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## Editorial

Welcome to *Ars Artium*, Volume 3, January 2015. Entering the third year of its publication, we have tried to give space to the original and high quality research papers in the fields of Humanities and Social Sciences along with book reviews and poems.

The present issue of the journal presents the research papers on Postcolonial issues in Shakespeare's Othello, Postmodernist fiction, Subaltern Studies, Translation Studies, Julia Kristeva's concept of intertextuality; the fiction of Graham Greene and D.H. Lawrence; essay of G. K. Chesterton; stories of Rabindranath Tagore; plays of Girish Karnad; fiction of Bhabani Bhattacharya, Rohinton Mistry, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni; poetry of Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Das, R. Parthasarathy, Meena Kandasamy, Jaydeep Sarangi and Kulbhushan Kushal, and "Iran and Turkmenistan", "India-ASEAN Relations", "Political Mobilization", and Religious Studies.

The Book Reviews section carries the reviews of the books recently published. They have been reviewed by the leading critics and reviewers. They are: B.R. Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste* (the annotated critical edition) edited by S. Anand, *Comparative Literature: Critical Responses* edited by Tribhuvan Kumar and Vijay Kumar Roy, *White Lotus and Other Poems* written by Bishnupada Ray, *A Door Somewhere?* written by Jaydeep Sarangi, *Eternal Quest* written by SL Peeran, *Manhood, Grasshood and Birdhood* written by Aju Mukhopadhyay, and *Ocean of Thoughts: Poems about Social Issues and Human Values* written by Sangeeta Mahesh.

The Poetry section of the journal offers the poems of Rob Harle, Jaydeep Sarangi, Vijay Kumar Roy, Ahmad Abidi, Priyaranjan Das and Vinay Kumar Dubey.

We are thankful to all esteemed authors of the research papers, reviewers of books and poets for their valuable contribution to this volume of *Ars Artium*. We will try to continue bringing out the research papers on diverse themes and areas of Humanities and Social Sciences in next issue of the journal.

Wish all the contributors and readers a fruitful reading, and happy, healthy and peaceful New Year 2015!

**–Vijay Kumar Roy**

Editor-in-chief



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## Subalternity, Globalization and Balram Halwai

—Md Equebal Hussain\*

### Abstract

This paper seeks to make a critical analysis of the subaltern consciousness of Balram Halwai, the protagonist in Aravind Adiga's critically acclaimed but controversial novel *The White Tiger* which won the Booker Prize for the author. Although one does not come to know about Balram's caste, the author tells us that he is the son of a rickshaw puller, Vikram Halwai.

Balram begins at the very bottom, without even a proper name; his family calls him only "Munna", or "boy." Moreover, on the basis of the surrounding he lives in, the kind of job he does, the kind of vocabulary and short and crudely constructed sentences he uses, he clearly appears to be a member of the subaltern class. The protagonist of the novel, Balram learns the success mantra of successful entrepreneurship in the corrupt atmosphere of the post-globalization India and goes on to fearlessly kill his employer, Mr. Ashok. He is a ruthless product of a ruthless age. He stands for the breeding discontent and aggression in the underbelly of India under globalization. The economic divide being created by globalization threatens the social fabric of India unless a more humane model of progress is adopted. The proposed paper would seek to closely investigate this aspect of the protagonist's character.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Discontent, Imbalanced economy, Ruthlessness, Aggression, New subaltern class, Humane model of progress.

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*The White Tiger* by Arvind Adiga is a stinging attack on the new India developing under globalization – 'an acidic satire on modern India', as Damian Whitworth calls it. No wonder the book has been received with considerable antagonism in India as it holds a mirror to realities we refuse to acknowledge. As Neel Mukherjee wrote in *The Sunday Telegraph* – 'Blazingly savage and brilliant.....an excoriating piece of work, relentless in its stripping away of the veneer of India Rising to expose its rotting heart'. Mohsin Hamid regards the novel 'compelling, angry and darkly humorous' (hindu.com). A lot of novelists in India, however, have not been kind to Adiga. It was surprising to read the remarks of Shashi Deshpande, a reputed novelist – "But which Indian will refuse to acknowledge the realities Adiga speaks of! In fact, the complaint of many readers has

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been: what is he telling us that we do not know?" (hindu.com) May be we are in the know of the realities Adiga is trying to focus but only an Adiga could have said this, for only a writer having intellectual honesty can say the unsayable. When we talk of Eliot's poetry presenting truth in all its nakedness, why can't Adiga do it?

Moreover, as Adiga himself responds to such charges, "In the 19th century the great European writers, Dickens and Balzac and Flaubert, were savagely critical of the societies they lived in. One of the things the arts should do is slap the middle class in the face. This is essential as a country rises to great power status. It is not that you are deriding the country. It is part of being self-reflective as a society" (timesonline.co.uk). It is indeed remarkable to note that in spite of all savageness of attack Adiga takes a less pessimistic view of India's economic boom under globalization than Arundhati Roy.

In fact, he believes that India "has a potential for a very unique destiny. This question of India's rise to global position is one that is very key to my sense of what it is I am doing as a writer. I am not saying I am opposed to it. I am saying I am ambivalent about it. India as a power can mean something different for different people. What I always thought it meant was a time when India wouldn't have poor people. But for a lot of people what it means is a sense of belligerence, which I think is disturbing" (timesonline.co.uk).

The theme of the novel, to put it in the words of the protagonist Balram Halwai, is to portray India which has grown into "two countries in one: an India of Light, and an India of Darkness (14). While addressing Mr. Jiabo, the Chinese premier, Balram Halwai says, "No!- Mr Jiabo! I urge you not to dip in the Ganga, unless you want your mouth full of faecas, straw, soggy parts of human bodies, buffalo carrion, and seven different kinds of industrial acid" (15), none can deny the sarcasm, but it must also be treated as a soulful cry of concern for the environment in danger. As Vijay Nair so succinctly remarks in *The Hindu*, "The White Tiger is a fairy tale, albeit somewhat bloody in its orientation. The book ends with the promise of marriage for the protagonist, thereby sealing the happily-ever-after ending. So it begs reason why it has left so many compatriots foaming at the mouth. The answer may be in the deceptively simple parabolic tale Adiga weaves in a little over 300 pages. Everything about the work is designed as a wickedly subversive tool to hold a mirror to the reader, the patron of his book" (hindu.com).

The novel tells the story of Balram Halwai who hails from a small village named Laxmangarh in Bihar. He belongs to a community which lives deep in the darkness of rural India. The son of a rickshaw puller who is taken out of school as a boy and put to work in a tea shop, Balram nurses dreams of escape. He originally was named Munna as it hardly made a difference and his parents never named him. His mother might have named him, but she was too busy dying of TB. His father was too busy pulling a rickshaw, weakening himself to be claimed by the same disease" (telegraph.co.uk). A school teacher, Mr. Krishna has to name him instead; later, a local official decides on his date of birth.



In Dhanbad he learns driving as he comes to know about the high salary paid to drivers. He finally gets his chance when a rich village landlord hires him as a chauffeur for his son, Ashok and his daughter-in-law, Pinky Madam, and their two Pomeranian dogs, Cuddles and puddles. The family moves to Delhi. There, amid the cockroaches and the call centres, the 360,000,004 gods, the shopping malls, the brown envelopes and the crippling traffic jams, Balram learns about modern India, where the air is so bad that it takes ten years off a man's life unless he drives in an air-conditioned car. "With their tinted windows up, the cars of the rich go like dark eggs down the roads of Delhi. Every now and then an egg will crack open – a woman's hand, dazzling with gold bangles, stretches out of an open window, flings an empty mineral water bottle onto the road – and then the window goes up, and the egg is released" (133-34). Thus he has the feel of the India of Light and becomes worldly and ambitious.

As Balram broods over his situation he realizes that it is only through ruthlessness he can ensure an escape from servitude and suffering to the India of Light. Therefore, he decides to murder his employer, Mr. Ashok whose increasing involvement in political corruption and divorce from his wife provides Balram with an opportunity. One day as Ashok is carrying seven hundred thousand rupees in cash to bribe politicians in New Delhi, Balram murders him and flees to Bangalore with his nephew Dharam. Balram uses the loot to bribe a police commissioner and start his own transport business. He changes his name to Ashok Sharma and becomes a wealthy entrepreneur in India's new technological society thus making his entry from darkness to light.

The novel uses epistolary structure and the protagonist writes a series of letters to Chinese Premier Mr. Wen Jiabo who is planning a visit to India. Mr. Jiabo is planning to visit Bangalore to have a first-hand experience of India's technological advance. Balram wants to give him a different perspective than the official one.

Out of respect for the love of liberty shown by the Chinese people, and also in belief that the future of the world lies with the yellow man and the brown man now that our erstwhile master, the white-skinned man has wasted himself through buggery, cell phone usage and drug abuse, I offer to tell you, free of charge, the truth about Bangalore (5-6).

As a matter of fact, the protagonist in this novel, Balram Halwai reminds us of the two memorable characters belonging to the Dalit class – Bakha in Anand's 1935 classic *Untouchable* who is damned to remain an outcaste despite the stirrings deep inside his soul, and Velutha in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, 1996 who is a paravan but cherishes a desire to 're-live' as a touchable. He dares to have physical relation with an upper-class woman (unthinkable to Bakha) which ultimately costs him his life.

Balram Halwai, the protagonist in Adiga's novel goes a step further and does not hesitate to kill his master (again unthinkable to Velutha) in order to become a successful entrepreneur. Therefore, one traces in these three characters a complete transformation of the Dalit character in terms of their attitude and the growing degree of aggression and protest. These three characters have arisen from 'the compulsions of life of the lower depths where the rejected in our country have been condemned to live' to use

the phrase of Anand (Anand (ed): 19). These novels are not merely literary exercises but also artistic articulations of the political and socio-economic conditions of the age in which they have been written – invaluable social documents of their time.

Of course, in *The White Tiger*, more than race or caste, it is the ‘vast economic inequality between the poor and the wealthy elite’ that is highlighted. The protagonist himself says, “...in the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies, and men with Small bellies” (64). But we must keep in mind that “Balram begins at the very bottom, without so much as a name; his family calls him only “Munna”, or “boy”.

Discussing Balram’s use of vocabulary, Sanjay Subrahmanyam wrote in *London Review of Books*, “His sentences are mostly short and crudely constructed, apparently a reflection of the fact that we’re dealing with a member of the ‘subaltern’ classes” (lrb.co.uk).

Although not much is told about the physical charm of Balram Halwai’s character, it would be interesting to have a look at how the inspector who visited his school and gave him the name of ‘the white tiger’ describes him: “The inspector pointed his cane straight at me. ‘You, young man, are an intelligent, honest, vivacious fellow in this crowd of thugs and idiots. In any jungle, what is the rarest of animals – the creature that comes along only once in a generation?’

I thought about it and said:

‘The white tiger.’

‘That’s what you are, in this jungle.’ (35)

Moreover, his sarcastic account of how he became a successful entrepreneur reminds us of the ‘young Vito Corleone in *The Godfather* refusing to be a puppet’ (usatoday.com). Balram reminds one of Heathcliff. Like Heathcliff, he is also a victim of the extreme inequality prevailing in the post-globalised world and passes sarcastic remarks on the much-hyped propaganda of prosperity in a country which still has 42% population living below poverty line. Paradoxically, however, he is the narrator of his own meteoric rise using the same contemporary formula of success, sitting in his 150 sq. ft office in Bangalore and writing letters to Mr. Jiabo, the Chinese premier, on the subject of Indian entrepreneur.

Therefore, Balram Halwai is out and out a fighter, a rebel and has the ruthlessness to survive in this world of ‘Big fishes eat small fishes.’ Even a glimpse into Balram’s character would bring out the truth that as we move from Bakha to Velutha and from Velutha to Balram Halwai, the degree of protest and anger against the system is rising. While Bakha and Velutha fail to achieve any success against the brutal and discriminatory attitude of the society, Balram Halwai shows that he is a cunning, resourceful and ambitious citizen of that post-globalization India which is a ‘merciless, corrupt Darwinian jungle where only the ruthless survive’ (usatoday.com). As mentioned earlier, his vision is that of a Marxist, not of a person raising his voice against any kind of racism or casteism in India. Had Baba Saheb been alive, perhaps Balram Halwai would have written him too not to worry about annihilation of caste system.

Bullied, uneducated, underprivileged, Halwai comes from the vast rural population in which seventy percent of the nation's population still lives, often in a state of shocking deprivation. He wants to escape from the India of Darkness to the India of Light. To fight ruthlessness, he acts ruthlessly and goes on to murder his master Ashok Sir. Although he regrets that he was the nicest one in the family. This is an act which Velutha, in spite of all his heroics, would not have done, not only because of his non-violent thinking but also because he would not have sufficient courage to do this as he is not the product of the post-globalized India.

Balram considers himself an entrepreneur and explains to Mr. Jiabo his entrepreneurial education in the very school of hard knocks. He knows that in today's world what you need is only success, no matter at what cost. He is the smartest and the most aggressive of the three characters. This tendency in him also owes to the growing consciousness in this class regarding their rights, as they are also enjoying political power from the panchayat level to the state assemblies and even up to parliament level. A new social engineering is taking place and at several places the Dalits are asserting themselves quite forcefully. As a matter of fact, they have also tasted the blood of political power and several heroes in the shape of Mayawatis and Kanshi Rams have emerged in recent past who thrive only on Dalit card. Some of the brain-washing is also being done by the Naxal and Maoist ideologies.

After all, they are also living in the world of information explosion which has its reach to the lowest level. Gone are the days when this class was ignorant and led a life of deprivation with little complaint. No wonder, characters like Balram Halwai can be found everywhere. It is absurd to say that Balram's character is unreal and merely a caricature. He is very much real and a product of this economically imbalanced system where all the doors of justice are closed on the poor. "Adiga wants us to see all this as emblematic of the new Indian tough guy, the murderous entrepreneur who will step over any number of dead bodies to get his way" (*London Review of Books*).

The digital divide which the new liberalized economy is creating at the behest of the MNCs and pro Developed World agencies like World Bank, IMF is producing characters like Balram Halwai which poses a serious threat to the social fabric of India. What Adiga has done is not to create an unreal character but to cast 'his gaze beyond the complacent smugness of middle class drawing rooms to the anger and squalor lurking in the underbelly of urban India' (*The Guardian*).

In short, my proposition is that a new subaltern group has emerged on account of the corporate centric economic policies being pursued under the umbrella of globalization. This group represents the 'India of Darkness' symbolized in the character of Balram Halwai. Of course, more than caste divide, it is the huge economic divide which is creating the same kind of chasm in the society as the caste ridden society created in the past. The oppressive structure is once again being created in the name of progress and national interest, and just as the Dalit awakening led to their rejection of the subhuman status imposed on them, this class is also asserting and gradually strengthening its position 'to subvert the authority of those who have hegemonic power' to use the expression of Homi Bhabha (Chakraborty 2).

The uprising in several states like West Bengal, Chattisgarh, Odissa, Haryana, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and at several other places stand testimony to this new consciousness. Balram Halwai's character, therefore, voices the discontent of the new India emerging under globalization where millions of people have been made refugees in their own land. In fact, *The White Tiger* is an advance upon *The God of Small Things* in the sense that while the later deals with the traditional Dalit question, the former addresses the agony of the new subaltern class. It must be noted down that Gramsci also incorporated 'peasants, workers and other groups denied access to hegemonic power' while categorizing the subaltern. "In the post-colonial scenario, the Gramscian term 'subaltern' gets wider perspective as it refers to the third world countries and the marginalized groups in the society" (Simon 35).

It's time India awoke to this impending disaster. It is a desperate situation requiring desperate measures. However, we can hardly hope for any radical step from our MNCs educated politicians. Responsibility to sound a note of warning and awaken the masses about the evils of this lop-sided model of development also lies on writers, social scientists, social activists and all those who wish to see India grow into a peaceful, progressive and just society.

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## **Structures of Reality: Postmodernist Fiction and Reality**

*–Baby Pushpa Sinha\**

### **Abstract**

This paper tries to deal with the shifting terrain and changing concept of reality beginning from its formative stage in the 18<sup>th</sup> century till date. The postmodern novelists like William S. Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut jr. and many others mainly focus on narrative displacement. The linear narrative strategy is replaced with a disjointed and disruptive articulation that underpins the destabilized, uncertain, ponderous subjectivities of the characters. Such a realization has allowed a polyphonic possibility, resulting in a schizoid representation of the individual and society. The very conceptualization and narrativization of reality has resulted in a playful irrealism. These novelists engage themselves in an antifoundational exercise in articulating human experience in a world of shifting terrains where real is irreal and truth is relativized.

**Keywords:** Reality, Postmodernist, Genre, Hyperreality, Unreal, Construct, Antifoundational.

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The novel emerged in the seventeenth century Europe as a part of literature. Since then the novel has engaged itself in search of reality. The novel aims at portraying reality. But the question that comes to our mind is after all what is reality? Reality according to Philosophy means the sum total of things that exist, or what would be included in a complete description of all the facts about the world. The term reality in fiction has been explained and described by many from different positions and perspectives. And the concept of reality is not fixed and stable. In this context, we can quote Gobinda Prasad Sarma who maintains:

The concept of reality is changing from age to age. And accordingly, the novel that wants to reflect it is also changing its form. The modernist movement in Europe of the first four decades of the twentieth century was an immediate reaction against the over dependence of the preceding naturalistic movement on science or scientific precision in literature. Indeed, it was a reaction against the long dependence on the certainty inherent in the Cartesian concept of reality.

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The sense of incertitude was basic to the modernist movement. We see that even with the passage of modernist movement into postmodernist movement, the sense of incertitude or uncertainty does not change. (Sharma 75)

We can further quote Gobinda Prasad Sharma who remarks:

As the modernist movement wore on towards the forties, the principle of uncertainty in knowledge, however, did not suffer the same fate. On the contrary, it got more importance with Heisenburg proving in the laboratory of Science that we can never determine for certain both the position and the momentum of a sub-atomic particle simultaneously. The observer's presence itself changes the observed particle. Thus during the postmodernist movement also, the basic idea of modernism got emphasized- if Science itself cannot believe in precision, how can humanities aspire for certainty in knowledge? The postmodernist novelists also believed in this way that since nothing can be seen for certain, reality cannot also be perceived clearly- far less described or reflected objectively. The novel can never be a mirror for reality. It can only be a discourse for it (Sharma 75).

The postmodernist theorists like Peter L. Berger, Thomas Luckmann, Jean Baudrillard and others believed that reality was not something that was given to us. Rather it was constructed or created. Jean Baudrillard is of the opinion that there is nothing which is called the real. His name is usually associated with what is normally called the 'loss of the real' and 'simulation'. He feels that it is the result of the scenes from television, film and advertisement that has eroded the distinction between real and imagined, reality and illusion and surface and depth. And this has led to a culture of 'hyperreality'. Here we can refer to Niall Lucy who in his book *Postmodern Literary Theory: An Introduction* writes:

Baudrillard's argument is that reality no longer appears as such, but rather has become its appearances. Social knowledge nevertheless continues to be based on the reality (or the presence) of the real, because the function of the postmodern sign is to disguise the fact that reality is no longer with us (39).

Reality is mostly constructed well in advance from its reproducibility as text in such a way that the real cannot be seen differently 'from what used to be able to be distinguished from it'. Literature and especially fiction as a genre is very useful in capturing the changing notions of reality. We finally in literature come across a rejection of traditional realism that is chronological plots, continuous narratives given by omniscient narrators, 'closed endings', etc. in preference for experimental forms of different kinds. The relationship between a work of fiction and its readers has been a subject of debate and discussion for a long time. The questions that need to be addressed are: 1. Do novels represent reality or are they all cooked up? 2. Are the novelists under the obligations to compare what happens in their works with what might have happened had the same events taken place in the real world? 3. Is the writer obliged to present a semblance of truth? Writers like Lionel Trilling feels that realism should be the stuff or substance on which the novels should be based on. Attempts have been made to recreate the real world around us in fictions written during the great "age of realism" by writers like Dickens, Eliot, Stendhal, and Dostoevsky. The novels written by writers like Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez are realistic writings designed

in a manner that portray the other side of reality not similar to the 19<sup>th</sup> century kind of realism. Barbara Foley, Linda Hutcheon, and Joanne Frye are the critics who are engaged in their task with fiction and reality in different ways. Out of the many assumptions that exist in the relationship between reality and the fictional narrative, one of it is that it attempts to portray life. And reality changes or alters and therefore the means of representing it will also change. The fact is that the unreality of reality is not the only theme that the postmodernist fiction can talk about. When we talk of the postmodernist novelists, we cannot afford to ignore the names of the three American postmodernist novelists like William S. Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon and Kurt Vonnegut Jr. Their works, in the fictional representation of reality in its postmodern context, deserves critical attention, admiration and recognition. The novelists like John Barth, Thomas Pynchon, Richard Brautigan, William S. Burroughs, Kurt Vonnegut Jr., William Gass and Donald Barthelme interrogated the concepts like the concept of reality, truth and accepted belief(s). We can then say that it is in reaction to the type of false realism that the postmodern fiction assumes its disruptive stand. William S. Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon and Kurt Vonnegut Jr. tried in their own ways to subvert the so-called official or generally accepted view of the social reality. Realism in literature is normally understood as the expression of a belief in a commonly experienced phenomenological world. In fact Postmodernism overthrows this assumption of realism and makes use of negative evaluation of it, thereby refuting the epistemological grounds of realism. The so-called new novel is placed in a theoretical projection of postmodernism that the accepted reality is an illusion. We understand reality as something concrete through which we order our experience. The postmodern view deconstructs this position and asserts that reality is simulated. Therefore, it is a mode of simulacrum. Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s *Slaughterhouse-Five* and Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* underline a reality that is supposedly unreal for our conventional understanding. It confirms to Michel Foucault's discourse of madness that underlines the fact that madness is constructed socially as prohibitive, tabooed and unsocial. The whole discourse in fact deflects upon the conventional understanding of things and helps us to understand the real-real. Here the pertinent question is how does one define the real? The real has been conventionally defined and understood as something concretely available, socially acceptable and manifestly conventional. The postmodern novelists question this position and take us beyond the conventionality to an understanding of things which are self-reflexive and underpin the manifestation of unreal as real and the invisible as visible. *Naked Lunch* portrays a reality that is unreal and absent. It includes the necessary absurdities of life and minimizes it to a series of cruel and often pointless episodes. We see that time, place, plot and characters are not of any significance in the narrative except for narrative effects-effects that are significant for their disruptive traces, and latent meanings. Burroughs does not put efforts to create artificial situations or construct an elaborate plot. Writing folds upon itself as consciousness does:

There is only one thing a writer can write about: What is in front of his senses at the moment of writing....I am a recording instrument....I do not presume to impose "story", "plot", "continuity"....In so far as I succeed in 'Direct' recording of certain areas of psychic process I may have limited function.... I am not an entertainer... (*Burroughs* 92).

In this sense, Burroughs can be ranked with “garrulous” American writers like Ezra Pound and William Carlos whose literary productions project to map the authors’ consciousness, recorded over a period of years or even decades. This literature is confessional at its best, since it can function only if it is totally honest.

In Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow*, we see Tyron Slothrop, the American whose hapless peregrinations form the bulk of the novel is troubled by his suspicions to which he calls as paranoid. We find that his notion of reality is either ruled by chance, and hence meaningless or else ruled by some latent powers which is at once “more real” than chance and more cruel, and the belief that this order, which is felt to lurk behind the debris of the world, is not merely secret, not just passively mysterious like a remote deity, but “systematically hidden from the likes of Slothrop(*Gravity’s Rainbow* 209). If the traditional novel describes reality in an attempt to give it a certain moral validity, the postmodern fiction like Kurt Vonnegut Jr.’s *Slaughterhouse-Five* seeks to show the form rather than the content of the novel. *Slaughterhouse-Five* offers a nonlinear mode of narration that, in Klinkowitz’s words, created “a radical reconnection of the historical and the imaginary, the realistic and the fantastic, the sequential and the simultaneous, the author and the text”. It has little resemblance to the traditional novel. There is no linear movement of the narrative, no intricate plot, crying for resolution. The protagonist who is a time-traveller can within a blink of his eye find himself in fire-bombed Dresden in the year 1944 and, by another blink, in Ilium, his home town in 1961. Billy Pilgrim had witnessed the firebombing by the Allies of Dresden at the fag-end of World War II. The experience was so drastic that Pilgrim got “unstuck in time”. After getting “unstuck in time”, he does not feel important to demarcate between past, present and future and also between the living and the dead. Vonnegut emphasises the importance of fantasy in order to make sense of the senseless in his *Slaughterhouse-Five*. According to him, fictions are answers to history and horror, ‘real’ horror forms one essential part of the book, and the process of the fantastic displacement the other. In the ‘real life’, Billy undergoes the author’s experience of a POW imprisoned in the Dresden Slaughterhouse, and saved by chance from the fireball which destroys the city. Vonnegut is at his best in fantasizing his real experiences as a prisoner in World War II. He felt after having written *Slaughterhouse-five* that he had nothing more to write if he did not want to.

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## Meena Kandasamy's *Touch*: An Articulation of the Voice of the Marginalized

—Mohan Lal Mahto\*

### Abstract

A young Tamil poet from Chennai, Meena Kandasamy is a fiction writer, translator, and activist. Her two collections of poems *Touch* (2006) and *Ms. Militancy* (2010) present the real pictures of the marginalized in Indian society. As a conscious artist with commitment she is grieved to see the age old in human social practices like untouchability based on caste system prevailing in our society.

She expresses her anger against caste based discrimination which has crippled the dalits/marginalized to dehumanized state as they are subjected to humiliation and oppression. In other words, her works focus on poverty, oppression, injustice, caste annihilation, linguistic identity and pangs and predicaments of women. This paper attempts to explore and analyze the grievances of the marginalized communities raised in *Touch* by Meena Kandasamy. In one of the poems titled 'Ekalavivan' she takes up the episode of the *Mahabharata* where Dronacharya declines to train Ekalavya because of his birth in a lower caste rather than Kshatriya. In another poem 'Liquid Tragedy: Karamchedu 1985', she lashes out at the act and attitude of the people of the higher caste by recapturing the massacre of Karamchedu, Andhra Pradesh in 1985, where many low caste men were killed and their women were raped by the upper caste people. In fact, Meena Kandasamy seeks equality, freedom and fraternity for the marginalized so that they can lead a life with pride and dignity in society.

**Keywords:** Verna system, Untouchability, Dalits, Caste annihilation, Oppression, Equality, Freedom, Injustice.

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Born in 1984, Meena Kandasamy is a young Tamil poet, fiction writer, translator, and activist. Her first collection of poems titled *Touch* which includes 84 poems was published in August, 2006 with a foreword by the famous poet Kamala Das, who gives high appreciation for this anthology. Kamala Das remarks, "Once again after long years of search I came into contact with the power of honest poetry when I was reading Meena Kandasamy's anthology." (*Touch* 7) She also adds, "Older by half a

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century, I acknowledge the superiority of her poetic vision and wish her access to the magical brew of bliss and tears each true poet is forced to partake of day after day, month after month, year after year....” (*Touch* 7). The second collection of poems titled *Ms Militancy* was published in 2010. However, her works have appeared in different reputed journals of the country and abroad such as *The Little Magazine*, *Kavaya Bharati*, *Indian Literature*, *Poetry International Web*, *Muse India*, *Quarterly Literary Review*, *The New Indian Express* etc. Truly, discrimination based on caste line has crippled the dalits/marginalized to dehumanized state as they are subjected to discrimination, humiliation and oppression. Meena Kandasamy expresses her anger against caste based oppression and is determined to combat the social evils through her literary creations. Her works focus on oppression, pangs and predicaments of dalit women, and caste annihilation. In other words, she attacks rampant social evils like injustice, atrocities, inequality, violation of human rights, etc. This paper attempts to explore the pains and predicaments of the marginalized communities as presented in *Touch* and also analyze their grievances raised in it. The poems of *Touch* are divided into seven groups: *Bring him up to worship you*, *Touch*, and *some spice*, *To that more congenial spot*, *Lines of control*, *Slander in a slaughterhouse*, and *Their Daughters*. The second part of *Touch* is dedicated to the issues of the marginalized/dalit communities of our society.

Casteism is an old social evil which is used to subjugate the lower stratum of the hierarchal social structure of Indian society and to uphold discrimination as well as gain unfair advantage over the ‘others’, marginalized. Earlier varna system was based on *karma*, but later on, it began to be identified by birth. Thus an individual’s identity is determined by caste and not by *karma*. The marginalized groups of India such as dalits or untouchables, Adivasis, and nomadic tribes were made to lead dehumanized and degraded lives. They have been denied the basic fundamental rights by the stratified rigid caste system. They are expected to lead mean life, doing inferior and menial works like sweeping, cleaning working in fields etc. and remain servile to the privileged class. It is observed that their habitats are away from the people who are in the centre. In *Touch* Meena Kandasamy focuses on the sufferings, frustration, humiliation, suppression, anguish and revolt of the ill-fated marginalized sections of our society.

In her poem ‘Another Paradise Lost: The Hindu Way’, she presents a story of a serpent and her conversation with it. The serpent narrates that once it was a monarch held with honour on the earth and in the heaven, too. He raised questions before gods in heaven about the caste system and the division of jobs on the earth, and advocated for equality, freedom and fraternity. He was branded rebel. For this act, he was cursed and as a punishment thrown on earth to wander because gods living in heavenly abode do want hierarchy of vernas to continue on earth. Any advocacy to dismantle this system is also unbearable to them. Thus the serpent discloses:

I wanted to know why  
caste was there, why people suffered because of  
their karmas. I questioned the Gods, and the learned  
sages there. I asked what would happen if a

high born did manual work just like the low-born.  
I worried about the division of labour, this disparity  
in dreams and destinies. You could say I was a rebel  
pleading for liberty-equality-fraternity. (56-63)

Even gods and sages divide human beings into the rich and the poor, upper caste and untouchables, and spread hatred among human beings.

In another poem 'Eklaivan', she takes up the episode of the *Mahabharata*, where Ekalavya was debarred from the art of archery by the great Guru Dronacharya, and had to pay a heavy price for being a tribe- man of so-called low caste. He possessed the noblest soul and the exemplary character. He parted with his thumb only to gratify the will of a guru who had not taught him rather humiliated him by debarring from learning archery. His right thumb was amputated just because he would not become better archer than a boy of upper caste. The poem runs thus:

You can do a lot of things  
With your left hand.  
Besides, fascist Dronacharya's warrant  
Left handed treatment.  
Also  
You don't need your right thumb  
To pull a trigger or hurl a bomb. (1-9)

The poet raises a question—Was Droncharya just amputating Eklavya's right thumb? In fact, his biasness is disclosed. His decision was affected by verna system.

In 'Liquid Tragedy: Karamchedu 1985' Meena Kandasamy recaptures the in famous massacre of Karamchedu which took place on July 17 in 1985 in Andhra Pradesh where six Madiga (lower caste) men were killed and three Madiga women were raped by the Kammas (upper caste men). The massacre ensued when a Madiga woman protested against the washing of buffaloes by the Kammas in the pond whose water the Madigas drank. Here the poet writes:

Buffalo Baths. Urine. Bullshit  
Drinking Water for the Dalits  
The very same Pond.  
Practice for eons.  
A Bold Dalit lady  
dares to question injustice.  
Hits forth with her pot. Her indignation  
Is avenged. Fury let loose. Violence. Rapes.  
Killings..... (1-9)

Kandasamy raises another question before us- Is it justified to silence the voices of the marginalized for raising genuine demands? Instead of taking sincere and justified steps to address their genuine grievances they are treated brutally and suppressed by might. Through this poem the poetess represents the authority of the privileged, and their age old scornful attitude towards the deprived. It seems ridiculous that in spite of

passing decades of independence, the dream of social equality is still unachieved and the deprived are forced to lead a non-existence life. Can one imagine that the untouchables are bound to drink water of a pond where the upper caste men wash their buffaloes and these buffaloes urinate and release dung? But it's true in a caste-ridden Indian society. Madiga men were killed and women were raped because they were socially and economically weak, they were powerless. One need not be surprised knowing this incident, as such kind of incident is common occurrence in our society.

The perennial oppression dehumanizes the down trodden and transforms them into non-existent state. It not only affects physically, but also psychologically. In her poem 'Fleeting', she mentions that we may lose our history, orbe destroyed, and our memories may perish from our mind, but caste imprint is perennial. The tag of caste is an unfailing weapon for the upper castes to dominate over the deprived. Her indignation against this social evilis revealed in this poem:

And fleeting memories are perishable—  
 Imagery showcase stuff having expiry dates,  
 Caste perennially remains  
 a scheming bulldozer  
 Crushing Dalits—  
 And renewing, revoking our bitter past. (1-6)

The divisive society divides even gods and prohibits entrance of untouchables in the shrines or abodes of deities meant for the upper castes. Offering prayers by dalits at their temple is unpardonable crime and severe punishments are in store for this kind of offence. Meena Kandasamy castigates such acts and attitudes and this brutal practice in the poem titled 'Prayers'. She delineates how amarginalized is thrashed to death for committing this crime. The weak person suffering from typhoid for ten days goes near the temple of an upper caste man to offer prayers and seeks God's blessings for recovery from the fever, but he is caught and killed. She presents the experiences which are true but unpleasant as it consists of the cruelty of man against his fellow human beings. Thus she writes:

He drags himself clumsily to a nearby temple.  
 Sadly, of an Upper caste God.  
 Away from the temple, he bends in supplication. (7-9)  
 .....  
 An irked Rajput surged forth  
 and smote the untouchable with an iron rode.  
 The warrior caste lion couldn't tolerate encroachment. (14-16)

The poet questions as well as challenges the age-old caste system and rigid society which prohibits inter-caste relationship, particularly between the higher and the lower. Violation of the caste boundary results in brutal punishments for the involved persons. In the poem titled 'We will rebuild worlds' she mentions how exemplary punishments are given to them who dare cross caste lines.

But the crimes of passion/  
Our passion/your crimes

Poured poison, and pesticide through the ears-nose-mouth/  
Or hanged them in public/because a man and a woman  
Dared to love

And you wanted/to teach /other boys and other girls/the  
lessons of /how to/whom to/ when to/where to/continue  
their caste lines. (16-23)

In this poem she narrates how the downtrodden have been harassed and brutally treated and massacred since time immemorial. She speaks with determination that time has come now and these deprived people will no longer live in their mercy and build their fortune by own. She gives a clarion call that they will give appropriate fight against the atrocities unleashed upon them on the name of caste.

So/now/upon future time/  
There will be a revolution. (42-43)

These lines recall poetic lines by a famous dalit poet J.V. Pawar who also calls upon for revolution:

These twisted fists won't loosen now  
The coming revolution won't wait for you.  
We have endured enough; no more endurance now. (ADL 143)

In 'Dignity', she calls upon the privileged men to be sympathetic and considerate towards the oppressed class. She believes in dignity and equality of all. She wishes they would not deprive due share of the oppressed, maintaining their own dignity and faith. But in warning note she tells them not to suppress the marginalized without any rhyme and reason, and deny their dignity.

You stick to your faith  
the incurable sickness  
of your minds,  
We don't stop you from continuing  
to tend centuries  
of cultivate superegos.  
We will even let you wallow  
in the rare happiness  
that hierarchy provides  
But don't suppress  
our rightful share of dignity. (7-18)

In caste governed patriarchal Indian society, dalit/untouchable women are doubly exploited being dalit and women. They endure the maltreatment, oppression and untouchability from the upper caste, while they are thrashed at home by their husbands. Sometimes their fathers and brothers torture them. Thus they are double victims.

They are stripped naked, molested, raped, assaulted and burnt for no rational reason except for the caste they belong to. They are taken for sexual gratification. It is their fate to bear threats of rape and violence from the hands of the privileged. At home they are put in pitiable condition too. Meena Kandasamy is pained to see the miserable condition of the women of weaker communities. In her poem 'Narration' she depicts the heart rendering cries of the oppressed woman who is exploited by her landlord. The very shadow of an untouchable is supposed to pollute the upper castes, but they are not polluted while molesting a dalit girl or woman.

I'll weep to you about  
 My landlord, and with  
 My mature gestures—  
 You will understand:  
 The torn sari, disheveled hair  
 Stifled cries and meek submission.  
 I was not an untouchable then. (1-7)

In our society physical and mental exploitation of the girls of the poor section is very common. Most shocking aspect is that the culprits involved in these sexual assaults find easy escape because of their high caste affiliations. In the poem 'Shame' the poet depicts how an untouchable girl becomes the victim of gang rape. But the rapists are spared as they belong to upper caste and the innocent and helpless girl suffers humiliation and irrecoverable pain and ultimately commits suicide.

'Gang Rape'  
 Two severe syllables/  
 implied in her presence  
 perpetuate the assault...  
 Public's prying eyes  
 segregate her—the victim.  
 But the criminals have  
 already maintained—  
 Their Caste is classic shield. (1-9)

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Gory scars on the wretched body  
 serves as constant reminders  
 of disgrace, helpless. (14-16)

The helpless girl sets herself into fire as a solution to this sin.

Bravely, in search of  
 a definite solution,  
 and elusive purification,  
 she takes the test of the fire—  
 the ancient medicine for shame. (22-26)

To sum up, in *Touch*, Meena Kandasamy depicts the bare truth of our society where people living in the margins are still victims of illogical and unscientific notions

which deprive them of fundamental rights. It is also the voice of those who were condemned to silence for thousands of years. Moreover, social oppression is justified by the oppressors on the basis of verna system of society. She poignantly records the miseries, humiliation, and brutalities experienced by the oppressed in *Touch*. Her poetry is an onslaught on the social evils prevailing in our society such as caste system, untouchability, oppression on women, and cultural hegemony. She places human at the centre and registers a strong protest against the hierarchy of castes, race, tribe and gender showing the value of human liberty. She champions the cause of the marginalized and pleads for their liberty, equality, fraternity and justice so that they can live with honour and dignity.

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## **From the Mundane to the Metaphysical- Recasting Territories in Jaydeep Sarangi's *A Door Somewhere?***

—Anju Sosan George\*

### **Abstract**

Jaydeep Sarangi's recent collection of poems *A Door Somewhere?* opens into the readers mind myriad pictures, incessantly alive and rapturously sublime. The paper gives a bird's eye view of most of his challenging poems in the volume and introduces the readers into the possible areas of exploration. Sarangi churns his words into obedience, dealing with the mundane as well as the metaphysical. His voice speaks for the silent subaltern and for the world around him. Postcolonial writing back to the empire, drawing connections between India and Australia are the global themes which are as simply important as the local nuances he finds in his birth land.

**Keywords:** Poetry, Subaltern, Dalit, Postcolonial, Australia.

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There is a strange power Jaydeep Sarangi holds over words. In his recent collection, *A Door Somewhere?* he churns words into obedience, sometimes gently, sometimes with urgency as he himself says, "Life rides on words" ("Baby Growing in a Poet" 31)

The resolute feminine in the role of the mother is a sustained image throughout the collection. It comes from a deep rooted love and Sarangi is proud to proclaim, "My temple has one deity - my mother." ("Prayer" 8) Yet mother does not only reconcile to the "Homely quit" sitting "beside the lantern" where she can "listen to my heart beats" ("Prayer" 3-4). She is not stereotyped into cozy niches and placid vicinities; she also evolves as the dark mother, Kali, powerful, fiery and the demolisher of vices.

Kali has a garland of fifty human heads  
All are bloody  
Vices beheaded by mothers love".  
(“The Dark Mother” 13-15)

The juxtaposition of contrasts is violently bound by love.

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The birth of poetry and the pangs of the poetic creation fleet by in abundance in the collection. The poet, like a birdwatcher and a naturalist, waits for every flutter of its wings, every unfurling of the leaves. In this magical time, he says,

My thoughts are now  
Waiting. Small things are  
Recalled and stored  
In raindrops and wind blowing.  
(“Small things in Life” 1-4)

Poetry opens not only windows, but also doors and we leave leaping, riding on its wings in ecstasy, and forgetting-

Old castles live with memories  
Of ancient ghosts chanting.  
(“Small things in life” 28-29)

As he says, “at times I ride on time” (“Small things in life” 17) and in this tryst, even time, the ultimate leveler does not comply to the poet.

Images from two worlds find their voices in Sarangi’s poetic realm. The world, where “Facebook friends wait for likes” (“My Image” 6), and a world where “like dinosaurs/you belong to the past” (“In Memory of an Inkpot” 1-2). Yet, the poet is not lost in the present, rather draws energy from every yesterday and hopes from every tomorrow. The world is complete in this synergy.

Aptly titled, “*A Door Somewhere?*” “the collection delves with a myriad of doors, some opening out to let the world in and the others opening in to let the darkness out. This is a world “where walls are doors into things.” (“Beyond the walls” 15) It opens anywhere and everywhere, linking the past and the present. He points out that “Each time I read history/I find a door somewhere.” (“A Door Somewhere” 1-2 ) “It’s a door between the self and the world/Despair dances in hope.” (17-18)

There is an overpowering sense of optimism that leaps up, buoyant in Jaydeep Sarangi’s words. Thoughts darkening in its course, burdened by the heavy weight of reality, leaps up fighting, never willing to be let down. They fly like “kites in the sky” (“Words” 9). He writes,

The wheel of justice,  
Got stuck for a while  
A stone somewhere  
A gutter, perhaps  
Causing oppression to the powerless,  
But will turn again to reestablish  
A just society  
With a different key.  
(“Window on the World” 3-10)

Yet at times, the wry humour cannot be mistaken

Blood is sold at low price, all can buy it.  
May be with discount  
One bottle free, if you buy one.

(“Globalised Manners” 9-11)

Heavy words pregnant with meaning, like dark rain bearing clouds loom momentarily on the startled reader, only to find himself in the downpour of thoughts mingled with love and compassion, dancing in orchestrated symphony. The reader finds himself provoked, dared to accept or negate the claims made by the poet, and then wishfully indulge in the poet's words like “raindrops for the thirsty earth.” (“Relationship” 23)

There is a journey from the mundane to the metaphysical and back, the poet is aware of his poetic credentials and it is no blind faith that makes his decisions for him. He is aware of the marginalized, the basket carrying village girls, and Samudra's daughter who counts off days for her “father to bring bags of happiness” (“Someone Waits for Me” 7), the unnoticed postman, even the

.. gentle flow of Dulong  
Through tribal villages.  
It carries corpses unknown  
As some insignificant deaths  
Of local villagers.

(“Community Near the River Bank” 7- 11)

The subaltern Dalit history interspersed with social injustice is a subject of concern raised by the poet. He looks at their narratives as “missing links”(18) and reaffirms that no history is complete without their story. As he puts it, “your blood unfurls that history”. (“New Year Gift !” 16)

Each passing moment where an untouchable dies  
In front of an elite,  
On the banks of the Ganges  
Pale skinned, the smell of death  
Eyes vacant and dull.

(“New Year Gift!” 8-13)

The eyes belong not just to the oppressed, not only to the observer, the trite participant in the subjugation, but also to the oppressor who has been blinded and hardened by the continuous saga of cruelty. A single phrase provides multitudinous meanings to the reader. Sarangi subtly mixes poetry and politics together to raise pertinent concerns.

Yet the journey is not complete without a glimpse of a nether world,

Roads take us to a mystic land  
Where shadows meet  
In a strange quarter of time.

(“Someone Waits for Me” 1-3)

Sarangi's words at times carry on the flame that Mahapatra lighted. Glocal in both their outlooks, if Mahapatra circumscribed the larger world into Orissa, to Jagannath temple, to Puri saying

At times, as I watch,  
it seems as though my country's body  
floats down somewhere on the river.  
(“Freedom” 1-3)

The same meaning is brought in by GajanMisra, another contemporary poet from Odisha who writes,

I am getting lost  
In this place called Puri  
All roads lead to Puri.  
(“Getting Lost” 16-18)

To his readers, Sarangi flows from Dulong outwards. He is there

Seeking for a guru  
Beside the mysterious Narmada.  
(“A Mirror” 12-13)

At the same time he is there with his uncle from Fermantle seeing boats paddling

Floating between  
Residential suburbs of Perth.  
(“Black Swan” 5-6)

As his introductory note explains, he constructs a bridge between nations. We have to admit, rather successfully.

The postcolonial anguish turns into a celebration, reverberating the voice of the voiceless, not just of the Dalit subaltern, but also of a whole nation who dares to walk with its head held high. This celebration of the local culture through the global medium marks a proud moment, which can rarely be mistaken in his words.

Today I write back  
Speak to you through my powerful pen  
Awards and crowns, all follow my way  
My being comes to completeness.  
I sign treaties and MOUs with metaphors of conquest.  
(“Writing Back” 10-14)

I remain as a crow  
Time-keeper for oral tradition  
For centuries to come.  
(“Life Beyond” 18)

Jaydeep Sarangi's voice still resonates strong in *A Door Somewhere?*, breaking open a postcolonial anguish into pride, connecting two diverse continents through metaphors of love and narrating experiences from mundane to the metaphysical. He

instills in his collection, countless stories, every time reminding us that “You and I are in the story.” (“Counting Beads”12). This is his story, his dreams and apprehensions and ours too.

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## Lyrical Aspect in the Poems of Sarojini Naidu

–Arti Kumari\*

### Abstract

The first thing that strikes us in reading Sarojini Naidu's poetry is her exquisite melody and fine delicacy of feeling, an expression blended with the freshness and exuberance of spirit. The poetic world of Sarojini Naidu built around the themes of Nature, love, life, and folk projects a consistently joyous universe, reconstructed out of her own emotional life and supported by the images and symbols of human aspiration and hope. Her poems show a sensitive awareness of the progression of life towards the immutable coordination of Truth, Beauty and Joy. In her poetry, the lyric appeal is wonderful and full of the magic of melody. She sings of Indian myths, festivals and rituals. She speaks of the events of day to day life in an enchanting voice.

**Keywords:** Nature, Love, Truth, Beauty, Joy, Myth, Magic of melody.

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Sarojini Naidu is primarily “a singer of songs” and a song bird, “The Nightingale of India” and “Bharat Kokila”. Professor Vishwanathan is correct when he points out that it is a closed mind that thinks that she is not a song bird. In the opinion of Mr. Mathur, Sarojini is a “Supreme singer of beautiful songs, songs bathed in melody and thought.” He finds a moving melody in her Indian folk songs. There can be no two opinions about the predominance of lyrical impulse in Sarojini's poetry. Her poems are mostly “short-swallow-flight of songs”, some are full of rapture of spring and some other takes us into a world of inner ecstasy and spiritual elation and many other quivers with the passion of love. There are some poems which lead us into a heaven of India's luminous past.

Although her themes are ordinary, common - place and quotidian, a lover's cry of joy lends her poems a visionary appeal and a sense of personal immediacy. In her poetry, one comes across yearning and dream, action and suffering, joy and song. The impact of Indian devotional poets and Sufi mystics is tremendous on Sarojini's mind but her conception of nature does not correspond to that of the classical Indian poetry where nature is treated just as the physical environment of men and not as an automatic force.

Her conception of nature is neither completely Wordsworthian nor exclusively classical Indian but a fine blend of both. Her poetry revolves round the simple facts of

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life and death, joy and sorrow, man and universe. There is pain and misery in her poetic world but the dominant note is always of courage and hope, not of despair and dejection. She does not regard pain as a metaphysical evil, rather as a cleansing and beneficial form. It engenders pity, sympathy and charity. She would accept death in her stride, for her to accept death is to accept life. At times, she rises above her romantic wealth and ecstasy and presents an intense study of psychological complexities of human life without indulging in philosophical distinction which shows a marked out difference with others.

Sarojini is firmly rooted to the soil. She sings of Indian myths, festivals and rituals. She speaks of the events of day to day life in an enchanting voice. Arthur Symons admires and values her poetry chiefly for its effortless energy and lyrical grace. The first thing that at once holds the reader in a spell is its haunting music and delicacy of feeling blended with freshness and exuberance of spirit. The emotional urge and romantic impulse, with all its exuberance of colour, sound and perfume, result into memorable expression in her delicate quivering songs. K.R.R. Shastry rightly observes that her poems have ‘the freshness and sweetness of a full-bloomed lotus as well as the musical cadence of a free bird singing in ‘full-throated ease’. The genuineness, the moving quality and the immediacy of appeal which are to be found in the most accomplished of Shelley’s or Swinburne’s lyrics can be noticed in most of Sarojini’s lyrics also. Sarojini shows a Keatsian passion for beauty in its purest form. Like him, her note is around beauty and her response to beauty and its all forms are quick and spontaneous. Beauty excites her and colour stirs her into liquid songs. She is by nature dreamy and fanciful, and her imagination weaves out exotic patterns of colour and beauty. Sarojini’s poems are mostly short lovely spells of fancy. Each lyric is concerned with a single emotion. Each is an expression of the divine essence.

Her emotional experience varies in kind, and though its duration is short, it is subject to sudden shifts of intensity. Some of her poems are effusions of the rapture of spring, some take us to the colourful Indian spectacle, some transport us into the world of inner ecstasy but there are many which burn with the passion of love.

More than anything, Sarojini has a delicate and playful fancy. She says: “Do you know I have some very beautiful poems floating in the air and if the gods are kind to me, I shall cast my soul like a net and capture them”. This is what she really does in her poems. In ‘Medley’ she says: “Dreams and delicate fancies / Dance thro’ a poet’s mind”, and in “The Poet’s Love Song” she tells us about her mad dreams:

Mad dreams are mine to bind  
The world to my desire, and hold the wind  
A voiceless captive to my conquering song. (p. 36)

There are poems which are lovely webs of fancy, such as “Golden Cassia”. Sarojini’s imagination is so plastic and so original that it can give the best of her genius even in her short lyrics. In “Golden Cassia” the “brilliant blossom” which is mere “woodland flowers”, are transfigured into things that only the poet’s imagination can capture. These ordinary flowers are so rich in their hue and beauty that they arouse

strange romantic feelings in the poet's heart. She goes where her imagination takes her, and compares the blossoms to various objects of the earth and the sky:

But, I sometimes think that perchance you are  
Fragments of some new-fallen star;  
Or golden lamps for a fairy shrine,  
Or golden pitchers for fairy wine.  
Perchance you are, o frail and sweet!  
Bright anklet-bells form the wild spring's feet,  
Or the gleaming tears that some fair bride shed  
Remembering her lost maiden head.  
But now, in the memorised dusk you seem  
The glimmering ghosts of a bygone dream. (p. 96)

Sarojini's lyrics are possessed of an individual beauty, and are a product of her fine sensibility, acutely responsive to the external world.

In some of her lyrics, Sarojini enters the children's world to capture their innocence and tenderness. They are, in fact, songs of innocence which she derives from vernacular models of lullaby. "Cradle song" opens in the fertile drowsy landscape of Indian village with its paddy fields, neem trees and fireflies. The fairy mother sings a sweet song to induce her child to sleep. All the lovely and sweet things which may be associated with sleep—groves of spice, the lotus, the fireflies, the fairy neem and the poppy-boles—have been gathered. A colourful little world of fancy is created. But it is a real world, at the same time, as it is dominated by the mother and the child. Nature with all its wealth is seen throbbing around:

From groves or spice,  
O'er fields of rice,  
Athwart the lotus-stream,  
I bring for you,  
A glint with dew  
A little lovely dream. (p.17)

The second stanza beautifully paints a fragrant and drowsy Indian evening with "neem" and "poppy-bole" and "fireflies":

Sweet, shut your eyes,  
The wild fireflies  
Dance through the fairy neem;  
From the poppy-bole  
For you I stole  
A little lovely dream. (p.17)

The stars are now gleaming in the sky and it is proper time for the child to sleep and be transported to his dreamland of wonder and joy. The fairy mother has stolen a lovely dream for her beloved child:

In golden night  
 The stars around you gleam;  
 On you I press  
 With soft caress  
 A little lovely dream. (p.17)

The natural imagery employed in the poem suggests harmony, beauty and repose that the mother seeks from nature. Her love and concern towards fullness and fulfillment is clearly expressed in the tender accents of a lullaby. Its sweetness and spontaneity is like some bird's song. The simplicity and abandonment to sheer joy of singing is refreshing and delightful. The words like 'spice', 'eyes', 'flies', 'stars', 'press', and 'caress' create sweet whispering note of lullaby, befitting the atmosphere of children's world of fancy and dream. The intense fragrance of neem and poppy-bole is intoxicating, and is quite suggestive in the case of a child falling to sleep. The poet has woven a dream motif into a dawn-to-dusk pattern of the poem. The poem is cast in three stanzas which correspond beautifully to the three states of a child falling to sleep. There is the waking child who is induced by Nature to sleep, then the child falling to sleep intoxicating fragrance of neem and poppy-bole, and finally, the child dreaming. The rhythmic movement suits the tender theme; it evokes the image of a mother rocking the cradle of her beloved child. The poem can be called a master-piece of creation, for here superb fancy has been blended with equally superb craftsmanship.

In "To my children" Sarojini expresses her deep love and concern for her children: Jaya Surya, Padmaja, Randhira and Leelamani. The form again is of folk lullaby. While invoking the god's blessings for them, she reveals her own hopes and aspirations regarding her children. The poem is cast in four stanzas, each devoted to a child reflecting mother's dreams. The mother has high hopes for Jaya Surya who is like the 'Golden sun of victory'. She blesses her son:

May your growing glory prove  
 Sacred to your consecration,  
 To my art and to my nation..... (p. 51)

Padmaja in Sanskrit means lotus maiden, hence her mother wishes her to enjoy all the ecstasy of life. She invokes Goddess Lakshmi, who is also lotus-born, to defend her beloved daughter. The mother blesses: "May you be/ Fragrant of all ecstasy". Randhira stands for chivalry in Sanskrit so he must-

Learn to conquer, learn to fight  
 In the foremost flanks of right  
 Like Valmiki's heroes bold. (p. 52)

He may be 'lord of battle' and 'lord of love and chivalry.'

They must pay heed to their individual demands as well as the challenges of humanity. Sarojini, herself a dynamic personality, wishes a dynamic life for her children. In "Child Fancies", also a song of innocence, the poet observes life as a great chain of being. It runs from one end of the universe to another, from poppy seed to tee glow-worm, from the silver sunbeam to dragonfly, from Ababeel to the stars. A child is a



great creation of God. He is as innocent and divine as God's laughter. He is simple of heart and fresh in vision. He looks at the world with wide-eyed wonder and excitement. The fancies of the child are curled around poppy seed, dragon-fly and Ababeel. The child wants to solve the mystery about these things in his own innocent way. In the opening stanza, he puts a question to poppy seed:

I wonder are you cold, are you lonely, do you need  
A little glowworm sparks  
Near your cradle in the dark  
Till you fall asleep and dream yourself  
A flower, poppy seed?

In the next stanza, the life of dragonfly poses a puzzle to him. He is-

eager to know how it spreads its  
wings of green and red.  
And go gathering lotus honey  
From the pools.

And, in the last stanza, the child puts such searching question-

When you reach the shining blue,  
Ababeel, Ababeel,  
Do you touch the stars behind the clouds, do you feel  
Brave enough to talk,  
With the eagle and the hawk,  
Tho' you're only just a tiny speck  
Of life, Ababeel.

The journey from the poppy seed to the Ababeel is an evolutionary journey from the earthly to the ethereal, from the cradle in the dark to the stars behind the cloud. Though there are only questions and no answer, we get a glimpse of the peculiar functioning of a child's mind. The nursery song structure of the poem lends it a touch of familiarity. In her child songs and lullabies, Sarojini cherishes to preserve an innocence which has the power of crystallising ordinary objects into transparent figures and images of sheer lyrical beauty. She, whether speaks of her lyric passion of cystic devotion, remains essentially a lyric child all her life. She is found invoking her fair fancies, and subtly creating an innocent world of infant dreams. Of all the seasons and states of mind she speaks with childlike eagerness and innocence. In 'On Juhu Sands' she shows a childlike eagerness and enthusiasm towards life. She is found gathering gleaming shells in the sands at the sea shore.

Idly I gather gleaming shells  
And drifting sea weed plumes,  
But my heart dreams in hidden dells  
Where wild narcissus blooms.

A melodic sing-song pattern is what arrests our attention in 'Village Song'. The mother talks the child bride to whom fairies call insistently. She is too young to have

fascination for 'bridal songs' and 'sandal-scented leisure'. It is hard to ignore the lyrical charm and the melodic perfection of the following lines:

Honey, child, honey, child, whither are our going?  
 Would you cast your jewels all to the breezes blowing?  
 Would you leave the mother who on golden grain has fed you?  
 Would you grieve the lover who is rising forth to wed you? (p.11)

The child, fascinated by nature's unspeakable beauty and balmy solitude, finds practically no interest in the trivial luxuries of life. The beauty of wild life is more alluring than the glittering worldly life. The lure of the forest call is simply irresistible to her:

Mother mine, to the wild forest I am going,  
 The voices of the fairy-folk are calling me, O listen. (p.11)

The fairies form an integral part in the structure of the poem. The poet expresses her strong craving for the mythological existence through overtones and undertones of the child. The poem has graver notes. The poet is fully aware of the intricacies of human life, its mixed fabric of pleasure and pain but nature's magical mirth holds her in a spell:

The bridal songs and cradle songs have cadences of sorrow,  
 The laughter of the sun today, the wind of death tomorrow.  
 For sweeter sounds the forest-notes where forest streams are falling;  
 O mother mine, I cannot stay, the fairy folk are calling. (p.12)

The lines show distinctly Shelley's impress of thought. They are reminiscent of his oft-quoted lines:

We look before and after,  
 And pine for what is not:  
 Our sincerest laughter  
 With some pain is fraught;  
 Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought

It is a superb lyric with its rhythmic movement, lucidity of diction and spontaneity of expression. Sarojini is a great artist who is capable of creating new and rich world of ideas chastening her on little themes. Sarojini, like Keats, links beauty with truth, and makes it a thing of permanent experience, a thing of constant joy. "She is two things in the main; a supreme artist and a fine melodist with the background of an intense thinker." Her thinking may not be methodical but lofty ideas are there. She is a poet, a being of emotion and her emotions lead her to splendour of thoughts.

'The Victory' is a powerful love poem which has freshness, lilt and liquidity of a bird's song. It is typical of Sarojini in its luxuriant diction and imagery. It captures the Hindu spirit and atmosphere in its revelation of an aspect of the relationship between the lover and the beloved that is constantly stressed in her love poetry. The victor has arrived but the maiden has nothing to offer him as a token of love and reverence. The world welcomes him with words of praise and precious gifts:

They brought their peacock-lutes of praise  
And carven gems in jasper trays,  
Rich stores of fragrant musk and myrrh,  
And wreathes of scarlet nenuphar....  
I had no offering that was meet,  
and bowed my face upon his feet. (p. 151)

But the poet has nothing to offer except her intense passion of love towards him: 'I had no offering that was met/ and bowed my face upon his feet'. She cannot welcome her love with precious worldly objects, with rich robes and 'pearls and silver blooms' but with her heart-felt love and devotion.

The last stanza captures the characteristic Hindu spirit of devotion in its dominant note of surrender and sacrifice. The poet is eager to surrender her life at the altar of love: 'I had no offering that was met/and laid my life before his feet.' Sarojini, like Browning, is faithful to her sensuous and passionate temperament. As a result, she responds freely and frankly to not only the vivid light and colour of the world around her, but also to human urges and instincts.

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## **A Study of Scobie's Psyche in Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter***

—Akhilesh Kumar Akhil\*

### **Abstract**

This paper is a study of Scobie's Psyche in Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter*. Graham Green is a widely acclaimed British novelist (1904-1991). Greene is among a number of twentieth century novelists, emerging out of two world wars, questioning the source of evil and the existence of God in a barbaric age. His fiction, spanning seven decades and fifty novels, is characterized by its outward political intrigue and its internal theological, psychological and personal struggles. The character selected for the observation, invites the attention of the readers into the depth of his constant mental agony before reaching the end. Graham Greene has depicted the mental agony of Scobie with utmost care and Scobie's character-sketch in the paper gives a real account of the same.

**Keywords:** Graham Greene, Psychological, Psyche, Mental agony, Religious conflict, Catholic novel, Paradox.

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*The Heart of the Matter* is the story of a gentle character, named Major Henry Scobie – the protagonist of the novel, who is depicted as a sympathetic character in his relationship with his wife Louise, with his mistress Helen, and in his relationship with God. Scobie's mental agony is seen from Greene's own spiritual conflicts and religious attitudes. The novel, *The Heart of the Matter* reveals occupies a unique place in the fiction of Graham Greene. Like Greene himself, who was a Catholic convert, in this novel, the protagonist Major Scobie gets converted to Roman Catholicism in order to marry Louise. Scobie promises to find a way to get the money on loan to secure her passage.

Scobie is an exceptional personality, who has been presented to us as extraordinary, in his relationship with his wife Louise, with his mistress Helen, with a Syrian trader and merchant, named Yusef, and above all, in his relationship with God. The novel mainly deals with Scobie's attitude to his wife, to his mistress, and his attitude to God. Scobie is split within, between the forces of good and evil and no one can miss the

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mental agony in the character of Scobie. John Atkins describes Scobie as “a distorted reflection of his creator, a man who cannot disguise or hide his feelings”. (159)

*The Heart of the Matter* is concerned with various themes like Catholicism, guilt, suffering, death and salvation. The novel focuses on the internal and external struggle of man for liberation. Scobie is found weak in his personal life; but he was sincere and dedicated to his duty and at the end of his life, he may be said to have attained martyrdom. Scobie dies for the happiness and safety of others.

Greene reflects his concept of suffering through Scobie: “He had been in Africa when his own child died. He had always thanked God that he had missed that” (HM 125). According to John Atkins, “It became clear that Scobie is riddled with pity and a desire to help the victims of in justice. His pity is his weakness, for there is no place for it in the official routine” (159). This proves the real human predicament in the character of Scobie. Through him, Greene portrays the individual’s realization of moral responsibility as a Christian. Though he is a responsible man, his responsibility as a policeman, goes even beyond the law. Henry Donaghy, in his study on Greene suggests: “Major Scobie, is a virtuous man whose *hamartia* or tragic flaw, lies in the excess of pity he possesses” (55). Greene tries to show more psychological insight in the character of Scobie, throughout the novel. Scobie realizes that his sense of responsibility, the desire to carry the burden of others’ suffering, involves despair. It is as though he is aware of his own fate:

Despair is the price one pays for setting oneself an impossible aim. It is, one is told, the unforgivable sin, but it is a sin the corrupt or evil man never practises. He always has hope. He never reaches the freezing-point of knowing absolute failure. Only the man of goodwill carries always in his heart this capacity for Damnation (HM 60).

There is severe pain and unbearable conflict in Scobie’s mind between his love for Louise and Helen, and his love for God. The only solution that he finds is to commit suicide in order to remain faithful to all the three - his wife, his mistress and God. Crowning all, he also has another intention of keeping himself away from anymore sins. Here, Greene portrays him as a hunted man, who actually dies in a state of mortal sin. Moreover, Scobie knows well what he is doing, and does it deliberately, with the full consent of his will. He commits the unpardonable sin of despair and thus, he is damned for sure. At the end of the novel, Greene insists through Father Rank, upon the ‘appalling strangeness’ of the mercy of God. Louise thinks that her husband is damned, but Father Rank holds out hope for Scobie: “For goodness sake, Mrs. Scobie, don’t imagine you - or I - know a thing about God’s mercy . . . The Church knows all the rules. But it doesn’t know what goes on in a single human heart” (HM272). Scobie’s love is a pendulum swinging between pity and responsibility. Scobie is a good man, but his main weakness is that he cannot hurt those whom he loves. Scobie seeks escape from a world that has become soiled and from the intolerable complications and demands of love that is hurting his wife and his mistress.

In this novel, while giving a psychological analysis of Scobie’s pity, Greene tries to point out how far Scobie’s actions based on pity can be justified by the Christian

doctrine. O'Brien supports this observation in his study of the novel that *The Heart of the Matter* is a novel about the progress of pity. As Greene explains both evil and suffering in theological terms, Scobie is openly concerned with realities of salvation and damnation. Being a Catholic, he knows that he is a sinner, who is tormented by his constant awareness of sin. Greene seems to be interested in the interaction of the private and public lives of his characters and this dual tendency is depicted through Scobie in this novel.

Scobie's relationship with his wife Louise seems an unhappy one, ultimately disastrous. In a way, Scobie is an honest man who is corrupted by his sense of responsibility for the happiness of others and as a result he becomes himself an instrument that causes the pain.

Scobie's human relationships are all based on pity. "He couldn't shut his eyes or his ears to any human need of him" (HM 187). His sense of responsibility moves away from "the beautiful and the graceful and the intelligent. They could find their own way. It was the face for which nobody would go out of his way, the face that would never catch the covert look, the face which would soon be used to rebuffs and indifference that demanded his allegiance" (HM159). His discontented wife and his pathetic mistress are the chief victims demanding fidelity. After swearing to preserve his wife Louise's happiness, he accepts another and contradictory responsibility, his mistress Helen's happiness. Scobie begins by pitying one woman and ends by pitying God. Meanwhile, this feeling of responsibility and pity troubles him and he wonders "if one knew . . . the facts, would one have to feel pity even for the planets? If one reached what they called the heart of the matter?" (HM 124). If Scobie pities someone, it may be for the sake of a woman or for the sake of a child. It is found that Scobie is abnormally sensitive to the whims of women, giving too much respect for them, and is emotionally submissive to them.

Greene exploits one of the great paradoxes of Catholicism. On the one hand, it specifies mortal by years of suffering in purgatory. It is an abode of purification, in which souls sins; on the other hand, it offers to such mortal sinners various means of avoiding entry to Hell. Purgatory, according to Catholic belief, is a preparation for Heaven, and many sinners atone themselves experience both the pain of loss and extreme pain of sense. Scobie sacrifices his life for the sake of those whom he loves. Yet he makes a last attempt at prayer: "O God, I offer up my damnation to you. Take it. Use it for them" (HM 225). Suicide is not always and necessarily a defeat. Scobie identifies himself with Christ as he kills himself so as not to cause others further pain. It is not merely a means of escape; it is also the consequence of their opening themselves to suffering because they have known what it is to love.

Although Scobie has a Catholic wife, out of pity he falls in love with a nineteen-year-old girl, a pathetic young widow, who is brought to the colony as a survivor from a torpedoed ship. As a result, one finds that love is confused with pity in Scobie's heart. Scobie's second moment of happiness leads him to his own damnation. As he leaves the Nissen hut, having found and fallen in love with Helen Rolt, he feels happy:

They both had an immense sense of security: they were friends who could never be anything else than friends - they were safely divided by a dead husband, a living wife, a father who was a clergyman, a games mistress called Helen, and years and years of experience. He said, 'Goodnight . . . He walked away, feeling an extraordinary happiness, but this he would not remember as happiness, as he would remember setting out in the darkness, in the rain alone (HM 140).

According to Roman Catholic faith and its teachings, regular receiving of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and attending the Holy Mass and Communion with God are very important. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, if a sinner goes to Communion in a state of sin, it leads to his damnation.

According to the Church's command, after having attained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year. Anyone who is aware of having committed a mortal sin must not receive Holy Communion, even if he experiences deep contrition, without having first received sacramental absolution, unless he has a grave reason for receiving Communion and there is no possibility of going to confession.

The major conflict in *The Heart of the Matter* becomes that of the individual against the orthodox religious concept. K.S. Subramaniam in *Graham Greene*, says that it is in the blending of religion and modern psychology that Greene's achievement lies. Greene thus portrays the mental agony and the sense of guilt of Scobie in the light of the modern human psychology and the doctrine of the Catholic Church. Scobie's suffering is pictured to be more of the mind than of the body. Thus the suffering is the result of the evil lust which is an off-shoot of his pity. Scobie, the hero of *The Heart of the Matter*, is crushed between the age of religion and the modern age and is caught between duty and desire. *The Heart of the Matter* challenges Scobie's commitment to his job and his efficiency and policing power. Scobie is quite aware of what his duty requires, and he believes that it is a vocation demanding discernment and a strong sense of justice. While responding to Helen Rolt's doubt about her stamp album, he replies, "That's my job. I'm a policeman" (HM 140).

Scobie wants happiness for others and solitude and peace for himself. He prays to God for his own death before causing and giving unhappiness to others. Perhaps people do not struggle too much for the happiness of others. From this novel one draws a sense of love and pity for the hero's predicament that is augmented lyrappedorted by the simplicity and clarity in the writing.

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## Rohinton Mistry's *Family Matters*

–Rupam Kumari\*

### Abstract

The article examines the significance of realism in the work of Rohinton Mistry, especially in *Family Matters* (2002). Born in Bombay and emigrated to Canada in 1975, Mistry writes generally about the India and of his youth. Through realism, Mistry represents the life with fidelity. He is a realist in true sense, who has wonderfully articulated realism maintaining situation and language.

**Keywords:** Realism, Mimesis, Postcolonial, Homi Bhabha.

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In *Family Matters*, Mistry is aware of the dangers and benefits of realism and thus avoids the naive of some kinds of realism. First of all, he poises the separate existence of the two entities of language and reality. As a typical representative of philosophical realism, he tends to close the gap between the word and the thing. His character Jahangir ponders over the power of words with youthful marvel:

The lavatory at school was disgusting, it stank like railway station toilets. The boys called it the bog. The first time he heard it, he was puzzled by the word. He had looked it up in Daddy's dictionary, and found more than one meaning. Slang for lavatory, it said, also, wet spongy ground. He imagined wet spongy ground, imagined putting his foot in it, and agreed "bog" was the perfect word. (96-97)

Jahangir's concoctions clearly represent the process of realist identification; he assumes that there is a reality which contains meaningful information that can finally be reflected in language. However as it is clear from the excerpt, the concord between the boggy reality of the toilet and the bogginess of the word is not natural or given, as it has to be thought. Mistry emphasizes through repetition that realism requires the active imagination of the linguistic subject in order to be effective, and thus, he presents the rationalization of consciousness, as Elizabeth Ermarth would have it. In other words, the mimesis that Mistry employs is active like Aristotle's and not passive, like the undistorted mirror which Stendhal holds before this reader.

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Vilas Rane, the village scribe, is one of the most vehement proponents of the realist position in *Family Matters*. He makes a living by writing letters in the name of his illiterate customers even if he gets paid for his service. He said:

Nothing is more cruel than a letter cut short for lack of money. It's like death one moment the words flowing, next moment silence, the thought unfinished, the love un conveyed, the anguish unexpressed (140).

Vilas, in other words, shuns fragmentary writing. However, his realism also operates in the mode of Aristotelian mimesis, providing through active representative information on the one hand and pleasure on the other hand, as one of the return letter testifies to:

Such a beautiful letter, they said, it is like being with you in the city, sharing your life, taking the train to your book shop, watching you work. And we hear your voice in every line, so wonderful is the effect of the words (141).

Even in the most realist mode, words effect the real. Through the very awareness of the fact words create an effect, Mistry questions their veracity, even if he tries to fill up the cracks in the realist code.

Next to the tendency to close the gap between word and world, Mistry's novel also bears testimony to a more overt difference between the linguistic artifact and the real world. At some point in the novel, the characters discuss the mind's capacity for conceiving things which are not there as with the imagined "damned spot" on lady Macbeth's hand. The object here is "more psychological than real" (109). Although the passage does not directly concern the status of language it is symptomatic of certain tendencies in *Family Matters* that insist on the capacity of language to create rather than reflect the real. Even the radical realist vilas knows that language creates truth, and that truth is an ideological construct which is informed by social conventions. As such, truth is not given, but created by the community through language, as in the doctrine of post structuralism.

Myths create the reality Point is, there was a time when living according to certain myths served your community well. With the present state of society, those same myths can make misfits of men. Even the British knew when to observe their myth of not cricket, old chap and when to hit below the belt, kick you in the balls, poke you in the eyes (213).

Vilas discussion of the creative nature of myth tastes wry though, as he uses it in defense of his own realism, which he claims is transparent and true.

However, Mistry's further comments on realism, which specifically envisage literary realism, pre-empt vilas's argument. *Family Matters* is suffused with intertextual references to Enid Blyton's realist books for children. The stories that relate the adventures of the Famous Five are fed to and greedily consumed by Murad and Jahangir, as they were by their father Yezad. Yezad believes that the English books of Enid Bytom are unsuitable for children living in India, as they function in the mode of neo-colonial alienation:

Yezad said it did immense harm, it encouraged children to grow up without attachment to the place where they belonged, made them hate themselves for

being who they were, created confusion about their identity. He said he had read the same books when he was small and they had made him yearn to become a little Englishman of a type that even England did not have (97).

Further in the story, Yezad remarks that “what they needed was an Indian Blynton to fascinate them with their own reality” (117). When Murad and Jahangir have grown up, also they realize that they cannot be served by the English realism of Blynton, because it presents an unreal fantastical world for Indians as well as for the English.

Mistry here recognizes that realism is not to be put on a par with reality and that there is a gap between the ‘original reality’ and the reality of words. Moreover what may be real for one may be unreal for the other certainly in the case of cultural differences. The cultural discontinuity between Indian and English reality scathingly uncovers the artifice of Enid Blynton’s realism. To phrase it by means of Homi Bhabha’s Jargon, Blynton’s realism is unable to install on Indian soil, ambivalence and slippage between reality and language.

Mistry’s acknowledgement of the divide between language and reality is also evident from his suspicion towards ideology and his obsession with the issue of renaming. First of all, he turns Bombay’s change of name to Mumbai into a theme. Second, Jahangir Chenoy, so that he can really feel English. Also Nariman connects words to ideology, and recognizes that renaming and rewriting amounts to alienation.

He became the husband of Yasin contractor, and formally adopted her children, Jal and Coomy. But they kept their father’s name. To change it to Vakeel would be like rewriting history, suggested his new wife. The smile appealed to his academic soul; he acquiesced (16).

And finally, also the “treachery of English Vowels” (11) leads to estrangement next to puzzlement and amusement.

As a result of the ambivalence, of realism the distinctions between reality and fantasy and between realism and magic realism collapse. For Nariman Vakeel, Professor of English and grandfather of Murad and Jahangir the streets in Bombay convey and experience of magical synaesthesia as they throb with the colours of mercantile life and dance to the rhythms and sweet tones of street musicians. Indian reality is “all magical as a circus, felt Nariman and reassuring like a magic show” (5-6). Nariman’s observation reminds of the defence of magic realism by Latin American Writers. Consequently there is no need to distinguish between different modes of artistic representation of reality, as both realism and magic realism are strangely but certainly connected to the squalor of reality in a double bind anyway. “Sometimes, when Mr. Kapur spoke about 1947 and partition, Yezad felt that Punjabi migrants of a certain age were like Indian authors writing about that period, whether in realist novels of corpse-filled trains or in the magic – realist midnight muddles all repeating the same catalogue of horrors about slaughter and burning, rape and mutilation, foetuses torn out of wombs, genitals stuffed in the mouths of the castrated” (151).

Mistry’s reference to Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* indicates that he does not blindly write in the mode of realism, but that on the contrary he is self consciously

aware of the various modes of representation. He acknowledges that his realism is only one way to represent reality, and in this way tones down the absolute veracity of his story.

Mistry's undermining of the truth premises of realism even extends to the form of art that is for some critics responsible for the move away in the literary art from realism to modernism, namely photography. Photography, until recently, was long considered to be the epitome of realist representation. Mistry questions the photographic link to the real alongside that of literary realism. Mr. Kapur, Yezad's employee, possesses pictures of the neighbourhood where Yezad grew up. Mistry's choice of words reveals the creative faculty of art; "the pictures conjure up the real" (214). While looking at the picture, Yezad is bedazzled by their magic; "He ran his fingers over his eyes and the ghosts receded, It's like magic, this picture" (225). Some of Mistry's self-conscious comments even come close to metafiction: "Nariman Vakeel's life would make a good novel, but it's not a bedtime story of a child". (235)

In a genuinely post modern novel these extracts would be interpreted as metafiction. However as Linda Hutcheon taught us metafiction aims at foregrounding the gap between fiction and reality, between literature and the real; it radically opens the representational abyss by continuously pointing the unresolved nature of the word. I think that Mistry's writing conversely tries to close the gap, without losing sight of its presence. His poetics reveal an awareness of the informative insights of postmodernism together with an attempt to think beyond them. In Mistry's realism, narrative closure is never complete no matter how hard he tries to realize it.

Rohinton Mistry's writing defends realism without letting go of a continuous vigilance over the illusory nature of language. Like Vilas Ranehe proclaims the urgent need for scruting details in postcolonial India, where corruption is rife and little white lies degenerate into ubiquitous illusion.

Some things can only be taken seriously; Vilas voice rose, and people passing assumed the two were quarrelling. "Little white lies are as pernicious as big black lies, When they mix together a great greyness of ambiguity descends, society is cast adrift in an amoral sea, and corruption and rot and decay start to flourish such is the time we are now passing through. Everything is disintegrating because details are neglected and nothing is regarded seriously". (212)

Vilas does not side with the anti realists of the story, the actors Bhaskar and Gautam. According to Vilas, they are "Too pseudo for me. They become blind to real life with their intellectualizing. Stanislavsky-this and Strasberg-that and Brecht alienation is all they talk about". (210-11)

However unlike Vilas, Mistry pays tribute to the principle of representational distance which he borrows from the anti-realists. Mistry's use of intertextuality function in the same way as his self-conscious commentary. Its aims at scrutinizing the cracks in the realist code, while at the same time trying to overcome them, even if this does not completely work. One character remarks:

Everyone underestimates their own life. Funny thing is, in the end, all our stories your life my life, old Husain's life, they are the same. In fact, no matter where you go in the world, there is only one important story of youth and loss, and yearning for redemption. So we tell the same story, over and over. Just the details are different. (228)

In *Family Matters*, Mistry draws upon European as well as Indian textual resources and writerly techniques. The Parsi population in Bombay has, as a consequence of the doctrine of British colonisation, little Indian sources to quote "as Mr. Kapur remarks" (303) which holds a fortiori for Rohinton Mistry's as a writer of the Indian diaspora.

The theme of problem solving and universalism recalls the liberal humanist tradition. In *Family Matters*, the vicissitudes the nineteenth century universalism are remote. The novel is set in post-colonial India the British have taken to their homeland and the country is ruled self sufficiently. The departure of the British implicates that the Parsis can no longer enjoy the benefits of colonialism and have consequently descended a few steps down the social ladder. The Shiv Sena party consisting of extremist Hindu nationalists insists on getting rid of all the traces the British have left behind. This political programme includes renaming the colonial Bombay to the Independent Mumbai. Yet, the downfall of colonial universalism has not resulted in a post colonial attention to particulars, as it has been replaced by its neo-colonial doppelgänger: globalization. The characters in *Family Matters* avidly consume Fatma, Michael Jackson and Elvis, and the possibility of migration to the west looms large, even if the roads to the land of milk and honey are thickly strewn with the impediments of opportunism and racism.

Considering this contextual evidence the persistence of alienating and difference negating universalism it would be surprising if *Family Matters* did not cry out against the common dominators of realist time and space. Some critics fault Mistry for his heavy reliance on linear plot. However, *Family Matters* draws more on the cyclical time of epic and myth than on the linear pattern of resolution. Of course, superficially, the plot covers the linear development from Nariman's fall to even his eventual death, but the narrative is suffused with circular time and repetition. The only moment when historical time is strikingly present in the story is when Yezad feels that he has got held of the world, that he will make promotion at his work and will eventually be able to pay for his family's needs. "How comforting its ticking, reassuring, like a steady hand guiding the affairs of the universe". (375)

In this particular instance, historical time is intimately linked with progress. As for the remainder of the story, historical time is thwarted, which is symbolized by the continual rewinding and failure of Yezad's clock.

Time conveys a sense of loss and isolation rather than gradual progress and liberal humanist wholeness young Murad's realization that mankind is like Sisyphus, repeating the same squalid actions day after day, "prefigures the circular resolution of the novel and the endless repetition of human misery". (117) At the end of the novel Murad, who is a Parsi, gets infatuated with a non Parsi girl, which was exactly the cause of his grandfather Nariman's familial trouble. On the political level, there is the

disillusion and subsequent death of Mr. Kapur, who initially intended to run in the elections in Bombay and turn the city into a better place. As for as economy is concerned every character loses his job. Finally even education in Bombay is corrupted and Jehangir is forced to abuse his position as a homework monitor by extorting money from his class mates to provide his family with food. Loss and failure figure at the personal, familial, political economic and educational level.

So the temporal structure of *Family Matters* is characterized by loss and circularity, which according to Homi Bhabha, “hardly identifies it with the linear conception of time in the realist tradition”. (93-122) Moreover, in contrast with historical time, there is often no clear delineation of past, present and future in Mistry’s novels. *Family Matters* defies temporal division in the conflation of past and present. Nariman, one of the novel’s central figures claims that “at his age the past is more present than the here and the now” (Mistry 128).

The novel relies on memory, trauma and the demoniacal rather than on the ongoing march of historical liberal time. Mistry pits the notion of memory against that of history: “Permeating everything, occupying the room as solidly as the furniture, a timeless smell” (280). For Yezad, the same time lesson is present in religion, “which he becomes completely engrossed in at the end of the story”. (342) Trauma in habits Nariman’s sense of time the portraits of his forefather’s reprimand him for fondling with a non-parsi girl and demoniacally make the past present in present. “As they marched down the passageway, Nariman opened his eyes. From his supine position he saw the glum portraits of his fore fathers on the walls. Strange, how their eyes looked at him as though they were the living and he the dead”. (89)

*Family Matters* also challenges the linearity of causality which is intimately linked with reason and individualism. Rational causality is replaced by the irrationality of coincidence or destiny. Yezad, who is in the beginning of the novel was the incarnation of sovereign undertaking, completely loses the will to shape his own destiny and become a religious fanatic. In the end, he thinks that “Man proposes, God disposes”. (410)

Casualty no longer falls under the jurisdiction of the individual but under that of God, Roxona, Yezad’s wife, “agrees with him that the entire chain of events, starting with Grandpa’s accident and ending with Mr. Kapur’s Murder, was God’s way to bringing him to prayer. (464)

Mistry copies the rhetoric of Mahatma Gandhi who defined the nation as one extended family. “In work and in play, we the children of Mother India, must be as one family in order to free her from the chains in which she was enslaved” (215). To achieve this goal, he believed that the mosaic of India, consisting of Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Europeans and the other ethnic and religious groups, should mingle into a unitary nation and together make the Indian dream come true.

Though Mistry is very much in the shadow of the Gandhian rhetoric, aspiring to a family like nation, he still questions the idea of a unitary family nation. The text of *Family Matters* is a sear figure of broken and mended families. First of all the Parsi

religion and the community's dwindling birth rates prohibit cross-cultural marriage. Marriage outside the community is thus considered to be unnatural. Mistry, however, questions this natural conception of the family and the community through Nariman and Murad's infatuation with catholic girls. Nariman's subsequent wedding with Yasmin contractor, a Parsi widow with two children, leaves him with fundamental unhappiness and eventually leads towards his death.

At the same time Nariman plays a pivotal role in Mistry's relation to the former British ruler in India. He is not only a step father to Jal and Coomy, but as a Parsi also to the Indian people as a whole. His partition as a professor of English confirms his allegiance to the British colonizer. Moreover, Nariman's body functions as a metaphor for the disintegration of Bombay after independence. The cripple and old Nariman is unable to keep himself clean and has to rely on his family members for his personal sanity. His health problems may be metaphoric of the squalor in which the British left Bombay after Independence: "Millions of people live in the gutters of Bombay" Roxana shouted back. "Eating drains and ditches. This whole city stinks like a sewer. And you are worried about pappa's bedpan? How stupid can you be!" (170)

Mistry criticizes the solid realist concept of a nation space by pointing to the fact that the nation, like the family, is an imagined community, in Benedict Anderson's terms, and not something natural or given. The nation like of family consists of step and half combinations that betray the naturalness of the whole and show that nothing can be taken for granted.

To conclude we can say that Mistry's *Family Matters* is an example of how the realist genre can be critically engaged in a post colonial context. Mistry does not use the realist mode blindly but questions realism while at the same time endorsing it in an attempt to establish meaningful communication. Mistry's realism is denaturalized because it distrusts issues of transparent representation, common time and space, universalism and individualism-the same issues that were central to and naturalized in eighteenth and nineteenth century-philosophical realism and foreground literary conventions rather than making them. Finally Rohinton Mistry's realism and the postcolonial condition do not oppose to each other but may be said to participate in a project to make the best of this even chaotic world. The family is the perfect metaphor for his critical realism, because: "And without family, nothing else matters, everything from top to bottom falls apart or descends into chaos, which is basically the malady of the west". (182)

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## Think Healthy, Live Healthy: G.K. Chesterton's 'On Running After One's Hat'

–*Neelam Agrawal\**

### Abstract

In our day to day life we come across many situations good or bad. Every unfavourable situation whether it's big or trivial, irritates most of us, most of the time. This research paper throws light on our attitude towards petty affairs in our daily routine. We start losing patience and getting irritated even for least significant things. We unnecessarily stress ourselves very often. Instead of doing so if we take these least important things lightly, we can get rid of this irritation and distress. The study points out that instead of grumbling at these petty inconvenient situations, how can we enjoy these moments. It may sound strange but the fact is that it really happens. While encountering routine inconveniences, many people curse the system, the people concerned, the time, and even their own destiny and so on, on the other hand some of us who are fun loving, enjoy these moments. G.K. Chesterton's essay 'On Running After One's Hat' enriched with humour, is the perfect example of it. It helps us in accomplishing this task.

**Keywords:** Enjoyment, Inconvenience, Irritation, Grumble, Attitude, Fun, Optimistic, Hat, Adventure, Life, Positive attitude, Trivial.

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Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936) was one of the brilliant prose writers of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was a poet, novelist, journalist, and essayist. He was a man of rich and generous sense of humour and positive attitude. It can best be seen in his popular essay 'On Running After One's Hat' (1908). In our daily life we feel very inconvenient for the least important things that are not as per our liking. This attitude irritates us and makes us stressed unnecessarily which affects our health. In this regard Chesterton's 'On Running After One's Hat' is an attempt to convince his readers to see a positive side of occurrences in bad situations. Through this essay he tries to convey a message to people that it is better to view annoying situations that occur (when not in our control) in our daily life with a little optimism. He gives several examples of annoying situations that people may find themselves involved in. Chesterton was of the opinion that even a very minor incident can provide us pleasure in life if we have a positive attitude. There is an opportunity of fun and enjoyment in everything. Everything depends

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upon our attitude. It is our attitude that makes the things convenient or inconvenient. Chesterton was a man of optimistic attitude so he sought fun even in trivial things. If his beautiful locality is flooded with water, he can enjoy this wonderful scene despite many inconveniences. In his essay 'On Running After One's Hat' he writes:

I feel an almost savage envy on hearing that London has been flooded in my absence, while I am in the mere country. My own Battersea has been, I understand, particularly favoured as a meeting of the waters. Battersea was already, as I need hardly say, the most beautiful of human localities. .... The greengrocer who brought cabbages to the corner of the Latchmere Road must have leant upon the oar with the unearthly grace of the gondolier. There is nothing so perfectly poetical as an island; and when a district is flooded it becomes an archipelago. (Chesterton 1)

Chesterton gives many examples of such minor incidents (inconveniences) occurring in our daily life. He states that we often see that grown up people make complaint of waiting for a train at the station where as a child doesn't do so because the scene at the station is a source of wonder and fun for him:

To him to be inside a railway station is to be inside a cavern of wonder and a palace of poetical pleasures. Because to him the red light and the green light on the signal are like a new sun and a new moon. Because to him when the wooden arm of the signal falls down suddenly, it is as if a great king had thrown down his staff as a signal and started a shrieking tournament of trains. (Chesterton 2)

He was a man of imagination and conviction. His comic view of 'Running after one's hat' is really fabulous. In his view 'running after one's hat' may be treated as a source of enjoyment. If running in games and sports provide us pleasure then running after one's hat may also give the same amount of pleasure. If people can run after a little leather ball, they can also run after a nice silk hat. He mentions:

There is a current impression that it is unpleasant to have to run after one's hat. Why should it be unpleasant to the well-ordered and pious mind? Not merely because it is running, and running exhausts one. The same people run much faster in games and sports. The same people run much more eagerly after an uninteresting, little leather ball than they will after a nice silk hat. There is an idea that it is humiliating to run after one's hat; and when people say it is humiliating they mean that it is comic. It certainly is comic; but man is a very comic creature, and most of the things he does are comic—eating, for instance. And the most comic things of all are exactly the things that are most worth doing—such as making love. A man running after a hat is not half so ridiculous as a man running after a wife. (Chesterton 3-4)

He believes that a day will come when it will be treated as a sport. On a windy day ladies and gentlemen of the upper class will get together at one place with their professional attendants. The attendants will run after a hat like hunters and provide pleasure to the people who will be looking on. Sharing his experience he writes:

When last I saw an old gentleman running after his hat in Hyde Park, I told him that a heart so benevolent as his ought to be filled with peace and thanks at the



thought of how much unaffected pleasure his every gesture and bodily attitude were at that moment giving to the crowd. (Chesterton 4)

Some of us don't find the idea of enjoying inconveniences practical and logical but Chesterton underlines the need of optimistic attitude and comic (or romantic) view of things. He says that nothing in this life is inconvenient if the thinking of a man is practical and logical. If a man is optimistic, he can seek an opportunity of enjoyment in everything, and is a sensible man. Apart from some exceptions, most of the inconveniences are the creations of our own minds. Such a person is more reasonable and practical than a person who irritates and grumbles over the payment of taxes due on his property. He writes:

The true optimist who sees in such things an opportunity for enjoyment is quite as logical and much more sensible than the ordinary "Indignant Ratepayer" who sees in them an opportunity for grumbling. (Chesterton 2)

To convince people Chesterton has quoted all the inconvenient incidents from our day- to -day life. Practically we see that we start annoying over very minor issues like on getting our doors, gates, drawers and cupboards jammed, and even if we are not able to open a tight vial. Discussing about some of his known who could not pull out their jammed and tight drawers, he gives an example of his friend who was also in distress because of the same reason. The writer states:

A friend of mine was particularly afflicted in this way. Every day his drawer was jammed, and every day in consequence it was something else that rhymes to it. But I pointed out to him that this sense of wrong was really subjective and relative; it rested entirely upon the assumption that the drawer could, should, and would come out easily. "But if," I said, "you picture to yourself that you are pulling against some powerful and oppressive enemy, the struggle will become merely exciting and not exasperating. Imagine that you are tugging up a lifeboat out of the sea. Imagine that you are roping up a fellow-creature out of an Alpine crevasse. Imagine even that you are a boy again and engaged in a tug-of-war between French and English." (Chesterton 5)

He is of the opinion that when you have no choice and no control over the happenings, it's better to handle them light heartedly and with optimistic and comic vision. He is sure enough that his words have positive impact upon people as is the case of his friend mentioned in the above passage. He writes about his friend:

Shortly after saying this I left him; but I have no doubt at all that my words bore the best possible fruit. I have no doubt that every day of his life he hangs on to the handle of that drawer with a flushed face and eyes bright with battle, uttering encouraging shouts to himself, and seeming to hear all round him the roar of an applauding ring. (Chesterton 6)

Through the essay Chesterton emphasizes emotional deal of people. According to him everything depends upon the emotional point of view. He asserts that reality test can be conducted to almost every one of the things presently talked of as the typical nuisance of daily life. These are not only the inconveniences or worries which can provide us an opportunity for enjoyment if handled with sportive spirit rather other trivial worries can also be enjoyed if taken with the same spirit. In the essay he writes:

The same principle can be applied to every other typical domestic worry. A gentleman trying to get a fly out of the milk or a piece of cork out of his glass of wine often imagines himself to be irritated. Let him think for a moment of the patience of anglers sitting by dark pools, and let his soul be immediately irradiated with gratification and repose. (Chesterton 4-5)

Chesterton believes that convenience or inconvenience is just an attitudinal matter. Nothing is convenient or inconvenient in itself. It is just our perception that makes the things so. We often face many small incidents and problems in our daily life which cause discomfort to us but if we rightly consider them, they can certainly provide us pleasure. He firmly believes that if our attitude to incidents is comical, we'll definitely get pleasure from every adverse situation. If our beautiful locality is flooded with water, it of course causes many problems to us. But if we take the situation in the right spirit, it doesn't annoy us at all. He writes in the essay: "An adventure is only an inconvenience rightly considered. An inconvenience is only an adventure wrongly considered." (Chesterton 6)

Some of us may likely consider his idea of enjoying a flooded locality insensitive and impractical because a situation of this magnitude may throw lives of civilians out of gear. Human and animal lives may be lost, houses may be devastated, electricity and water supply may get disrupted, and crops may get ruined and so on. In that case it is most likely to cause panic and irritation. But still he opines: "Some consider such romantic view of flood or fire slightly lacking in reality. But really this romantic view of such inconveniences is quite as practical as the other." (Chesterton 1) He agrees that a flood, in fact is a calamity because it causes pain, discomfort and inconvenience. But once one's locality is flooded, one has no option but to take a romantic view of things. When his locality was flooded, he viewed it like a watery landscape. For him it presented a view of Venice. When flooded it looked like an island where he could sail in a gondola like a Venetian. When London was flooded in his absence, he felt envious for he missed the opportunity of enjoying the scene of flooded London.

Chesterton, through his comic essay 'On Running After One's Hat' tries to convince the people the significance of optimistic, positive, and comic attitude. He finds an opportunity of enjoyment even in small activity like 'running after one's hat'. He finds it a comic exercise. He states that most of the activities of man are also comic. Just as eating, love making, and running after one's wife. Running after one's hat is not as ridiculous as running after one's wife. Chesterton draws moral lessons from minor events like running after one's hat. The same lessons he wishes and tries to convey to his readers. Through this essay he strongly sends the lesson or message that if an inconvenience is rightly considered, it becomes a source of enjoyment. The question of pleasure or pain, convenience or inconvenience is attitudinal. A small inconvenience may be pleasure some if it is taken as an opportunity of amusement. So 'think healthy and live healthy'.

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## **The Subalterns Are the Most Fluid and Refreshing: Women Characters in the Plays of Girish Karnad**

*–Priyaranjan Das\**

### **Abstract**

Women characters in the plays of Girish Karnad are not mere society's obsession for beauty, the 'Shyama Nayikas' rarely to be found in the real world, but they are the true characters grounded in Indian milieu throughout ages. They are not only sensible and sensitive but also intelligent and bold. The vulnerability is their strength; subtle interpretation is their armor; sharp tongue is their sword; more so they are guided by spontaneity even in the most oppressed state of theirs. The queen Devyani to liberated Padmini to modern Vidula, they depict the trends of societal change, rather they are the instruments of change by following their raw impulse like fury, passion and desire even in a limited way in the space allotted to them by the man's world. The double subalterns like Swarnalata, Sharmistha, Kurudavva are the most amazing. They are the ones who understand the reality and the meaning of life far more than other characters. When the characteristic traits of leading men characters are almost static with their patriarchal attitude and notion, it is the women who take the lead to reverse this notion by raising pertinent questions and acting differently. Men are always the towering figures and dominant characters in most of the plays but women are seen as having different and versatile roles which allows them to be the centre of the conflict or plot.

**Keywords:** Subaltern, Post colonialism, Feminism, Women characters.

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The subtle complexities of female sexuality have often been attempted in literature. Their vulnerability and unpredictability, sensuality and sensitivity, creative power and destructive prowess have been deliberated by both the best and worst of minds, in both the best and worst of ages, irrespective of secular and religious narratives. Be it myth, folklore, history or contemporaneity, the female characters arouse immense interest among the readers/audience, thinkers/writers alike as a counterfoil to male characters. Male sexuality is often interpreted with the pretext of female sexuality. Thus diverse aspects and dimensions of female sexuality are incorporated keeping an eye with the society's view (man's view) of a given point of time as the human sexuality of both the sexes is evolving.

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The myth, folklore and history are predominantly the story of man. Women are devoted to a limited set of roles as defined to them by man. Man is stronger, noble, ruler; women are weak, corrupt and ruled. Within this binary, the foundations of the main characters are established. We can always expect the male characters to be strong along with few of his other personality traits, but characters of women who are often seen to come out freely from their expected position and become unpredictable. This unpredictability makes them interesting and we often find them at the centre of the story. Her story is so weaved in the deeds and conflicts of man that readers/audience sway their heads constantly with every fortune and misfortune of the protagonists but their beating hearts are always worried about the plight and journey of her/s. At other times, her silent suffering in desperation and the feeble attempt to renegotiate in her very own world, where she finds herself to be alien. In other words, being neglected, it is the different aspects of her sexuality occupies the primary position and makes the world go around, while men are the least forward looking characters. In the man's dominant world, women are having different and versatile roles, which allow them to be at the centre of the conflict or plot, where men despite their strength, ruggedness, higher position become mere puppets, subservient to women and her causes.

Inner strength/vulnerability of Indian womanhood can be traced back from its traditions, customs, culture and civilization. According to traditional believes and Hindu mythology, she (woman) is the Energy (*Prakriti*) and the Power (*Shakti*), thus termed as uncultured power which is dangerous and needs to be controlled by spirit represented by *Purusha*. On the other hand, the popular stories in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata with the characters like Sita, Savitri, Damayanti have brought a different notion about Indian woman on their *pativrata dharma* (chaste and devoted wives). On this background, virtue, virginity and chastity become the buzz word for the Indian psyche to narrate any woman with veneration. The heritage/baggage from devi to devadasi, prostration to prostitution, is a long story of adoration and subjugation that makes them intriguing, the characters fit for exploration and further analyses.

Girish Karnad in an era of feminism and post colonialism cannot be free from the spiral and impending influence of his time, but a worthwhile producer of a literary genre to raise some of the pertinent questions on the over arching power of patriarchy and the damage that it causes to Indian woman and the society. 'His plays abound with subalterns especially women and lower caste people subjected since ancient time by patriarchy or upper hierarchy of the society. Karnad has not only exposed their subalternity but also fused energy in their lives so that they can speak; shifted their position from "margin" to "centre" (Singh 121). Their deprivation, subjugation, loneliness and silence push them to such an extent that they could rise and resist even at the cost of inviting their ruin. With this act of valour, it is they who bring the unfathomable meaning to life. They resist and perish, but enough to churn the mighty patriarchy and at times makes them to crumble under their feet. The history is full of gendered subalterns so also in the myth and contemporaneity as it is the by product of culture but the treatment of women characters in the plays of Karnad are like those of

heard before, but not felt so in any point of time. They are sharp, intelligent with empowered voice and embittered action. They could comprehend the life and its consequence in a far better way than their male counter parts. When they are pushed into a corner by the mighty patriarchy, their actions are the ones that determined the fate of the race.

In this essay, I shall try to capture the fluidity of female characters in the plays of Girish Karnad. They are synonymous to poetic grandeur not because of their inherent beauty, the Shyama Nayikas, but because of their spontaneity and rebellion. Their inept understanding to life is amply proved by their actions. And their comprehension to various facets of life is what refreshing to the audience and readers alike. Their tragedy does not bring the audience to their feet rather their actions enlighten them exposing the vices that exist in the man and the patriarchy. They are the archetypes; their fall is not because of individual error or folly like King Lear or Macbeth but a rage against a system, though that bring their perish. They may not be deliberate construct by the dramatist as they are taken from myth, folklore or history except the two plays but definitely retouched to present his view point to the issues related to present society. On this backdrop, I wanted to discuss the women characters of Karnad.

There are at least three set of women characters, even more in the plays of Karnad. The first set of characters did not act on the stage, but their stories not only binds the plot of the plays, but also make a stirring impact on the audience; namely- the mother of Pooru, the mother of Hayavadana and the daughter of Radhabai. The second sets of characters are the double subalterns, very crucial chains of the plot but among the women they hold the lower strata. Swarnalata, Kurudava and Radhabai belong to this list. The third, of course, heroines of the play – Devyani, Sharmishtha, Chitralekha, Vishakha, Nittlai, Rani, Padmini, Manjula, Vidula. The fourth may be the lamps and dolls but I am not going to interpret them in this paper. All these characters are known for their inner strength, spontaneity and rugged impulse that make them lively, bold, rebellious and forward looking. Their constant urge to invent their position in the society has made this species better evolutionary creatures than their other counterparts.

The seemingly improbable character is the mother of Hayavadana (body of a man with the head of a horse). The princess of Karnataka finds no prince worthy of her but a stallion. She marries him and lives for fifteen years. The hilarious story finds a divine turn and the horse turns to be a celestial being, ready to return to his heavenly abode along with his human love. She refuses to give him company rather urges him to return to his original form. Infuriated, he curses her to become a horse, and she becomes so and runs away happily. This bizarre story has four interesting turns. First, a teen ager infatuates with an unworthy being; second, she cares him to such an extent with her love that he almost becomes godly; third, after regaining his position, he dumps her; fourth, the woman does not surprise at all and faces the predicament happily. In every phase of the story, there is a progression in her spiritual life. On the contrary, there is a regression in the character of her husband. He returns to his divine form but fails to understand the divine meaning of life. His curse to the princess amply

proves that aspect of his life but for a spiritual lady like the princess the curse is like enlightenment, free from the worry of losing someone, free from the fear of breach of discipline and free from the pain of immortality. She is free, fresh, rejuvenating and one of nature's own child. The mother of Pooru is another woman who can be interpreted like any other women characters in *Yayati*. She is a loving mother to Pooru and rakshyasi woman to Yayati. She was beautiful – ethereal, not to mention, 'A Bharata prince would not have married a woman not beautiful' (36). She came to Yayati like a winning trophy in one of his military campaigns. The other part of her life is least cared by Yayati, but has a deep impact on Pooru, about the deathly silence which surrounds that face. Even if we pursue the antagonistic view point of Yayati about her, we find she is a subaltern character even if she is the senior queen of Bharata dynasty; she is an untouchable due to her race. Her vengeance is unique in nature that she could pollute the bloodline of Bharatas. Her rebellion brings to the end of her life, but she is found courageous enough to proclaim so. Ironically of course the same bloodline bails his father out during his disillusionment of prioritizing the preference. Another character of such category is Yamuna, the daughter of Radhabai. She is maintained by a rich trader as his concubine. She is a telling character, her being thrown out from the trader's house to her madness and screams, is the story unparallel- her suffering and her tragedy. The other women characters of Karnad show their resilience and rebellion, whenever they are pushed to an extreme by the patriarchy. They are very blunt in their words and action. Karnad has portrayed Yamuna providing no such voice, but presented her predicament in a very outrageous way when Vidula acts as Kuchla the Jezebel. She takes the story of Yamuna while submitting herself 'to the disembodied randy voice of Swamy Anang Nath the Bodyless, in a darkened Cyber Café' (Foreward xi).

Swarnalata, Kurudavva and Radhabai are brought from the pragmatic school of Karnad's women characters. Among them Swarnalata comprehends the life more than anyone else. Her lie to her husband to release him from the torments of doubts, suspicion and obsession at the cost of making her life a living hell is a story of extraordinary courage. She exposes the hollowness of her husband who was suffering from Rama Syndrome – love and doubt for the wife at the same breath. Her support and advice to Devyani on every matter related to life of what it is and how one should lead including the statement on Yayati to her; 'His Majesty is ... he is like a child. He will forget that woman once he finds another toy' (31). To Swarnalata she is a solace, a harbinger of hope (bringer of poison) to end the pain and assure peace. Kurudavva, on the other hand, is a blind lady, but a light of hope to reverse the fortune of those miserable and unfortunate. Her magic root is the centre of the plot, like that of Shakuni's three dices to achieve direction at wish. She fails but brings a new lease of life for Rani. The Naga comes to Rani's rescue because of Kurudavva's miracle roots. The insanity of Kurudavva at the end of the story is a poetic injustice and an anticlimax. Is it because defying the law of nature? Whatever, her act is miraculous but she is not, she is the product of the earth, of magic and of nothingness. Radhabai is a domestic help in a modern Indian city. Her poverty and insecurity has a dimming effect in the glowing lights of the city. She tries her best to depersonalize her professional life but

fails ironically because of a teleserial. Her decision of an unfortunate time starts haunting him. The melodrama of the life of the poor in the television industry like the poverty of India to the west is best sold but their life raises questions of the sensitivity of the so called intellectual mass. Vidula becomes the mouth piece when Karnad raises questions on the life of Yamuna, the injustices thrown to them by the society.

The heroines of Girish Karnad are from diverse backgrounds but with one common baggage - the subjugation in the hands of patriarchy. Karnad has not changed the narratives but given the weapons of speech to his leading women characters that the narratives seem altogether different. His women characters are not only empowered with shrill tongues but also capable of stings. It is true like any other subaltern characters their sting instead of causing harm to others bring their own ruin. The three major women characters in the plays of *Yayati*, the play of an ancient myth but 'not mythological', are Devyani, Sharmistha and Chitralekha. All these characters are living a life of hell or at least a part of it. But the combative powers of these three characters could teach Yayati a lesson what thousands of battle and hundreds of sensuous women could not. Sharmistha not only seduces king Yayati but exposes the injustice meted out to her because of her race. The illogical sufferings of her are tersely debated, 'After all, as a slave, what weapon did I have but my body' (29). Devyani's remarks out of fury; 'I am no kshatriya queen to suffer relatives foisted on me. I am leaving...' (31) brings the notion to the forefront that woman for her self-respect can go any further. Chitralekha's rebellion and her ultimate sacrifice for her cause is an inspiring story of anyone who dares to dictate the terms on the questions of rights, duties and justice. The role of woman, the concept of marriage, the worn out line of *pativrata* are beautifully mocked at by Chitralekha:

I married him for his youth. For his potential to plant seed of the Bharatas in my womb. He has lost the potency now. He doesn't possess any of the qualities for which I married him. But you do. (65-66)

Padmini in *Hayavadana*, is the most debated character of Karnad. Her love for Kapila's masculinity to the exhilaration after the juxtaposition of heads; her loneliness and emptiness to becoming sati make her a complex character. She not only suffers from the Dionysian tendency but she is the product of nature, which is naturally attracted to another product of nature. It is she who infuses the sense of belongingness in Kapila. She is the woman ahead of her time, and the disjunction at the time, being a woman, to celebrate the desire, the mirth and the laughter; thus her downfall. The paternity anxiety and the blessed motherhood is the focal point in the play *Naga Mandala*. She was like a caged bird in all her married life, faced the loneliness and humiliation like never before. Kurudavva's magic roots attracted Naga and in turn bring a new lease of life to her. Her poetry of rebellion bumps in no place but enough to clot the vessel of the man at night:

I shall do what you tell me. Scowls in the day. Embraces at night. The face in the morning unrelated to the touch at night. But day or night, one motto does not change: do not ask questions. Do as I tell you (51).

Once the paternity anxiety of Appanna is resolved, she becomes a tormentor to her husband with a tag of goddess. Her reward to Naga the trophy of life is a kind of punishment to her pati, not always the parmeswar. Vishakha's tongue, her action and boldness exhibit her strength and comprehension of life as it is. Her two stern dialogues to Yavakri such as 'Indra may be immortal. But ... my breasts hang loose now' (121) and ' He left no pore in my body alone. And you – you think a woman is only a pair of half-formed breasts' (123) at the first place sum up her understanding of human sexuality. Her concern and action (the cause) for the death of Yavakri; her bold admission of her fornication to her husband and her sisterly advise to Aravasu not yield to Paravasu are glaring examples of Vishakha a woman of substance and a woman of rebellion. Nittilai a subaltern in true sense is caught in the crossfire of rage, of hate and of treachery. Arvasu's calling of her name while it is raining at the closing of the play is a triumph of her that she could establish only after her death. Vidula in the *Wedding Album*, after so much of drama of uncertainty, her search for private space, the regressive out look towards woman, is seen as a savior not only to the inner turmoil of her husband but to the spiritually starved world at large. The future is unknown but the subaltern is forced to carry the load for a spiritual elevation. For anything goes wrong, she is the one to perish not the race.

Karnad has presented the women characters with least emotional precision so that they could come out from their traditional allotted space either to rebel against the injustice or to follow their desire as their own. They are the ones who understand the reality and the meaning of life far more than other characters. When the characteristic traits of leading men characters are almost static with their patriarchal attitude and notion, it is the women who take the lead to reverse this notion by raising pertinent questions and acting differently. Men are always the towering figures and dominant characters in most of the plays but women are seen as having different and versatile roles which allows them to be the centre of the conflict or plot.

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## Resurrecting Native Pride: D.H. Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent*

–Richa Bhardwaj\*

### Abstract

In his writings of the 1920s about the native American people where he gives an acute analysis of the damaging influence of colonization on both the white men as well as the American Indians, D.H. Lawrence is much ahead of his times. Indeed the writer's imagination is strained to the utmost as he makes a genuine effort to grasp the ethos, the ways of living and being of a different race and culture. It is to be admitted that Lawrence has oscillating responses to colonial issues. At times, he seems to clearly share the prejudices of his age as, for example, when Somers contends in *Kangaroo* that the Indians are not prepared to govern themselves. However, Lawrence's rejection of the values of his own culture is so very authentic and forceful that it puts into a clear perspective his stance toward the issue of colonialism. The novel makes a tremendous effort to decipher the meaning of the call made directly on the blood by the massive, angry and desecrated elements of Mexico. While the white man's attempts to improve the social conditions are shown as lacking a proper understanding of the pulse and the psyche of the people, the native's desire for a bygone era, for wonder and mystery, and for living beyond money and externalities is underlined with sympathy. The novel fore shadows many of the ways adopted by later African writers to undermine colonialism. While depicting the damage caused to the psyche of both the natives and the white men, the novel seeks to resurrect a sense of pride dignity among the natives, aiming to rid them of their feeling of inferiority.

**Keywords:** Dignity, Pride, Colonial, Postcolonial, Marginality.

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In his writings of the 1920s about the native American people where he gives an acute analysis of the damaging influence of colonization on both the white races and the American Indians, D.H. Lawrence is much ahead of his times. Indeed the writer's imagination is strained to the utmost as he makes a genuine effort to grasp the ethos, the ways of living and being of a different race and culture. It is to be admitted that Lawrence has oscillating responses to colonial issues and, at times, seems to share clearly the prejudices of his age, as, for example, when Somers contends in *Kangaroo*

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that the Indians are not prepared to govern themselves. However, Lawrence's rejection of the values of his own culture is so very authentic and forceful that it puts into a clear perspective his stance toward the issue of colonialism. Ursula's rejection of Skrebensky in *The Rainbow*, one recalls, is inextricably linked with his status as a colonizer in India and Africa. Taking into account Lawrence's fascination for the dark American continent as repository of altogether different life-values and his repudiation of the domineering ways of the white civilization, this paper attempts a post colonial reading of Lawrence's Mexican novel *The Plumed Serpent*. It puts forward the argument that many of the ways adopted by later African writers to undermine colonialism are foreshadowed in this classic novel that was published in 1926.

I am going to attempt a postcolonial reading of D.H. Lawrence's novel *The Plumed Serpent*. This is a novel set in Mexico which became a Spanish colony at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore I begin by briefly sketching Mexican history.

It was the year 1519 when a few hundred Spanish adventurers led by Hernan Cortes invaded the domains of the Mexican Aztecs. By 1521 Mexico had been conquered. After the Conquest, the Spanish King set up a system, through which colonial masters were to provide for the material and spiritual welfare of the Indians (Clark 563). However the natives were enslaved. No one of native birth, even if purely Spanish, was permitted to hold office. Those who worked the land for the Spanish became serfs, peons. Spanish overlords and the Catholic Church continued to take over Indian land, much of which had been held in communal ownership by tribal custom (Clark 563). Though the Mexican people won their independence from Spain in 1821, they achieved little political or economic emancipation. The Catholic Church retained its wealth and privileges. The ruling class that was ever in a state of opposition, kept the country in a state of constant revolution (Clark 563). Gradually the land taken away from the Church was absorbed by the big *haciendas*. It was this country of "broken walls, broken houses, broken *haciendas*" (*The Plumed Serpent* 63), devastated by its eventful history that Lawrence first visited in March 1923. Set on the Mexican soil, *The Plumed Serpent* makes a tremendous effort to decipher the meaning of the call made directly on the blood by the massive, angry and desecrated elements of Mexico, as it grapples with the implications of the imposition of an alien culture and religion on another race.

The novel *The Plumed Serpent* has certainly been no favourite with Lawrencean critics and scholars. It has been criticized, in particular, for its insistent ideology, the killings, and what is taken to be its advocacy of male supremacy. Even sympathetic critics like F.R. Leavis, Harry T. Moore, Mark Spilka and Mark Kinkead-Weekes have found fault with the novel. The novel has its faults and excesses. However, it is one thing to castigate the novel for events and incidents, that have been viewed as "rebarbative" (Kinkead-Weekes 73) and quite another to condemn the novel wholesale. Terry Eagleton has certainly done no service to Lawrence when along with Aaron's Rod and Kangaroo, he enlists the preoccupations of *The Plumed Serpent*: "a protofascist veneration of power, 'blood hierarchy', racial purity, male bonding, charismatic leadership, the revival of 'primitive' ritual and mythology, and the brutal subjugation

of women” and dismisses it as “execrable” (278, 272). The novel’s attempt to found a religion by resurrecting the gods of ancient Mexico should not be brushed aside as repelling or as exotic primitivism. While depicting the damage caused to the psyche of both the natives and the white men, the novel seeks to resurrect a sense of pride and dignity among the natives, aiming to rid them of their feeling of inferiority. The Catholic Church that is destroyed in the course of events, is seen not just as a drab institution, failing to vivify the Mexican soul, but as an agent of domination and colonialism. The violence that erupts may be seen as necessary for breaking the shackles of psychological and political colonialism.

For Homi Bhabha, the encounter of colonizer and colonized always affects both. As he says in “Postcolonial Authority and Postmodern Cult”, while colonialism brings a radically unsettling “affective experience of social marginality”, the colonial experience also affects the colonizer (56). Shifting his focus to the colonial hybrid, Bhabha argues that the cultural interaction of colonizer and colonized leads to a fusion of cultural forms. Hybridity thus gets positive connotation as it “intervenes in the exercise of authority” (Location of Culture 163). Making an acute diagnosis of the Mexican situation, Lawrence analyzes closely the effects of cultural encounter between the colonizer and the colonized. He locates the damage caused to the psyche of both in factors such as the colonizers’ wilful insistence on having his own way and the colonized people’s mimicry, their aping and imitating their rulers’ superior mode of life while actually desiring something else. Affected by centuries of colonial presence “the eternal peon of Mexico,” (*The Plumed Serpent* 64) is gripped with a desire to join the course of modernization. The process of Americanization is on: “one hope, one faith, one destiny, to ride in a camion, to own a motor car,” (*The Plumed Serpent* 98). However, this outward imitation of modernization serves only to bring the inward sense of wrong and being cheated to the fore. The result is rage and rowdiness – a desire to pull everything to the ground. In the remarkable opening Chapter “Bull-Fight” Kate Leslie, the protagonist of the novel, is shocked to see the brazen display of “human indecency” as the masses gathered in the bull-ring degenerate into a vulgar, rowdy mob (*The Plumed Serpent* 10). The City-bred crowd keenly enjoys the spectacle of bulls being gored to death, deriving a perverse pleasure in “beastliness, a smell of blood, a nauseous whiff of bursten bowels” (*The Plumed Serpent* 9). Kate finds it strange that these people seem to want the ugly things, to enjoy making everything fouler” (*The Plumed Serpent* 29). The black eyes of the natives appear to have no “centre”, no “real I” in them, but a “raging black hole, like the middle of a maelstrom” (*The Plumed Serpent* 32). Even the elements of this country seem hostile. While the sun blazes angrily over Mexico, the very earth seems to exude a sense of grisly fear, horror. The “ponderous” mountains, the volcanoes Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl suppress all soaring of spirit and seem to “emit a deep purring sound... audible on the blood, a sound of dread” (*The Plumed Serpent* 40). Like most other white people, Kate feels suffocated, crushed by a terrible oppression of the spirit all the time. In the eyes of so many white men, she has detected “the look of nullity, and life moving in ‘the reversed direction”” (*The Plumed Serpent* 66). The spirit of the place is definitely down-dragging towards the white people. The novel diagnoses shrewdly that the white invaders were mistaken

when they wilfully imposed their religion on a different people – a religion that laid the entire emphasis on the spirit and advocated humility and gentleness. They did not consider whether it suited this land of fierce sun and forceful storms. The novel shows clearly that the very blood of the natives revolts against the white man's way of life. An alien religion has failed to touch them inwardly. The Sunday Church that with its cheap glitter, offers no more than a little "orgy of incense" leaving the soul all the more slack, has not just been indifferent to the needs of the Mexicans. It has acted as an agent of coercion and domination, forcing Quetzalcoatl, the revered deity of Mexico, to leave. However, in the process of asserting his own superiority, in attempting to save the others' soul, the white man himself lost his own. Now, thwarted, instead of moving forward, his life is going all backward. The shrewd analysis of colonization shows both the white people and the natives being affected and suffering diminution and disintegration as a consequence of this cultural encounter.

The incidents and events such as the destruction of the Church, the burning of the images and the crashing violence that results, have drawn considerable flak. While it is to be admitted that many of these events are distasteful, the use of violent force becomes necessary for breaking free from the shackles of colonialism. Here the novel looks forward to some of the ideas of Frantz Fanon. Though, Lawrence's attempt to found a religion and invent the liturgy and rituals for it may be part of his whimsical excesses, and as Frank Kermode observes, the Quetzalcoatl symbol may become "tiresome, overdeveloped" (109), it is the Quetzalcoatl religion that holds hope for the natives, as well as the colonizers.

It is neither an alien religion, nor the outward glitter and externalities and Socialism that hold a key to the Mexican soul. The President of the country, Montes, who wants to make his country progress, to save it from poverty and ignorance with the help of European ideas, is unconcerned about the craving of the Mexican soul. However, the Mexicans who have retained a "strange, submerged desire" for "things beyond the world" are by and large indifferent to money, materialism and comfort (*The Plumed Serpent* 233). They want the wonder of myth and mystery in their lives, long to be connected and sincerely want to believe.

Later as the religion of Quetzalcoatl is declared to be the national religion of the Republic, the longing of the Mexican soul is fulfilled. As Jascha Kessler says, Ramon and Cipriano are men who believe that "Mexico can meet the future only by means of some kind of projection of its psyche" (243). The novel makes a tremendous effort to establish native dignity and identity by resurrecting ancient gods of Mexico. The ancient religion is a religion of living in harmony with the elements. The massive elements of Mexico demand to be held in respect. The angry elemental forces are pacified as there is a revival of morning and evening rituals and people pause for brief prayers at dawn and sunset and are put in connection. The slow round Indian dance "the dance of downward sinking absorption" re-roots the people deep into the earth. In Ramon's *hacienda*, there are artisans, sculptors and blacksmiths who derive pleasure and satisfaction from their work. These men seek neither land nor gold but life first of all. The morning star that shines in their eyes, the star that in Mexico was Quetzalcoatl,

resurrects native pride, dignity and beauty. At the same time, through Kate-Cipriano relationship, the marriage between a white “gringuita” woman and a red Indian, as L.D. Clark observes, the novel envisions a new conception of human life rising out of “a new fusion of white invader and the dark native” (D.H. Lawrence and the American Indian 362). While emphasizing the need of balance between mind and blood, the novel looks forward to a new vivified life rising out of the union between the white races and the Mexican natives.

In its vision of the natives of Mexico seeking inspiration from their past and shedding their present sense of inferiority, *The Plumed Serpent* shows how successful Lawrence has been in decolonizing his imagination. The novel seeks to establish native pride and dignity. At the same time it also hints at a better future in the fusion of the races.

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## A Feminist Reading of Tagore's Selected Stories

–*Sarika Gupta\**

### Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore has touched every essence of society through his oceans of literature, whether it's his plays or poems and most importantly his stories. One such angle of his writings is feminism. Female characters are very well portrayed by Tagore in his works through which not only he talks about the contemporary situation of women, their role in the society, their efforts for self-alleviation, but also shows how they proved to be much better than their male counterparts. He reflected the situation of women in all times, like in the time of the Mahabharata to the present times, in all communities, Muslim to Hindu. He showed how woman was treated by her husband, how she fulfilled her duties as a wife, a sister, and a daughter. In all, he beautifully painted the picture of feminism on his canvas of literature.

**Keywords:** Rokeya, Womankind, Kankal, Matriarch, Patriarchal, Hindu, Muslim, Ghater-Katha.

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For assessing whether Tagore was a feminist or not it is necessary to have a glance at the socio-political conditions of his time, his contemporaries and his works. Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain was a contemporary of Tagore. She was born on 9 December 1880 in Dhaka. She belonged to the minority Muslim community. In this community the women had limited opportunities for education. Rokeya was a self-educated woman. At the time of marriage she was 16 years old while her husband was 40 years old. He was a widower but his outlook was liberal. He supported his wife in her thirst for knowledge. Later she opened a school for Muslim girls. Rokeya wrote in Bengali about the exploitation of women. She wrote various essays about the need of education for girls. In one such essay titled 'Educational Ideals for the Modern Indian Girl' which was published in *The Mussalman* on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1931 she wrote:

We should by all means broaden the outlook of our girls and teach them modernise themselves. Yet they should be made to realise that the domestic duties entrusted to them cover a task on which the welfare of the country depends.... The future of India lies in its girls. The development of its

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educational system on proper lines is therefore question of permanent importance.... In short, our girls would not only obtain university degrees, but must be ideal daughters, wives and mothers – or I may say obedient daughters, loving sisters, dutiful wives and instructive mothers. (Das Gupta 98)

In another essay 'The Degradation of Womankind' Rokeya asked women to reflect on their pitiable plight. In another such essay she blames menfolk of not imparting education to the girls. She challenges men to quote from holy books if there is any prohibition against women obtaining knowledge.

Another self-taught woman who is related to Tagore was his elder sister, Swarna Kumari Devi. Being born in a distinguished family she had the advantage of association with great minds. She was 11 at the time of marriage and the age of her husband was 27. He was a broadminded person and he encouraged her to read and write. In her life span of 76 years she wrote various fictional narratives. She wrote essays on such subjects as male superiority, widow remarriage etc. She expressed her views about the need for education women and the welfare of widows.

These examples of cultured Bengali women bring into notice that the social and cultural atmosphere of urban Bengal was changing. Tagore's short stories deal with this changing state of women. His women characters in these stories resist the traditional role as portrayed by Tagore's contemporaries like Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay and Chandra Nath Basu. A cursory reading of Tagore's short stories will prove that. The environment of Tagore family was liberal because they were members of Brahma Samaj. Brahma Samaj is famous for its liberated humanist ideals. The members of Brahma Samaj were free from rigid caste regulations. Tagore also did not confirm to Hindu rituals.

Ghater Katha (Story of the Ghat) is Tagore's first short story. In this story Tagore has shown the silent suffering of women under the patriarchal system. A young woman prefers to end her life because her husband becomes a priest after deserting her. The husband rigidly adheres to his own principles and neglects his wife. Khata published in 1898, is the story of a child bride Uma. Her only crime is that she is literate. She writes down her emotions on a notebook which is torn away by her husband. Although he is an educated youth yet he does not like his wife to abandon domestic work and enter in the field of males. Tagore shows how this apparently educated males ravel in darkness. The subject of dowry has found place in his short stories Dena Paona. Nirupama is constantly humiliated by her in-laws for bringing less dowry. Her father, Ram Sunder, fails to give dowry. Nirupama does not want her father to pay dowry. She discourages him by saying that it is humiliating for her. Her in-laws treat her badly and she dies at last. Nirupama is an excellent example of Tagore's new woman. Tagore's next story Shasti (Punishment) was published in 1893. Chandara's husband falsely implicates her in the murder of his brother's wife. Although he knows that her brother has committed the crime. Police arrests Chandara. Chandara's husband has a peculiar opinion that if his wife is sentenced to death he can get another wife but a brother cannot be replaced. When the hearts of the brothers

change they admit their crime in court. The judge thinks that they are trying to save Chandara. Chandara is sentenced to death. When her husband wants to meet her in jail for one last time she refuses. This is her self assertion and self-respect. Chandara is Tagore's new woman who resists patriarchal supremacy. In *Manbhanjan* Tagore shows the resistance of a married woman. Giribala is the wife of Gopinath. Gopinath never pays attention to her. He regularly visits theatre to watch plays. Giribala also secretly visits theatre. Gopinath elopes with actress Lobongo and shatters the hopes of the manager to cast her in his next play. Giribala is selected for the lead role in this new heroine-centred play 'Monorama'. Gopinath cannot bear this and he threatens to kill her. Thus Tagore successfully portrays the patriarchy which is egoistic, irrational and overpowering. Tagore's rendering of a heroine who retaliates is really supreme. Tagore dealt with theme of extra-marital relationship in his short stories *Madhyabartini* and *Nishithey* (In the Dead of Night). In *Madhyabartini*, Harasundari persuades her husband Nibaran to marry another girl as she herself is unable to produce a child. When Nibaran marries Sailabala, Harasundari feels neglected. She has to abandon her bed which belonged to her for twenty seven years. This story creates the ideal patriarchal stereotype of the self-effacing wife. Harasundari is depicted as an ideal wife who does not care for her personal agony for the happiness of her husband. Sailabala dies out of illness during pregnancy. Now it seems irreconcilable for Nibaran to return to his first wife. In *Nishithey* also a dying wife implores her husband to marry again. Her husband Dakshinacharan confesses of the attraction he feels towards the daughter of his wife's general physician. In his intimate relation with his second wife Dakshinacharan feels haunted by his dead wife. He is grasped with the feeling of psychological guilt.

*Kankal* (Skeleton) depicts the unfulfilled desire of a young woman. Her spirit is restless even after her death. The spirit says that her skeleton is hanging in a classroom and the teacher is teaching the basics of human anatomy to his students. The spirit narrates to a young man her sorrowful story. She tells him that her husband died just two months after their marriage when she was only 16. She returned to her parental home. There she got infatuated with Sashisekhar, her brother's doctor friend. But Sashisekhar was engaged somewhere else. When he was about to go for his marriage she mixed a toxic substance in his drink and also consumed it herself. Then she dressed up like a bride and waited for her union with her eternal love. She thought that she would unite with her lover as a spirit. Tagore shows aptly that in those social surroundings women could not express their desires. They would die with agony in their hearts. Their youthful desire would remain unfulfilled.

Tagore held the society responsible for its insensitive attitude towards women. In his short story *Ginni* (The Matriarch) Tagore shows how Ashu is ridiculed and scolded by his own school teacher Shibnath Pandit for playing with dolls with his younger sister. Playing with dolls was considered a pure feminine trait. Thus by playing with dolls a boy was feared to acquire that femininity. From that day Ashu starts adapting himself in patriarchal environment. He assured himself that he would never do anything that will be interpreted as an act of feminisation and degrade his maleness.



In his short story *Darpaharan* (Pride Surrendered) Tagore visualises his new woman. Child bride Nirjharni has equal talent of writing like her husband, Harish. Her fame as a talented writer spreads among her husband's friends and acquaintances. Harish feels jealousy for her. He finds some solace in his knowledge of English language which his wife does not know. Harish tries to dissuade her from writing. In an essay writing competition Nirjharni wins first prize. It is only after this that Harish accepts her as a talented writer. This story is "a gendered documentation of women's education, companionate marriage, gender rivalry". (Das Gupta 119)

In colonial Bengal the state of women's education was not good. There was a superstitious feeling among Hindu households that an educated girl becomes a widow soon after marriage. In the patriarchal society the condition of women was abject. More over education was considered only as a means of making the girls economically self dependent. There was no such vision of making education a means to achieve enlightenment of mind. Hindu revivalism would take it as a means of better understanding of religious tracts. However Tagore efficiently scripted the faults of patriarchal system and championed the cause of women education. In his post Nobel Prize winning period he penned down pro-woman stories more fiercely.

He wrote *Streer Patra* (A Wife's Letter) in 1913. In a letter written on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1941 Tagore wrote that "It's in my short story 'Streer Patra' that I supported the women's cause for the first time...." (Das Gupta 122). The story is about gradual evolution of a woman from non-entity to a person conscious of her identity. Mrinal was 12 years of age when she was married. She writes the letter at the age of 27. In these fifteen years she could not find the atmosphere of the house worth living. She points out that her intelligence remained a threat for her in-laws. She writes that she would find pleasure in poetry writing amidst the various compromises she had to make. Mrinal first questions and then rejects the supremacy of patriarchy. The letter begins with the word 'Sricharankamaleshu' meaning the letter is addressed to his 'lotus feet' and ends with 'Tomader Charantalaroychinno' meaning 'freed from the shelter beneath your feet'. She signs her own name 'Mrinal' instead of the title of 'Mejo Bou' given to her. The escape of Mrinal may be compared to the escape of the heroine of the play 'A Doll's House' of Henrik Ibsen. In this story Rabindranath protests against the enslavement of girls in the name of marriage.

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## **Cultural Studies of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Vine of Desire***

–Savita Yadav\*

### **Abstract**

This paper seeks to explore the complexities and the dilemma of the immigrants in Exile literature with Cultural Studies, by focusing upon its attraction, repulsion and their exploitation by the vested interests. Expatriates leave behind their home and look for new home in their host culture. The *Vine of Desire* continues the story of Anju and Sudha, the two young women at the center of Divakaruni's novel *Sister of My Heart*. Far from Calcutta, the city of their childhood, and after years of living separate lives, they rekindle their friendship in America. Anju, adjusts well in the U.S., a place totally foreign to her nature, culture and traditions with her husband's support. She leads a more independent life, independent to the extent of believing that one should not attach to any relationship which lacks love and compatibility. Whereas Sudha who comes with big dreams to America, but she ends up doing odd jobs there and is dissatisfied with her life in the U.S. and finally wants to return to India. This story of the two sisters epitomizes a paradigm of becoming accustomed to a conventional American culture and its effects on a person's individuality.

**Keywords:** Culture, Cultural Studies, America, Kolkata, Immigrants, Cross- cultural confrontation.

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Literature is a manifestation of the cultural, social, political and spiritual growth of a nation. Today, global interpretation of culture has given new dimensions to literature. India is known for its vast treasure of spiritual wisdom and cultural heritage that has significantly contributed to the growth and development of the world literature. The depiction of the two opposite culture and value systems of India and America happens to be one of the most prominent thematic concerns of Indian English novelists. The confrontation between the East and the West at social, cultural and political levels has been viewed from different perspectives.

Cultural Studies is the analysis of a culture's systems of meaning production and consumption. Cultural studies have made its presence felt in academic work within

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the arts, the humanities, the social sciences and even science and technology. It appears to be everywhere and everyone seems to be talking about it. Cultural studies concerns itself with meaning and practices of everyday life. Cultural practices comprise the ways people do particular things (such as watching television, or eating out) in a given culture. A cultural study does not have a clearly defined subject area. Its starting point is a very broad and all-inclusiveness of culture that is used to describe and study a whole range of practices.

Cultural studies is not one thing, it is many things. It is not an academic discipline quite like others. It possesses neither a well-defined methodology nor clearly demarcated fields for investigation. It moves from discipline to discipline, methodology to methodology, according to its own concerns and motivations. It adapts methods of analysis from various disciplines; media studies, cultural anthropology, discourse analysis, popular culture studies and audience studies. This is why cultural studies is not a discipline. Cultural studies is, of course, the study of culture, or, more particularly, the study of contemporary culture. A range of theories are used in C.S. such as structuralism, post structuralism, deconstruction, Marxism, postmodernism, feminism and Post feminism Queers Theory, Postcolonial theory.

In his essay "The Evolution of Cultural Studies" from the book *What is Cultural Studies?* (2012) Colin Sparks writes about the definition of Cultural Studies:

It is extremely difficult to define 'Cultural Studies' with any degree of precision. It is not possible to draw a sharp line and say that on one side of it we can find the proper province of cultural studies. Neither is it possible to point to a unified theory or methodology which are characteristic to it or of it. A veritable rag-bag of ideas, methods and concerns from literary criticism, sociology, history, media studies, etc. are lumped together under the convenient label of cultural studies. (Storey 14)

In the exposition of cross-cultural conflicts the novelists usually confined themselves to the cultural life of expatriates. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni living in America away from her land of birth has lent a new dimension to Indo-American literature. Her basic concern is to delineate the problems of cross cultural conflicts faced by Indian women immigrants. The Indian Culture and American Culture serve as trigger to her writings. In Divakaruni's works nostalgia and home are configured in a totally different way. Her creative genius is primarily rooted in the evaluation of cross-cultural studies in the area of globalization.

Divakaruni's writing is fueled by her own experiences as a first-generation immigrant and a woman between cultures and traditions. Her concern for women of her own heritage is transmitted not only through her award-winning short stories and novels but also her involvement with organizations that aim to help South Asian or South Asian American women in distress and in situations of domestic abuse, in the San Francisco Bay area and Houston. Each of her novels presents one or two memorable characters. The Indo-American interaction is depicted mainly through the experiences of Sudha and Anju, two Indian immigrants in America. In the character portrayal

again, she is primarily interested in the projection of female protagonists living in separate, closed, sequestered worlds of existential problems and passions, loves and hates.

Her novel *The Vine of Desire* (2002) successfully depicts the conflicts of cross-cultural confrontation of the Indian immigrant women Sudha and Anju. Striving for identity in the postcolonial world, they present the dilemma of the modern day woman covering each and every aspect of their life. They make new adjustments in their new surroundings and for this they reinvent themselves. In this novel she has mapped the social, political and cultural changes brought about by colonization, postcolonial consciousness and globalization.

*The Vine of Desire* continues the story of Anju and Sudha, the two young women at the center of Divakaruni's best selling novel *The Sister of My Heart*. Far from Calcutta, the city of their childhood, and after years of living separate lives, Anju and Sudha rekindle their friendship in America. The deep-seated love they feel for each other provides the support each of them needs. Anju gets strength this way to pick up the pieces of her life after a miscarriage and Sudha gets confidence to make a life for herself and her baby daughter, Dayita without her husband. Their bond is shaken to the core when they confront the deeply passionate feelings that Anju's husband has for Sudha.

The two sisters made their own choices-regarding their lifestyles, their respective matrimonial alliances and finally their level of association in the host country. Meanwhile, the relationships they form with men and women in the America as well as immigrant Indian community with their families in India profoundly transform them. The clash of values occurs in the novel at several levels, but the most crucial encounter remains between the ideas inculcated by cultural traditions of India and the forces of progress unleashed by Western science and technology.

Anju, adjusts well in the U.S, a place totally foreign to her nature, culture and traditions with her husband's support .She leads a more independent life, independent to the extent of believing that one should not attach to any relationship which lacks love and compatibility. Though Anju becomes a confident survivor and conqueror of the host culture but through her, after her miscarriage, we feel as though whatever happens to her is a result of centuries of traditions- the arranged marriage process; the need to have a child but feeling guilty because she really didn't feel she wanted one; her aim of studying and achieving independence through a sound career in creative writing. Though she immediately tries to embrace American culture taking advantage of the opportunities it affords and attempts to assimilate as best as she can to the new society but she does not stop herself to condemn on having lost her baby.

We find here the dilemma of the young girl who wishes to behave in the progressive manner of her western counterparts but whose Indian background makes her conscience prick. Here we find the difference of cultural upbringing. If she had come from a different society, more progressive and forward thinking she would not have gone through the emotions and the reactions that she experiences. The East-West

confrontation is appears limited in scope and depth mainly because she is too idealized to bring out the clash between his inherited and adopted cultures. She would not accept the responsibility for her actions nor for the consequences that resulted; choosing instead to blame others. Apart from Anju's interest in India and the little facts that she has discovered, her life is also shaken by new shocks given by her husband.

Traditionally in India, the burden of the family is borne by the woman she is also expected to preserve the traditions of her ancestors and culture, even at the cost of her personal interest. Her individuality is ever endangered because of her efforts to strike a compromise between the burden of legacy, and the need to preserve roots to establish a position for her. Sudha who is married in India and living in a joint family selflessly accepts her husband's dominating mother and two young brothers. She occupies herself with the daily responsibilities of life. She forgets her passion for stitching and designing clothes. She also tries to divest herself, of the memories of her past love, Ashok of whom she is always reminded because she is dissatisfied with her married life. But she continues to live in her husband's house with forbearance till she is made to undergo an ultrasound test during pregnancy to find out the sex of her child. The insistence by her mother-in-law to abort the female fetus is the last straw and she decides to depart from her husband's home. Sudha flees away from her husband's house because she is being urged to abort her unborn daughter and returns to her paternal home.

When Anju learns of this development in Sudha's life therefore she invites her to America where she feels it will be easier for Sudha to live as a single parent and look after her child. Sudha takes the rebellious step of running away to her mother's house and then to her cousin Anju in the U.S., mainly because she is opposed to the idea of female feticide and hates the thought of enduring life-long submission to the old fashioned views of her mother-in-law and an ineffective husband.

Indian culture demands specific duties of woman and strict conceptions of morality are held in high-esteem. While outside home, in the public realm in America, she has begun to experience a sense of freedom and self-expression at many levels which is conflicting with her domestic role and duty. The development of a divided roles is largely due to circumstances, created to cope up and respond to the cultural dissonance that surrounds her. This happens with Sudha also. She comes America and begun to experience a sense of freedom which changes her attitude towards Indian woman who is weighed down by social relationships and communal identities that prevail both in her pre and post marital life.

About the immigration issue there is an incident in the novel when Sudha arrives to the American airport, a mustached man speaks about fraudulent visa which shows immigration as a very prickly lately, including a lots of questions, at the airport where Anju and Sunil comes to receive her in *The Sister of My Heart*.

I hear immigration's been very prickly lately, asking lots of questions...Why, they even denied entry to someone last week, some kind of a fraudulent visa. I heard it from my friend's mother-in-law-she came on the same flight. She

was telling us about the poor young woman, crying and crying as the authorities took her away. Apparently the girl's husband was already here, but she lied about it in order to get a quick tourist visa'...What some people won't do to try and bypass the legal channels. (Divakaruni 344)

When Sudha comes America, she thinks she will be able to bring up her daughter Dayita in a better manner in a liberal society like America, as a single parent. Under this thinking she defies traditional Indian culture and leaves her husband to raise her child independently, which she thinks is much easier in the U.S. Once bound in marriage, woman has little room for escape and running away is a disgrace not only to her family but also to the whole of society and its tradition. Sudha knowingly or unknowingly emulates the ideal woman because of her traditional upbringing. She thinks positively in *The Sister of My Heart* about America.

America has its own problems, she said, but at least it would give me the advantage of anonymity. No-one in America would care that I was a daughter of the Chatterjees, or that I was divorced. I could design a new life, earn my own living, give Dayita everything she needed. Best of all, no one would look down on her, for America was full of mothers like me, who had decided that living alone was better than living with the wrong man. (Divakaruni 294)

Sudha comes with big dreams to America, but she ends up doing odd jobs there and is dissatisfied with her life in the U.S. She had come to America after defying the traditions of an arranged marriage, and does it at the cost of ostracism isolation and intense loneliness. Her stay in her cousin Anju's house is terminated by the emotional involvement that grows between Sudha and Anju's husband. However, she does not want to cheat her cousin so she decides to leave and the life-long candid relationship of the two sisters. She looks after Trideep and Myra's incapacitated father, a position she obtains with the help of Lalit, who is a surgeon.

Sudha after coming in America finds that she is comprised of multiple selves accepting or rejecting certain aspects of both Indian and American culture. Analyzing the unjustified violence and behavior of the people to her, she thinks herself everything with a new perspective in *TheVine of desire* of Chitra Divakaruni thinking enough is enough when the old man spits on her face.

So many violences done to me. My mother pounding my life into the shape of her desires. My mother-in-law wanting to cut from it whatever she considered unseeingly. My husband backing away, with his narrow, apologetic shoulders. Sunil plunging into the center of my body, corrosive with need. Each time, I made myself pliant. I gave a bearable name to what they did. Duty. Family honor. Filial respect. Passion. But today...The old man's spit on my face, so frank in its hate. I couldn't pretend it meant something else. (Divakaruni 243)

The novel is abounding with many examples of the description of various kinds of different pressures on its characters; though the nuances of it may differ due to the physical and cultural placement of their characters. But Sudha does not want to

allow anything to come between herself and her professional goals. Here the identity issue takes on another color, that of making a position for themselves in their adopted country. She tries to resolve the matters between their circumstances and environment and put the pieces of fragmented selves together. Her character develops multiplicity of consciousness in viewing herself.

While living in America and facing the East-West encounter she tries to adjust herself to the alien culture. Instead of transplanting Indian culture or disposing it off altogether she tries to assimilate her Indianness through reinventing her identity as experiences forever keep on molding it into something new. Though she never compromises her orthodox Indian ways. Though living on the American soil she adheres to her Indian ways of living, dressing, eating. As a typical Indian woman she never compromises with her rich religious tradition. She plays mostly Indian music and cooks Indian dishes to maintain her culture:

I find a cassette of Hindi music... I remember it from the streets of India, blasted from the speakers of a hundred shops, whistled by cheerfully unemployed young men who stood on street corners, smoking and spitting... Pyar Dwanahotahai, goes the song... I've left door open so our laughter mingles with the music. Gata Rahemeradil, My heart is singing... In Myra's sparkling modern kitchen, I prepare an old dish. Bhatebhat... when we were sad, Pishi used to make it because we loved it so much. (Divakaruni 245-46)

The novel holds out the possibility of intercultural meeting through this relationship founded on profound human sympathy, care and compassion to the exclusion of racial and cultural barriers. She cooks, cleans, mends the clothes of old man who admires her and later she becomes a sort of permanent employee of him.

Though she pays a big price, which in a way all immigrants pay when they leave their homeland, give up the comforts it offers them and come to a new land where they have to work hard to make two ends meet. She was not well educated to do the dignified jobs and besides this she was there on a tourist visa. Her loneliness in a new country, her failure attempts to adjust there, She wants to return to India and tells the old man she is nursing in novel *The Vine of Desire* that "America isn't the same country for everyone, you know. Things here didn't work out the way I'd hoped. Going back with you would be a way for me to start over in a culture I understand the way I'll never understand America. In a new part of India, where no one knows me. Without the weight of old memories, the whispers that say, we knew she'd fail, or Serves her right." (Divakaruni 320-21)

The old man is extremely surprised at her choice of leaving America because in his experience "Young people who come to this country never want to leave" (Divakaruni, 320). It is the dilemma of the Sudha who wishes to behave in the progressive manner of her western counterparts but whose Indian background makes her conscience prick. All these factors describe her condition as to the immigrant person whom as for immigrant, as home is deeply embedded in memories that are not one's

own. To her, her identity is no great an issue as she maintains most of her Indian culture and tradition.

Her loneliness in a new country, her attempt to earn money to finance a return journey. Sudha chooses to return to India, even after her mother's condemnatory letter where she accuses her of destroying her marriage with Ramesh and throwing two households into turmoil. She writes "Once a woman leaves her husband, she doesn't hesitate at anything. Even the most immoral acts come to her with ease. I shudder to think of the effect your behavior will have on your daughter's character." (Divakaruni 272)

Though she appears very progressive in her thinking, she does not think that marriage is destiny for her and that she always need to compromise due to patriarchal pressures. Sudha realizes that life back in India is not going to be easy but she thinks that going to a new place and getting a convent education for her daughter will be beneficial.

Anju also separates herself from her husband and maintain her dignity rather than live with a man who has betrayed her. Both are modern Indian women who wish to survive independently of the male influence. Anju cannot forget and forgive the infidelity of her husband and does not want to be a prisoner at the hands of men who apparently wish to come to her aid, but would finally exercise complete control over her. She would rather bring up her daughter alone according to her own wishes.

The process of assimilation into American culture for both Anju and Sudha is different. Sudha's stands for deep-rooted view points, background, one's initial stages, the personality one is born with, the pull of the native land, the buried past and, the security etc. She remains an outsider in the adopted country. As immigrant in America she leaves the status of her past, discarding nostalgia and seek assimilation into her adopted culture, which for her, is the chief survival strategy. Whereas Anju stands for liberty, escape, exploration, discovery, revelation and removal of the imagination, for balancing new heights, for thoughts and aspirations and achievement and for facing the test of the indefinite.

Divakaruni reveals her serious and vital artistic preoccupation by examining various factors that entirely hinder cordial relations between the two different races and cultures. She depicts judiciously the confrontation of the two modes of living. Her thorough knowledge and perception of both Eastern and Western values of life enables her to portray the personal, political and cultural interactions between the two. Undeniably she is a sensitive writer and her accurate depiction of the juxtaposition of two diverse civilizations is a true accomplishment because her own creative and aesthetic personality is a unique combination of opposite qualities and values of two cultures.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is one of the outstanding voices of the immigrant writers. In most of her novels, Psychology, Mythology and Folklore are interrelated which reflect that the writer did not get displaced from her Indian origin. Divakaruni wanted to speak and write the language of women. She opens up a window into the multicultural world of her characters and entertains a passionate desire to tell an



honest and moving story. The Diaspora has changed the lives of Indians immensely. As a new woman novelist, Divakaruni, in an interview with Neila C. Seshachari says:

I am because it is a physical fact that I have left my homeland, whatever my motives were. And I have decided to settle in a land that is very different and a culture that is very different. So whatever the original motive or intent was, I do find myself torn between two cultures especially now that I'm bringing up children here, and I'm torn by the desire to go back to India for long or short periods of time. I'm conflicted by the fact that my mother is alone in India. All her children are here [in the United States]. I think the idea of the diaspora is very important to me and in my writing it comes up many times because I'm aware of other people whose entry into America was even more diasporic than mine. And I write about them too; their stories are important to me. (Seshachari)

In Divakaruni's novels the identity issue of her protagonists takes on another color, that of making a position for themselves in their adopted country. Her characters develop multiplicity of consciousness in viewing themselves. One basic consciousness with which they understand is, a minority class living in America whether they are the first generation Indian-Americans or the second generation. Though these people have been settled in America, adopted the American way of life and feel and mourn at the loss that the country has undergone but at the same time are worried about their own existence in the host country.

Her depiction typically take place within the charged context of the immigrant experience, making for a writing style both narrow in focus and broad in scope. She has been praised for her literary creativity and person sensitivity in dealing with cross-cultural complexities. Most notable has been her continuing concern with the experiences of Indian and Indian American women.

Thus, the East-West encounter as a recurrent theme in her novels is directly related to her experience as an expatriate who inherited Indian values by birth and acquired Western values by choosing to live in America. Like her, most of her characters find themselves in situations where they must confront values rooted in opposing cultural milieus, historical processes, economic systems, political ideologies, and philosophical traditions. Not all of them are able to resolve the tensions and inequities that threaten to disintegrate their own psyche and spirit. But even their defeat is redeemed by their heroic endeavor to overcome their innate weaknesses or the inexorable forces around them.

Divakaruni's frequent return to the theme of the East-West encounter and especially of the Indo-American meeting and her masterly treatment of it in great depth and seriousness shows her genuine and resolute concern for the global and contemporary situation. She seems to suggest in her novels that cultural and political synthesis and a compromise between the two modes of living are always possible.

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## Delineation of Love in the Poetry of Kamala Das

–Tribhuvan Kumar\*

### Abstract

Kamala Das is a confessional poet. She writes about love and sex in her poetry whatever she has faced and experienced in her life. Her poetry is thus all herself, about her intensely felt desire for love and her failure to maintain a sound married life. She explores the recurrent theme of love and its multi-faceted emotional entanglements with a kind of boldness and frankness that she has earned for herself the reputation of notoriety. The paper thus explores the various facet of love in her poetry.

**Keywords:** Kamala Das, Confessional poet, Love theme, Female sexuality, Indian English poetry.

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Kamala Das is preeminently a poet of love. Love is the leitmotif in all her poems. A serious deliberation of her poetic works reveal that underneath the disguise of mere physicality in many of her poems there lurks a seeker who is in search of ideal love and in the process unravels the essential spirit of love. This idea rings with a distinguished note in the voice of the woman persona who yearns for love in the poem 'Love':

Until I found you,  
I wrote verse, drew pictures,  
And, went out with friends.  
For walks...

Now that I love you,  
Curled like and old mongrel  
My life lies, content,  
In you.... (SC 30)

Before she met the lover the life of the speaker was altogether different, she was engaged in insignificant trivialities and whiled away her time in meaningless activities. Her life changed after she met her lover. She attained fulfillment in his arms. From the external world she moved inward to find contentment in her man's love.

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Kamala Das's urge to obtain love through an all-encompassing relationship is articulated in yet another poem called 'Winter'. Here the strong emotional attachment of the speaker borders on physicality when she utters:

... even my  
Soul, I thought, must send its roots somewhere  
And, I loved his body without shame,  
On winter evenings as cold winds  
Chuckled against the white window-panes. (SC 16)

As roots of a tree clutches soil to attain fixity, so also the soul of the speaker holds her lover's body to obtain security and warmth in love. She longs that her love may surpass the pangs of separation as suggested by the word 'cold' and attains immortality by defying the whiteness of death.

Kamala Das with her characteristic honesty makes no bones about relating her need for love. Her passionate yearning is manifested in the voice of her woman protagonist who says:

I met a man, loved him. Call  
Him not by any name, he is every man  
Who wants woman, just as I am every  
Woman who seeks love. (SC 63)

It appears obvious that she is least concerned about the man's wants. Even after knowing full well that the man desires only a female form she nevertheless expresses her wish to be loved infinitely and assumes that every woman wants unstinting love from her man.

It is not only at the emotional level that the poet restricts herself in asserting her longing for love. By rejecting the garb of conventionality, unlike her predecessors, she is the first woman poet in Indian English Literature who has unabashedly talked about female sexuality. She has explored the man-woman relationship both in the physical and mental plane. In the strain of the French feminist critics who advocated *écriture féminine* Kamala Das, like Helene Cixous who claims that women should write through their bodies, writes in a typical feminine style whose language, tone and feeling work in unison to give a feminine outlook to her poetic works. Probably this is the reason for which we come across the detailing of female physical organs in her poem like 'The Looking Glass':

Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of  
Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,  
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your  
Endless female hungers. (OSS 68)

Kamala Das admonishes the woman to gift her man everything that goes into the making of her womanliness. She thinks that by giving away her essential femininity the woman will be able to obtain a fulfilling love relationship. It is only through the complete surrender of selves that the lovers can taste the feeling of oneness.

... When he  
And I were one, we were neither  
Male nor female. There were no more  
Words left, all words lay imprisoned.  
In the ageing arms of night. (OSS 69)

During this moment of intense love between the lover and his beloved their biological distinction erodes away, the gender binary dissolves in each other's company and all words between them are spent.

Kamala Das's persona expresses her desire to obtain love with such undying passion that it verges on obsession on her part. To her:

The only truth that matters is  
That all this love is mine to give  
It does not matter that i seek  
For it a container, as alms  
Seek a begging bowl ... (TSR 12)

The poem deviates from the usual notion of a beggar asking for alms. Here the poet is ready to shower all her love and looks out for suitable container that can hold her unbridled emotions. She wants nothing in her life but unconditional love. Life without love is meaningless for her and she would prefer death to life if it is devoid of love:

I want to be loved  
And  
If love is not to be had,  
I want to be dead, just dead. (OSS 108)

Kamala Das's pleading for love is exhibited with compelling drive in the poem, 'Morning at Apollo pier' also. Her anguish is prominent in the following lines:

But, hold me, hold me once again,  
Kiss the words to death in my mouth, plunder  
Memories. I hide my defeat in your  
Wearied blood, and all my fears and shame.  
... ..  
Your flawed beauty is my only refuge.  
O love me, love, love me till I die ... (TSR 16)

With desperate yearning she clings to her lover whom she thinks is her ultimate abode where she wishes to take "refuge". In him, she desires to submerge all her "defeat", "fear" and "shame" and be loved till death. This inexorable dependence upon her man makes the woman persona sound somewhat pathetic.

In another poem named 'The Gulmohur' the poet celebrates the crowning emotion of love and its powerful impact upon her. She compares her present condition with that of the past and describes how her life has changed after she received love:

...my hands before I met him were cold as though they had reached out and touched a corpse I was so uneasy with them but in his room against his body summered my hands grew warm... (TSR 43)

Earlier the poetic persona was akin to a corpse; cold and dead but love rejuvenated her life with the warmth of pleasant summer. She basked in the sunshine of her lover's love and all her uneasiness of feeling like a "corpse" withered away with the loving touch of her lover.

It is a known fact that Kamala Das's autobiography "My Story" when published for the first time in 1976 caused a huge furore in the literary world. The poet was immediately labelled as controversial. A lot of stories have been fabricated regarding her relationship with Madhav Das, her husband. Many critics of known credentials have regarded the autobiography as touchstone of her feminist principles and read her poems in relation to that book. As a result her husband has often been criticized for failing in his duties to the poet. However Kamala Das turns the tables to acknowledge a close affinity with her husband quite precisely in her interviews and in covert manner in some poems.

The poem 'The Last Act' is one such poem that bear explicit testimony of the deep-seated love she had for her husband:

... Back home,  
He stumbled into the woman's arms, that  
Little one who used to talk of love and  
Tire him. I was waiting for you, she said,  
I thought you would need me today. (OSS 106)

The dependency of both husband and wife on each other leads to marital bliss. The wife comforts her husband and provides him with emotional and mental nourishment. She continues in the same strain at another place when she says:

...My beloved is armed with winning and violet hate and mistrust but he comes to my arms unarmed and when the last of strengths in drops is shed I call him my baby I hold him to my breast.... (OSS 36)

Here Kamala Das does not restrict herself to the limited role of wifely duties but following the tradition of Indian culture she makes an extension of her feminine self and manifest motherly qualities only to solace her husband against the pitfalls of life. But reality jolts her when to her dismay she finds him a completely changed man: "... I open his door and see him at his desk signing/letters with the glasses on with the stern look with the do you want/something the change is so complete that I am silent...". (OSS 36)

In Kamala Das's poems love often brings frustration along with it as resultant outcome. In most poems her persona has felt the pangs of love with severe sufferings. This may be due to the fact that her expectation of a fruitful relationship has never attained fulfillment. She recollects the relationship with her husband with a sigh:

There are no memories that enthrall,  
no fond phrase capsuled in thought,  
It was never a husband and wife bond.  
We were such a mismatched pair, ... (OSS 141)

The mismatch between the spouses is probably due to the unreciprocated love between them which drives the wife to seek the much needed love desperately outside her marital bonds. She takes her own liberty when the husband is not around, “When you leave, I drive my blue battered car / Along the bluer sea. I run up the forty / Noisy steps to knock at another’s door” (PP 57). Her pathetic urge to obtain love is so potent that the woman persona does not deter to pay heavy price to receive love in meagre amount: “Ask me why life is short and love is / Shorter still, ask me what is bliss and what its price ...” (PP 51).

The poet’s desire to find love outside her marriage however brought disillusionment that caused further pain in her life. Love proved to be a mere ideal of which she could only dream of. Even in the presence of her lover she feels hesitant to think of love:

Million questions awake in  
Me, and all about him, and  
This skin – communicated  
Thing that I dare not yet in  
His presence call our love. (SC 12)

It is a pity that instead of emotional involvement, the lover could only awake “skin’s lazy hunger” in his beloved. The woman persona in the poem ‘The Freaks’ considers herself and her lover unfortunate enough because: “... who can / Help us who have lived so long / And have failed in love?” Silence fills their relationship and even after sharing much time together the couple fails to feel the necessary attachment towards each other. Their hearts are vacant, for they are empty of emotions and share no feelings in between them. The disillusionment caused from mere physical attraction brings along with it some painful experiences:

Yes, I was thinking, lying beside him  
That I loved, and was much loved.  
It is a physical thing, he said suddenly,  
End it, I cried, end it, and let us be free. (OSS 66)

This is the sad story of the end of a love relationship; evidently when carnal pleasures take precedence an everlasting bonding between the lovers becomes impossible. Although, once they were enough responsive towards each other, it proved to be momentary spring time which withered away and only “a physical thing” left behind that led them to end up their relationship.

The poetic persona laments the loss of her love in the poem ‘A Losing Battle’ also. She compares this loss with the losing in a battle. She feels defeated by a more worthy competitor who seems to have taken over her lover. On being rejected she speaks out:

Men are worthless, to trap them  
Use the cheapest bait of all, but never  
Love, which in a woman must mean tears  
And a silence in the blood. (OSS 59)

The poet here expresses her indignation for men who do not value the true feelings attached with love. She states difference in attitude of man and woman regarding love for each of whom it means different. To men, love is nothing short of lust; while that same feeling brings pain and agonies in women. Hence, the poet is of the opinion that the ennobling emotions which love brings along with it should not be meant for men.

The frailties in love and the poet's repeated failings to establish an immortal relationship with the lover creates vacuity and sufferings in her life. As a result, she has remained preoccupied with the theme of insecurity in love. The poem 'My Predecessor' is built around this theme and consists of a series of questions in which the female counterpart asks:

How shall I believe this man?  
 If what he said was true who was it who blanched his  
 Rude short hair, rumped the satin of his skin and  
 Left him feeling like a rind? (OSS 154)

The woman persona continues with a sting of jealousy in her voice and asks her opponent's "inauspicious name". She wishes to know by which power the other woman could draw away her lover from her.

The woman protagonist in Kamala Das's poems brings out male betrayal besides pointing to the callousness and indifference of an insensitive husband towards his wife. The female persona in the poem 'The Sunshine Cat' speaks out her resentment:

They did this to her, the man who knew her, the man  
 She loved, who loved her not enough, being selfish  
 And a coward, the husband who neither loved nor  
 Used her, but was a ruthless watcher ... (SC 51)

The man whom she loved proved to be "coward" and "selfish" who could not understand her emotional involvement. The husband too was no less at fault because he turned out to be a silent but ruthless watcher who gave cold shoulder to his wife's sufferings. He was careless enough to provide any stability to her when she needed his support the most.

The emotional aridity and unresponsiveness that Kamala Das felt in the company of her husband and other male lovers was compensated to a great extent by her grandmother who showered all her warmth and affection on the poet right from her childhood. Her autobiography *My Story* is strewn with nostalgic memories of her dear grandmother. She fondly reminisces about her in the poem 'My Grandmother's House':

There is a house not far away where once  
 I received love. That woman died  
 The house withdrew into silence, snakes moved  
 Among books. (OSS 150)

In the above context Kamala Das refers to her grandmother as "that woman" who by her loving nature made the ancestral house of Nalapat the abode of peace where the poet received abundant unconditional love. But with the passing away of grandmother



that house lost all its identity for her and so she sadly grieves the fact that "... I who have lost/My way and beg now at stranger's door to/Receive love, at least in small change?"

For Kamala Das, her granny had always been a genuine source of love and sustenance. She shared close affinity of warmth and affection with her which gradually faded away with the passage of time. The childhood happiness got restricted only to memories of the poet but never for once had grandmother's love waned for her: "My grandmother, she was/the first I loved, trunks, when opened, after/She died, contained only dolls" (OSS 113). It is a loving memory for a grand daughter to recollect that her dear old granny's trunks contained gifts of dolls that she had kept as treasure to offer her affectionate grand daughter.

Besides grandmother, Kamala Das has extended her love towards her father also. Interestingly, the few poems that she has written on her father are after his death and project to the deep attachment between father and daughter through a loving relationship which apparently seemed to be otherwise. Mourning on the loss of her father, she laments the fact that the father died without any parting words, "You left me without good bye". She might have brought pain and dishonour to him as she over-heard someone whispering: "The one who caused him the greatest pain/And look at her now, acting solemn" (OSS 49). However she resolves this apparent anomaly in the father-daughter relationship towards the end of the poem when she confesses:

Should I have loved you, father  
More than I did  
That wasn't so easy to do  
If I have loved others, father,  
I swear I have loved you the most. (OSS 49)

In another poem 'Next to Indira Gandhi' Kamala Das talks about the relationship with her father at length. She begins with a note of strong antipathy for him as she gradually unfolds the ways by which the father tried to dictate her life and subjugate her within the boundary of his whims: "You chose my clothes for me/My tutors, my hobbies, my friends/And at fifteen with my first saree you picked me a husband" (OSS 148); She had no courage to go against her father's wishes because she dreaded him most. It was only after his death that the poetic persona could ask "Did you ever want a daughter/Did I disappoint you much ..." (OSS 148). But the last line of the poem is a volte-face that conveys an absolutely different attitude of the poet: "And I, freed from fear at last, feel no relief at all, I feel dead. More dead than you..." (OSS 149). The entire poem creates the impression that the father is a man of strict convictions who has put the daughter under his thumb and therefore no love has been shared between them. The end part of the poem however reveals that the loss of father has created a void in her life. Freed from his constricted rules she ought to have felt happier but on the contrary she feels benumbed and lifeless.

The somber tone that goes with numbness arising out of the father's death persists in the poem 'My Father's Death' also. Here the poet gives an elaborate description of the funeral scene of her father and goes on to relate that people came to get photographed

with the dead man “For he was the most important/Man to die in Calicut” (OSS 146). He had suffered for twelve days before he passed away and during that time the daughter tried to nurse him back to health. It was only during his illness that she could feel a close bonding with him:

Only in a coma  
 Did he seem close to me, and  
 I Whispered into his ears that  
 I Loved him although I was bad,  
 a bad Daughter ... (OSS 147)

All through his life there was a cold indifference between them that distanced even the close relationship of father and daughter. It is only after his death that she calls out in pain “You should have hugged me, father, just/Once, held me to your breast, you should/Have asked me who I was, in truth” (OSS 147). Her agonies to obtain her father’s affection are prominent here; she has pined for his love and care.

The father’s death caused a great grief to the poet. She might have failed to become her father’s daughter in true terms, she might have brought dishonour to his name but undoubtedly such is her deep attachment for him that she would have gladly changed her place with him at his death bed as he loved life more than she did.

Throughout a long poetic career of nearly a century Kamala Das has kept herself preoccupied with the theme of love and its intricate emotional entanglements. Sometimes she celebrates the euphoric ecstasy attained through earnest feelings of engagement, while at other times she appears pitiable with her gripping pleadings to cling to her lover. In some poems she is turbulent and articulates her thoughts with impulsive drive that has urgency of passion within it while in some other poems she is sedated like the deep blue sea which often forms the background of her poems with all her emotions spent up and adopts a reconciliatory attitude towards life. While she is mesmerized by the unblemished beauty of love she also feels disillusioned by the repulsive selfishness in man woman relationship. Kamala Das’s artistry arrest all the nuances attached to the delicacy of male-female liaison to render them into poetry of rare artistic merit.

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## **Text/Texts: Interrogating Julia Kristeva's Concept of Intertextuality**

*–P. Prayer Elmo Raj\**

### **Abstract**

Julia Kristeva's contribution to the notion of intertextuality is immense. She not only coined the word intertextuality but substantially stressed the importance of the potential dynamics that lay within the text. Text is not a unilinear entity but a heterogeneous combination of texts. Any text is at once literary and social, creative and cultural. They are culturally and institutionally fashioned. Most of the ideas that Kristeva puts forward is a rework or revision of Bakhtinian notion of intertextuality. Bakhtin also held the view point that the text cannot be detached from socio-cultural textuality which is the backdrop in which a text is created. This paper is an attempt to trace and interrogate the various notions and ideas relating to intertextuality in Kristeva's thought.

**Keywords:** Intertextuality, Dialogism, Productivity, Ideologeme, Transposition.

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Julia Kristeva, a Bulgarian, arrived in the French intellectual scene at the point when a host of critique were being applied on Saussurean linguistics, the moment that saw the advent of poststructuralism. Her writings appeared in *Tel Quel*, the crucible of poststructuralist thinking. Barthes observed that Kristeva alters the scheme of things and demolishes the final prejudice, “the one you thought you could be reassured by, could take pride in; what she displaces is the *already said*, the *déjà-dit*, i.e., the instance of the signified, i.e., stupidity; what she subverts is authority, authority of the monologic scene, of filiation (168).

Julia Kristeva coined the term intertextuality. Intertextuality, though surfaced as a poststructuralist concept, existed as a universal phenomenon that elucidates the communicative interconnections between a text and the other and text and context. However, as Zindziuviene observes it still “retains its mosaic, absorptive and transformative aspect” within poststructuralist discourses. With the arrival of various theories, intertextuality has now acquired wider range of meanings than what Kristeva had expounded in her path breaking work “Word, Dialogue and Novel.” Intertextuality maintains that a text “cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system” (Worton and Still 1). The author compiles the text by

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reading other texts and the text becomes available to the audience in a process of reading. Bakhtin finds in a Socratic dialogue an earliest form of novel, heteroglossia and dialogism, what Kristeva later names as intertextuality. Kristeva assumes that a text is compiled as an assortment of quotations and is assimilation and a make over of another. Intertextuality reinstates intersubjectivity. In "The Bounded Text," Kristeva deals with the process of creating a text outside the already present discourse. The authors are not original and do not create anything from their texts from original minds but compile from the already existing texts. She explains text as "a permutation of texts, intertextuality in the given text," where "several utterances, taken from other texts intersect and neutralize one another" (Kristeva 36). Texts are not isolated personage but culturally fashioned discourses, ways of systemic/institutional 'speaking and saying.' Allen remarks that it is within this postulate one finds how "Bakhtinian notion of the dialogic has been rephrased within Kristeva's semiotic attention to text, textuality and their relation to ideological structures" (36). However Bakhtin's notion of dialogism is based on how human beings exercise language in specific social situations but Kristeva thinks more in terms of text and textuality. Both arrive at a point that texts cannot be detached from the social or cultural textuality which is the back drop in which a text is created. The social text and the literary text are inseparably knit together to fabricate a tapestry.

Text is a practice and productivity. Therefore its intertextual position symbolizes its configuration of words and utterances that already existed making a text "double voiced." The text is productivity in its association to language where it is "redistributive (destructive-constructive) and consequently it can be approached by means of logical categories other than purely linguistic ones; it is permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a text, many utterances taken from other texts intersect with one another and neutralize one another (qtd. in Orr 27). The text envelopes within it a reverberative process which is also part of the disposition of language itself, of an on-going ideological struggles and tensions. The meaning that the text embodies is not constant and apparent because the text symbolizes the society's conflict over the meaning of words. Intertextuality deals with the materialization of a text from the social text and its perpetual existence within society and history. The text, on its own, have no unity or unified meaning' but part of the on-going socio-cultural processes. Kristeva views text or its components as ideologme. Ideologme resolves the dynamics of a semiotics positioning a text within the text of society and history. The ideologme of a text is the centre where the comprehending rationality grapples the alteration of utterances in which the text becomes a totality encompassing the historical and social text.

Kristeva elaborates the literary word in terms of a horizontal and vertical axis. In the horizontal dimension, the communication takes place between the author and the reader and in the vertical dimension, the text communicates with a frontal and synchronic literary corpus. Kristeva explains this idea by reinterpreting Bakhtin's theory of dialogic text: "Horizontal axis (subject-addressee) and vertical axis (text-context) coincide, bringing to light an important fact: each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read" (66). Kristeva also introduces the concept of subject of enunciation and subject of utterance to elucidate the role of the author. The important distinction between enunciation and utterance is that enunciation connotes to the origin of utterance and utterance is linked with the

verbal nature. Utterance is the production of words by a human subject and enunciation is a form of words that stay independent of a human subject. When the uttered word is conveyed to a listener, the subjective position of the speaker is maintained but when a reader reads the uttered words years later, the subjective position of the author is missed or no longer part of it. Moreover Kristeva attempts to view intertextuality as transposition, transposition of one sign scheme into another and “specifies that the passage from one signifying system to another demands a new articulation of the ethic—of enunciative and denotative positionality” (59). Such a position allows fresh expressions positioning the sign system in a relational process. She argues that: “If one grants that every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying systems (an inter-textuality), one then understands that its “place” of enunciation and its denoted “object” are never single, complete and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated. In this way polysemy [multiple levels or kinds of meaning] can also be seen as the result of a semiotic polyvalence—an adherence to different sign systems (Kristeva 59-60).

One of Kristeva's famous Bakhtinian revisions is her use of the word ambivalence which arises of hybridity and heteroglossia which lead her to assume that within the inner space of the text and the space of the text poetic language is dual. Both Kristeva and Bakhtin emphasize the doubleness or the dialogic feature of words which interrogates the fundamentals of Western logic, unity and the Aristotelian logic and its propositions on singularity. Kristeva's dialogism is inherently a conceptually relational process that attempts transcendence rather than synchronization involving “an idea of rupture (of opposition and analogy) as a modality of transformation” (89). She also dealt with the manner in which discourses were dynamically employed and appropriated in the novel. Text as intersection of textualities entail the author, different characters present in the novel and the manifold ways of speech positioned in a given period artistically to make it a narrative whole. A novelist, thus, performs two oppositional roles, the narrative role and the textual role. The two fold creative dynamics of an author can be understood as the working pattern or the structuration that defines textual meaning involving word and sign, elements that have liquidity relying on the interconnection with other functional elements within the text. Text also embody an “agency of signifying activity” through perfunctory metaphors as “translinguistic apparatus” only to reallocate a linguistic sign relating the anterior and synchronic articulations and making text as an open productivity (Kristeva 101).

Kristeva's intertextuality divests Bakhtin's dialogism as an interaction between human beings by opening up how dialogue with its sociolinguistic and ideological ruminations forms a cognitive and evaluative perspective. Moreover, the methodological regeneration presumes an interconnection between subject and discourse within a text from socio-cultural viewpoints. Kristeva also emphasises that text engenders meaning at a synchronic level that is identifiable with the relations between text and the corpus of already existing texts. Therefore meaning becomes flexible and intersubjective within the text. If text as productivity assumes a subject that allows the generation of the text and meaning is debatable within Kristevian notion of intertextuality. She accentuates on linguistic arrangements that allows subject positions only through a configuration of texts taking its cue from cultural deposits of texts.

The text has its historical and social coordinates which is incorporated through the reference of semiotic practices at different structural levels of each text. Semiotic practices that encompass within the text are no more a fixed linguistic structure according to the codes that generates meaning. The function of intertextuality also involves the reconfiguration of the thetic (Juvan 102ff). Positioning of the subject within a discourse assumes significance through a process of transposition. The interconnection and movement of signs within a signifying system entail the fresh enunciation of the thetic where the intertextual generates meanings.

Kristeva views text as an interplay of texts not as a singular entity. The possible openness that the text subsumes within it unbolts the possibilities of viewing text from many different purviews. The claim that the author while compiling a text engages in a discourse with other texts point out to the dynamics of creativity that ventures beyond the creative subject. This conversation which the author enters into is a creative dialogue where meaning is arranged or composed rather than created. Therefore what we term as meaning of the text finds a wider and complex characterization beyond what is inscribed in a text. The 'text that is' is 'texts within' and the 'meaning that is' is 'meanings beyond.' This alters the hermeneutic of the text and takes the task of interpreting text as a skilful intervention into historical, cultural, social and institutional realms. Interpretation can no more be done within the postulates of academia but should take into account the relation between text to society and culture. Therefore, interpretation becomes a process similar to the process of compiling a text. There is no independent meaning, no independent text and no independent interpretation. Singularity is illusory. The text would become texts to open up the dynamics of intertextuality within and outside the text. Intertextuality assumes an examination of interconnections between texts that situates the making of meaning in and through a dialogic process that occurs between the text and audience. This process expands the purview of what a text is from being a written form to encompass culture and history. The autonomy of the text becomes questionable by making it permeable through a process of inter-coherence where text generates structural connections between itself and other texts.

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## The Plays of Girish Karnad: Critical Perspectives

–Rajesh Kumar Pandey\*

### Abstract

The postcolonial Indian theatre saw many meaningful encounters with our tradition. The drive to return and re-discover our tradition was inspired by a search for roots and identity. This was part of the whole process of decolonization of our life-style, values, social institutions, creative forms and cultural modes. Girish Karnad, a famous Indian playwright, probed into the Indian past to re-interpret it and make it relevant for the present times. There is a unique amalgam of the elements of tradition and contemporary in the plays of Karnad. It seems that themes taken from folklores, myths and Indian history turned into a vehicle to express contemporary issues like feminism, marginalization of castes and minority religions, violence, increasing fundamentalism, denigrating Indian politics and existentialism.

**Keywords:** Theatre, Dramatist, Technique, History, Myth.

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Girish Karnad is one such Indian playwright who has rejected the imitative pursuits of the West and has stuck to the native tradition for the themes and techniques of his plays. The reason why Karnad chooses myths or legends is not very difficult to discover. Myths, legends and folklores form the bedrock of any culture or civilization from which come out its basic values, modes and customs. These cover, as Carl C. Jung points out, in the form of motifs and symbols, certain recurring patterns of collective human behaviour and certain archetypal human experiences. Our Indian theatre had a strong tradition in mythological and historical plays. Karnad is deeply aware of the fact and firmly believes in the potential of the Indian theatrical tradition.

The characters in the mythical plays of Girish Karnad are not abstract symbols of some idea but are fully developed characters in their own right. Each play is a presentation of multiple ideologies and ideas; Concerns on caste and gender recur in all myth-based plays; existentialism and related philosophical discourse also find mention while burning issues of violence and non-violence in present times too, seem to fit in. The plays written by Karnad which base themselves on myths are three in number, namely, *Yayati*, *The Fire and the Rain* and *Bali: The Sacrifice*. This paper discusses these contemporary issues knitted in his mythical plays. The origin of the myth and

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the creative outbursts by the author, the themes of existentialism, social stratification, gender issues and other minor issues have been dealt here.

Girish Karnad probed into the Indian past to re-interpret it and make it relevant for the present times. There is a unique amalgam of the elements of tradition and contemporary in the plays of Karnad. It seems that themes taken from folklores, myths and Indian history turned into a vehicle to express contemporary issues like feminism, marginalization of castes and minority religions, violence, increasing fundamentalism, denigrating Indian politics and existentialism. He writes his plays in Kannada and then translates them into English. He is credited for having established the Kannada theatre at a global level. While preserving the local flavour in his plays, the appeal of latter seems to be trans-regional and trans-national. However with the publication of his three English plays, *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* (2004) and the two monologues, *Flowers* and *Broken Images* (2005) it appears that the playwright has shifted his medium of expression from Kannada to English. In the postcolonial scenario, when an increasing number of literary artists are turning towards the rich heritage of native tradition to re-define their Indian identity, Karnad touches upon contemporary issues like domestic violence, feminism, existentialism, marginalization of castes and psychoanalysis.

The first play written by Karnad was *Yayati* (1961) which has not been rendered into English by the playwright. The play was a spontaneous outcome of the pressures bearing on the young Karnad's mind which made him realize that he was not a poet he had conceived himself to be, but a dramatist at heart and had failed to realize so. Karnad has borrowed the myth of Yayati from the "Adiparva" of the *Mahabharata*; he however has induced certain changes in the play. Karnad takes liberty with the myth and weaves complex dimensions into the plot borrowed from the *Mahabharata*. To the mythical story of Yayati he adds new characters and alters the story-line so as to deepen its connotative richness and give it a contemporary appeal.

*Tughlaq* not only indicates the experience of colonialism but also suggests the growth of neo-colonialism in postcolonial India. The Indian governance is overtaken by corrupt, educated government bureaucrats and officials whose powers are unchecked by the higher authorities and who execute their own idiosyncrasies. In an essay, "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness", Franz Fanon calls attention to the fact that the newly-independent nation can find itself administered by an indigenous middle-class that uses its privileged education and position cheerfully to replicate the colonial administration of the nation for its own financial profit. This class is "neo-colonial" in that it continues to exploit the people in a way not dissimilar to the colonialists. It is a situation when in Fanon's words, "the national bourgeoisie steps into the shoes of the former European settlement." Aziz here takes up the neo-colonialist position; he rises to the level of an officer in the civil services by his deceit and treachery and then exploits people and accepts bribe from them. He takes complete hold of the political policies of the Empire and finally emerges victorious. It depicts the hold of bureaucracy over the government policies of the nation.



In *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, Karnad celebrates Tipu as a figure of anti-colonial resistance in keeping with the occasion for which it was written. The play thus calls for a resurgence of the feeling of patriotism and nationalism by reminding the uprooted Indian of the sacrifice made by a great warrior for safeguarding one's country. He honours the achievements of a pre-colonial ruler in the postcolonial present. The play projects the life of a great warrior and visionary who foresaw the looming devastation brought upon India by the British Raj, and who in the early years of the English military expansion fought with all his strength and vigour to resist their advances. He was in fact the only Indian prince who threw a challenge to the British empire and proved to them that India was not a land of uncivilized barbarians (as they were seen by the British) which could be captured and toyed with at ease.

*Hayavadana* (first written in 1971; rendered into English in 1975), which is the third play written by the playwright, delves into the rich heritage of the Indian folk theatre to address contemporary issues and pose philosophical riddles about the nature of identity and human being's quest for completeness. This experimental play is an "urban folk" drama in that it joins the conventions of *Yakshagana* performance (a dance-drama form belonging to the coastal areas of Karnataka) — stock characters, music, dance, masks, talking dolls etc. with a core narrative which apart from the philosophical implications, addresses contemporary concerns.

*Naga Mandala* (1990) is a socio-psychological study of Indian woman; richly textured dramatic transmutation of two folk tales of Karnataka. It deals with gender-bias and the subjection of woman in patriarchal Indian Orthodox society. The female protagonist- Rani and Kurudavva, other female character, are generic creations that stand for Indian women. In *Fire and the Rain* (1998), which is a far more successful play, Karnad draws upon a story from the *Mahabharata*. But in the best traditions of modernism, he gives a contemporary meaning to an old legend which stresses the dangers of knowledge without wisdom and power without, integrity. The 'fire' in the title of the play is the fire of lust, anger, vengeance, envy, treachery, violence and death. The 'rain' symbolizes self-sacrifice, compassion, divine grace, forgiveness, revival and life. The myth of Yavakri has been dramatized with new dimensions, and presentation is amply successful to create ancient atmosphere and link past with present. *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* (1997) was first written as a radio play for BBC to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence in 1996. Later it was entirely re-written for the stage. The plot obviously deals with some aspect of Indo-British relation. It primarily explores the secret inner world of a man whose public life was a continual war against British colonialism. It follows the model of the history play established in *Tughlaq* and *Tale-Danda*. *Wedding Album* (2008) is the latest play of Karnad. It's a delightfully poignant tale of love and longing in a shining India. It explores the traditional Indian wedding in a globalized, technologically advanced India. It took more than thirty years to transform the memory of Karnad's sister's marriage which was marked by celebration and anxiety into a full-length play. The marriage of Vidula Nadkarni belonging to urban middle class Saraswat family of Dharwad represents the indigenous socio-cultural practices, though she belongs to a different world-cyber world of modern youth to whom "marriage is a gamble" (89).

Karnad borrows heavily from traditional theatrical techniques. In *Hayavadana* and *Nagamandala*, he makes use of a number of traditional techniques. Multi-level communication by way of animals, supernatural beings, talking dolls, songs and prose recitations, *bhagvata* and masks, *swagata*, music, rhythmic movements, *rangpati*, *prasanga*, *nandi* and *bharatvakya* etc. are made use of in these plays. There appears to be a sprinkling of folk-theatre and classical techniques in *Yayati* with use of Sutradhar and Nati; *The Fire and the Rain* with the induction of *bharatvakya*, Prologue and Epilogue; *Bali* with inductions of songs sung by characters and singer; *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* with use of *kaskshavibhaga*. However these techniques seem to be used to create an effect of alienation or defamiliarization. It appears as if the playwright wished to make the audience think about the themes and characters portrayed and not identify with them.

Though Karnad is an Indian and makes use of folk-theatre devices, his intents appear to be at variance with those of the traditional theatre. The classical and traditional Indian theatre never drew a line between the realistic and the spiritual world. For them the cosmos comprised of both worlds and so their presentation of supernatural beings, talking animals completely fitted in their system of things. The question of alienation, thus never arose in the traditional theatre.

On the other hand Bertolt Brecht thought of these techniques as part of Eastern Stylization. He incorporated these techniques borrowed from Chinese theatre, to create the effect of alienation in his plays. The techniques were deployed in order to prevent identification of the spectators with the characters and force the audience to think about the situation and jolt into action.

Karnad expresses his indebtedness to Brecht for reminding him of the techniques present in his very own Indian theatre. He too, like Brecht and unlike the traditional theatre, uses varied techniques for creation of alienation. It appears that Karnad's chief interest in traditional techniques is prompted by his aim for creating alienation effect. For this he sometimes even adopts Brechtian modes and blends them with traditional theatrical techniques. In *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, Karnad makes strong use of alienation effect through historicism. The two historians who are present at the beginning of the play appear to be Brechtian devices to create alienation. On account of their being real human beings present at a certain period of history who had actually done a research on the life of Tipu, the two historians of the play seem to resemble the *sutradhar* of the Indian traditional theatre very less. In *Tughlaq*, the Sultan's theatrical speeches create an effect of alienation. The narration in *Bali*, *Flowers* and even in *The Fire and the Rain* moves backwards and forwards and almost creates a movie-like effect. Flashbacks, an alienating modern device is again made use of in *Bali*. In *Flowers*, the flashback forms a part not of enactment but of narration. There is use of cinematographic Brechtian device in *Naga-Mandala* in scenes where Appanna becomes Naga in a flash.

In *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, the non-division of acts into scenes does not so much appear to be the extension of the folk tradition followed by Karnad in *Hayavadana*, *Nagamandala*, *The Fire and the Rain* and *Yayati*, but as means to maintain the rapidity

of movement between dreams and reality, without any breaks. The language-issue, the debate in the country on the privileging of the elite language of the time, English over regional languages is a subject of much discussion in Karnad's monologue, *Broken Images*. In the latter play the debate is between English and regional languages and in *Tale-Danda*, it is between Sanskrit and the language of the masses. In both cases there is a conflict between the language of the elite and the regional languages. It seems that the playwright, not satisfied with what he has already achieved, moves on with his creative explorations into new aspects of life and philosophy, art and technology.

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## **Views of Realism in Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers!* and *Music for Mohini***

–Rajesh Kumar Sharma\*

### **Abstract**

Bhabani Bhattacharya is rightly metaphorised as one of the four wheels of the Indian English novel chariot- the other three are Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. His fictional contribution spreads over a period of about thirty years and consists of only six novels, viz. *So Many Hungers!* (1947), *Music for Mohini* (1952), *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1955), *A Goddess Named Gold* (1960), *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966), *A Dream in Hawaii* (1978), and a collection of short stories - *Steel Hawk and Other Stories*, which appeared in 1968. Bhattacharya, in all of his novels, gives an account of the Indian way of life. He refers to various customs, conventions, superstitions and oddities present in the Indian society usually without commenting on their merits. The present study is a depiction of realism in his two novels- *So Many Hungers!* and *Music For Mohini*.

**Keywords:** Realism, Society, Village-bred, City-wed, Destitute, Untouchability.

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Bhabani Bhattacharya is one of the most prominent among the older generation of Indian English novelists. He, like Mulk Raj Anand and Kamala Markandaya, believes that “an artist should delineate contemporary reality rather than recreate the historical or legendary theme” (Srivastava 5). He says that the artist should be a keen observer of truth in life’s varied situations so that he may be able to deal with such situations in his works. It has often been maintained that his themes are entirely related to the contemporary life and events in the country and that he writes with intense realism, on problems, trials, and tribulations faced by Indian people. His main object is, no doubt, the presentation of Indian social, economic and political scenario with a view of symbolic reality. Wallace Stevens points out: “Reality is a cliché from which we escape by metaphor” (Stevens 179). Bhabani Bhattacharya does not describe events or settings because they are interesting and picturesque, but because they fit into an imaginative pattern and have a symbolic and realistic significance.

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His wide range of experience in and around the world and his close association with men, manners and their personalities have enabled him to grasp the innate significance of humanity and all these find expression in the characters of his novels and short-stories, carved out with a pen that never wavers. The reader lives with the characters of the stories and marvel at the author's keen observation of the day-to-day incidents of life. Bhattacharya has written with a spicy language which is at once crisp and facile. He has caught the vein of rural speech and the informal behaviour of the people, their rustic world and their small and simple views about the great things that take place around them. He holds the view that "Indian writing in English has been a decisive factor in redressing the balance of false presentation by foreign storytellers who with their limited possibilities of true experience have seen only the surface of our way of life, failing to reach deeper into our spirit.

Of the six novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya, the first five are set against Indian social scene in the perspective of world-shaking historical events, where as the sixth one has its setting both in India and America's Hawaii Island. Being a creative artist cum-critic, Bhattacharya presents a vivid image of Indian life which is the result of his deep involvement in life. He criticises the cruelties and inhuman acts of the antisocial and anti-democratic forces of democratic contemporary India.

His first novel *So Many Hungers* (1947) was published two months after India attained Independence. Writing at such a momentous period of history, no other sensible writer could be oblivious of the crucial issues of the day. The novel vividly reflects Indian life and problems. It deals with the hunger for liberty, hunger for food, hunger for authority, hunger for sex, wealth, and for recognition. It depicts the two devils of war and famine which squeeze the blood of human race. Of the two, famine is worse because it keeps man neither completely dead nor alive. On the realistic ground the novel *So Many Hungers!* presents a very moving picture of the torment of body and spirit endured by the people of Bengal during the hideous famine years and the early stages of World War II. The simple and honest villagers of Baruni, nourished on the moral values taught to them by Davata (Devesh Basu), suffer traumatic agonies because of the inhuman and cold attitude of the administration and the vicious and corrupted atmosphere of Bengal's economy.

Bhattacharya deals with the specific period of famine, when the poor farmers were fooled by the opportunists into selling all their grain for a paltry price and were finally reduced to hunger. Bhattacharya traces their movement to the city of Calcutta in search of food and their degradation as well as the tragic deaths of millions of men. He portrays a whole lot of exploiters who never hesitate to use the vulnerability of its victims for selfish gains.

The Indian traders from the cities nearby come to help the British with perfect planning. They know exactly when to go to their doors with the rice and buy their cattle and commodities. They are shrewd like jackals. They are cunning enough to draw everyone in their trap. "Finally, human endurance ebbed. Hungry children cried themselves to death. Streams of desperate men ventured out of their ancestral homes in search of food" (*So Many Hungers!* 111). Hunger uproots millions of peasants

from their soil. The exploitation compels them to leave their birth places. Chandrasekharan's observation in *Bhabani Bhattacharya* in this regard is worth noting:

*So Many Hungers!* is a severe indictment both of the foreign government for its apathy and neglect and of unprincipled Indians who exploit the situation for their own benefit and who are no better than the vultures and jackals 'waiting for the flesh that dies' and sometimes not even waiting till it dies. The novelist's righteous indignation, his sincerity and his compassion are in evidence all through the novel. It undoubtedly presents an artistic success (Chandrasekharan 32).

While analysing various reasons of hunger he throws light on migration of villagers to the big cities. This has been the problem in India till today. Most of the rural people rush to the big cities in order to get job. They blindly believe that the poor and the needy are cared for in the city. Those who want to work can get work. One can earn his living through honest means. There is enough food and money. Here Bhattacharya wants to show that hunger is same in both places. The people who leave their birth places find it impossible to settle in the city. The same vultures and jackals of the countryside who feed themselves on the miseries of the people exist in the city. Hunger makes the destitutes dig the roots and snatch the green figs of trees in the countryside. Hunger makes the destitutes dig out the garbage cans for peels and stalks and rotten vegetables in the city. In the countryside they catch the fish and crabs to eat, in the city they are compelled to catch the rats to survive. In the countryside they search their food through jungles and meadows. The garbage cans become their food bowls in the city.

Hunger makes them so weak that they even fail to protect themselves from the wild animals. "A woman lay stretched by the tree trunk, groaning, while a jackal crouched and ate her body. The jackal saw Kajoli, grunted and slunk off unhurried" (*So Many Hungers!* 140). Those who survive rush to the great city with the belief that they will definitely get food, shelter and honest means of earning. Kajoli's mother reflects that "...the poor and needy were cared for in the wonder city. And why not? The city had money to spare and jingle. The people had great kindness in their hearts" (*So Many Hungers!* 152).

Devesh Basu, Devata of the village rightly introduces Kajoli as "a well-bred peasant girl with legacy of manners as old as India" (*So Many Hungers!* 37). Like any other rustic girl her dreams are simple. She dreams about her happy married life. She marries a boy from the city, honouring the wish of her father. She enjoys a short period of her married life. She becomes a victim of poverty, hunger and exploitation. The dream of her married life shatters. She loses her husband in a brutal attack of the railway police. Onslaught of war and manmade scarcity of food make her homeless and turns her into a miserable destitute. Her pregnancy makes her life more gruesome. But even in dire poverty and hunger she remains a symbol of endurance. The virtuous girl cannot save her chastity in a sex assault by a sex hungry soldier for two reasons: firstly, as she is too weak to fight or run, and secondly, as she feels guilty of forgetting her mother and brother. When a soldier offers her bread she forgets her mother and

brother and swallows the bread. When she realizes her mistake she is so ashamed of herself that in order to get some more bread for her mother and brother she surrenders to the soldier's hunger for sex. In the brutal rape she gets seriously hurt and loses her child.

Towards the end of the story she decides to sell herself for the sake of her mother and brother. She feels that the body once defiled is defiled; its purity cannot be restored. At least she can save her family and send them back to the village.

Kajoli had made her grim decision. She would sell the last thing she owned - herself. Mother was dying. She ailed and could not eat the poor fare her son and daughter provided, begging on streets and picking in the garbage (*So Many Hungers!* 191).

The courage to act arises from her inner self and shows a better picture - if not the best - of her future. She regains her strength to fight against the greed and exploitation and gives a blow on the face of the betel seller woman, a brothel agent. Her decision symbolises her conquest over her inner conflict. Her contemptuous smacking slap symbolises her rebuff to the exploitation. K.R. Chandrasekharan in *Bhabani Bhattacharya* says,

This is Kajoli's exit from the story; ... It is clear that she has grown to her full moral stature and chosen her path, which, one may safely surmise, is the path of dignity and self-respect. Sorrow and suffering have not destroyed her spirit which remains unconquered and unconquerable (Chandrasekharan 21).

Devesh Basu, the grandfather of Rahoul, is modelled on Gandhi as Moorthy is Gandhian in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938). He is called by the villagers of Baruni as Devata, a celestial being. He is a true follower of Gandhi and the congress. After Gandhi's arrest during the Quit India Movement, he organises the national flag *pranam* ceremony and is suspected of sedition by the police. When the police come over to Devesh Basu to arrest him, the villagers of Baruni try to stop the police, but he commands them to be non-violent, Devata says: "Friends and Comrades do not betray the flag. Do not betray yourself. There is violence in your thoughts, that is evil enough. Do not make it worse by violence in action (*So Many Hungers!* 72).

Despite all efforts to repress the Quit India Movement, the patriots remain undefeated. One remarkable aspect of Indian rural life, depicted in the novel, is that the peasants are bound by the sense of oneness, common brotherhood, devotion and their motto of living and dying together.

Bhabani Bhattacharya's another novel *Music for Mohini* (1952) deals with the theme of social rejuvenation of India, particularly its villages. With freedom of India in sight, the author fears that the society caught in the deadly mire of superstitions, blind faith and obsolete customs, may fail to utilise political freedom for the real progress of the country till it undergoes a complete social and cultural transformation. Jayadev, the hero of the novel, wonders:

What, he wonders, had happened to the ancient quest of the Hindus, the quest for *Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram?* The core, the spiritual content had

been choked by countries of evil overgrowth. Misguided faith burned like a great lamp of oil that gave a little light but a great deal of smoke. It was this smoke that was pouring over India.... (*Music for Mohini* 179).

The novel portrays a cross section of the contemporary Indian society full of superstitions and irritational orthodoxy. He writes: "Society, rural society was sick with taboos and inhibitions of its own making, the iniquity of caste and untouchability, the situation that passed for religion the wide-flung cobweb of superstitious faith" (*Music for Mohini* 67-8).

Bhattacharya portrays the growth in Mohini from a carefree girl of teenage to the mistress of a house. She is shown as torn between the taboos of village life and her passion for a bright and joyful life. Mohini loves life in all its colours and has contempt for all that is dull and dead. It is hard for her to bear the images of decay. K.K. Sharma describes her thus:

She is instinctively vivacious, playful and carefree. She loves to laugh, and needs just a slight cause to go into peals of laughter. As a young maid, she is famous for her beauty and melodious voice. When she has a longing for a lover and has really none, she does not feel very miserable. She smiles by musing on love, which is the light and saviour of life; life without love is like jasmine without scent" (Sharma 1979).

Her dream of a perfect happily married life is shattered and she is shocked by the behaviour of her silent, solitary husband. She is totally neglected by her husband and feels lonely. Her mother-in-law is very orthodox and traditional while she herself is modern, city-bred girl, and full of new ideals, thoughts and interests. But her sister-in-law, Rooplekha, suggests to her to cope with the difficulties with courage. Rooplekha is village-bred and city-wed while Mohini is city-bred and village-wed. When Rooplekha goes to the city with her husband, she has to give up her old modesty while Mohini has to traditionalise herself and adjust herself to the atmosphere of her husband's village and the Bighouse. In spite of joylessness in her married life, she does not accept her defeat. She decides to bring happiness to her house. She is ready to accept the traditional way of life of village and her traditional mother-in-law, just for the sake of her husband. Though it was a great task - full of challenges, responsibilities and difficulties, Mohini decides that she would play her part to win the faith and favour of her husband. To be his true partner in life, she throws herself into this great task. Her hatred for her mother-in-law turns into love and she decides to let her follow her own way of life. She becomes ready to co-operate with her to offer her heart's blood in a lotus-bowl to the Virgin Goddess, so that she could bear a son. At the critical moment of this ceremonial offering, Jayadev reaches there and stops it. When Mohini finds that she was already expecting a child, she feels that her life has been fulfilled with diverse notes of music.

*Music for Mohini* presents the tradition of marriage alliance through matrimonial columns of the newspapers. Conflict can be seen between the Indian ways of life and Westernised outlook through the wrath of old mother at the indecent questions posed during the marriage interviews of Mohini, the heroine of the novel. The practice of



believing in the personality of astrologer is revealed through the character of Govind, the fortune teller. The observation of austerities during the marriage functions, the existence of the joint family system in Hindu Society, the Chanting of Sanskrit and religious mantras, the restraint of food to a Hindu wife before her husband, the dedication of evening meal to goddess Kali have been presented by the author with matchless power. We observe the scriptural belief in the necessity of the birth of a son for the salvation of the father and passing down the name of the father to the next generation. The birth of a child under a particular star and the arrival of a daughter in law, are believed to have their good effects or bad upon the inmates of the family. Restrictions on the marriages of the girl under sixteen, of widow remarriage and the existence of untouchability in the all can be seen as a process of change. On the whole, *Music for Mohini* depicts a realistic picture of "The New India", of the newly emerged free India. Thus realism is the keynote of both novels.

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## 'Identity' and 'Culture' as Postcolonial Issues in Shakespeare's *Othello*

–Sandeep Kumar Dubey\*

### Abstract

The Identity and Culture are very important issues in Postcolonial studies. In Shakespeare's play *Othello* it seems that Othello tries hard to be accepted in his host country as a native Venetian but he is always excluded. Being a black in a white society, he suffers from identity crisis. Moreover, he suffers from alienation too. His identity in Venice is completely vague. He thinks himself to be an insider to Venice but he is perceived by the Venetians as an outsider who is black in colour. Culture is another important postcolonial issue in *Othello*. In the play, a marked contrast has been shown between the Western Venice and the Eastern world, where Othello belongs to. It seems that Othello, being a cultural "other", neither can understand Venetian culture nor can adjust to it and so the tragedy happens.

**Keywords:** Postcolonialism, Identity, Culture, Race, Black.

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A very important postcolonial issue in the play *Othello* is the issue of identity. Othello is an outsider to Venice. His identity is always in question. It is ambiguous. He thinks himself to be a Venetian whereas the racist characters of the play believe that he is an alien in Venice. His condition, in reality is that of a very confused person.

In *Othello*, we can compare Othello's situation in Venice, with a migrant who has settled in a new country away from his own native country. About the condition of migrants, John MacLeod mentions, "Migrants tend to arrive in new places with baggage; both in the physical sense of possessions or belongings, but also the less tangible matter of beliefs, traditions, customs, behaviours and values. This can have consequences for the ways in which others may or may not make migrants feel 'at home' on arrival in a new place"(211-12).

About the condition of the migrants, he further writes, "The dominant discourses of 'race', ethnicity and gender may function to exclude them from being recognised as part of the nation's people. Migrants may well live in new places, but they can be

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deemed not to belong there and disqualified from thinking of the new land as their home. Instead, their home is seen to exist elsewhere, back across the border" (212). Migrants live, "'in-between' different nations, feeling neither here nor there, unable to indulge in sentiments of belonging to either place" (214). Othello feels devoid of the 'rightful' claims to belong, Othello's, "grounded certainties of roots are replaced with the transnational contingencies of routes" (215).

In the course of the play, we see that Othello has been treated as racial 'other' in Venice by some racist white men who think that Othello is an alien in Venice. They think that he does not belong there. They always marginalise him as an inferior human being. One of the effects of racist ideologies is to produce a sense of national identity gained through the exclusion and denigration of others, as Balibar points out:

racism always tends to operate in an inverted fashion . . . the racial cultural identity of 'true nationals' remains invisible, but it can be inferred (and is ensured) a contrario by the alleged, quasi-hallucinatory visibility of 'false nationals': the Jews, 'wogs', immigrants, 'Pakis, natives, Blacks. (qtd. in McLeod 112)

In the play, we see that Othello tries hard to be accepted in his host country as a native Venetian but he is always excluded. Othello's identity in Venice depends on his good reputation. He is a black man in a white society and if he wants respect and recognition in his host country, he has to be extraordinarily good, noble and worthy. Thus, we see in the entire course of the play, that Othello is over conscious of his reputation as that is the only way to create an identity in Venetian society, for him.

At the very beginning of the play, when Iago warns Othello against the dangers that Othello may have to face from Brabantio, by eloping with Desdemona; Othello seems confident, and says to Iago:

Let him do his spite;  
My services, which I have done the signiory,  
Shall out-tongue his complaints; 'tis yet to know  
Which, when I know that boasting is an honour,  
I shall provulgate - I fetch my life and being  
From men of royal siege, and my demerits  
May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune  
As this that I have reach'd; . . . (I, ii.17-24)

Othello seems to be confident of his reputation and so he does not fear any danger.

On Iago's suggestion to hide himself from Brabantio and his companions, Othello says:

Not I, I must be found:  
My parts, my title, and my perfect soul,  
Shall manifest me rightly: . . . (I, ii. 30-32)

It is obvious that Othello thinks himself to be equal to any Venetian. This confidence is based on the good reputation that he has acquired in Venice. It is his worthiness and

competence as a general that generates respect and recognition for him in the eyes of the Venetians. It is due to his worth as a great general that the Duke asks him to go to Cyprus to handle the threat imposed by the Turks.

However, despite his good qualities, Othello unconsciously seems to be conscious of his racial “otherness”. He seems to be conscious of his blackness. On some occasions in the play, we see him giving explanations that he is not like an Orientally stereotyped black man. On the issue of giving permission to Desdemona to go to Cyprus with him, Othello says to the Duke:

Your voices, Lords: Beseech you, let her will  
 Have a free way; I therefore beg it not  
 To please the palate of my appetite,  
 Nor to comply with heat, the young affects  
 In my defunct, and proper satisfaction,  
 But to be true and bounteous of her mind;  
 And heaven defend your good souls that you think  
 I will your serious and great business scant,  
 For she is with me; . . . no, when light-wing'd toys,  
 And feather's Cupid, foils with wanton dullness  
 My speculative and active instruments,  
 That my disports corrupt and taint my business,  
 Let housewives make a skillet of my helm,  
 And all indign and base adversities  
 Make head against my reputation! (I, iii. 260-274)

Here, we see that Othello seems to be conscious of his blackness. He seems to fear that the Duke- and Senators may think that he is a lascivious moor who wants to enjoy sexual union with Desdemona on his trip to Cyprus. Commenting on this speech of Othello, Victor L. Cahn writes , “We cannot be certain if he wants to emphasize the spiritual qualities of their relationship or whether he downplays the physical aspect of the marriage to avoid offending anyone. In either case, we may assume that he is conscious of the racial difference between himself and Desdemona” (111). He further writes, “as a black man alone in a white society, Othello is self-conscious” (111).

Commenting on Othello's identity in Venice Victor L. Cahn mentions, “the early insults from Brabantio clarify that Othello's skin colour and background make him an alien in Venice. Consequently when Iago applies pressure, Othello is isolated, with no one to trust. He is therefore intensely vulnerable to hints of fallibility or weakness, and when he becomes suspicious of Desdemona, he can only turn his self-doubt inward, where it is intensified by an unspoken estrangement from the white environment” (111).

Thus, we see that Othello, being a black in a white society, suffers from identity crisis. Moreover, he suffers from alienation too. His identity in Venice is completely vague. He thinks himself to be an insider to Venice but he is perceived by the Venetians as an outsider who is black in color. He thinks himself to be a Christianized Venetian but he is made to realise that he is an African heathen. There seems to be only one way for his identity formation and that is his reputation. This is the reason, why he always

remains over-conscious for his reputation. His reputation is the only thing through which he can resist the racist attacks on his psyche, by the Eurocentric white Venetians. And when his reputation seems to be spoiled by Desdemona's alleged adultery with Cassio, he is shattered. His entire identity collapses.

Othello says to Iago:

. . . O now for ever  
Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell content:  
Farewell the plumed troop, and the big wars,  
That makes ambition virtue: O farewell,  
Farewell the neighing steed, and the shrill trump,  
The spirit - stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife;  
The royal banner, and all quality,  
Pride, Pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!  
And, O ye mortal engines, whose wise throats  
The immortal Jove's great clamour counterfeit;  
Farewell, Othello's occupation's gone! (III, iii. 353-363)

Here, we see that Othello thinks that by making him a cuckold, Desdemona has spoiled his reputation that he had made through his heroism, bravery and his nobility of character, in the white Venetian society. In utter frustration, he says to Iago:

. . . my name, that was fresh  
As Dian's visage, is now begrim'd, and black  
As mine own face: . . . (III, iii. 392-394)

Here, Othello seems to believe that by being unfaithful, Desdemona has blackened his name which was as fresh and spotless, earlier, as Diana's visage.

Othello thinks that due to his wife's adultery with Cassio, his identity in the Venetian society has declined to the zero. He thinks that, from "brave", "valiant" and "warlike Othello", he has now become, "a horned man, a monster and a beast." His entire identity has been changed. It has been degraded. Earlier, he was given respect and recognition in Venice; now he will be mocked at, as he has become a cuckold.

The identity crisis of Othello, is the identity crisis of a black man in a white society and it is created by a white woman. It has racial dimensions in it.

In Act V, sc. ii, Othello kills Desdemona and tries to justify his act as an act of honour-killing. Lodovico, who is present there expresses his shock and asks Othello what should be said to him? Othello says to him:

Why, anything,  
An honourable murderer, if you will (V, ii. 294-295)

Here, Othello thinks himself to be an honourable murderer who has avenged for his lost reputation. He has killed Desdemona, a white woman, who, he thinks, had deserted him due to his blackness and had shifted her love to Cassio, a white man. He has avenged for his lost identity.

In Act v, sc.ii, when Lodovico informs Othello that he is relieved of his authority and his command, Othello says to him:

Soft you, a word or two:  
 I have done the state some service, and they know't;  
 Nor more of that: I pray you in your letters,  
 When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,  
 Speak of them as they are; nothing extenuate,  
 Nor set down ought in malice; then must you speak  
 Of one that lov'd not wisely, but too well:  
 Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought,  
 Perplex'd in the extreme; of one whose hand,  
 Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away,  
 Richer than all his tribe: of one whose subdued eyes,  
 Albeit unused to the melting mood,  
 Drops tears as fast as the Arabian trees  
 Their medicinal gum; set you down this,  
 And say besides, that in Aleppo once,  
 Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk  
 Beat a Venetian, and tradue'd the state,  
 I took by the throat the circumcised dog,  
 And smote him thus. (V, ii. 339-357)

Othello fears that Lodovico and Gratiano can defame him in Venice. They can do that due to the malice that they may bear for him as he, a black man, has killed a white woman, who belongs to their own race. Othello once again seems to be conscious of his blackness. About this colour-consciousness of Othello, Ania Loomba writes, "Not just Iago and Brabantio, but Othello himself makes many references to his blackness and status as outsider" (150).

Othello does not want that his good name in Venice, that he has made, while doing the state "some-service", should be spoiled by their biased report regarding Desdemona's murder. Othello repents for the murder of his wife. But he says that he killed Desdemona under unavoidable circumstances which were created due to his identity crisis. Finally, Othello kills himself, too.

Thus, we see that Othello identifies himself as a Turk, who has traduced the state for, by lapsing into barbarism, he has betrayed all the values of Venice. He is now both Venetian and Turk. Whereas he once defended the honour of Venice and punished the offending Turk, now, as a Venetian, he punishes the dishonour which the Turk in him has inflicted on the Venetian in him. He repudiates the Othello who murdered Desdemona and identifies himself with the Othello who acted as a loyal servant of the state of Venice. The image of himself he leaves to the world is the image of a Christian warrior, defending the values of Christian civilisation and affirming the values he has betrayed.

Commenting on Othello's consciousness of his identity, Stephen Greenblatt writes that Othello's, "identity depends upon a constant performance, as we have seen, of

his story, a loss of his own origins, an embrace and perpetual reiteration of the norms of another culture”(245).

Thus, we see that in the entire course of the play, Othello seems to fight for his identity.

Culture is another important postcolonial issue in *Othello*. In the play, a marked contrast has been shown between the Western Venice and the Eastern world, where Othello belongs to. Venice is shown as a place of order, law and good government contrary to the East which is considered lacking in these civilised things.

In the first scene of the play, Iago and Roderigo rouse Brabantio, Desdemona's father and inform him that his house has been “robbed” - an ambiguous term which could refer to his goods, although it actually refers to his daughter. Brabantio is incredulous. He expresses his incredulity in interesting terms: “What, tell'st thou me of robbing? This is Venice, My house is not a grange” (I.i. 105-106). He takes the security and stability of Venice for granted. Such things do not happen in his well-ordered world.

When Brabantio discovers that he has indeed been “robbed”, that his daughter Desdemona has married Othello, he goes straight to the Duke to denounce Othello. “For if such actions may have passage free”, he says, “Bond-slaves, and pagans, shall our statesmen be” (I.ii. 98-99). In other words, if Othello were allowed to get away with his actions, Venice would lose all that distinguishes it as a civilised city and would become as barbarous as pagan countries such as Turkey. Brabantio has a very strong sense of the difference between the way a Venetian should behave and the way a Turk behaves. I think that one of his functions in the play is to define the values which are associated with life in Venice - order, law and good government.

During the course of the play, we see that difference has been made between the Christian religion of Venice and the heathen. Christian religion is shown as superior to the heathen religion. Victor L. Cahn writes, “The contrast between Christian and heathen resounds during the play”(106). This attitude of the Venetians shows their Eurocentric mentality. Moreover, throughout the play the threat of the Turkish invaders is shown by the Venetians as, “the invasion of barbarism into civilization” (Cahn 109). This mentality of the Venetians shows their colonial attitude.

In the play we see that Othello comes from a different cultural background. Probably, he belongs to Africa. Though he has converted to Christianity, unconsciously he remains deeply rooted within his African culture.

Desdemona's act of losing the handkerchief and her indifference towards its significance shows that she does not understand the cultural roots of Othello. Thus, it shows her lack of understanding for her husband, who is from a different cultural background. Moreover, Desdemona's losing the handkerchief, becomes a proof of Iago's suggestions that she is a false and characterless woman. For Othello, she becomes the stereotypical example of Venetian women who have been described in the play by Iago as characterless women.

About the Venetian Women Iago says:

. . . I know our country disposition well;  
 In Venice they do let God see the pranks  
 They dare not show their husbands: their best conscience  
 Is not to leave undone, but keep unknown.(III, iii. 205-208)

Whatever Iago says to Othello about Venetian women's morality, Othello credulously believes. It seems that "he is not experienced in a cosmopolitan social setting, and his lack of sophistication proves part of his downfall"(Cahn 108). About Othello's understanding of Venetian culture and her women's morality, A.C. Bradley writes, "he has little experience of the corrupt products of civilised life, and is ignorant of European women"(190). He further says that, "he is totally ignorant of the thoughts and the customary morality of Venetian women"(193).

Thus, it seems that Othello being a cultural "other" neither can understand Venetian women's culture nor can adjust to it and so the tragedy happens. While analyzing the play in postcolonial light it is found that the issues of Identity and Culture prove to be of great significance. These issues play very decisive roles in the lives of Othello and Desdemona, as well.

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## A Visit to the Poetic World in Kulbhushan Kushal

—Susanta Kumar Bardhan\*

### Abstract

Kulbhushan Kushal, a bilingual poet, is one of those highly sensitive and creative souls, who are born in every age to draw, depict and show the bleak and in human aspects of the age dominated by narrowness, strife, deception, self-centred barren in humanity in their respective creative works with a view poetically suggesting the appropriate path of life suitable for the purpose of overcoming this crisis, saving the humanity, protecting the living world from becoming a 'waste land' producing nothing but 'cactus'. The present study attempts to explore the distinct features and aspects of the poetic world of Kushal. In doing so, I have tried to deal with several poems of this poet both from the perspective of theme and technique.

**Keywords:** Poeticity, Globalisation, Aesthetic, Communication.

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God

hath given you one face, and you make yourselves  
another. (Shakespeare's *Hamlet* III, i, 149-51)

Unreal city

Under the brown fog of a winter noon  
(T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*: ll 207-8)

The rapid growth in the world economy, commerce, science and technology in the second half of the last century has exercised a far-reaching consequences in the socio-academic, socio-cultural spheres of both human and non-human life. The change is generally branded (with an ostensible pride) as *globalization* and the earth is called *global village*. But this global village is sans the features of our age-old village representing the innocence, intimacy, cooperation, empathy, love and peace, in one word, *humanity*. Instead it is full of those of opposites. Our country India as a part of this global village has the similar experience. The scientific, technological and economic development and consequent urbanization in different parts of our country has dimensionally affected, rather transformed the basic foundation of human life and the relationships i.e., man-to-man, man-to-nature governed by the subtle human feelings and understanding, rich and constructive tradition. Alienation, faithlessness, strife,

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distrust and moral and spiritual degeneration which are the direct off shoots of modern urbanization and along with these dominating socio-cultural features, consumerism, narcissism, populism, celebration of body and neglect of soul/spirit, loss of patience, disrespect to the traditional human values, rat-race in the pursuit of material prosperity, etc., hover in almost all the strata of life in the postmodern globalized world.

Added to this, the revolution mainly in the fields of electronics, telecommunication, information technology and other related fields has brought more ease to the life of the dominating section of the society. In the so called urban society, the techno-competent persons, be they half-educated, insensitive, immoral, prone to the physical pleasure, or material, are regarded as resourceful and creative. Instead of capitalizing the technological and commercial progress for the benefit of humanity at large, the business giants of the present time are consciously working in the direction of transforming the traditional societal value system into money-governed and pleasure-driven value system in which there is no room for traditionally nurtured subtle creative humane qualities. As an inevitable result of this phenomenal change, an individual is valued on the basis of his/her income/money, not on the basis of the human qualities. N.K. Neb (2005: 9-10), while discussing the poems of Kulbhushan Kushal in 'Introduction' to *Shrinking Horizons 1990/2005*, rightly sums up the present time:

The present day life with a marked tendency for cut throat competition and material success has given a different direction to human feelings and emotions. Instead of the warmth of love people run after dry and tempting successes, 'Barren Successes' in Kushal's words, resulting out of a misplaced sense of values. Common human values that develop strong ties among people as a whole are now replaced with a concern for self—the self governed by will for power and wealth. This attitude reigns supreme in human relationships in the present day reality. These developments have initiated intense responses in sensitive minds concerned with basic human condition and authentic experiences. In the changed circumstances, the everyday reality and the role of human beings as active participants in the drama of life have undergone massive change. In spite of the fact that change in itself is natural, the shifting roles and understanding of life seen in recent times mark an unprecedented suddenness. This shift in the reality around and the paradigms governing its understanding have caused a major jolt to traditional human values.

Kulbhushan Kushal, a bilingual poet, is one of those highly sensitive and creative souls, who are born in every age to draw, depict and show the bleak and inhuman aspects of the age dominated by narrowness, strife, deception, self-centred barren inhumanity in their respective creative works with a view poetically suggesting the appropriate path of life suitable for the purpose of overcoming this crisis, saving the humanity, protecting the living world from becoming a 'waste land' producing nothing but 'cactus'. Kushal being well equipped with poetic insight, practical as well as philosophical experience, and creative linguistic competence has ventured to pen his deep reflective ideas/thoughts in the poems published in volumes such *Shrinking Horizons* (1990/2005), *Rainbow on Rocks* (2005), *Whirlpool of Echoes* (2006), *Songs*

of *Silence* (2008) etc. Now let us take and analyse some poems from these anthologies and see how the poetic self of Kushal pregnant with fragmented and illusion-free experiences gathered from his surroundings treads on the poetic space and share his ideas germinated, alchemized by poeticity.

Kushal as a man of the post modern era has experienced different shades or aspects of his time and life marked by material progress spiritual and moral degeneration. Kushal with his artistic view and skill depicts these bleak *negative* aspects in his poems. This has been done in boldly and with clear and disillusioned mind of a visionary. His poem 'Cunning Craft' with which his *Shrinking Horizons* begins exposes with images from real life experiences and applying a series of rhetorical questions how the consciously nurtured cunning or foxily mentality of present man leads him into the world of hypocrisy, alienation, disturbance, and ailment as illustrated by the following quotes from the poem:

why do we feel  
the coils of cobra  
tightening around our legs?  
Whose cunning craft  
has transformed  
the flowers  
into weeds?

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What strange inflection  
ails us  
what nightmares  
disturb our sleep?

In order to hide such cunning designs man, the poet records aptly in the poem 'Smiling Masks', wears the 'smiling masks' yond which 'languishes a face/eluding recall, recognition'. This poem immediately reminds us of Eliot's poem 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' where modern man Prufrock exposes his hypocrisy by stating:

There will be time, there will be time  
To prepare the face to meet the faces you meet; (Lines 26-27)

Kushal in the poem 'Smiling Masks' presents that the man wearing 'a face/without ears, eyes, lips' leads a life characterized by 'melting dreams, thin 'contours', 'a tattered text reflecting,', 'mutilated colours', and 'silence grim'. Man with 'tattered thoughts', aspiration, and at the same time with fragile, frail and deceitful mind ultimately fails to achieve the happiness. Thus, mask appears to be a powerful symbol of deception, hypocrisy and malignity working in the deepest core of human heart. In the poem 'Dance of Masks' included in the anthology *Whirlpool of Echoes* starkly shows modern men's proneness to cover or hide the real mental states or intentions by wearing a masks of gentlemen. As a result, all the societal actions and interactions in day-to-day life are being conducted by men living behind the 'laughing' masks.

There presentation of such amechanized lifeless life of man is found in several poems of Kushal such as 'Elusive Fragrance', 'Angels of Chaos', included in *Shrinking Horizons*. All these poems with the help of images culled from the real life experience expose the rather pathetic trouble-torn hell-like condition which has been generated by man and which has snatched innocence, happiness and peace from him. Of these poems, 'Angels of Chaos' blatantly which depicts the chaotic situation i.e., anarchy is spread all over the world by the *angels of hell or evil* forces and the mere innocence is not celebrated, and cosmic forces are not paid heed to. That is why, Kushal utters:

Hungry chaos now  
is devouring shores  
kissing homes, domes.  
(‘Angels of Chaos’, Lines 1-3)

As a result common people are gripped in nightmarish thoughts, anxiety and agony and the poet expresses aptly

And we are advised  
to seek solace in the  
fractured present  
fragmented past.  
In the dangerous dark  
dance angels of chaos.  
No rest within  
No respite without.  
(‘Angels of Chaos’, Lines 12-19)

The three direct and inevitable consequences of this are the loss of importance of time, breaking of promises and loss of communication as depicted in poems belonging to this volume 'Time', 'Breaking of Promises' and 'Communications' respectively. It is found in all our old great works, be they religious or cultural, scientific or not, that the value of time has been upheld as the most driving force behind all sorts of creation in this universe. Kushal's poem 'Time' exhibits the poet's philosophical understanding time in relation to both microcosmic and macrocosmic world views. Time, to Kushal, does make linear movement in the form of past, present and future but a complex one. He equates time to 'a river whirling / to a sea of moments' All the civilizations have flourished only because of man's laying importance to age old ideas about time connected with creation, creativity, immortality, judgement. In both modern and postmodern age the collapse of the value of time can be realized in terms of procrastination and unproductivity. Modern man is not engaged in capitalizing the creative hours of his life which is limited. Hence, man does, as the poet observes, suffer from monotony and drudgery in busy restless life being mocked at by watch symbolizing the man's effort to divide time into several fragment in terms of second, minute, hour, etc.

The watch laughs at us  
we laugh at the watch

we think  
we can catch time  
by forelock  
but time  
has fettered  
our feet  
our hand  
(‘Time’, Lines 13-21)

And so the poet with his visionary eye and reflective thought can see man grope in hopeless future:

Future is a siren  
singing melodies  
soothing our tense nerves  
till we are tired  
and willingly yield  
to its embrace  
and kissing the crimson lips  
frantically crave water  
till we discover  
the mighty sea  
cannot lend  
a drop to drink.  
(‘Time’, Lines 29-41)

Therefore, in his evaluation of the poem ‘Time’ N.K. Neb (2005: 16) aptly observes Kushal’s idea about time:

His awareness of a cosmic concept of time highlights human limitations to understand its real nature and significance. Here again the poet tends to disorient our mind filled with fixed ideas that make us accept things at their face value instead of trying to unearth their real nature and relevance for human life the moments in time are treated indifferently.

With such shocking awareness and concern Kushal in his title poem ‘Shrinking Horizons’ conveys his sincere realisation that men’s world of exposure and experience are gradually and steadily getting narrowed, fragmented and shrunk. They cannot imagine the world beyond their limited and self-centred one, and so also the ideas, thoughts, or anything relating to humanity’s wellbeing and prosperity. Horizons symbolically represent those respective spheres in and beyond which human experiences get shaped but now:

Sprawling horizons now  
shrinking fast  
on this side o horizons  
green deserts  
on the side greener

greener woods.

(‘Shrinking Horizons’, Lines 1-6)

All these the ‘Adventures of ages’ dignity of labour, the past history, etc., are not being honoured and so are ‘melting fast’ as, the poet with bleeding heart utters,

the present is  
too brittle  
handle with care  
with acumen rare.

(‘Shrinking Horizons’, Lines 21-26)

As a sensitive and reactionary soul or spirit, Kushal sharply reacts to such deterioration as well as degeneration of mankind in outlook and action. He with a shocked mind and heart observes that the promise keeping with which dedication/devotion, religious faith, honesty and above all sacredness were attached in every sphere of human life is now-a-days one of those fast fading phenomena necessary for peace, and love in a society. The narrowing and there by shrinking of the human selves or horizons covered by the shroud made of selfishness, heartlessness, insensitivity, envy, hatred, pride, impatience and mental, moral and spiritual imbalance/anarchy results in the inevitable non-compliance and breaking of promises. In the value based tradition the promises are considered to be identical with certainty in carrying out the works/duties assured through those (promises).

A typical product of the present mechanized society does not even feel motivated to keep the promised but rather feels elated in breaking those. The bleak aspect of the present day humanity has been blatantly attacked by Kushal in his poem ‘Broken Promises’. Kushal’s poetic self is always in collision with prevalent corrosive forces which do not hesitate to break the promises. The poem ‘Broken Promises’ (in *Shrinking Horizons*) metaphorically suggests that in our every step of life we experience the breakdown of promises relating to love, financial activity, religious duties. The promises not fulfilled at different levels and walks of life, the poet with terrified mind feels, haunt those sensitive souls including that of the poet. These promises, as represented in the poem, behave like *conscience-knockers* knocking at our every attempt in our day-to-day activities (like love making, business, religious prayer) spanning from personal/emotional one to religious one. They (unfulfilled promises) may knock even at the moment:

when we are busy  
matters  
of consequences  
they may come  
sitting quiet  
in room  
we contemplate  
impending doom.

(‘Broken Promises’, Lines 21-28)

Another powerful poem 'Communication' of *Shrinking Horizons* exhibits the poet's penetrating insight. As man has turned out and out an evil force wearing a mask of angel, he cannot communicate with other with the help of language corrupted with hypocrisy, deception, animosity and such other evil designs. In the midst of high flown and verbose speeches being aired profusely and loudly, communication in the true sense of the term is getting strangled, distorted and also lost in the present world of high-tech communication. Hence the poet in the tone of disgust and hopelessness tells us:

Shower of words  
meanings ever  
elude us  
gesture comes to  
our rescue  
(‘Communication’, Lines 1-5)

Again in the same vein Kushal says:

A demon sleeping  
in the den of time  
swallows our words  
strangling our meanings.  
(‘Communication’, Lines 22-25)

From the analysis of the poems made so far, it is evident that Kushal's poetic self appears to be agonized by the prevalent bleak state of modern urbanized humanity. The poet's experience of the life around pains him too much. Men are not hankering after the peace, happiness, spirituality, the every essences of human life, but after the material successes which are to yield mental unrest, anxiety and distrust identified with hell. This has been rightly dealt with in the poem 'Barren Successes' including in *Rainbow on Rocks*:

It's the time when our sly smiles  
And our magic strangeness  
Invite us us to embrace  
Barren successes  
Mock satiations  
Proxy fulfilments.  
(‘Barren Successes’)

The sensitive poet's concern for the state as well as the fate of the contemporary humanity gets expressed in his almost all the poems dealing with the artificiality ridden urban life governed by the 'sway of projected reality instead of basic human values' (Neb 2005: 10). The poet himself has expressed his realisation and feeling about the present human existence in one of the interviews with N.K. Neb (2008: 47) where he himself holds:

Rocks have always fascinated me for their static disposition and structure.  
Their imposing presence in environmental landscape corresponds with my

psychic scope, where they provide a magnificent and meaningful back drop for the enactment of my experience. Their barren faces remind me of the inherent barrenness of the modern urbanized way of life which paradoxically, in spite of high-tech movement and mechanical movements continue to reflect rock like static presence-sound and fury signifying nothing (Insight: 47).

The main point, Kushal wants to project in the poems discussed in the present study, relates to the poet's minute observation and philosophical understanding of and approach to the present day reality of life. It seems worthy to mention that such sort of reaction can be traced in all the literatures of the world across the time and Kushal is not an exception to that. However, the way Kushal conveys his sincerely nurtured ideas in his poetical works deserves to be well-mentioned so far as the thematic choices, use of images and symbols and linguistic selections in order to translate those ideas into concrete poetical representations are concerned.

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## Faith, Religion, Merit, Sin and Spirituality

–Rama Rao Vadapalli\*

### Abstract

Spirituality is a condition and quality of the mind. It depends on man's upbringing, environment, education and thinking capacity. Religion, belief, ideas of good and bad, merit and sin vary from person to person. Each religion has its own ideas about merit and sin and cause in consequence differences in the individual's character and behaviour. Concepts of Hell vary from faith to faith and religion to religion. These are matters of belief. This article deals with faith, belief, religion and spirituality and also the concepts of Hell in three major religions in the world: Hinduism, Christianity and Islam.

**Keywords:** Spirituality, Faith, Belief, Concept, Hell.

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Faith, religion and spirituality are cognates. All human beings have an innate tendency to believe in some power, a good or bad way of life and some fear/carelessness about punishment for evil deeds. Into the very nature of human life and existence itself duality is built in. There is a point and counterpoint, light and shade, good and bad, obverse and reverse to a coin. According to Hindu faith, the entire creation is the will and grace of the Supreme Being. The human being is the crown of creation, being invested with power, skill, knowledge, wisdom and *manas* the heart-mind-intellect unity. In Christian faith everything came into existence with God commanding “Let there be Light”.

The Hindu belief has it that Man is born with *vasanas*, acquired and inborn tendencies, and also *gunas*, qualities, *Satva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamo gunas*. Is Man ruled by an unknown fate or by his own FREE WILL? No one knows the right answer. Is there evil? What is evil? Are there *paap* and *punya*? Are there Sin and Merit? Yes and No. The discussion whether it is all Predestination or Freewill, goes on and on. Life continues. An answer will not be found. People grow more and more rationalistic, secular, fundamentalist or dogmatic. Life does not stop; nor does the debate. Is Religion essential? Is there God? There are people, millions of them, who deny the existence of God. But not all deny the existence of Good and Bad.

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Varying depths of depravity lead to sins of varying degrees of heinousness, and thus call for different intensities of retribution. Abstaining from sin would be possible by the sense of righteousness, which is another name for the moral sense given by faith in the Supreme Being. The righteous one practises restraint in word, deed and action. For those who have no faith either in god or righteousness, at least there should be fear of retribution to act as a deterrent. Organized religion is a mighty construct, mostly drawn from high intellect and intuitive inferences. These give rise to scriptures, epics and several other genres of edifying literature.

Good, a pristine absolute, is older than the hills, and evil came into being only much later. This is what both Hinduism and Christianity make us believe. Satyayug is the aeon of pristine virtue and Evil was the cause of Adam's transgression, in the till then glorious Garden of Eden. In the Hindu perspective, sin is punishable by being thrown into hell for the soul to suffer torment. The *Srimad Bhagavatam*, a scripture by Vyasabhadgavan has been translated into many *bhashas* and of course into English too. Of the eleven hundred pages only four or five have been devoted to the description of the twenty-eight hells. In the Italian epic by Dante *The Divine Comedy*, widely considered a Christian epic, Inferno, a whole Cantiche in thirty four cantos, is devoted to the description of various hells, its inhabitants and the tortures sinners are made to undergo. One wonders whether Man's fear of hell was made a greater force attracting him to goodness and God. As civilization advanced the fear seems to be growing more and more.

The Buddhist conceptualization of hell closely followed the Hindu perspective. There are said to be eight hells, though some did say there were ten and even more up to a thousand. Some Buddhists seem to have revealed at a later stage that the tortures and hells are figments of imagination, mainly of the sinners themselves. Khenpo Konthar, the abbot of Karma Triyana Dharma Chakra, had said, "From the Buddhist perspective, such a thing as hell does not exist." Though this is reassuring, Kshitigarbha Bodhisattva described hells extensively. Earlier, in Buddhism, we come across the description of eight hells.

God is envisioned as one above all duality and the Supreme Being is all pervading. This Supreme one transcends all, all dualities, and all qualities and all distinctions. A saint's eye view is that

*Sin is behovely.*

*All is well*

*All shall be well.*

This Being has infinite mercy and infinite understanding. Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, the major religions, believed that there are wages of Sin. Those who kill for fun and pleasure inhabit this place. The second is the Black Rope Hell for those who kill someone while committing some other crime. It is important to note that in the group of killers each has to suffer, though it is a sin committed by a group. In this hell big black birds would be plucking out the eyes, pulling out the tongues and pulling out the innards of the sinners. The tormented here are forced to drink molten copper, would be stabbed again and again. Crowded Hell is for those who kill and steal

and for those who are concupiscent libertines. Satyrs and nymphomaniacs suffer here for their transgressions. Fire Jar Hell is for those with sexual perversions and sins associated with sexual abuse. The organs of such are singed here. Those who indulge in sexual fantasies with others' women will have their eyes scorched here. Those who are attached to the voices and laughter of others' women will have their ears burnt here. The fifth is the Screaming Hell where there is a section called Great Screaming Hell too. Those who abuse intoxicants are thrown into this. The sixth hell is for those who make use of voice and make sound to show dissension. For those who cause divisions and cause disharmony there is a special torment. Snakes and vipers would be gnawing at them continuously. People who hold false views are tormented in hell of burning heat. False views include the negating of the karmic law and God. Diamond Beak Hornet Hell causes extreme pain to the sinner for he is made to drink the spurting blood after the beaks stab them. The seventh hell would be the lot of those who defile religion. This hell is called the Burning Hell of Stinging Worms. The worms thrust by force into the anus would travel up eating everything on the way to emerge out of the scalp. Hell of No Interval is the eighth for five types of premeditated killers of father, mother, holy man, the *sangha* and Bodhisattva.

Most important of these is the naming of the hells by Earth Store Bodhisattava, also known as Manjushri and Khsitigarbaha Bodhisattva. In a reply to Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, mahasattva, Manjushri replied that there is the Hell of Ultimately Relentless and another hell called Avichi, *un-spaced*, with no interval. Along with these he listed forty-four various other hells. He concluded saying: "Each of these hells contains lesser hells numbering from one, two, or three, or four, to hundreds of thousands. Each of these lesser hells has its own name." The Bodhisattva tells the queen Mahamaya, "To quote the names of hells, the types of punishment and instruments used would take a period of one *kalpa* (aeon)."

Modern mind does not believe in unproven things. Yet, one is reminded often of Dr Faustus who murmurs to himself "Why this hell, nor am I out of it." Hell may be real or unreal but more often than not it is one's own making, irrespective of faith or reason. In Sanskrit we have a wise simplification: *paropakaaraaya punyaaya paapaaya para peedanam*. It means helping others is merit-acquiring; inflicting pain is sin, *paap*. If this truly secular, rationalistic guideline to our conduct is accepted and followed, one can harmlessly say: "Hell! Go to Hell" and get done with it.

Great sages and seers, '*drashtas*', as they are called in our *Devabhasha*, wrote out long and inspired visionary experiences to reveal to us what they envisioned in an inspired effort to illumine what is dark in the likes of us. They invariably believed in a Supreme Being and showed time and again in their envisioned narratives what should be viewed as Good and what its dangerous opposite is.

Theism is the dynamics of thinking which believes in these intriguing concepts, intriguing because of lack of basic understanding. This cannot be served on a platter and this is where the concept of intimate one to one relationship with God through a mental state and contributory way of living called *Bhakti* emerged. While asking people to cultivate belief and have faith in God, the sages and seers went further to explain

the consequences of bad deeds, also called evil-doings. This is what we now call a two-pronged approach to instill Faith. While detailing the fruits of right action and good deeds they also told us with deep concern how evil would be ‘punished’. In our languages we have ‘punya’ and ‘paap’. The western world has near equivalents like ‘merit’ and ‘sin’.

While the conceptualization of hell is towards the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of Renaissance in the occident, the oriental visualization ages ago reflected in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* appears to be more electrifying. It is inclined to more severe punishment for wrong doings. Shukamuni’s Tale Divine in Seven Days to Parikshit, whose days were strictly numbered, would act as a more powerful deterrent to evil doing. We have descriptions of twenty-one frightful hells *taamisra* (thick dark) *andha taamisra* (blinding dark), *raurava* (frightful and loathsome), and *mahaaraaurava* (extremely frightful, loathsome), *kumbhipaaka* (potter’s kiln) and several others. In *taamisra*, those sinners who make fun of or ridicule others’ wives and children would be thrown into the pitch darkness. *Andha taamisra* would be the lot of those sinners who take a woman who already has a man of her own. *Rauravas* are for those who cheat others or are traitors for the sake of maintaining families. *Mahaaraaurava* is the place for those who want to be on their own without paying heed to the suffering and travails of birds, beasts and other beings. Those who kill rats and creatures by ensnaring them would be thrown into the hell where they would be baked in potters’ kilns. The one who is treacherous to his parents or the pious brahmins would be thrown into the most dreadful hell called *Kaalasootra*. Here there would be sun overhead and underneath flames. The one who leaves the path of righteousness and the Veda would be punished with sword blades on both sides making any movement impossible. This is called *asipattra* forests. *Kaalasootra naraka* is the place for those who punish the unpunishable. The servitors of Yama inflict these punishments. They break the sinners as simple sugar canes while they howl miserably. For teasing and joyously inflicting pain on animals and birds, the sinner would be thrown into *andhakoopa* where he would be treated as with contempt. He who enjoys all his wealth eating and spending only for himself without sharing it with kith and kin would be thrown into this. There is another severe punishment in the hell where a sinner is made to eat worms. This is called *krimi bhojan narak*. In *Sandasa* hell, those who commit theft of the property of the righteous are pierced with spears heated in heated orbs. For the madly lustful the *narak* is designed in such a way that the couple would stand intertwined, burnt endlessly and made to embrace melting hot statues of iron. This hell is called *vajra kantaka shalmali*. *Vaitaraninaraka* is for the lawless and who turn *pashandas* not following the Veda. Here crocodiles would chew the souls of sinners while they are made to list his sins. Here the sinner would have to be under blood, marrow, semen and the excreta eating and drinking them in that horrible and loath some heat. Those who train dogs and the like and by killing makes a living in pride would be punished there. There are other hells in this category called, *praanarodham* where life-beath is intermittently stopped as punishment. *Vishasanamu*, *laalaabhakshanamu*, *saarameyaadanamu*, *naveechirayambu* are other hells where unthinkable and unimaginable punishments are meted out. *Retah paanaamu* is the most detestable hell where sinners are made to

drink semen for making their wives do that in lasciviousness. There are seven other hells the names of which themselves are bloodcurdling: *kshaarakardama*, *rakshogana bhojana*, *shoolasootra*, *dandashooka*, *navata nirodhana*, *saparya vartana* and *shoochee mukha*. Those interested to know further can go to the second *aashwaasa* of the fifth *skandha* in *Sree Mahaa Bhaagavatham* in Telugu.

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), the Italian poet was born in Florence. Between 1308 ad 1321 he wrote what is now known as the *Divina Commedia*, translated into English as *The Divine Comedy*. This is considered the greatest epic in Italian produced at the junction of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Dante's epic is primarily a Christian epic, central to Christian Theology and a must-study in classical scholarship. It is an elaborately extended allegory as Puranjanopaakhyaanam in *Bhagavathapuraanam*. Dante sets out to visit the after-life worlds or the worlds of the dead with the ancient poet Virgil accompanying him. In the first circle, before entering hell, the visitors see the opportunists who do neither good nor evil.

There are nine circles of hell. The first is Limbo for the virtuous Pagans (non-believers) who did not accept Christ. The second circle is for those lustful. They are trapped in a torpedo, staying together forever. The third circle is for gluttons where Cereberus forces them to lie under mud under lashing wind and rain. In the fourth circle sinners are divided into two mobs, hoarders who keep things for themselves and rarely use them and wasters who squander all. The fifth circle is for the wrathful. The sixth circle is for heretics. Here they are trapped in flaming tombs. The seventh circle is for the violent, which is further divided into six rings. The eighth ditch is where fraudulent advisors are trapped in flames. The ninth is the part of hell where those who sow discord are cloven and joined only to be attacked again. The last hell is where falsifiers like alchemists, counterfeits and cheats are punished with different kinds of afflictions and diseases. In the ninth, heinous traitors are frozen in the ice-lake Cocytus. This is the most terrible and harsh section containing Satan, waist deep in ice, his wings flapping and beating in vain.

### Note

- St. Juliana of Norwich, English anchoress, canonized 14<sup>th</sup> Century Saint  
Buddhism Inputs: Courtesy Internet sources, khandro.net and siddham.

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## Elements of Exile and Alienation in R. Parthasarathy's Poem 'Trial'

–Vinay Kumar Dubey\*

### Abstract

The self-imposed exile had left a traumatic impression on Parthasarathy's soul and psyche which compelled him to look for his real self in his Tamil milieu and Tamil language. "Trail", the second part of *Rough Passage* voices the efforts of the poet to celebrate, love as a reality here and now. The impulse to preserve his culture is at the bottom of "Trial", where he is continuously haunted by his inadequacy at his inability in Tamil language and feels segregated and alienated. The concluding part of first section "Exile" of 'Rough Passage' intoned the self awareness of his own vulnerability and the virtue of wisdom he acquired in the intense moments of conflict and sense of alienation. It is an effort on the part of the poet to recapitulate his youth against the background of the misery and loneliness he underwent during the period of his exile.

Parthasarathy's poems in this section thus project an experience, the dominant mood of which is a peculiar combination of regretful wryness, tone of fear and anxiety, and symptoms of an alienated person.

**Keywords:** Exile, Traumatic, Psyche, Segregated, Alienated, Alienation, Wryness.

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The self-imposed exile had left a traumatic impression on Parthasarathy's soul and psyche which compelled him to look for his real self in his Tamil milieu and *Tamil* language. "Trail", the second part of *Rough Passage* voices the efforts of the poet to celebrate, love as a reality here and now. Against the turmoil's of non-relationship, personal love holds forth the promise of belonging and embedding in his original tradition. The impulse to preserve his culture is at the bottom of "Trial", where he is continuously haunted by his inadequacy at his inability in Tamil language and feels segregated and alienated. It is the perception and his encounter to his innate inability to recover his linguistic roots -and through them his colonial past –that leads Parthasarathy to explore, in this second section of *Rough Passage*, the seminal emotion of love between man and woman for which the language is undifferentiated experience itself. The concluding part of first section "Exile" of *Rough Passage* intoned the poetic

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self's awareness of his own vulnerability and his subsequent desire to grow by giving 'quality to the other half', by the virtue of wisdom he acquired in the intense moments of conflict and sense of alienation.

"Trial" in *Rough Passage* is his tentative attempt to know and understand love between man and woman. It was Parthasarathy's belief that a man attains his fullest measure in love, but it is not to be in "Trial", where he remains more or less, the same person he was in "Exile", lonely and detached. It is an effort on the part of the poet to recapitulate his youth against the background of the misery and loneliness he underwent during the period of his exile. It is therefore, in a bid to bring meaning to the present by reassessing the past and by giving shape to the accumulated waste of experience that he (Parthasarathy) goes back to a period of westernization, when he had been squandering his youth by 'Whoring after English Gods'. Viewed in this light the whole "Trial" sequence is a "poetic trial", a re-living of the "poetic past" in which more often than not Tamil is identified with a lover with whom the protagonist had a passionate relationship. Which the poet's turning towards Tamil for inspiration in search of a new creative self is symbolized by the protagonist's intensely personal relation with his old love, the creative aspect of language gets identified with the sexual impulses of the lover, and the consummation of the poetic self's intense passion for the cultural inheritance is converged through a description of a sexual intercourse.

The interplay of all these and many more associations in "Trial" makes the declared "celebration of love here and now" a imagistic correlative. Such a imagistic correlative voices he felt need for putting together, the disintegrated self with the purpose of rejuvenating it on the one hand and the crippling awareness about the futility of discursive language on the other. Vasant Shahane says:

On another - may be on a rather superficial level- "Trail" detracts the self's attempt to explore. The seminal emotion of love between man and woman for which the language is undifferentiated experience itself.<sup>1</sup>

We also have poet's own words in support:

'Trial' represents my tentative attempts to know and understand love between man and woman. Images of direct perception preponderate: eyes, hand, tongue and tactile, auditory and olfactory sense vie with one another for an accurate rendering of undifferentiated experience."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, body in "Trial" becomes an overall apparatus to examine the connection between sexual love and individualism. It is only natural that in this process {he poet encounters fundamental challenges of life posed by transience, the tyranny of time and. above all death - pushing him in the dark -corners of alienatedpoles.

One may also perceive "Trial" any of the following perspectives; either as the poetic self's exploration of his growth by interrelating his twin inheritance or as an exploration into the everlasting spiritual joy of love with body as the apparatus, the predominant culminative effect of the effort is a sense of fatigue, a sense of waste and an ever growing fear that the self's endeavour to articulate the innate feelings will end

up a mere wreath of empty words. Thus the poet's effort in "Trial" to celebrate love ends up as a more intensified personal crisis, with a revelation, to the poet's agony, that love cannot be everlasting. His effort to locate his genuine self in the native environment through the invocation of the undefiled past brings only a self-recognition of limitations.

This accounts for the melancholic tone and the sense of darkness, despair and inevitable gloom that pervades through the entire section of "Trial" in *Rough Passage*. William Walsh observes:

Disappointment, is his principal theme, whether with the edgy complications of love, with the insoluble problems of poetic composition or with England in face of the actuality of what he expected.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, the lesson learnt, towards the end of "Exile" is-the need of acceptance of things as they are "Nothing can really/be dispersed with/ the heart needs all" (*Rough Passage*, Lines: 144-146) stands him in good state during this phase of its evolution when the self is painstakingly ascertaining whether love would survive in the face of life's bitterness and complexity. This is the "Trial" that the self undergoes during the second phase of his *Rough Passage*.

Parthasarathy's poems in this section thus project an experience, the dominant mood of which is a peculiar combination of regretful wryness and mockery. The very first poem of this section 'Trial' intones the sense of mortality, he feels so down and low that he even contemplates - death in a subdued tone of fear and anxiety, symptoms of alienated person:

Mortal as I am, I face the end  
With unspeakable relief,  
Knowing how I should feel  
  
if I were stopped and cut off.  
Were I to clutch at the air,  
Straw in my extremity,  
  
how should I not scream,  
'I haven't finished?  
Yet that too would pass unheeded.

(*Rough Passage*, Lines: 14-22)

The limitations of poet at the soothing touch of love and realization, that it is circular journey arriving at the very initial point of its flight after a momentary soaring of spirits makes him melancholic and feel in isolation:

Love, I haven't the key  
to unlock his gates.  
Night curves.

(*Rough Passage*, Lines: 11-13)



In "Trial", Parthasarathy in a mood of tranquil recollection, without any hint of nostalgia, attempts to recreate the childhood days, to rejuvenate the self as he glances through pages of an Album:

Over the family album,  
the other night,  
I shared your childhood.

*(Rough Passage, Lines: 4-6)*

But he is reminded of the transitoriness of life and transience:

..... How your face  
bronzed, as flesh and bone struck  
atouchwoodday.

*(Rough Passage, Lines: 31-33)*

He recollects the day of his father's death, when his wife had rolled her self in a ball, in 'a shock. Parthasarathy's reminiscence of past only evokes a sense of loss and silence, he can't share feelings with past, remains cut off, with no friends or relations at present. Then, finally in "Trial" the experience culminates in a visual nightmare for the poet, and 'though "passions burn" quicker than candles"', he is intervened by the image of death :

Evening disfigures vision;  
stones of the day turn phantoms.

*(Rough Passage, Lines: 41-42)*

Parthasarathy is always aware of the corrosive influence of English on the Indian mental-makeup. The poet finds that devoid of native language and culture, the Indian (like Parthasarathy) with English becomes impotent and a misfit in his own country, exiled and alienated:

School was a pretty kettle of fish:  
the spoonfuls of English  
Brew never quite slacked your thirst.

*(Rough Passage, Lines: 44-46)*

Parthasarathy's indulgence is delicate and sensitive in and through an experience of love, sometimes associated with a sense of darkness, despair and inevitable gloom, lurking around:

Tonight I breathe on your skin:  
It clouds over. Soon it will reflect  
Nothing.

*(Rough Passage, Lines: 54-56)*

The poet faces the 'trial' in 'love' as he finds it (her) "touchable", "inexpugnable" and "sleeved" in a "childhood" which' he cannot surpass and his consciousness is overcome by a sense of dark gloom.

The sense of "Trial", is subtly expressed in his conflicting passions, the transitoriness of bodily fulfilment and the everlasting spiritual joy of love. The images

of body and physical pleasure are curiously juxtaposed with the approaching middle age and the shadow of death and despair:

A knock on the door:  
You entered.  
Undressed quietly before he mirror  
Of my hands. Eyes  
Drowned in the shell  
As flesh hardened to store.

*(Rough Passage, Lines: 74-79)*

Parthasarathy renders the experience of love, and relegates to the background his sensitive past, like an over worked and tattered umbrella put aside in the corner 'of the room':

I have put aside the past  
in a corner, an umbrella  
now poor in the ribs.

*(Rough Passage, Lines: 64-66)*

However, the sense of overpowering middle age seems to grow upon him as he is continuously confronted by the predicament of the present and future.

In "Trial 11", Parthasarathy compares his beloved's hand to an image of rare beauty and passion, to a galaxy, he could reach and feel with his 'half inch telescopic fingers', and then suddenly it follows with a curious association of feelings of the opposite extreme, when he broods over the fact that the momentary relief offered by love is not a permanent solace and refuge, for the bodies are mortal and bound to perish in dust:

Overwhelm the flight  
Of human speech. Thus celebrate  
Something so perishable, trite.

*(Rough Passage, Lines: 48-51)*

The poem of saga of love ends on note of celebrating something so earthly, so elusive and so commonplace as the sheer bodily enchantment, yet another sign of the poet's restless and detached persona. This induces mood of introspection and questioning, whether he and his beloved should lose their way in the undergrowth of tears and stumble over the articulating of their innate feelings, and end up merely; wearing a Wreath of empty words. Incidentally, in an unpublished introduction to *Rough Passage* Parthasarathy says that "his love poetry may be seen as his stumbling footsteps through the field of love).<sup>4</sup> Parthasarathy at this juncture found himself chocked by the tyranny of words:

Our world, love, moves within  
The familiar poles of eye, hand,  
Is eclipsed by the word.  
And words, surely, are no more than ripples  
In the deep well of throat.

*(Rough Passage, Lines: 84-88)*

In "Trial 12" the wryness and self-mockery of the poet's mood is reflected in calling himself "a disused attic". The poet's footsteps "burned in the crypt of a page", reading and experiencing the tragic sense in the poetry of the famous Chinese poet TuFu, and well known Greek poet Sappho. Parthasarathy's alienated self is reflected in his visual image of the code as an unromantic counterpart of the moon. In the predicament in which love fails and word 'eclipses' the body the redemption offered by physical love is only a passing phase, which cannot sustain the poet's sense of authenticity. In such a predicament of soul nothing nullifies the self's degenerate state:

The clock was my simple unromantic moon  
Icount the digits  
Ofthe years on.

*(Rough Passage, Lines: 94-96)*

The images of the body, of physical reality appear to reach the roots of death, another kind of reality, which, in the poet's view is inevitable. Similarly, the images of light and day are followed by those of darkness and night, a pattern which is partly symbolic of the poet's - alienated, spiritual journey.

Parthasarathy's contemplation of death is neither a mystery nor a muddle, nor an obsession; it is an articulation of the poet's tormented soul in the face of his colonial, personal and intellectual alienation, as he is engaged in a futile battle, to grapple his loss of self and aloofness:

Sleep becomes impossible:  
The eyes shut in apology,  
hinges which the doors turns  
itsfragile door on,  
asI hob-and hob with death.

*(Rough Passage, Lines: 104-108)*

Thus, the expedition and his exploitation of love as a search for a new identity and belongingness in terms of bodily experience only aggravate the crisis within the self. His investment in love ends up in loss with the realization that he had only been a tenant in hisbeloved's heart and that there is no hope there of any permanent refuge; love can never materialize and get translated into a promise of a home and that the "heart isn't hospitable anywhere". Added tothis is the price of the awareness of the bitterness of the past that looms large in his consciousness oppressing him with a deep sense of remorse and guilt conscience:

Curled around me  
are not the familiar arms  
but an octopus past, blurring  
the plate-glass of my days.

*(Rough Passage, Lines: 89-92)*

Parthasarathy cannot escape the burns of his obtrusive past and its pains he only caresses thewounds of the past and his agony in certain expressions, which are precise to the extent of agony:

I confess I am not myself  
in the present. I only endure  
a reflected existence of the past.

(*Rough Passage*, Lines: 114-116)

Thus as Brijraj Singh observes:

Parthasarathy's poetry conveys the whole range of feelings; from the ecstasy of transcendence to the drugged mindless trance of passion, to the poignant bitter, memory to the anguished sense that cannot be stayed off.<sup>5</sup>

Parthasarathy's poetic-self intended to recognize love as a reality here-and -now, but it got dipped in the sense of death and his disintegrated self. The protagonist endeavours to attempt a communion with his Tamil heritage to re-sensitize his sensibilities,-through his ecstasy of love, but his efforts were futile. In order to-derive pleasure he intercourses with his own inheritance (Tamil) he puts aside his British inheritance - English, which is now for him - "an umbrella/now poor in the ribs". Yet his conflict arising from his own twin inheritance is not a perishable one. Once the short excitement of renewed contact with Tamil is over the appalled awareness about his inescapability from neither of the twin inheritances intrudes upon his consciousness and he finds himself being curled around by the "octopus past".

Thus what the voyage of the self with the native culture - Tamil offers is only a temporary vent for his chaos, not an intellectual resolution as desired by the poet, because even when he is submerged in the sensuous pleasure in. his communion' with Tamil culture, the intellectual awareness about the impact of the tenacity of his own twin inheritance and dual personality is a persistent factor on his consciousness. It is this intellectual awareness that leads the self to recognize tragic irony inherent in the very effort to rehabilitate himself in his roots. Ultimately, he confesses that his effort to seek the "unity of being" through his re-entry into the native culture as a way out of the felt sense of exile has been a failure due to his dual existence: "I am not myself/in the present I only endure/a reflected, existence of the past." O.P. Bhatnagar writes:

... Parthasarathy as a poet is full of precarious ambiguities, dilemmas and contradictions, placed between the cultures. He can't forget and the culture he doesn't feel a tease with the language through long usage becomes one's potential medium. The dilemma got aggravated by the awareness of the illusive quality of language and by "The Issue of a contemporary artist faced with the problem of expression in the present complexities of time, age and region."<sup>6</sup>

Thus, Parthasarathy's quest for roots remains unfulfilled and he remains alienated.

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## **Growing Needs of Translation to Build and Promote Indo-Turkish Dialogue: Cultural Perspectives**

*–Yugeshwar Sah\**

### **Abstract**

21<sup>st</sup> century age is called an age of translation, technology and information. Translation is a bridge between two nations and it creates such a condition where cultural and commercial, social and political dialogue can be established and promoted to resolve the age-old conflicts, contradictions and differences. It breaks the culture of silence and builds the culture of dialogue which is essential to socio-economic development, political progress and bilateral relations in this age of globalization. Translation bridges social, economic, cultural and linguistic gaps which separate us from one another.

Language, Literature and culture can play very significant role in promoting Indo-Turkish dialogue. Cultural and linguistic awareness can well be disseminated through the translation of literary texts. The study of translated literary texts roots out cultural and linguistic prejudices and biases and helps us to understand one another better. Cultural and linguistic differences hamper the prospects of bi-lateral dialogue and economic relations. Translation enables us to go beyond these barriers and expand, establish and strengthen Indo-Turkish dialogue and bilateral relations for the development of both nations and for the welfare of whole humanity. If Turkish literature will be translated into Indian languages and vice-versa then we can understand the culture and society properly and in this way we can come closer to one another to enhance and enrich Indo-Turkish dialogue and to promote bilateral relations.

This paper attempts to explore the prospects and significance of translation to build and promote Indo-Turkish dialogue and strengthen economic and bi-lateral relations. It emphasizes on how translation helps us to change our prejudiced and biased mindset and see the other nation with friendly perspective. The paper discusses how translation functions and will function as a bridge between India and Turkey to promote in-depth dialogue and development and how lack of translation

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creates misunderstanding and misconception among masses which may hamper economic relations and bi-lateral dialogue. The paper also tries to examine how translation of literary texts can expand our academic engagement and interactive prospects at the level of higher education to encourage mutual understanding pertaining to language, literature, culture and society. The effort has been made to explore the prospects of teaching Turkish literature in translation in Indian universities and vice-versa to strengthen the age-old Indo-Turkish ties because we have American, Canadian, Australian, African, French and Russian literature. So we should also have Turkish literature in our syllabus at institutional level. Commercial investment and trade agreement cannot be very well successful and durable without cultural transaction and cultural transaction is only possible through the translation of Indo-Turkish literature and its promotion in higher education.

**Keywords:** Translation, Indo-Turkish dialogue, Bilateral relations, Cultural refinement, Understanding, Literature, Promoting economic development.

## Introduction

“I translate, therefore I am”

-Jhumpa Lahiri

Life cannot be perfectly perceived and conceived without translation. Translation is the axis upon which our life revolves because every act of thinking and imagination is an act of translation, as Lahiri connects our existence with translation. Gregory also rightly asserts that “Every act of communication is an act of translation” (If This Be Treason). It is needless to mention the practicality and utility of translation in an era of globalization. It is an undisputable fact. If literature is the mirror of the society then translation is the illustration of the excellence of literature, culture and civilization.

Every act of writing is an act of translation and every writer, in profound sense, is a translator. Lahiri reveals that the representation of India in her book is a “translation of India” (Lahiri 118). Every writer is a translator also in the sense that he/she translates the voice of his/her characters. Jhumpa Lahiri goes to extent saying “Almost all of my characters are translators, in so far as they must make sense of the foreign to survive” (Lahiri 120). The same fact has been expressed by Sashi Deshpandey when she says “As a writer in English, I was in effect a translator – because we are not only translating our lives here into English but we are also translating the words of those characters who would not be speaking English” (Deshpandey 2013:2). In this way every writer and every character is a translator.

The term translation has been derived from the Latin word “*translatum*” which is made up of two segments – ‘Trans’ i.e. ‘beyond’, ‘through’, ‘across’ and ‘*latum*’ means ‘to carry’. Thus the term translation refers to taking/carrying something beyond or across. According to Nida “translating, consists in producing in the message of the source language, first in meaning and second in style”. Translation is such a medium through which we can travel the whole world sitting in our home “*Yatra Vishwam Bhawati, Ekneeram*” (qtd in Agarwal 1999:15) and it makes us realize “*Vasudhaiv*

*Kutumbakam*” (the whole world is my family). Translation plays a key role in national unity and cultural integration and it is true in the case of India. It was the translators who saved the unity of India by translating great Indian classics and disseminating the valuable knowledge. Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal’s poem reveals the facts:

Yoonani, Mistree, Roman sab mit gaye jahan se  
Kuchh baat hai ki hasti mitti nahi hamari  
Sadiyon raha hai dushman daure – jahan hamara

(The Greek, the Egyptians, the Romans were all defeated, there is something within that prevents us from being defeated. Even though nations stood against us in enmity since ages.) (Ravi 2012: 9)

Translation connects us with various unique culture, community, country and continent which are yet unfamiliar to us. It changes our mind set and ignites the ways we perceive and portrays the world and enlarges the diversity of human experiences. Amitabh Ghosh emphasizes that “.....and the thing translation is that there is no way around it. In a country as multilingual as ours, unless you have really good translation, you are doomed. (Ghosh 1994)

### **Indo-Turkish Relations: Past, Present and Future**

The relationship between India and Turkey is age-old. This relation refers to political, financial, cultural and foreign affairs between the two nations. “Economic cultural relation between ancient India and Anatolia date back to Vedic age (before 1000 BCE). During the World War I, the Indian Empire played a key role in the successful allied campaign against the Ottoman Empire” (Wikipedia).

In 1948, the diplomatic relationship between India and Turkey was established Turkey’s embassy is in New Delhi and consulate general in Mumbai. India’s embassy is in Ankara and consulate general in Istanbul. The relationship between India and Turkey has been strained due to the close ties of Turkey with Pakistan, an arch rival of India. Turkey advocated the position of Pakistan on Kashmir issue and Turkey was also against the inclusion of India into the nuclear suppliers group.

At present, the Indo-Turkish ties have been strengthened due to bilateral support in the field of trade, technology and education. The GMR group of India is one of the major state holders in the International Airport in Ankara. There is increase in trade from 28 million in 1985 to US\$ 6.6 billion in 2012. Salman Khurshid’s visit to Turkey aims to strengthen collaboration and co-operation for the year 2014-2016. This proposal plan covers various areas like trade and technology, science and sport, education and culture, and defence and investment. Both the countries want to promote the relations. This will increase the communication at both the levels official level and between the common masses. “In the final analysis Indo-Turkish relations should depend not so much on past grievance as much on the current developing scenario in Today’s World. The ties have not yet reached the level of depth and strength that it would be immune to third party factor and influence. The need for new chapters to revitalize the relationship will fade away only when the two nations pursue the present path of



mutual consolations and corporation. This will yield in enduring bonds and compatible strategic outlook” (Wikipedia).

Translation is one of the effective media of communication which reaches even to the common people and it brings us closer and together to deepen and promote Indo-Turkish dialogue. Translation functions as a bridge which connects the diplomats of two nations to boost the development and collaboration due to common strategic goals to emerge as powerful nations in the whole world. “At the turn of the century India and Turkey emerged into the multi-polar world with a renewed sense of openness and co-operation. While one is a bridge between Europe and Asia, and is held as an example of democratic engagement with the political Islam in the middle East and Megherb region, the other is an undisputable leader in South Asia, sits at the centre of the Indian Ocean and is a founder member of many global south-south co-operation block”(Wikipedia). This is how both the nations are inter-related and inter-dependent.

## **Turkish Literature**

Turkish literature is very rich and has profound depth and strength. It encompasses oral and written compositions in Turkish language. The history of Turkish literature covers the time span of almost 1300 years. It is comprised of two traditions – folk tradition and written tradition. The important phases in the history of Turkish literature- the folk literature include the epic tradition, folk poetry and folklore. The Ottoman literature consists of Divan poetry, early Ottoman prose and the 19<sup>th</sup> century literature and western influence. The 20<sup>th</sup> century Turkish literature witnessed three important movements which are the new literature movement, the dawn of the future movement and the national literature movement. The republican literature has two genres prose and poetry.

Orhan Pamuk, one of the greatest writers of Turkey, won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2006. His major works have been translated into English. These works are *My Name is Red*, *The Innocence of Objects*, *Snow*, *The White Cattle*, and *The Black Book*. Like Orhan Pamuk there are many great writers who write in Turkish language and their works have also been translated into English e.g. “A.H. Tanpinar’s”, “The Time Regulation Institute”, Yasar Kemal’s “Memed, My Hawk”, Elif Shafak’s “The Bastard of Istanbul”, Aziz Nesin’s “Socialism is Coming: Stand Aside”. Irfan Orga’s “Portrait of Turkish Family” etc..... There are many great poets who have contributed a lot in the development of Turkish literature such as Sait Faik’s *Sleeping in the Forest*. Stories and Poems, he is regarded as “The Turkish Chekov.” Apart from this there is Nazim Hikmet whose greatest work “Poems of Nazim Hikmet, Revised and Expanded Edition.”

Turkey has such a rich literature with great depth and influence but these writers and their works have not yet been translated into Indian languages. They are only available in English translation due to this they don’t have much popularity in India like American, Australian, Canadian literature etc. It is a matter of great concern. The reputed works of great Turkey writers should be translated into important Indian

languages and vice-versa so that the culture of communication between the people of two nations may take place for cultural and scholarly exchange.

### **Strengthening Ties through Translation**

We have received/are receiving the knowledge of world's greatest literature through translation. The translation of the *Bible*, the *Gita*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, the Vedas, the Upanishadas, *Panchtantra*, etc. has revolutionized the whole world and history is a witness that translation of the *Bible* has played a crucial role in spreading Christianity. We have been reading the greatest writers of the world in translation such as Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Kalidas, Tagore, Tulsi, Tolstoy, Dante, Petrarch, Virgil, Horace, Cicero etc.... and it is a long list. "Classical influence flows into the literature of modern nations by three ways- translation, imitation, and emulation." (Hight 1949:104) Had Indian sacred texts such as the Vedas, the Upanishads, the *Gita* been not translated, Indians would not have emerged as spiritual leaders across the globe. The *Gita* has been translated in many languages and many times in the same language after the *Bible*.

If we can read Tolstoy, Gorky, Stendhal, Marquez in translation why not we can have Pamuk, Yasar Kemal, Elif Shafak, Ahmet Hamdi Tanoniar, Nazim Hikmet, Sait Faik etc... in Indian languages? If we can have Russian, French, German, Canadian, Australian, American, African literatures in our syllabus at college and university levels then why not we can have Turkish literature? If we include Turkish literature in translation in our syllabus then we not only easily expand, enhance and enrich our knowledge of culture and literature but also we can build the culture of dialogue between two nations and can promote Indo-Turkish ties and can also resolve the conflicts during the course of time. Translation will enable us to breathe in the fresh air of dialogue, development, hope and harmony. If they include Indian literature in Turkish language then they will be able to understand us deeply and in this way we can come together and stand for the common cause to benefit mankind.

"Once the Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit of Turkey, an Indophile, who had translated works of Rabindranath Tagore and the ancient Sanskrit text Bhagwat Gita into Turkish, injected a positive and new tone in the diplomatic parley" (Wikipedia). Translation of the texts and teaching them in school, college and university level can expand and enlarge our academic engagement, literacy prospects and interactive possibilities. If we can teach our children the stories of Anton Chekhov Mupassant the poem of Frost and Atwood etc. at school level than why not we teach Sait Faik, the Turkish Chekhov, Nazim Hikmet etc... to learn the best from Turkish culture, literature and society. The need is also to establish the department of Translation studies in the university and launch the courses of B.A. M.A. M.Phil. and Ph.D. as we have these courses in departments of foreign language studies.

If we can read and teach the works of Marquez, Tolstoy, Stendhal, Gorky, Dostoevsky, etc. then we can also read and teach Yasan Kemal, Orhan Pamuk, Latif Tekin, M.M. Samer, Elif Shafak etc. for intense academic discourse, scholarly

transaction and interactive prospects which will enable us to understand many social, cultural, linguistic practices and philosophic issues taking place in the societies.

This will open a new era in the relations between both the nations and it will also create employment in the field of translation and also at the academic level. Without cultural, linguistic and knowledge transaction, commercial investment and trade ties will not be durable because all relations, treaties and ties are based on understanding and translation would help us to understand one another profoundly.

Translation of Indo-Turkish literature only, will not help us to achieve our desired goal, therefore, we have to also pay attention to the translation of knowledge texts i.e. philosophy, sociology, science, psychology, education etc. which will instill into us valuable knowledge and enable us to comprehend the social processes and philosophical thoughts cropping up in the societies. We also need to focus on the translation of Indo-Turkish music and cinema which will have enduring impact on the minds of the people of both the nations.

The poorest of the poor and the commonest of the common people have access to music and cinema. Even the illiterate and uneducated those who cannot read or write, but listen, watch and understand message inherent in the music and cinema. Films and movies are the reflection of society's culture and social problems and prospects. So, they would help us to comprehend social perspectives and correct social and cultural problems. There is a great scope of translation in this field which will lead to socio-economic development and boost bi-lateral relations.

There are three activities from which nations can be developed "War to expand their territory, commerce to accumulate wealth and expand their economic activities and translation to expand their cultural, artistic and economic productions." (Nyongwa, 2012: 34)

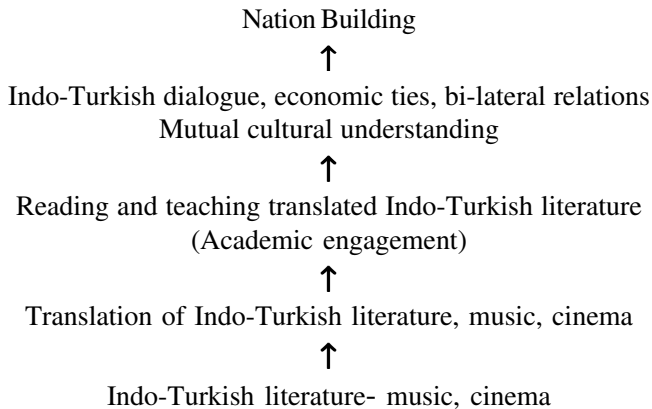
There is one more way to promote Indo-Turkish dialogue i.e. to start teaching and learning Indo-Turkish language. In India, as we learn French, German, Spanish, Portuguese etc. then we can also learn Turkish language which will provide the forum of academic engagement and generate employment prospects. In the same way if the people of Turkey will learn and teach Indian languages then they will have deeper understanding of diverse cultures and social practices of India. For all this we need Turkish language department in Indian Universities as we have German and Romance studies department in University of Delhi where foreign languages are taught. In the same way Turkish Universities may have Indian language department which will provide profound academic engagement and intense interactive possibilities. Such types of learning will enable Indian students to visit Turkey and vice-versa to understand the linguistic, cultural and religious practices.

## **Conclusion**

The progress of the nation and refinement of culture are centered on the axis of translation. No country can progress or develop in isolation and therefore the unity of the nations is needed for cultural, intellectual, moral and spiritual enrichment and also

for socio-economic development and it is possible through translation. Translation is the barometer of nation’s advancement in the field of education and employment, culture and literature, cinema and mass media, bi-lateral dialogue and diplomacy etc. Translation is an effective medium of promoting dialogue and diplomacy, education and employment, bi-lateral relations, socio-economic ties and treaties etc. It is emerging as a global means of communication in an era of globalization. Translation is a powerful weapon through which we can unite all the nations under one banner and establish peace and harmony across globe and ensure bi-lateral dialogue and development in the field of education, tourism etc. among all nations.

Indo-Turkish dialogue can be strengthened and promoted through the translation of Indo-Turkish literature and teaching of translated texts at school level as well as higher educational level. Without cultural understanding the foundation of any relations will be weak and temporary. For Indo-Turkish ties and bi-lateral relations we need solid foundation and it will come through understanding of culture, language and literature, and the understanding of the language, culture and literature will come through teaching and reading Indo-Turkish literature in translation which will prepare the soil for Indo-Turkish dialogue, bi-lateral relations and socio-economic ties that will lead to Nation building:



Translation encompasses various aspects related to language, culture, literature, philosophy etc. of the society which need to be studied, imparted, and incorporated into academic curriculum at institutional level for the expansion and promotion of intense interactive possibilities that will result in strengthening Indo-Turkish dialogue, bi-lateral relations, and economic ties.

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## Iran and Turkmenistan: An Overview

–Amit Kumar\*

### Abstract

To understand the relations between Iran and Turkmenistan very comprehensively and bring out a thorough analysis of the subject, it is very important to study the social, economic and political relations between these two countries. Research works have been conducted by various scholars about the Iran-Turkmenistan relations but the emerging socio-economic and political relations between these countries have not been taken into consideration. Thus, this research paper will help to understand the socio-economic and political spheres in analyzing the bilateral relations between Iran and Turkmenistan as an overview.

**Keywords:** Disintegration, Geo-strategic, Cosmology, Mythology, Isolation, Islamic fundamentalism, Bilateral relations.

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### Introduction

Central Asian Republics emerged as independent sovereign countries in December 1991 as a result of Soviet disintegration. Central Asia lies at the heart of Eurasian continent and completely land-locked and geographically encircled by Russia (In the North), the Eastern Europe (In the West), Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan (In the South) and China (In the East). Any power which has a foothold or deep influence in Central Asia can have close watch to the important neighboring areas. Therefore, the region bears great geo-strategic importance. Its geo-economic importance is mainly because of the presence of vast oil and natural gas resources.

Iran sees the Central Asian region as an arena for reducing its own isolation. Hoping to make itself an attractive economical and political partner to these states. Iran has been cautious in supporting radical Islamic opposition movements in the region. Several Central Asian States (CAS) are proceeding with or contemplating energy projects that transit Iran. Prior to the disintegration of Soviet Union, the Caspian Sea was under the joint ownership of Soviet Union and Iran but the emergence of three new states, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan bordering the Caspian Sea laying claim to resources make the situation complex. The exclusive rights of Russia and

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Iran have come to be a challenge. The largest oil and gas reserves are located within the territory of these three former Soviet Republics.

Turkmenistan and Iran enjoy a common cosmology and mythology through the concept of "Turan-o-Iran" a traditional mode of spatial sub division. Actually, Turan is a Persian term to designate north eastern Iran. The Turkmenistan and Iranian peoples share a great deal of traditions, like the Navruz. Availability of ethnic minorities on both of the border is one of the factors facilitating close contacts between Turkmenistan and Iran. After the disintegration of USSR, these independent governments set out to outline a new framework of relationship with the outside nations. Turkmenistan has gained invaluable geopolitical advantages that may lead it to increase of power as important player in the Iranian region in the near future. If the Caspian Sea was to be given the status of sea it would be divided into five territorial zones with each country bordering each other as per their 1982 laws of the sea convention. This would allow these three Central Asian countries, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan, major share of the Caspian Sea's hydrocarbons and the right to develop their own portion of the sea bed for their respective country. If the Caspian Sea is accepted as a lake then all the five states bordering the Caspian Sea will have equal rights of navigation and exploitation of its natural resources. The tension increases due to rise of terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism too.

Turkmenistan shares a common border with Iran. The Caspian dimension is also an important factor of the relations between Turkmenistan and Iran. They have a lengthy border; they share historic, religious, and civilization commonalty stretching back for centuries. Advancing relations with Turkmenistan, Iran is being quite pragmatic. It is after strengthening of its positions in the region and benefiting from availability of hydrocarbons in the neighboring country and from its convenient geopolitical location at the crossroads of transit ways. Turkmen population of the northern provinces of Iran is a factor that facilitates neighbourly relations. Geographically Iran and Turkmenistan play a vital role in linking Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf. It is the only country which has access to Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea ports although since the mid 1990s. Turkmenistan is also aware of Iran which has a very sensitive political relationship with the West, more particularly with the United States, which has alleged that Iran provides extensive support to terrorist groups. There is also a dispute about its nuclear program, which allegedly violates the terms of Non-Proliferation Treaty. Despite several difficulties and hurdles, Turkmenistan also sees the Iranian policy in relation to this region which has proved durable. In the first place, Iranian policy has vastly improved its relations with Russia, despite the potential contradictions in the Iranian and Russian policy towards Central Asia and the Caspian region. Both countries have evolved a strategic partnership with significant military and nuclear components. Secondly, they share increasing desire to influence the development of oil and gas resources in the Caspian Sea. Turkmenistan has signed agreements with Iran, Russia, Ukraine, and China and tries to develop relations with Iran in this respect. However, due to the limited capacity of gas pipelines and the lack of any alternative export routes for natural gas, Turkmenistan needs to develop socio-economic and political

relations with Iran. Iran sees Turkmenistan as transit route to rest of the Central Asian region. "The head of the Iranian delegation to the second session of the regional planning council of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) held in Tehran on 27 January 1992, welcomed the request from the republic of Turkmenistan to join the ECO, and expressed the hope that the ECO activities would contribute towards the formation of a commonwealth of the Islamic countries."<sup>1</sup> At present, the gas infrastructure and the signed contracts connect Turkmenistan to Iran and Russia (since 1 January 2006, Iran and Russia are the sole importers of Turkmen gas). The construction of a 200 kilometer pipeline between the Turkmenistan town of Korpedzhe and Kord-Kuy in Iran assured the export of 8 billion cubic meters of gas each year into Iran's network. With Iranian financing, this pipeline is expected to become a part of a larger system for exporting Turkmen gas to Turkey. The steady improvement of Turkmenistan's relations with Iran in the sphere of gas transport was symbolized by the joint decision in the summer of 2006 to increase Turkmenistan's annual export to the Iranian grid to 14 billion cubic meters.

In this way, many scholars emphasize that by virtue of its geographical location, history, and economic circumstances within the region of Greater Central Asia, Turkmenistan should be a major crossing point for both regional and continental transport. Since independence Turkmenistan has done much to seize this opportunity and establish itself as an entrepot along major rail road and highway arteries. Notwithstanding impressive achievements that have been largely underestimated abroad, Turkmenistan at the start of the twenty-first century lags behind many of its neighbours in transport and trade and shows few signs of breaking out of the isolation that results from this situation. Despite possessing significant oil resources and the world's fifth largest natural gas supply, Turkmenistan remains one of the poorest countries in Central Asia. A lack of export routes for gas and oil, and misuse of export revenues by the government have meant that Turkmenistan is not profiting as much as it might be from its natural resources. Katarzyna Czerewacz and Zofia Tomczonek (2008) argues that Central Asian countries are the object of interest of several countries (the USA, China, Russia, Turkey, Muslim countries, partly European Union), because of their geo-strategic location but mainly due to their enormous resources of crude oil, natural gas, gold and uranium. The region is important for the fast developing Chinese economy. Moreover, the shortest land route from Europe to China runs through Central Asia. However, that the region of Central Asia is characterized with big ethnic and cultural diversity resulting in many tensions and conflicts. One of serious dangers is the Islamic fundamentalism; among the others one can indicate questions of boundaries protection and security<sup>2</sup>. Kenneth Katzman and James Nichol (1998) said that Iran sees the Central Asian region as an arena for reducing its own isolation hoping to make an attractive economic and political partner to these states. Particularly Turkmenistan and Iran have been cautious in supporting radical Islamic opposition movements in the region. Several Central Asian states are proceeding with or contemplating energy projects that transit Iran<sup>3</sup>. Simbal A. Khan (2004) analyses that the twentieth century political landscape of the world is strewn with conflicts whose sources lie as much in



the engagement of extra regional powers, as they lay in the fault lines of their regional security environments. This attempts to expose the underlying tensions within Iran's immediate security environment which are exacerbated by the involvement of the hyperactive super powers like the U.S. These changes have largely undermined Iran's geo-political significance and increased its vulnerability to pressures from various international and regional sources. Growing U.S. unilateralism and the post 9/11 war on terrorism have enhanced Iran's security predicament as it grapples with the manifold increase and concentration of U.S. military forces along its borders<sup>4</sup>.

## Conclusion

Iran and Turkmenistan shares a number of highly significant factors in terms of religion, history, customs, and traditions-these factors will help in promoting and strengthening the political relations between two countries. Turkmen population of the northern provinces of Iran is an important factor for that facilitates neighbourly socio-economic and political relations between Turkmenistan and Iran. The attraction, both countries experience toward each other, stems from the lack of choice, which is a distinct feature of the Iranian and Turkmen relations. Both countries cannot help having active bilateral contacts because they have a lengthy border; they share historic, religious, and civilizational commonalty stretching back to centuries. Turkmenistan and Iran have interest to develop their relations for three reasons- firstly, to build ties with the neighbouring states for social, economic, and political reasons in order not to leave the area free for their rivals. Secondly, to break its isolation from the gulf and the Near Eastern areas, and thirdly, to become active in their region by re-launching their foreign policy and by re-invigorating their regional diplomacy. To achieve these objectives Turkmenistan and Iran have been intensely active at the bilateral level relations. Though Turkmenistan will definitely look for other countries to have an access to International markets. So, in this context Iran's long border with Turkmenistan contributes to its status of a potentially powerful external actor in Central Asia.

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## **The Role of Women Activism in Social Change: An Indian Perspective**

*–Arvind Kumar\**

### **Abstract**

The women's movement in India has a long and rich history. The presence of women in the public sphere has been significant, as their mobilization has been part of major event in the history of India. Ancient Indian text gives women a very respectful place in society. Furthermore, there are millions of ordinary women in the country who struggle to survive in order to remake their family and social lives; they are fighting for water, electricity, safety, literacy; safe contraception or resisting sexual harassment. There have been more changes in our contemporary society. They are fighting for oppressed classes and uplifting them in the mainstream of the society. The women movement in India has been heterogeneous in its different forms in diverse parts of the subcontinent. In present time, there are many women activists in the streets to demand right to dignity and respect for women. A woman activism in India has come in a full circle, where women are leading their own struggle against patriarchal structure of the society. The issues today are sexual harassment at the work place, the violence of development, caste and communal violence, lobbying for increased political participation of women in the highest levels of decision-making, etc. The list will go on as long as there is a women's movement. India has a rich and vibrant women's movement but it has still a long way to go to achieve gender equality and gender justice.

**Keywords:** Activism, Empowerment, Education, Feminism, Movement, Patriarchal, Reservation.

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### **Introduction**

The women's movement in India has a long and rich history. As such, much theorization from feminists across the world has emphasized the importance of the politics of such relationships, in order to understand motivations and the development of the "self" and "others" as part and parcel of the development of policy. The broadening of

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concerns in policy development has often, however, lacked a parallel effort to deepen feminist theory on the terms of the diverse relationships we create. Little attention is paid to the fundamental ability to empathize, cooperate, listen and reach out from the heart. All activist and feminist work is greatly strengthened – and in most cases requires – the transformation of the self as an essential step in breaking through the barriers of injustices. So, this paper will try to analyze the Indian women activism and social change in different times of the history.

### **Definition of Feminism in Indian Perspective**

There are many points of view to define feminism in India. Indian feminism is very much related with women activism in India, which has brought social change in Indian society. Women's role in Pre-colonial social structures reveals that feminism was theorized differently in India than in the West. In India, women's issues first began to be addressed when the state commissioned a report on the status of women to a group of feminist researchers and activists. The report recognized the fact that in India, women were oppressed under a system of structural hierarchies and injustices. During this period, Indian feminists were influenced by the Western debates being conducted about violence against women. However, due to the difference in the historical and social culture of India, the debate in favour of Indian women had to be conducted creatively and certain Western ideas had to be rejected. Women's issues began to gain an international prominence when the decade of 1975-1985 was declared the United Nations Decade for Women.

Indian women negotiate survival through an array of oppressive patriarchal family structures: age, ordinal status, relationship to men through family of origin, marriage and procreation as well as patriarchal attributes. Examples of patriarchal attributes include: dowry, siring sons etc., kinship, caste, community, village, market and the state. It should however be noted that several communities in India, such as the Nairs of Kerala, Shettys of Mangalore, certain Maratha clans, and Bengali families exhibit matriarchal tendencies. In these communities, the head of the family is the oldest woman rather than the oldest man. Sikh culture is also regarded as relatively gender-neutral.

The heterogeneity of the Indian experience reveals that there are multiple patriarchies, contributing to the existence of multiple feminisms. Hence, feminism in India is not a singular theoretical orientation; it has changed over time in relation to historical and cultural realities, levels of consciousness, perceptions and actions of individual women, and women as a group. The widely used definition is "An awareness of women's oppression and exploitation in society, at work and within the family, and conscious action by women and men to change this situation. Acknowledging sexism in daily life and attempting to challenge and eliminate it through deconstructing mutually exclusive notions of femininity and masculinity as biologically determined categories open the way towards an equitable society for both men and women.

The male and female dichotomy of polar opposites with the former oppressing the latter at all times is refuted in the Indian context because it was men who

initiated social reform movements against various social evils. Patriarchy is just one of the hierarchies. Relational hierarchies between women within the same family are more adverse. Here women are pitted against one another. Not all women are powerless at all times. There have been intense debates within the Indian women's movements about the relationship between Western and Indian feminism. Many Indian feminists simultaneously claim a specific "Indian" sensitivity as well as an international feminist solidarity with groups and individuals worldwide. The rise of liberal feminism in the West in the 1970s focused deeply on demands for equal opportunities in education and employment, as well as ending violence against women. To a large extent, the emerging feminist movement in India was influenced by Western ideals called for education and equal rights, but also adapted their appeals to local issues and concerns, such as dowry-related violence against women, Sati, sex selective abortion and custodial rape. Some Indian feminists have suggested that these issues are not specifically "Indian" in nature but rather a reflection of a wider trend of patriarchal oppression of women.

### **Indian Women's Movement and Social Change**

The roots of the Indian women's movement go back to the nineteenth century male social reformers who took up issues concerning women and started women's organizations. Women started forming their own organization from the end of the nineteenth century, first at the local and then at the national level. In the years before independence, the two main issues they took up were political rights and reform of personal laws. Women's participation in the freedom struggle broadened the base of the women's movement. In post independence India, large number of women's autonomous groups have sprung up challenging patriarchy and taking up a variety of issues such as violence against women, greater share for women in political decision making, etc. both at the activist and academic level. India has a rich and vibrant women's movement but it has still a long way to go to achieve gender equality and gender justice.

There are several clear indicators of the fact that Indian women continue to be discriminated. The sex ratio is skewed against them; maternal mortality is the second-highest in the world; more than 40 per cent of women are illiterate; and crimes against women are on the rise. Yet, the women's movement which gathered strength after the 1970s, has led to progressive legislation and positive change, spurred on by the participation of women in local self-government.

It is a paradox of modern India that women wield power and hold positions at the topmost levels, yet large sections of women are among the most underprivileged. Some women from the upper classes head political parties and command large followers, yet women's representation in the Parliament and state legislatures has not been more than 10 per cent. The roots of discrimination against women lie in the religious and cultural practices of India. The beginning of changes started with the reform movements in the nineteenth century, which addressed practices like *sati*, child marriage, life of the widows, etc. Although India's widows today are not forced to die on the death of

their husband – in ritual of sati – by burning to death on their husband’s funeral pyre, they are still forced to undergo daily ritual humiliations, to live completely apart from society, to live lives of extreme poverty for their children, alone, helpless and hopeless. Younger widows, with no chance of remarrying, face strong cultural disapproval within their own families. They often face dangerous hostile family situations or abuse. Rising problems with widows and their husbands’ family after the death of their husbands sometimes include sexual abuse from a husband’s brother or father, starvation or abandonment. Once young beautiful widows have arrived at Vrindavan, in some of the bhajanashrams, today they sometimes face the terrible fate of sexual trafficking and sexual exploitation as the ashrams try to produce more money. The only other alternative, to life in Vrindavan, for many of these widows is a life lived on the streets as a beggar in their own home region living under the humility of those she knows. Some of the ashrams today are also scattered with diseases like tuberculosis, dysentery and STDs. Most often, in the poorest ashrams medical help is virtually non-existent. Most of the widows of Vrindavan are categorized today in India as war widows, political widows or religious widows. The status of women in the contemporary context is reflected in the state of their health, education, employment and life in society. The Indian women’s movement started with addressing the problems that women faced, like violence, property rights, legal status, political participation, and the rights of minority women. Today, Indian women have achieved several victories against an oppressive way of life and are poised to raise pertinent questions that will make their lives more emancipating.

There has one important question emerged that from where all these kinds of societal deprivations of the women come in Indian society? They can be traced back to ancient Hindu civilization. Although some studies point to the equal status and rights those women enjoyed in the Vedic period (2500 B.C. to 1500 B.C.); patriarchy seems to have been the norm throughout history. In the later Aryan period after 300 B.C., domination by the Brahmins (the priestly class), the growth of the caste system and other factors led to social decline. Child marriage became the norm, wives were expected to worship their husbands, barren women were thrown out of their homes and widows were not permitted to remarry. The practice of “Sati Pratha” in traditional Indian society made women condition more worse. Many of these vicious customs are still observed in some parts of the country. Other religions, like Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism or Islam, have questioned some of the practices in Hinduism, but, by and large, all religions have kept their women in varying stages of confinement and restrictions. The Bhakti cults tried to restore women’s status and questioned some of the forms of oppression.

One of the fallouts of English education for the middle class during the colonial period was a change in attitude towards women. Through the Arya Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj, the Bengali middle class questioned the rigidity of brahminical Hinduism. Social reformers like Raja Rammohun Roy opposed sati or the practice of burning the widow on the husband’s funeral pyre. The government abolished it in 1829. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar’s crusade for widows led to the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856.

Several decades of agitation led to the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 that stipulated 14 as the minimum age of marriage for a girl. Education of girls through formal schooling was another major concern. The All India Women's Education Conference held in Pune in 1927 became a leading organisation in the movement for social change. Women played a major role in the struggle for freedom from colonial rule. In 1917, the first women's delegation met the Secretary of State to demand women's political rights. The Indian National Congress supported the demand. In 1949 independent India gave them their due by enshrining in the Constitution the right of equality for women. Indian women have participated in large numbers in people's movements including those for land rights, environment, anti-price rise and anti-liquor agitations.

Several groups of feminist thought and activism emerged to create the contemporary women's movement in India. The spark was provided by the Declaration of the UN Year of Women in 1975 and the release at the end of that year of the Status of Women Committee Report, a voluminous compilation of data that blew apart the myth that post-Independence Indian women were gradually 'progressing'. Faced with stark facts on the abysmal status of the mass of Indian women, who suffered from poverty, illiteracy and ill health as well as discrimination in both the domestic and the public spheres, middle class women in the metros began to campaign against the worst manifestations of sexism and patriarchy. They represented different sections of the society — left leaning political groupings in academia, students' unions, trade unions, peasant groups and ordinary middle class women.

### **Contemporary Women Movement in India**

Both research and activism has focussed on the negative fallout of the process of globalisation and liberalisation on women. They have demanded that the investment in the social sector be increased. But a government bent on opening up the economy to foreign investment and free trade has paid no heed to these voices, although India has experienced industrial recession and a period of jobless growth in the past decade. Given the high levels of the population and a large population below age 20, the demand for employment is growing and joblessness and accompanying frustrations have contributed to violence, frequently expressed as ethnic, caste, class or communal conflicts. Women are the worst sufferers in such conflicts. Besides raising these economic issues, sections of the women's movement are questioning the oppression of Dalit women. Muslim and Christian women are strongly demanding equal rights. The war in Kargil has spurred activism for peace. Women were the first to lead a peace delegation to Pakistan in the post-war period, breaking the ice and initiating people-to-people dialogues. Issues of conflict and peace are important, given the tremendous suffering of women in Jammu and Kashmir and in the North East region. Cross-border trafficking of women and girls is a major problem that remains untackled. Lobbying by women's groups of the South Asian region forced the SAARC countries to include in their Male Declaration of 1997 a paragraph on trafficking and a commitment to sign a regional convention on trafficking. This commitment has yet to be fulfilled.

The National Commission for Women has made a series of recommendations for legal reform and other measures that deserve consideration but have so far been ignored by the government. Last year the Indian government reported to a UN Committee on the status of implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination of Women and was congratulated for bringing women into *panchayats*, but critiqued on other counts including denial of rights to minority women. Activists have drafted a Bill on Domestic Violence after national consultations with women's organisations and lobbied for its passage. An official version is likely to be introduced in Parliament shortly. The government has declared 2001 as the Year of Women's Empowerment or Swashakti.

The gang rape of a 23-year-old woman on a Delhi bus has sparked mass protests in India, with thousands demanding drastic action be taken. She had been travelling home from watching a film at a shopping mall in the south of Delhi when she and a male friend were attacked by a group of drunken men on a largely empty bus. Thousands of protesters took to the streets to demonstrate outside the Indian parliament, the Delhi chief minister's office and at the police headquarters to demand urgent action to protect women in the "rape capital of India." Campaigners claim there is an ambivalent attitude to sexual violence against women in India and that assaults are often trivialised. Many were afraid to report assaults because lacks of sympathy among police officers who instinctively believe the woman "deserved" the assault and the fact that few offenders are convicted. Despite having two million people less than Mumbai, Delhi records considerably more rapes. Last year of 2012, during this incident there have been many protest demonstration happened throughout of the country. Indian government has also taken steps to stop the violence and sexual offence against the women. Government brought up and ordinance after following the recommendation of Justice Verma committee.

## **Conclusion**

Today Indian women movement has reached it extreme point. Many women organisations are taking up their responsibility to fight against the exploitation of women. Today every political party have women wing in the party. Women as a whole emerging as basic vote bank of any national party. Recent trends have been showing that women voting behaviour is changing and voting against the family wishes. Reservations in local level election for the 50% seat have been giving women a powerful tool to fight against the patriarchal structure. All the women started to realize that as a voting constituency can reclaim a respectful position society. If we took up the recent movement against the police and patriarchal structure of functioning of the government, then we can notice that women movement is reaching at its true potential. This is the dream of women activism to change in the social structure. We can see the change in thinking of the society towards women. There are many old practices like sati rituals have been put at the end. There is long way to achieve an egalitarian society in India, where women will considered as the equal partner. So, women activism has achieved many rights in their struggle, but still they have many destinies to be achieved. One

thing is totally clear that woman activism and participation in politics has change various aspect of the society. True social change can be achieved only when women will start to think equal to male and men will also treat them as equal partner. Women activism is the most important aspect to bring social change in society.

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## Political Mobilization on Caste and Development in Bihar: Some Observations

—*Nawal Kishore\**

### Abstract

This article attempts to analyze the different dynamics of politics in the past two decades of the contemporary Bihar. The prominence of caste factor and development is seen in the political mobilization during this period. This assertive phase of politics in Bihar also brings regional parties with individual popular leaders as major political force putting the major political parties to the margins. The caste-community combinations of OBCs, Dalits and minorities influenced electoral performance of political parties heavily. The shifting alliances among these political parties indicate that the development planks have influenced to certain extent whereas caste factors have been playing a predominant role.

**Keywords:** Caste, Development, Bihar Politics and Regional Parties.

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### Introduction

The electoral politics in Bihar in past two decades has witnessed considerable mobilization on two defining factors i.e. caste and development. First, political mobilization on caste has been so predominant in the elections that any explanation on the politics in Bihar seems to be incomplete without the use of caste factor<sup>1</sup>. Historically, there have been instances even in pre-independence period to believe that caste was a determining factor in electoral politics in Bihar. However it was basically strategic affairs adopted by Indian National Congress at the time of distribution of tickets during Provincial Assemblies elections of 1926 and 1937. Looking at the caste configuration of constituencies, tickets were given on the basis of numerical strength of the caste of candidates by passing popular leaders from caste groups who were minority in numbers<sup>2</sup>. In past two decades, there has been a paradigm shift in the way caste mobilizations have played a decisive role in Bihar politics. Now its caste based mobilization which is adopted by political parties in Bihar to attract masses to vote in their favour. Thus it is more or less a tool to expand their support base. Political

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Parties have applied various methods like awareness, education, campaign and assertion to garner socio-political support. At times Political Parties also used caste-centric sloganeering to mobilize their caste supporters and also work out an alignment of castes. In recent years, caste has become such a dominant category that even the mass leaders are much popularly known as caste leaders. The rise and fall of political parties in Bihar politics seems to depend on the management of vote through caste mobilization, sometimes explicit and sometimes may be implicit.

Second, in the context of the economic indicators, the state is caught up the lowest figures during this period on the overall state of development. Consequently developmental issues became a competing category to caste-based mobilization. No doubt caste-based electoral politics has resulted in higher participation and more intense politicization of the hitherto marginalized groups. However it seems that the social engineering in Bihar, in consequence, has cost dearly its economic development which had been put in complete abeyance. These parties have been working on a caste mobilization formula for electoral success notwithstanding the fact that the state has been found wanting on the plank of development. It is reflected in the poor supply of electricity, lack of proper roads and transport, absence of law and order, a degrading educational system, lack of primary health facilities, increasing unemployment, lack of new industrial investment and prevalence of sick industries. However, the use of primordial category like caste, religion, language etc. in Indian politics is widespread among the different states. But it has not influenced their development on equal terms? There have been states like Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra that have fared well on development indicators despite the use of the above said categories. However, states like Bihar and UP have experienced rampant underdevelopment. It needs a serious explanation, how the political parties have functioned in Bihar evading issues of development? And how the existing Party System fails to capture and explain the relation between the issues of development and caste based mobilization in Bihar.

### **Understanding the Linkage**

Since March 1990, the rise of non-congress parties as dominant players in the political process of Bihar seems to be a complete break from the past. Several state parties came up with their leader constantly opposing national parties with an alternative. The Janta Dal snatched power from the Congress Party in 1990 under the leadership of Lalu Prasad Yadav who, then, broke away from Janata Dal in 1997 to form the Rashtriya Janta Dal as a new party. Since 1995 the RJD with Rabri Devi as Chief Minister ruled the state till 2005. Apart from Rashtriya Janata Dal, the other two parties who have influenced and determined the political outcome in Bihar are Samta-JD (U) under the leadership of Nitish Kumar who had been the Chief Minister since 2005 and Lok Janshakti Party under the leadership of Ram Vilas Paswan. These political parties have risen basically by mobilizing two large sections of the society, namely, the Other Backward Castes (OBCs) and the Dalits whose democratic upsurge in the political process has been at large scale and have entered into alliances as per

requirements of government formations. They have pushed the Congress Party out of power in Bihar politics. In doing so, they have reflected new patterns of leadership and mass mobilization at different levels of parties hierarchy while interacting with the masses. The victory of OBCs and Dalits based political parties was made possible through various kinds of caste mobilization along with symbolic alignment with upper castes and minority vote bank. They asserted to champion the cause of different caste groups and build a rapport with the local people. This has resulted in a charismatic leadership for state party with mass base.

The Assembly or parliamentary election in Bihar has become a battleground for its three leaders, namely, Lalu Prasad Yadav, Nitish Kumar and Ram Vilas Paswan. There is more than one way to compare them; the most recent is that all of them have been Railway Ministers of India during the past two decades. It will not be an exaggeration to say that they watch each other keenly while moving forward in their political career. Two of them have been Chief Ministers and the third one is aspiring for it. The rise of these leaders can be traced to the JP movement of 1974 and the Mandal Commission has proved to be a life-line for them. They have been undisputed leaders of their respective castes (OBCs and Dalits) ever since. Career-wise, the past two decades have been the best time for them. The crucial issues that have been applied by these leaders in socio-political mobilization in their favour were primarily social justice, secularism, empowerment of weaker sections of the society and of late development issues.

### **Mapping the Social Churning Process: Castes or Development**

The numerical strength of different castes and communities in Bihar has directly influenced electoral performance of political parties. The assembly elections of 1990, 1995, and 2000 and parliamentary elections of 1991, 1996<sup>3</sup>, 1998 and 2004 have seen the churning of Muslims (16.5%) and Yadav (12.7%) along with some supports from rest of the OBCs castes and dalits. This can be considered as first phase of social churning in Bihar which had the impact of Mandal Commission. However the assembly election 2005 saw the second phase of social churning with the rise of the extremely backward classes or EBCs. The EBCs are mainly self-employed, poor, landless and largely unrepresented people – constitute one in three voters in Bihar. These are caste like Kewats, Dhobis and Nishads. This churning had a decisive role in the victory for Nitish Kumar in 2005<sup>4</sup>. Evidently, Mr. Lalu Prasad Yadav has been defeated by a rainbow coalition of the lowest castes, or Extremely Backward Castes (EBCs), upper castes and breakaway Muslim and Dalit voters, many of whom had voted faithfully for Mr. Yadav over the past 15 years. The Backward politics in Bihar has displayed a special characteristic. That is, the fight is between two combinations, one, led by RJD and other by JD (U)<sup>5</sup>. Such political situation seems to continue since past decade and a half and should continue subsequent years.

The assembly election 2005 has been claimed by many analysts to be a breaking point. That is to say, development has ultimately influenced voters in Bihar. Mahesh Rangarajan said on the conclusion of assembly election 2005 that “It points to an

immense churning in India's rural heartland. It is a positive vote for change. Most of the voters were disappointed with lack of development." Similar opinion came from Professor Nil Ratan at Bihar's AN Sinha Institute of Social Sciences when he said "The results reflect the Bihar people's desire for restoration of governance and law and order above their caste and community." Whereas analysts like Shaibal Gupta of the Bihar-based Asian Development Research Institute say, caste also sealed Mr. Yadav's fate and asserts that "Politics without caste in Bihar is simply incomplete".

So the turning point during this election was the decision of the extremely backward castes to vote for Mr. Nitish Kumar. Mr. Kumar was shrewd enough to give party tickets to some 23 candidates belonging to this caste-group to contest in the elections. However Shaibal Gupta agrees that "the biggest change is that development will finally get its place in Bihar. The middle class will again start taking interest in Bihar". "The EBCs have always been a hidden vote bank in Bihar of sorts. They used to vote for Mr. Yadav, but he never really publicized it. Mr. Yadav's coalition was mostly known to be one of his own Yadav community and the Muslims," says Professor Nil Ratan.

### **Issue at Large**

The interconnect between Caste and Politics in India has attracted many social and political theorists ranging from M.N Srinivas, Andre Beteille, Rajni Kothari<sup>6</sup>, Anil Bhatt, Walter Hauser, Dipankar Gupta<sup>7</sup>, Francine R. Frankel<sup>8</sup>, Ramashray Roy<sup>9</sup> and others. They have tried to conceptualize from various perspectives. M.N Srinivas opined that the role played by caste in politics is in close approximation to that of the pressure group. The modernizing forces will however reduce the influence of caste over the politics. Andre Beteille holds that while westernization is taking individual away from caste identity, the role of caste in politics is taking the people towards the caste identity and thereby strengthening it. Rajni Kothari studied the nature of relationship between caste and politics. He has also examined the type of changes that have taken place in the political system as a result of the involvement of caste organization. Caste has three important indigenous elements—secular which refers to relevance of caste in politics in terms of the relations within and between castes. Integrative which refers to castes being relevant to politics through differentiation and integration and ideological which is heightened by its value structure. Anil Bhatt in his analysis of Dominant Caste and political process reveals the crucial role played by castes in politics and awareness of the lower castes of their political gains. He found that the higher caste groups had lower political interest and low castes have higher political interests. Political awareness was high among the higher castes and was low among the lower castes. Lower castes by organizing themselves in pursuit of collective interest were able to emerge successfully. The involvement of these castes organization in politics has changed their position in hierarchical pattern of Hindu society. Caste solidarity and political power helped them to achieve higher social, economic and political success.

This was highlighted by the studies conducted by Rudolf and Rudolf. The same was highlighted by Andre Beteille's study of Tanjore district in Tamil Nadu. Caste has

become one of the most formidable elements of group formation within political parties in India. The patronage and pecuniary resources available to the political leaders enable them to create a coalition of factions on caste basis, whose leaders are bound to political elites in power in a complex network of personal obligational ties. Each of these leaders had a group of followers tied to him in accordance with the same set of caste principles. The personnel of these caste factions may vary but whatever may be their social composition they demand and to a higher degree receive from their members' full support. Political parties mobilize caste support in various ways. According to Andre Beteille two kinds of changes seem to be taking place in relation between caste and politics - power shifts from one dominant caste to another and the focus of power shifts from one caste itself to another on caste basis. He maintains that loyalties of castes are exploited in voting. New alliances cutting across castes are also formed.

Rudolph is of the opinion that caste association has given caste a new vitality and democracy has enabled caste to play an important political role in India. Caste federations are formed not of one caste but many. His further observation pointed out that caste enters the political process by making appeals to caste loyalties in a general way. Also by activating networks of inter-personal relation both during elections and at other times for mobilizing support along caste lines and by articulating caste interests in an organized manner. Beteille has also pointed that the political process has a dual effect on the caste system. To the extent that caste and sub-caste loyalties are consistently exploited, the traditional structure is strengthened and to the extent that it leads to new alliance cutting across caste, it loosens the traditional structure. Political parties utilize the support of caste for their functioning and seek their support in winning elections. Grass-root political arenas as well as political parties have always remained and continue to remain dominated by elites of castes which compete with each other to form caste coalitions of supporters strong enough to maximize control over local resources and enhance opportunities to become players in political system.

## **Conclusions**

Bihar is among the least developed states of India. The economy is mainly based on agricultural and trading activities. The mainstream writings on electoral politics in Bihar had single focal point i.e. caste until recent years to explain state politics, of late development has also been used. It is suggestive that caste is at the core of explanation to understand the party politics in Bihar; however one can find some sporadic appearances of explanation in terms of developmental issues and others on class category, There is growing dissatisfaction among scholars from this explanation and contradicted that the numerical strength of neither caste is enough to get them to power but they have accepted the importance of alliances of caste as a determining factor. Howsoever the alliance of caste during election keeps changing to meet the demand of winning situation. It not difficult to conclude that caste is the only factor which has capacity to mobilize political society in Bihar. Caste mobilization has been historically rooted and it has been nurtured throughout. The past two decades has

seen its penultimate growth. The category like development can be one of the issues which will have only temporal significance. Whereas caste has performed like an ideology throughout, that is rooted in the mindset. As Swami Sahajan and conviction on this phenomenon from his statement ‘that there is very little difference between nationalism and casteism, and it is a difference which disappears at a certain stage.... The only real difference is that caste covers a relatively smaller field whereas nationalism functions in a wider area’.<sup>10</sup> This is to suggest that a framework using caste to explain electoral politics of Bihar is basic. What is interesting to note is that despite Bihar being the most backward state and even when it is sliding down continuously on the development scale, the politics of Bihar kept revolving around caste.

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# India-ASEAN Relations: The Voyage of Eco-Political Multilateralism

–Rasmita Sahoo\*

## Abstract

The intensification of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and India's cooperation has already been shaped upshot with the implementation of the ASEAN-India free trade area. However, Eco-political relations have not been fully examined specially if there are possibilities of potential conflicting policy directions. This paper aims to describe in brief about ASEAN and India's political and meteoric economic relations through the look east policy paradigm. ASEAN was formed in 1967 by the ten countries of South East Asia. It began with Five South East Asian nations (Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines, Singapore and Thailand) and later on Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia and Vietnam joined. Coupled with a number of virtues like enormous size, huge population, convenient geo-strategic location progressive military might, meteoric economic growth inspired various states together with South-east Asian States to devise collaborative ties with India. India-ASEAN relations are reflection of the complementariness of interests between the two entities. As India chooses embark on a benign projection of its rising power, it has become vital to chart a foreign policy commensurate with its ambitions in Asia and the world per se.

**Keywords:** ASEAN, India, Eco-political, Paradigm, Free trade, Look east policy, Meteoric economic growth, Geo-strategic.

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## Introduction

With the new dispensation of Narendra Modi's government, India's involvement with the ASEAN is credible to grow further. The craze of power so as to play a dominant role in the eco-political management of the world has become so intense these days that countries are not leaving any stone unturned. How India could have underprivileged to hold an ally with ASEAN?

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is an alliance promoting economic and political cooperation by fostering dialogue among its ten members:

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Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. ASEAN is becoming a major economic powerhouse in the region, having signed free-trade agreements (FTA) with China, Australia, New Zealand, India, Japan, and Korea. The end of the Cold war marked a turning point in India's association with ASEAN. The resolution of the Cambodian conflict brought about a change in Indo-ASEAN relations. With the launching of India's economic liberalization policy in 1991, ASEAN came to be identified as being pivotal to India's policy in the Asia-Pacific region. The changed global circumstances forced India to adapt itself to the new emerging world order. India began to renovate its foreign policy and it was felt that ASEAN could be much help to India in this exercise. India extended support to ASEAN's efforts in establishing peace in Cambodia and to bring the warring factions to the negotiating table at the Jakarta Informal Meet and later cooperated with the UN Transitional Authority in its effort to bring peace to Cambodia.

"Before embarking on the analysis of the rationale of India's multilateral adventure with ASEAN, it would be imperative to discuss briefly the basic doctrine of multilateralism. The concept multilateralism refers to the practice of coordinating national policies in groups of these or more states through ad hoc arrangement or by means of institutions."<sup>1</sup> India-ASEAN relations reached a new height on 20-21 December 2012 during the commemorative summit celebrating twenty years of dialogue partnership and ten years of summit partnership. The summit ended with the termination of an economic agreement, an impressive India-ASEAN car rally, an emphasis on achievement of multi-pronged connectivity between the two regions, and strength of mind to work together towards building a stable and peaceful regional order. Themed on its path-breaking announcement of 2004 India-ASEAN Partnership for Peace and Shared Prosperity – the commemorative summit marked a qualitative jump in the tone and tenor of India-ASEAN relations.

## **Look East Policy**

India's major presence in the global arena can be evidently discerned from its dynamic foreign policy orientation as well as from a number of enterprising collaborative ventures with other nations. In the early nineties the then Indian PM P.V Narasimha Rao started a new phenomenon as the Look-East Policy in Indian foreign policy paradigm. The Look East Policy of India, framed by the Narashimha Rao government in the early nineties, is a substantial manifesto of India's focused foreign policy orientation towards South East Asia, an immensely resourceful and flourishing region. The economy of South East Asia is a virtually untapped market which is up for grabs by major regional economic entities such as India, China, Europe or the USA. India's compatibility with the South East Asian countries with regard to better regional cooperation lies in the fact of its abstinence from exhibiting he gemonistic ambitions, making it more benign towards South East Asia. The East Policy is expected to usher a new era of development for the north-east through network of pipelines, connectivity, communication and trade.

In promoting "Look East Policy" India feels that the greater involvement of India's north-east is needed. The immediate neighbours, South East Asia is one of the arenas where Indian and Chinese have taken interest in terms of strategy, trade and economy.



Therefore all the more it becomes more important for India to engage ASEAN countries in more positive way. While interacting with ASEAN, India has paid particular attention to one of the ASEAN member countries-Myanmar. There had been increasing realization on the part of India's policy makers to develop physical connect between North-eastern India and south-east Asia. Myanmar stands as a hub as well as kingpin linking northeast India and ASEAN. Myanmar's open-door policy after the political change in 2011 gave more opportunity to expend India-ASEAN strategic cooperation. For India, it is a pre-requisite to utilize the opportunities provided by its "Look East Policy". As a result, India has initiated certain bilateral projects and also became a part to some multilateral projects, aimed at enhancing connectivity between north-east India and South East Asia. In "Look East Policy" and Thailand's Look West Policy, India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway project will promote border trade and people-to-people connectivity on tourism in the region. The project is accepted to go under Myanmar-India strategic partnership in order to implement ASEAN-India's cooperation by 2016.

### **Economic Dimensions**

In today's world, economic relations cannot be strengthened without adequate focus being given to trade in services and investment. Over the past two years, ASEAN and India have tried to engage for an early resolution of the issues that would help move the negotiations on services and investment onto the fast track. An early conclusion of agreements in both these areas could provide the wherewithal for getting the trade in goods off the ground. In economic scenario since the early 1990's and India's own march towards economic liberalization has compelled India to focus on strengthened and comprehensive relationship with ASEAN countries. Moreover, ASEAN and Indian economies are complementary to each other. ASEAN is export-driven while India is a service sector driven economy. "Trade between India and ASEAN was worth about \$76 billion in 2012-13, making ASEAN the 4<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner of India after EU, USA and China. Both sides have set a target of increasing this \$100 billion by 2015."<sup>2</sup>

In the post-Cold War period, and particularly since the latter part of the 1990s, India's relations with all the major powers, especially the US, have shown considerable improvement. There is now greater mutual understanding of inter-linkages between economic, security and strategic interests of India on the one hand and major powers on the other. There are also hopeful signs that economic imperatives are gradually becoming much more important in driving relations on the Indian sub-continent, together with between India and Pakistan (Solomon 2004). As India demonstrates its economic and technological capacities to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is becoming an important player in shaping the future political and security environment in Asia. Resilience and stability of India's political and other institutions and harmony between its decentralized economic and political arrangements also have the potential to contribute to India's competitive strength. ASEAN's population is about half that of India's population of over one billion. The most populous country in ASEAN viz. Indonesia, has about a fifth of India's population. However, ASEAN's per capita income in current prices at US \$1,230 is nearly two and a half times that of India. The gap may narrow somewhat overtime but is not likely to reverse in the foreseeable future.

Asia is assuming new responsibilities commensurate with its capacities. Political and economic structures are evolving globally, and in a more pronounced manner, in East Asia. Under these circumstances ASEAN and India will have to remain natural partners in defining their perspective and addressing their common requirements of economic growth and prosperity. On the other hand, “ASEAN countries were more comparative in agriculture, textiles and auto components, electronics, and this was the major concern for India. As a safeguard measure, India submitted a list of around 1400 products at HS-6 digit level as the negative list. Those products accounted for about 42% of the total exports of ASEAN to India. In view of assessing the trajectory of India’s economic journey with ASEAN, both at the organizational and bilateral to multilateral levels, prospects and challenges strewn on the alleyway have been predominant. In the field of trade, India and ASEAN are dependent on each other because of the availability of various goods in their respective spheres.”<sup>3</sup>

The ASEAN region has a great quantity of natural resources and significant technological skills. These provide a natural base for the amalgamation between ASEAN and India in both trade and investment. India is also improving its relations with the support of other policy decisions like offers of lines of credit, better connectivity through air (open skies policy), rail and road links. “If truth be told, the first ASEAN-India Summit (2002) established the rationale of India’s enhanced multilateralism on the basis of the immediate advantages that accrued from such arrangements, particularly for geographically contiguous regions. Additionally, it provided the Indian domestic industry and agriculture a valuable learning period, before it was exposed to the far greater competition of global free trade.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Political Dimensions**

In the political sphere, “India has been dynamically participating in various conclusive meetings under dialogue and cooperation frameworks initiated by ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN post Ministerial conferences (PMC)+1 sessions, ASEAN Economic Ministers+1 Consultations, the East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting plus (ADMM PLUS) and expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum. ASEAN member states and India are also involved in Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), which facilitate contribute to enhancing regional dialogue and accelerating regional integration. India initially was seen as a champion of decolonization in Southeast Asia during the 1950s and 1960s as head of the Non aligned Movement (NAM). However, with the signing of an Indo-Soviet Peace and friendship Cooperation Treaty, relations between India and ASEAN took slump. Ideologically differences precluded close political knot from developing, throughout most of the Cold War.”<sup>5</sup>

The India-ASEAN relationship has entered its third decade. India became an oral partner of ASEAN in 1992, a dialogue partner in 1996 and a summit level partner at Phnom Penh in 2002. At the Bali Summit in 2003, India and the ASEAN signed the Instrument of Accession to the treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South East Asia, a framework agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and a joint declaration for cooperation to combat international terrorism. “During the Vietnam conflict, India

supported North Vietnam due to its strong opposition to the United States. Consequently, the Cold War rivalry between the two super powers also influenced India's relations with Southeast Asia. At the time, India had reasonable relations with Malaysia and was amongst the first countries to grant diplomatic status to Singapore in 1965."<sup>6</sup>

In December 2012, New Delhi hosted the India-ASEAN Commemorative Summit to mark 20 years of its association with the grouping and 10 years of its summit level partnership. It also marked the two decades of India's "Look East Policy" and that of its economic liberalization process. The India-ASEAN relationship was elevated to a strategic partnership at the 2012 meeting. The leaders also adopted a vision statement or a blueprint for the future India ASEAN-cooperation. ASEAN and India have now intensified their political dialogue to add a new dimension to mutually beneficial economic and commercial relationship. Reflective of India's interest in intensifying its engagement with ASEAN, both sides are in the process of jointly developing an India-ASEAN 2020. "The institutionalization of ASEAN India relation came with the first ASEAN-India Summit in Phnom Penh on 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2002 and was perceived as the success of India's look east policy. It was considered an acknowledgement of India's emergence as a key player in the Asia-Pacific Region."<sup>7</sup>

Southeast Asia and India are by no means strangers. Their civilizational and cultural links date back thousands of years and are still visible today in Southeast Asian architecture, food, pop culture and religion. But ideological differences precluded the development of close political ties for most of the Cold War. It was only after the collapse of the Soviet Union that Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao decided to engage Southeast Asia via the "Look East Policy", as part of a broader effort to liberalize the country's economy in an increasingly globalized world. "At the 2003 ASEAN summit in Bali, ASEAN leaders declared Bali concord second calling for establishment of an ASEAN community comprising ASEAN security community, ASEAN economic community and ASEAN socio-cultural community."<sup>8</sup> In the post-Cold war period ASEAN institutionalized the cooperation in the security field through ASEAN regional forum (ARF) which is modelled ASEAN post-Ministerial Conferences with its dialogue partners.

India's effort to align with ASEAN was not an easy task. "India close relationship and friendship agreement signed with Soviet Union and the establishment of Communist rules in some of the countries of the ASEAN were worrying these nations. Opposed to the SU and the communist nations in general and close to the US branded the ASEAN as pro West and this was the reason that India turned down to have dialogue with it twice in 1975 and 1980."<sup>9</sup>

## **Conclusion**

ASEAN-India relations as what they are in the present day have come a long way. The 1990s have seen a higher interaction along with firm measures to amalgamate and cooperate in the economic as well as political spheres. It wouldn't be wrong to say that India-ASEAN relationship is one of the most defining partnerships of the century and is pivotal to both, in achieving their goals and objectives. No wonder,

India –ASEAN connection is one of the fastest growing relationships for partnership with a vision for peace, shared progress and prosperity.

Though ASEAN is known to endorse pan-southeast Asianism, it is an outward-looking organization; hence Pan-Asianism comes natural to it. It wouldn't be wrong to see its expansion in the future. Its success would be a template for the entire east. The idea that the problems of Asia 'have their solution in Asia' is again finding a strong ground in the region. ASEAN is a fine example of an Asianized regional organization. It has to emerge victorious, for the rise of a truly Asian Century. Having accomplished a fair degree of political consensus on the need for economic reforms, India is now vigorously pursuing its vision to become a developed nation by the year 2020 (Kalam 2004). This requires the country to preserve an annual average growth rate of 8% per-annum as envisaged in India's 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2002-07) 26. As India's vision of becoming a developed nation by 2020 continues to be translated into domestic reform initiatives and leads to its further integration with the world economy, the opportunities for ASEAN and other economic partners for mutually beneficial economic cooperation are expected to multiply. Hence, ASEAN per se is aware of the need to further diversify its engines of growth from the traditional growth engines of the US, Japan and more recently, China, to India as well.

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## Book Reviews

**Tribhuwan Kumar & Vijay Kumar Roy, eds. *Comparative Literature: Critical Responses*. New Delhi: Alfa Publications, 2014, pp. 291. Price: ₹ 895.00. ISBN: 978-93-83292-41-7.**

*Reviewed by*  
**Dr. Ajay Kumar Srivastava\***

*Comparative Literature: Critical Responses* is an anthology of twenty three articles written by distinguished academicians of Comparative Literature not only from all the corners of India but also from some foreign countries. The anthology is the result of the insight visualised by two young bourgeoning scholars, Dr. Tribhuwan Kumar and Dr. Vijay Kumar Roy to make literature convenient and comprehensive through comparison. As a matter of fact, the accurate and effective analysis of literature demands sound understanding of Comparative Literature as methodology. There is no exaggeration if the noted comparatist in India, Prof. Avadhesh Kumar Singh writes: “Comparison is a natural human instinct. It is the only valid approach to know the true worth of a work of art. In itself, like a mountain, each text is great. But one comes to know the true worth when we take it close to another mountain or the Everest”.

The foreword by Prof. Avadhesh Kumar Singh offers a clear and easy-to-read approach to understand the concept of Comparative Literature and it makes the book more important.

The first paper by Dr. Madhur Kumar delineates with subtlety and perfection the various modes and aspects of Comparative Literature. The next twenty-two research papers are about spirituality across cultures; Oriental and Occidental views of Romanticism; Sanskrit scholar Kuntaka and Russian scholar Shklovsky; Eliot’s critical theories and Sanskrit Poetics; the poetic world of Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist scholar; Exilic Identities; Macbeth, Tughlaq and Caligula (characters) as tyrants; Shelley and Majaz’s portrayal of love; Latif Bhittai; Benyamin’s *Goat Life*; Sir Edwin Arnold’s *The Light of Asia* and Hermann Hesse’s *Siddhartha*; the pain of the commonality of umbilical cord in *The Mill on the Floss* and *The God of Small Things*; Ruth Praver Jhabvala and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni; Virginia Woolf and Anita Desai; Nayantara Sahgal and Doris Lessing; DF Bailey’s ‘Suitcase’ and Bhishm Sahni’s ‘Chief Ki Daawat’; John Keats and Vijay Vaibhav’s *Premanjali*; poetry of Shyam Singh Shashi and Mahendra Bhatnagar; Walt Whitman’s Mysticism and Indian Philosophy; Language Politics and Dev Virahswamy’s *Toufaan*; and Translation and Comparative Literature.

The editors have shown insight into bringing together responses of various scholars on various aspects of Comparative Literature, however it is impossible to deal with all the aspects in a single volume, for the canvas of Comparative Literature is surely vast. The anthology under review is an enviable publication and I am sure, it will be useful for the large group of researchers, as the trend of research is changing these days.



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**B.R. Ambedkar. *Annihilation of Caste. (The Annotated Critical Edition).***  
**Ed. S. Anand. New Delhi: Navayana, 2014. pp. 415. ₹ 525.00.**  
**ISBN: 978-81890-596-37.**

*Reviewed by*  
**Dr. Md. Equebal Hussain\***

*Annihilation of Caste* was first published in May 1936 by Ambedkar himself. This revolutionary book encapsulates the ideas of a rebel of how *Caste* and *varna* division inflict social, moral and economic wound to people without any fault of theirs because no one in this world has control over his birth in one caste or the other. The book was originally conceived as a speech for Jat-Pat-Torak-Mandal, an off-shoot of the Arya Samaj which had been established to meet the threat of mass conversion of the Scheduled Caste people to Buddhism/Christianity/Islam. The organisation, however, withdrew the invitation when Ambedkar refused to delete his provocative remarks against Vedas in the original draft and subsequently, Ambedkar published the book himself.

It is true that Ambedkar was not the first to have come out strongly against the evil of caste based discrimination and cruelty and from Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Mahatma Gandhi and even before there were people who made scathing attack on caste system but none was so thorough in his investigation of the malady. Moreover, what distinguishes Ambedkar from Mahatma Gandhi in particular is that while the later argued that political reform must precede social reform, the former insisted social change must precede political change. It is a different matter that the cause of social reform quickly dissipated because of the indifference of the majority of the Hindu community to the unjust social conditions within their midst, which desperately focussed on finding emancipation from British Rule. But Ambedkar's argument remains still fresh just as Arjun's argument with Krishna fails to die. What is more revolutionary and indomitably courageous about Ambedkar and this book that he questions the very authority of the Vedas, Upanishads and Manu Smritis itself:

There should be one and only one standard book of Hindu Religion, acceptable to all Hindus and recognised by all Hindus. This of course means that all other books of Hindu religion such as Vedas, Shastras, and Puranas, which are treated as sacred and authoritative, must by law cease to be so, and the preaching of any doctrine, religious or social, contained in these books should be penalized. (308)

Another important part in this book is Ambedkar's reply to the criticism of Mahatma Gandhi to this work. Ambedkar does not spare even Mahatma Gandhi and gives back a direct, logical and completely devastating reply. Thus, responding to Gandhiji's argument that everyone should follow his ancestral calling according to his/her caste, he asks:

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Does the mahatma practise what he preaches? ..... The Mahatma is a Baniya by birth. His ancestors had abandoned trading in favour of ministership, which is a calling of the Brahmins. In his own life, before he became a Mahatma, when the occasion came for him to choose his career he preferred law to [a merchant's] scales. On abandoning law, he became half saint and half politician. He has never touched trading, which is his ancestral calling. (342)

As a matter of fact, the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar form an essential binary. One person paves the way for immediate change, taking into consideration current sensibilities, while the other constructs the dreams of tomorrow – shattering every rotten, but dearly held sentiment that stands in the way. By playing a crucial role in the drafting of our constitution Ambedkar has left us the foundation for the construction of an eternal nation. How we engage with his legacy, will determine the fate of our nation. So far we have done very little to strengthen the foundation laid by Ambedkar except customary garlanding of his statue on his birth anniversary. This is what this fresh edition of *Annihilation of Caste* strives for – to place Ambedkar not just as the constitution maker but as a visionary who ‘imagined the contours of a nation that persisted beyond this century and into the next’, as a scholar remarks.

The charm of this fresh edition lies in the book length introduction titled *The Doctor and the Saint* by Arundhati Roy and S. Anand’s masterly executed annotations. Arundhati Roy who has become the most hated & loved intellectual of our country regards this book as ‘a breach of peace’ and reinvents Ambedkar and makes a fervent plea for lending our ears to Ambedkar’s teaching to cure the disease of casteism that plagues India. She may sound provocative at times but her introduction, as Satish Deshpande says, ‘is both well documented and closely argued.’ Moreover, her triumph lies in the fact that through her arguments she has shown how and why we need Ambedkar urgently. This book is a must for all, who wish to see India grow into a true democracy based on the ideals of equality, fraternity and brotherhood.



**Bishnupada Ray. *White Lotus and Other Poems*. New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers, 2014. pp. 60, ₹ 95.00.**

*Reviewed by*  
**Dr. Jaydeep Sarangi\***

God grants a poet the serenity. When we glimpse a wide range of armoury existing in correlation to themes and cadence, modulating and stimulating our intellect His images unlock our hearts. Bishnupada Ray's poems are collage of varied impressions and moods. They invoke many beautiful settings and bring to our attention. The poet's creativity and imagination are reflected in novel metaphors that evoke incessant images of hope and picture of life's daily course in the readers' minds. Poetry for Bishnupada Ray is "an expression of the non-grammar of being." In the 'Foreword' to *White Lotus and Other Poems* the poet says, "The fable that poetry presents is neither true nor false." We easily apprehend the fact that Bishnupada is well versed in aesthetic function of poetry. Basho said, "A poet doesn't make a poem, something in him naturally becomes a poem." There are thousands of ways to define poetry. It's an ongoing process. Poetry is eyes to a poet. Niranjana Mohanty in *Prayers* says, "Grant me an eye to see things as they are."

Bishnupada Ray, a gifted artist, is a poet with felicity and veracity:

"today we need white lotus  
to worship the goddess  
of creativity  
but the water bodies are bereft  
of white lotus." ('White Lotus', p. 1)

Painting is silent poetry, and poetry is painting with the gift of speech. Bishnupada paints his home of thoughts with words:

"the offseason swarms of bees  
sting with anarchist philosophy  
so that I may lose  
appetite and desire." ('Purpose', p. 6)

Poetry is the revelation of a composite feeling that the poet believes to be social and at the same time personal which the reader recognizes as his own. Poetry for Bishnupada, is an echo, asking a shadow to dance. No matter what we touch and we wish to know about, we simply end up in the enigma that his words and phrases generate. His subjects are varied, and that too a rich feast of ideas. He talks about different subjects like Kundalini, Kandahar, Stone Age, mystic river and peace with effortless ease. His works invite the readers with deep insights and surprise them as the foundations of his poetic idioms are laid on well-researched truth and beauty.

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Poetry is not a pre-planned, deliberate exercise, but, as John Keats very appropriately put it, “That if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all”, what in Urdu is known as *Aamad*. For Bishnupada Ray, poetry is expression of *joy*, a ‘space clearing act’. There is the pleasure in the recognition of a shared moment followed by a heightened awareness and anxiety. These poems can be read, studied, thought about and reveal deeper meanings of life’s acts:

“my poetry is  
to draw a picture  
of my strange bedfellow  
a rogue philosophy.” (‘Idiom’, p. 34)

Here, an indomitable gusto turns the key to a chamber of elevated thoughts. Images are woven one into another with rare brilliance and effortlessness. Bishnupada writes for who are sensitive, who think about existential issues and who want to free themselves from hypocrisy and move towards an authentic way of life. His artistic sensibility is pregnant with varied shades of feelings and emotions recollected in tranquillity. His poems capture each rainy moment of life’s daily acts. He walks through long corridors of inspiring discourse through which there is often no return; but returns with the coloured wings of successive images, metaphors and poetic cadence:

“this peace among the leaves  
is a mockery of the peace  
I have to buy among people  
this peace among the leaves.” (‘Peace’, p. 51)

A powerful poetic imagination enlivens even rusty metals and bricks. Bishnupada has a key to do that. The result is a lyrical moment of ecstasy.

Gone are the days when people were victims of colonial snobbery. Indian poets have found their own idiom to write back in the global code. Bishnupada Ray scripts his vast academic knowledge and in depth sensibility for Bengali and English literatures in poetic cadence, and becomes a member of a rich family.



**Jaydeep Sarangi. *A Door Somewhere?* Allahabad: Cyberwit.net, 2014. pp. 68, Price: \$15 & ₹ 200.00. ISBN: 978 81-8253-490-2.**

*Reviewed by*  
**Mr. Rob Harle\***

This latest book by Jaydeep Sarangi is a treasure trove of excellent poems. No matter what else poetry does it must move the reader in some way – bring a tear to the eye, arouse indignation, stir the heart – Sarangi’s poetry fulfils this criterion very well.

His poems use simple language but many are quite complex and to truly appreciate them require a couple of readings. This is not a criticism, exactly the opposite in fact, poetry which engages the readers’ imagination, defies everyday “shopkeepers” logic and is appreciated intuitively is poetry of the highest calibre. Simic alludes to this notion of poetry when he states:

Like our ancient ancestors who inhabited an animistic universe, the poet claims the interconnectedness and sentience of all things. This is what haunts: a world where magic is possible, where chance reigns, where metaphors have their supreme logic, where imagination is free and truthful. (“The Uncertain Certainty” - Charles Simic 1985 Uni. of Michigan Press)

This statement perfectly describes Sarangi’s poetry and yes he does claim, an “interconnectedness and sentience of all things.” I would add to this that if a poem reads like a sentence or paragraph in a newspaper then it is a poor poem indeed. A considerable amount of contemporary poetry is guilty of this trait, the use of the free-verse form is not an excuse to abandon metaphor, rhythm, cadence or poetic subtleties.

Sarangi casts his net widely and we find works which empathise with marginalised, downtrodden groups and individuals; which exalt the simple beauty of nature; suggest ways of communicating with divinity; and honour family and ancestral roots. The poem *Day Breaking* (p. 48) is an example of re-connecting with the “animistic universe” where the breaking of the day isn’t just a thing that happens but a living, dynamic entity – almost like a person, the daybreak is “leaning on the doorway”:

The daybreak is leaning  
On the doorway now, with shadows of an earlier night,  
Night’s lullabies welcome the yellow Sun  
When the body  
Finds its wrapper.

In the poem *A Letter To God* (p. 51) the poet is reminding God, he is here trying to communicate and get some help in his task of honouring the natural world, his use of subtle metaphor and evocative imagery is just exquisite:

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\* A writer, artist and academic reviewer, he has published two volumes of his poetry - *Scratches & Deeper Wounds* (1996) and *Mechanisms of Desire* (2012), besides various poems in a number of magazines and journals. He lives at Nimbin, Northern NSW, Australia.

I read your music  
 On the black windows  
 Like the souls of the rain-lashed trees.

further on:

I want new words in my kingdom  
 To write poesy that is not old.  
 My words should have wings  
 To suck honey from little buds  
 I envy butterflies.

Dr. Usha Bande in the foreword to this collection makes a very important observation regarding the way poetry interacts with society, speaking about poets like Jaydeep Sarangi:

When words and ideas rush through the mind, there is no choice but to express them, to write down and offer the world a vision, albeit a personal one. Slowly, the vision gets established and others also start seeing the beauty. True to the dictum that poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world, the process of change starts.

We see this in a poem like *Caged Bard* (p. 29) which is celebrating the move to freedom of Dalits and other extremely oppressed people:

Long struggles  
 Demystified Byapari of false honours  
 of the caste-ridden society  
 He discovers beauty in working class,  
 Cooperation among have-nots,  
 Humanism in rebels,  
 Simplicity of outcastes.

We witness here in Sarangi not only a poet who writes about the beauty of nature so as to help others appreciate it *again*, but also a humanitarian who uses poetry as a vehicle to bring about positive change for other humans. Sarangi is passionate about this work not only in his poems, but also in his position as an educator, and as a translator of Dalit literature, such as in *The Wheel Will Turn*, a recent publication by Cyberwit in which Sarangi with some other scholars translates the poetry of Manohar Biswas.

Some lines from *Window On The World* (p. 47):

He struggles hard and captures each rainy moment  
 Of life's daily  
 The wheel of Justice,  
 Got stuck for awhile  
 A stone somewhere  
 A gutter, perhaps  
 Causing oppression to the powerless,

But will turn again to re-establish  
A just society

Biswas believes the “pen is mightier than the sword”, stating that his pen is his weapon for bringing about social change, Sarangi clearly agrees with this and sees words and books as a way to set free the oppressed.

A verse from the title poem *A Door-Somewhere?* (p. 62):

Books are doors to read the world  
Where images travel fast.

further on:

My thoughts are love songs  
And morning prayers for the unquiet stones of history  
Where musing is a relentless struggle  
With a door of paper.  
All poets record the torn profiles of men  
Searching for his painted house, springs splashes of blood.  
It’s a door between the self and the world.

“All poets record the torn profiles of men  
Searching for his painted house, springs splashes of blood.”

These brilliant lines indicate we are in the presence of truly great poetry and a poet who moves effortlessly between the material world and metaphysical realms.

From *Sleep* (p. 44) a few lines:

Life’s ember  
Sparks with a flash,  
A tender journey within  
With a magic rod  
To enlighten each rock  
Speaking to another.

I have written elsewhere we need to recuperate our *abandoned metaphysical and spiritual modes of being*. The new poetics and art will help re-humanise the technology of the digital, embrace sustainability and re-envision the “mysterium, tremendum et fascinans.” Jaydeep Sarangi’s poetry is doing exactly this, if you support the effort to create a better, more just world for all global citizens, then owning a copy of this collection of poems will aid in this goal and of course be a wonderful addition to your library.



**S. L. Peeran. *Eternal Quest*. Bangalore: A Bizz Buzz Publication, 2014. Price: ₹ 150.00. ISBN: 978-81-88699-26-5.**

*Reviewed by*  
**Dr. Yogesh Sharma\***

The book, *Eternal Quest* by S.L. Peeran consists of 93 beautiful poems, 71 striking quatrains and 27 remarkable haikus, and 111 pages, covers a broad range of themes, serious and light hearted. Others are cultural, social, emotional and philosophical. The book beautifully displays the sensitivity and intelligence of the writer as a poet and his involvement with the art of writing poetry. The poet takes the readers on a voyage of joy with his verses.

The poems of *Eternal Quest* achieve fabulous heights. Equally the poet shows his pain and anguish to the readers in his love to his homeland 'India our land', .....

Chinese attack, loss of Tibet  
Pakis invasion of Kashmir.

Here poet almost cries to see his bleeding nation. Equally they set out to show the readers his concern inner peace, with such poems, 'Whither Solace?', 'Whither Harmony?', 'How to reach inner Peace?' etc..

The inner light that cherishes the soul  
Is a celestial gift for a fortunate few.

Each poem is a carefully woven story and is left in no confusion about its meaning. Each poem will mean a new thing to new readers but all display without doubt, the excellent ability of the poet and a fabulous imagination of pen that has created this delightful collection of verses. The titles are very simple and meaningful.

The poems change in rhyme, scheme or meter but this does not stop the flow of ideas. Comparisons and similes have been used very sensibly and are highly relevant to the flow of ideas.

Our children are like cool streams  
To parching land and gardens.  
Warm Sun shine on a wintry day.  
Full Moon and shining Stars on a dark night.

('Our Children', p. 84 )

The poet displays a very deep understanding of sensitive emotions such as grief, poverty, struggle, religion, patriotism, humanism, mysticism and what not. The poet has been highly successful to deliver a very clear message with very well selected words. The verses clearly develop emotions in the reader; some happy, some sad. Many are written in questioning style. 'What Colossal Change?' (49-50).

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The poem 'Nirvana, Moksha' (p. 72), talks about reality into a mythical world in a very fine way. "How to attain 'Moksha', Nirvana", (p. 79), - the readers now wish to go in that world to see if they can enjoy or experience that joy. The poem 'What Dignified Pure Life?' talks with love and affection of an ancestral home in need of repair and of grandmother now unable to carry out these repairs herself. Readers can identify themselves with these situations.

The poems seem to have been written the events connected with life, 'Laughter the best medicine' (p. 63), and others possibly written after some personal experience motivated to be written, 'Senseless Power' (p. 23). An enjoyment of the family life seems evident from the poems. A lovely poem, 'Lost in City's din' paints a beautiful family scene. The passion of the poet is clear when he writes about his love in 'Love Betrayed'. It evokes comfort in the reader as the emotions are conveyed through his words. Possibly family, close friends and students would be the reader for this collection of poems. These poems would offer something to them all. For those readers who are unfamiliar with the Indian language, Sanskrit, or Indian values may lose some beauty and pleasure.

One free himself from these forces,  
To attain 'moksha' and 'nirvana'.  
(How to attain 'moksha', nirvana? p. 79)

The punctuation and grammar in the book are good. It is however unusual to see a sentence starting with 'And' or 'But'; even more so when followed by comma.

Poetry is the manifestation by the poet. Like painted art there is nothing right or wrong but all is art.

Nature in our self  
Stars, moon, sun, celestial signs  
Unite knots of time. (p. 108)

So it is difficult to find flaws with the poet and suggest improvement. Verses are believable and very finely written. The design of the poems is well organized. The book is readable because there is a variety of solid subject matter and a wonderful glow of ideas. It is good to see reference to current issues as well as more traditional ones.



**C.L. Khatri. *Two-Minute Silence*. New Delhi: Authors Press, 2014. pp. 81, Price: ₹ 195.00. ISBN: 978-81-7273-920-1.**

*Reviewed by*  
**Dr. Ram Bhagwan Singh\***

T.S. Eliot's assertion "the question involved in the phrase 'the use of poetry' is nonsense" correlates with the earlier assumption of Matthew Arnold that poetry can replace religion though with undefined practicality. No doubt, poetry can sensitize our consciousness and awaken our soul without claiming to affect a change-over.

Here is Dr. C.L. Khatri's latest collection of poems with women as the central theme. He has dedicated the book to the memories of his mother. The book has a quotation from a letter of Sir Percy Fitzpatrick to Lord Milner in 1919 in which he has acknowledged the selfless service and devotion of the womankind.

The poems in this volume, nevertheless, present an assessment of subject matter-woman, nature, festivals, folk culture, social satire and personal musings. They show different shades of the poet's mood and mind, both appreciative and critical. The very title of the book is an outright denunciation of the present state of affairs on the national scene in India, a social wasteland. It is a virulent satire on our unruly parliamentarians those who are no better than hooligans uprooting the microphone and tearing the pages of the constitution. It is a satire on the foolish shaking off of our age old cultural values. It is a satire on our thoughtless polluting the environment and killing one another over trifles. The poet's conscious self mourns the loss of such priceless possessions and seeks like-minded company to observe a two minute silence to condole the loss. Here again, he takes a dig as someone makes a mischievous suggestion "can't we do with one- minute silence?" With these words he hammers down the insensitivity of the people who don't even want to spare two minutes to consider the loss of human values. The satire is so pointed that it can pierce the pachydermic mind of man. I wish it could!

The strain of satire carries on in a number of poems, for example, 'government schools', 'Bull's Reaction', 'Election', 'sex', 'Chastity' etc. We all know the sorry state of government schools sans building, sans teachers, just a pigsty of a school. Poor, hungry children rush to such hunts for the love of free mid- day meal, free bicycle and books. Hired teachers know little and teach less. The government and their political agents behave like the three monkeys of Bapu. Their eyes fail to see the evil, their ears don't hear other's grievances and blissfully observe the ceremony of silence. In 'Bull's Reaction' mechanization is the butt of satire. As oxen and horses have been replaced by machines for tiling the earth, so will human being be replaced by test tubes. The poet's intended message is to realize the equal rights of animals. 'Election' highlights the corrupt means to gain power. Politics is, no longer the skill of state administration, rather it is a self seeking enterprise. The poet is also critical of rampant sex abuse on and off roads.

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'Mother' shows different aspects of her divinity, love, sacrifice and privations. The poet calls her 'a universal emblem of love and sacrifice' (*Two-Minute Silence*, 27). But unfortunately the same mother is forced to abort her female foetus, at Kalahandi in Odisha out of penury a mother has to sell her child in the present day circumstances. Side by side the poet recounts the mythical women like Kunti who had to cast away her son for public censor, Sati immolated herself to protect her husband's honour. These examples just show the mother's selflessness and her utter vulnerable position in society down the ages. 'Homage to Maa' is C.L. Khatri's personal tribute to his mother in which he recounts his mother's love, sacrifice and aspirations for him. He likens her to Mother Mary and cherishes a series of loving memories of his Mother. It turns out to be a tribute to all mothers, and to female power.

There are poems like 'Naina Hills', 'River,' 'The Falgu' that describe the poet's long association with them and his regret at the present day neglect and nature's apathy. In 'Paeon to Patliputra' he nostalgically describes Patna of the past and present, its historical opulence and present day poverty. It was the haunt of Gautam Buddha, the Britishers' Lawn now called Gandhi Maidan, the Harding Park etc. The once divine, now "The Ganga crawlson her knees in north sinking in the sand mixing memory and desire" (p. 24). The pageantry of legendry giants effigy burning on Vijayadashmi and the celebration of Holi festival describe the traditional ritual updated as fun-filled celebrations. "Jogiji Wah Jogiji" is an example of a regional song with all its rural originality.

The book, as a whole, is a good specimen of Indian English poetry showcasing its exterior. Poetry today is a criticism of life more than ever before and the popular reader has no taste and mind for sublime thoughts and high philosophy. As such, the book will definitely appeal to the common reader.





**Aju Mukhopadhyay. *Manhood, Grasshood and Birdhood*. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 2014. pp. 88. Price: ₹ 180.00. ISBN: 978-81-7977-521-9.**

*Reviewed by*  
**Dr. Vijay Kumar Roy\***

*Manhood, Grasshood and Birdhood* is the eighth collection of poems by Aju Mukhopadhyay. Besides writing poetry in English and Bangla, he has produced a number of books on biography, philosophy and environment. Though, he is best known for his books on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The present book has been divided into two sections ‘Manhood and Grasshood’ and ‘Birdhood.’ The first section covers more than half of the book. It mainly deals with the poet’s experiences of glee and gloom with ‘Men and Countries’. He describes the golden time of ancient India that allured the ‘Foreign merchants and missionaries’ ‘carrying Christ’s message’ but the ill wills of the invaders disappoint him because they ‘ravished her’ a number of times. In the course of time there have been drastic changes in the terms of social, economic and political. The poet believes that being a huge nation sometimes the unimaginable happenings distress India’s soul. Still it is a progressive, sovereign and democratic country where people of all cultures and creeds live together. So we should not forget the love and fraternity. He suggests that:

Instead of pride domination or diplomacy  
let us embrace all with pure love  
for that is the only sovereign entity.  
(‘United in Camp-fire’ 28-30)

New themes of his experiences with men and nature make him an experimental poet. His acute love for the flora and fauna gives an ecological order to his poetry which is praiseworthy in the modern age of hankering after the lavish city life. The poet writes:

How have we progressed in time  
when we are still not in rhyme  
with the primitive and the ancient,  
with Nature, our everlasting friend?  
(‘United in Camp-fire’ 1-4)

He also gives an example of ceasing tribal life and suggests that tribal people face difficulties in leading their life as per their wish. Their habitat is brought to an end for ‘self-interest or self-assertion’.

Social and political disorder has given rise to corruption throughout the world. It draws poet’s attention. He does not like such evil prevailed in society. His love for the mother land is well expressed in the poem ‘Yearned Gloom’. When people celebrate the arrival of New Year, the poet sees the “humiliated face of our Mother land/bent

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with the burden of corruption... /tears rolling down her cheeks for her children vile.”(‘Yearned Gloom’ 1-6)

In ‘Politicians of the World Unite’ the poet writes that ‘political activists’ are ‘Diehard’ who ‘have spread their wings far and wide/cutting up didoes, corrupting/ the country’s social fabrics’.

they touch the pithy heart of truth  
with hard core supercilious falsehood;  
this is a class irrespective of parties  
who loot the country’s wealth  
shedding all dignities;  
there are exceptions as in every other field  
but in the long run most entrants join their guild.  
(‘Politicians of the World Unite’ 11-17)

The poet sees it a ‘dangerous signal in all countries’ (26). Though he is pessimistic and his hope is still alive in him.

Hope and trust surge in us that God may indeed  
burn all garbage, evil doers and deeds  
and sow in us the fresh-life seeds.  
(‘Yearned Gloom’ 40-42)

In the poem ‘What a Great Republican Shore are We Basking in!’ the poet presents the real picture of India which is known as a country of agriculture but the use of ‘foreign seed’ and ‘entirely unsuitable foreign expertise’ is considered a pride. The system of farming has so worsened that it leads the farmers to commit suicide. It is very difficult to understand that ‘everything including petty vegetables/will come to their hands well packed, marked/by multinationals.’ ‘Muddy hands and legs, poor farmers or tilled land and bullocks/nothing will remain except foreign bred profit and stocks.’The changing scenario disturbs the poet. For him it is ridiculous so he is unable to believe that ‘we have taken the development road’. (‘What a Great Republican Shore are We Basking in!’)

Crime, terrorism and misguided religious belief (causing jihad) taking numerous lives also draw attention of the poet. But here also he does not lose his hope. He wishes that one day ‘the sane voices’ (‘The Victims of the Evil Forces’) will rise to cease these heinous crimes and peace will prevail with equal right and dignity.

‘Krodh’ is an important poem of the book. Here the poet goes in the past and highlights the brutality of the Sultan and zamindar. They could torture their servants and bound-labourers and took their lives. In Mughal Empire the king did the same as zamindars. The poet reminds us those black days and convinces us to have control over our anger which is the worst enemy proved by histories.

To grow long hair and long beard in order to show off himself a religious or spiritual person has become a trend in India. It has been found that a person without long hair and long beard has more religious knowledge than them. In recent years a number of anti-social activities have been exposed which had been committed by

them. In the view of the poet there are various so called saints smocking afeem and ganja. Which kind of saints they are? What lessons do they teach? The poet sees them as culprits and escapist only. ('Either a Saint or a Ganja Khor')

In 'Invisible yet Perceptible' the poet discusses the philosophy of life and death. He reminds the eternal truth of life that one who takes birth, he has to die. So it is better to believe in eternal soul than the perishable body. We find another poem ('Pray that You Play Your Part Best') of the same vein in which the poet mentions that death is inevitable. It is an equalizer that maintains balance in the universe. If one does not believe in God, he believes in death. So we should not waste our time in vain. We should use our time in some good work and play our role best till we are alive. Thus we can escape from repentance.

The poet also maintains a balance as Nature and soon he brings us in another world. He brings forth the scenery of happiness in 'Spring of Life'. As spring is the best season, it gives us relief from the 'thrilling chill' and scorching heat of the summer. Here he reminds us the ending lines of PB Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind': 'If winter comes, can spring be far behind?' He also says that spring is a 'great/creative daughter/ of Nature' which gives birth to many things on the earth. The beautiful colours of flowers rejuvenate us and their smells intoxicate us. Lovers also wait for this season for their long cherished enjoyment.

'Arribada' is another poem through which the poet reveals the law of Nature. He presents beautiful pictures of fish, turtles and some other creatures but at the same time he says that their beauty is short lived. We enjoy their beauty but forget their fate. The truth is that what comes is bound to depart unlike Keats's Nightingale's songs.

The section 'Birdhood' has several poems on birds that draw our attention. They present the beauty and lifestyle of birds.

Thus *Manhood, Grasshood and Birdhood* contains the poems that fully justify the title of the book. Though while reading some of the poems of the collection the readers need to understand their background. However, the language used thoroughly is so simple, and style is so lucid that readers of all groups can relish them fully.



**Sangeeta Mahesh. *Ocean of Thoughts: Poems about Social Issues and Human Values*. New Delhi: Authors Press, 2014. pp.64. Price: ₹ 195.00. ISBN: 978-81-7273-861-7.**

*Reviewed by*  
**Dr. Vijay Kumar Roy\***

*Ocean of Thoughts: Poems about Social Issues and Human Values* is the first collection of poems by Sangeeta Mahesh. It comprises thirty five poems on various aspects of life. The book begins with invocation to Lord Ganesha, 'God of wisdom, knowledge and new beginnings.' The poet begs the Lord to spread 'spiritual thoughts' and reveal the 'the beauty of simplicity'. She seeks the ability to 'sing songs for the welfare of the world' and 'raise voice/For the sufferings of the mankind'. Her yearning for the welfare of humanity finds detailed notes in the poem 'Invocation to Lord Ganesha'.

There are human touch and spiritual longing in her poems. She wants to make her poem 'the song of humanity'. She believes that attaining 'lofty thoughts' one can get victory over the 'worldly thoughts', 'materialism', 'power', 'Money, physical beauty and lust'. ('Ocean of Thoughts') She suggests that to achieve 'peace' and spiritual delight one needs to change worldly perception. In beginning one can be 'baffled and restless' but it is strong inclination that helps one to achieve it. ('I am the Wave in the Ocean...')

Her human touch is also evident in the poem 'Wail of a Female Foetus':

I was in my mother's womb  
Like a pretty pearl in the sea-shell  
I was feeling secured and safe  
Under my mom's loving protective veil (1- 4)

I was killed before taking birth  
I vanished before seeing the light on earth  
A female was killed by a female doctor (21-23)

It is a cold-hearted and 'ruthless' mentality of discrimination between boy and girl that babies are killed before taking birth. The fact is that 'a woman' kills 'a woman'. This is a social evil, 'a shame' and 'a curse' on humanity, as the poet describes in the poem.

Poverty is another curse described by the poet. She does not see India free due to several reasons. There are various temples where she finds abundance of 'silver and gold' and coming outside of them she finds the beggars 'Shivering in winter with cold' having no 'proper clothes or shelter' and 'staring at every passer-by/For a rupee or a coin'. ('Why Should One Starve in Free India' 2-7) This is an irony on humanity and freedom. The poet adds that:

No, my motherland has not got freedom  
It's helpless even to feed its own children  
My India will be free when it will get freedom  
From empty bellied, hunger stricken children  
( 'Why Should One Starve in Free India' 24-27)

The poet suggests that humanity is the best religion. It should be cultivated to reap the

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fruits of 'love', 'compassion', 'peace and harmony'. Poverty can be eradicated through spreading this religion.

Religious places should be meant for spreading humanity but it is not so. Today humanity cries due to selfishness and dishonesty prevalent in every corner of the world. Killing has become a part of religion. Often we read the news of bloodshed with the name of religion. Somewhere saints indulge in rape 'Under the false cover of ... religion'. ('Beware of Wolves' 4) The poet says that:

These imposters are more voracious than wolves  
The wolves live in jungles, these with us in disguise  
( 'Beware of Wolves' 5-6)

They attack on women, followers of them  
And make them the victims of their lust  
They are more poisonous than the poison  
( 'Beware of Wolves' 9-11)

Here is a note of suggestion:

Oh, my fellow beings! Beware of these wolves  
Let not them prey you making you blind  
Service to mankind is the service to God  
( 'Beware of Wolves' 17-19)

The poems 'Essence of Life', and 'What is Life?' also deal with love, fraternity and humanity at large.

Sangeeta Mahesh is a poet of courage and hope. When the poet depicts the pictures of modern time, she does not forget India's glorious past. With the help of mythical examples she better describes it. She says in her poem 'Fly High in the Boundless Sky' that nothing is impossible to achieve if courage and wit are used like Lord Hanuman who crossed the sea in search of Sita Mata facing great hurdles and being examined by Sursa.

The corruption spread every where in India draws poet's attention. She believes that India's beauty and prosperity allured foreigners resulting in being invaded by them. They looted our motherland for centuries but the worst time has come when her own children loot, destroy and defame her.

However, believes that life is a mixture of pleasure and pain. This is meant for keeping balance. We should not be pessimistic. 'Withering of flowers is not the end of redolence/It tells that old departs and new takes place.' ('Why to Cry' 11-12)

We find revolutionary zeal in the poems '16 December, a Day of Resolution' and 'The Change is in the Air'. There is an ecological order in the poem 'Nature, a Boon to Us by Our Beloved Creator'. There are many other important issues dealt in some other poems that are also worth noticing.

The book is surely a good read dealing with different aspects of life. The most important point in the poems is that the poet does not only expose the problems, she suggests the solutions too. She uses simple language and easy to understand imagery to convey her message to the readers. The book is worth recommending for general readers as well as research purposes.



# Poetry

## Definition of Love

You seem curious to know definition of love  
You seem excited to get its meaning  
Should not it be a question on everyone's mind?  
After searching on Google for many days  
The answers come for you from several ways.  
I never had to go to the internet  
To explore a word, though often I heard.  
People want to know definition of love  
In this technology-oriented world.  
Now let me tell you precisely,  
I speak what it is really  
For me love is deep and profound  
That makes the world go round.

## You have to come again

You have to come again  
Not for me but for this world,  
Don't think I am talking absurd.  
You have to come back for the love  
That long remained in our hearts  
And we used to enjoy in the rose-garden.  
You will have to come to show me again  
How trees dance gladly in the rain,  
How may I tell all about the separation?  
How may I say about your distraction?  
How may I utter that misconception?  
You have to come without my permission.  
Whether you have maintained a distance  
But you have to come without any assurance  
You have to come to show me my worth  
As rain comes down to the thirsty earth.

– Ahmad Abidi\*

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\* Assistant Professor, G.S.S. Mahavidyalaya, Allahabad, UP. He writes poems, short stories, articles and columns in English, Urdu and Hindi besides reviewing films for dailies and magazines.

## Relationship

My bond to this land  
Is blessed with eternal spring  
Between shifting strands.  
Who cage two birds of unfamiliar species?  
A star to guide me  
The lost track somewhere in the mind.  
Facts and dreams are juxtaposed  
To see things through an open glass  
Of sweet lines pouring like rain drops  
While taking my pet for a community feast  
The busy Sun  
Warms our wings  
Over the limitless Pacific  
A roti for the hungry  
A stick for an old man  
In an alien shore  
Ushering green plague  
For the survival  
Words written with embossed paper.  
My relationship is lotus for Lakshmi  
Peacock for Kartika;  
Braille for the blind;  
Raindrops for the thirsty earth  
One looking after the other,  
A soft touch somewhere.

– Jaydeep Sarangi\*

## A Door

I sleep for a while  
And get up  
Walk through a door  
Of papers and letters  
With a poem in my hand  
For my readers.

A Door is always a door  
A fine line  
Between loving hearts  
Who speak  
In rhythmic words and idioms  
Rain of images  
Like a flock of birds  
Migrating from one place to another.  
Someone suggested, moving out is a good bit of illusion.

A poet is a translator  
He translates for his reading world  
Through a door,  
Whispers in time  
To another door somewhere.  
Even a castle at Eger  
Is a door  
On the hills of the Bükk Mountains.  
Traveling on a *Schengen Visa*  
Is a door.  
I pass The Slovak Republic,  
The river Hornád greets me with a smile.  
I land up in a holiday resort at Poprad.  
Who can deny me to cross these doors?

– Jaydeep Sarangi\*

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\* Widely reviewed and anthologised as a poet and critic, Jaydeep Sarangi is the author of four collections of poems in English and one in Bangla. He teaches English at Jogesh Chandra Chaudhuri College (Calcutta University), West Bengal.



## Blessing and Curse

It may be the cure, the enlightenment, the power  
In the pages of myth, history or contemporary world  
With stories long, complex and compound,  
Every blessing has its side effects  
Like allopathic medicines  
With the symptoms of dizziness, insomnia and headache.  
Intelligence is a blessing, emotion and imagination  
Join the man to rock on, but alas! When one is there,  
The excess of the same eludes happiness.  
The sound-sensor arrow could make the wise king wrong,  
The bed of arrows had to wait the north-bound sun,  
Deathless life could be so painful; thumb-less life could be so meaningful,  
A name can be both man and elephant; a time can be beyond day and night,  
A being can be both lion and man; a bullet can both wound and heal.

It is not easy to find the blessed when blessing of all kinds scattered all around  
It is myth that created heaven and hell, so wide apart  
Only shadow knows it is a mistaken notion, one astride the other.  
Every curse is a manifestation of under-dose or overdose of blessing in medical term.

– Priyaranjan Das\*

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\* Assistant Professor, Zisaji Presidency College, Kiphire, Nagaland.

## Rainbow Bridge

There is a bridge from Saturn to Uranus,  
Chiron reaches out to all who come to cross,  
tread carefully intrepid traveller  
Saturn's hold is strong.  
I tried to cross the rainbow bridge  
from past to promised future,  
I lost my nerve and fell  
falling, falling fast  
like a leaden autumn leaf.

The abyss opened her withered hands  
covering me in cloying darkness,  
frantically I tried to struggle free  
but like quicksand  
I became engulfed,  
as though wrapped in spider's web  
soft, silken and sticky  
I bound myself in deeper.

Pure white light  
pulsated above  
trying to penetrate the abyss of my ignorance,  
all was out of focus  
like peering through watery, tear filled eyes.  
I searched desperately for Achilles the healer,  
friend of Dionysus  
to remove the arrow from my heel  
so aeons of self-deception could drop away.

– Mr. Rob Harle\*

## The Return

Drifts of memory surface  
then fade, taunting me  
the Potala Palace is beckoning  
centuries ago my home  
calling me back  
with the echo of conches.

The subterranean passages, dark  
hold secrets the invaders will never know,  
arcane inscriptions by senior lamas  
coded in the universal language of light  
passages to higher dimensions  
transcending the material.

Young husband's British superiority,  
his guns and arrogance useless  
the invader's fear and ignorance mocked  
Lamas come and go still.

New invaders  
driven by ideologies of insecurity  
armed with yellow-steel machines  
drones, infrared eyes and satellites  
all useless against the secret of invisibility.  
And still the lamas come and go.

The fragrance of sandalwood  
lingers far beneath the golden turrets,  
I must return to complete the Yantra  
deep in the mountain rock vault  
the place of my Little Death Ceremony.

High on the roof of the world  
arcane secrets wait patiently,  
The Dali Lama clearing the way  
as the focus of white light  
emerging from the universal matrix  
will manifest through the interlacing Yantra.

The sacred symbol will pulse  
channelling the healing energy  
like radio waves around the earth  
peace and unity will soon return  
resonating and clearing the turmoil of centuries.

– Mr. Rob Harle\*

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\* A writer, artist and academic reviewer, he has published two volumes of his poetry - *Scratches & Deeper Wounds* (1996) and *Mechanisms of Desire* (2012), besides various poems in a number of magazines and journals. He lives at Nimbin, Northern NSW, Australia.

## I'm the Same, the Same as I was

I am  
as formerly  
true to you.  
Nor ever wandered from your love,  
I'm the same, the same as I was  
my heart retains its inner world:  
of concern for you,  
gentle esteem,  
of love  
and constancy.  
I'm the same, the same as I was,  
my laughter runs all through the room,  
lines too  
of a loving song,  
and dreams  
more bold than those I told of you,  
the heartache of parting, grief.....  
I'm the same, the same as I was  
unchanged  
in tenderness,  
unchanged my love of verse.  
Poesy—my treasure on earth,  
my dowry to you.  
I am wholly unchanged.  
I'm the same, the same as I was,  
and even were I born again  
all the same  
I would live as yesterday I did and do today,  
dearest in life,  
you know yourself what way I've changed—  
wrinkles more and more appearing,  
calmness leaving my sleep at night,  
heartbeat tempo  
shade of hair.  
What is changed  
and gone from me  
in the world of youth.

– Vinay Kumar Dubey\*

## For a Moment Only.....

If I were an eagle in flight over mountain crest,  
 I should leave my peaks; fly to you as my only nest.  
 If I were to have a rendezvous full of happiness—  
 My head on your knee alone would I wish to rest.  
 If I should become a Parting, with keeping thrust,  
 I would swoop around you, as a whirlwind must.  
 And should I fall to earth like a shooting star,  
 For you I'd start to blaze.....till I burnt to dust.  
 Should hunter's arrows strike me and fatally wound,  
 I'd trace your name in blood out on the ground.  
 And I would endure with all of my stubborn will,  
 The bitter fury unleashed by a storm unbound.  
 If spring should give me her colorful brush to use,  
 Your portrait alone to paint I'd choose;  
 And when sweet nature would gaze on my work of art,  
 Her wilding ecstasy would the world confuse.  
 If I became a song that held not a word,  
 Of grief....on your lips, I'd swing like a bird;  
 And the sadness and the grief that tortured your heart—  
 They'd be held on a curb-rein, never spurred.  
 If I could raise a storm as the deep seas do,  
 I'd dedicate all my polyphony to you.  
 If I become a garden of rioting colour,  
 I'd say you gave me each shade and tint.  
 Could I be lightning once, or ye the wind,  
 I'd drive all the shadows away that hang on your mind.  
 Whenever, wherever, you need me, if at all—  
 Be sure I will seek you out and search till I find.  
 Without you, my songs are stilled and as mute as ice;  
 Without you, all earth and life.....lost paradise.  
 So live and shine on earth's bosom like a star,  
 From age to age undying splendor rise.

– Vinay Kumar Dubey\*

## Comparisons

I compare you to a flower—  
Though the flower's life  
Be only a day  
Or only a year.

The likeness lies in  
Neither the flower's span  
Of life, nor that of man.

I compare you to a flower——  
In delicacy  
And tenderness.

I compare you to a lion—  
What likeness here?  
The one a beast of pray—  
The other man.  
If you should catch his  
Eye, in the heat of rage  
He'd tear you all to bits.

I compare you lion  
In valour  
Courage  
And pluck.

I designate you elephant——  
Would I come close?  
What likeness lies  
Between unreasoning  
Giant, reasoning man?

I designate you elephant  
For strength, for power,  
For work that knows  
No beginning or end,  
For honest merit.

I compare you to a horse—  
Yes, even now with  
Horses out of date.  
Where then  
The likeness?  
He tolerates saddle,  
Harness, flicking whip,  
Long roads.  
Whereas who dares to  
Lay a finger  
Upon you?  
For you are a man,  
And he—mere beast.  
I compare you to a horse—  
For fortitude  
When the way ahead is hard  
And troubled.

– **Vinay Kumar Dubey\***

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\* *Department of English, Delhi Public School, Ranipur, Haridwar, Uttarakhand.*

## A Pious Pursuit

The blowing of winds, trembling of leaves,  
Waves of water, chirping of birds,  
Movements of innocent babes and beasts,  
Beauty of flowers and moonlit nights, and  
Existence of the living and non-living entities  
Are eternal educators  
And the messengers of Eternity.  
They lead us to the pious pursuit  
Of the mysteries of Nature  
And divine knowledge.  
That kingdom of Delight  
Entails our surrender  
To His lotus feet  
Without attaching to our acts  
And approaching our Master  
Who keeps on waiting  
To welcome us in His sovereignty  
Where successful entry  
Can reserve an eternal seat  
Close to His splendid throne  
And liberate us from the bond of rebirth.

## Nurtured by Nature

Nurtured by Nature,  
I learnt to bear the scorching of summer,  
harshness of winter  
and swimming in the face of the current.  
Engrossed in the task of Truth,  
I see different forms of Goddess Durga  
in some women, and the smile of Lord Vishnu  
in every leaf of the peepal tree.  
They all make Beauty- my guardian  
and Love- my inmate  
whose company bridges  
the delight of celestial and terrestrial.

– Vijay Kumar Roy\*

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