

# **Ars Artium**

ISSN (Online) : 2395-2423 • ISSN (Print) : 2319-7889

**An International Peer Reviewed-cum-Refereed  
Research Journal of  
Humanities and Social Sciences**

**Volume 4**

**January 2016**

Editor-in-chief

**Dr. Vijay Kumar Roy**

**Paragon International Publishers**

New Delhi - 110 002 (India)

Published By  
G.C. Goel  
for Paragon International Publishers  
5, Ansari Road, Daryaganj,  
New Delhi - 110002  
Phone: 011- 65364964  
email: paragonintpub@gmail.com  
website: www.arsartium.org

ISSN (Online) : **2395-2423**

ISSN (Print) : **2319-7889**

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For subscription, all orders accompanied with payment in the form of DD in favour of **Paragon International Publishers** and payable at **New Delhi** should be sent directly to:

**Paragon International Publishers**

5, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi - 110002

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**Individual ₹ 1500.00 (India)/USD \$ 50 (Abroad)**

**Institutional ₹ 2000.00 (India)/USD \$ 60 (Abroad)**

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## Editorial

We are pleased to present the fourth volume of *Ars Artium*. It contains research papers on different aspects of English literature, Indian English literature, English language, Diasporic literature, Criticism, Post-modern studies, film studies, cultural studies, international relations, and book reviews and poems.

Dr. Bir Singh Yadav in his paper, “Religion, Science and Literature: An Integrated Vision of World Peace”, well illustrates the interconnectedness of religion, science and literature for global peace and harmony. Dr. V. Pala Prasad Rao, in his paper, “The Refugees’ Predicament: A Select Study of Indian Fiction” explores the religious frenzy in Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi*, Taslima Nasreen’s *Lajja*, Bhisham Sahni’s *Tamas*, Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Cracking India*, Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*, and Shashi Tharoor’s *Riot* and finds it responsible for refugee’s quandary and social and national unrest. Dr. Shobha Diwakar also studies the social, national and global disruption due to “religious fanaticism” and the need for new political order in Stephen Gill’s epic poem *The Flame*.

Dr. Bhaskar Roy Barman’s paper “Women Characters in the Works of Sarat Chandra” is an in-depth study of “a kind of realism” in the short stories and fiction of the famous legendary Bengali writer Sarat Chandra. Dr. Hem Raj Bansal’s paper, “Resisting and Assertive Stance of Pahari Women in Raman’s “Gaachi” and Bhatia’s “And a Song She Became”” presents the real and latent pictures of the predicament of *pahari* women.

Dr. Mohan Lal Mahto’s paper “Cultural Conflicts and Hyphenated Existence in Meera Syal’s *Anita and Me*” is a study of diasporic tribulations. Dr. Rupal S. Patel in her paper “Feminist Perspective of Manju Kapur’s *A Married Woman*” studies the social predicament of Indian women in patriarchal society. Vinay Kumar Dubey presents women’s sense of self-exile in his paper, “A Study of Alienation in Shashi Deshpande’s *The Dark Holds No Terrors*”.

Dr. Neelam Agrawal’s paper, “Love as Divine Power and Spiritual Gratification: An Analytical Study” is a study of the poetry of William Shakespeare, John Donne, Michael Drayton, and Kamala Das on the lines of true love and spiritual awareness. Dr. Raj Kumar Swami illustrates man’s relation with Nature in his paper “Ecological Harmony in William Wordsworth’s Selected Poems”.

There are two research papers on the poetry of Jaydeep Sarangi. Dr. Sandeep Kumar Sheoran discusses the “poetic sensibility” in Sarangi’s *The Wall and Other Poems* and Sibasis Jana presents Sarangi’s views on the poor and down-trodden in his collection of poems, *Silent Days*. Nidhi Gehlot’s paper, “Realistic Approach of Life with Special Reference to Dalvir Singh Gahlawat’s Poem “Self” is a “comprehensive study of the poem “Self” in which the poet shows that self and sapling both celebrate their victory over negative situations but ... they are destined to put themselves in the troubles again and again.”

Dr. Sravasti Guha Thakurta, in her paper, “Tagore’s Modernist Predilections: Incursions into an Unchartered Territory” seeks to explore the fact that Tagore’s poetry has not only the similar elements that of Keats, Shelley, Thompson and Tennyson but also of the Modern poets. Dr. Nirja A. Gupta’s paper, “A Commentary on Locales and Treatment: O.V. Vijayan’s *The Legends of Khasak*” presents “the rustic setting of characters, motifs, and stylistic conventions that can delineate the shape and presentation of a text”.

Rushiraj Waghela’s paper, “Shashi Tharoor’s *Riot: A Postmodern Study*” is a critical study of the form and content of Tharoor’s famous novel, *Riot*, and Dr. Sunil Sagar’s paper, “India as the Uncivilized Other: Reading Kipling’s *Letters of Marque*” presents “Kipling’s unsubstantiated value judgments on India.”

There are two papers on film studies. Minu Susan Koshy, in her paper, “Rhythmanalysing New York through Diasporic Lens: A Study of Nikhil Advani’s *Kal Ho Naa Ho* and Karan Johar’s *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna*” explores the diasporic subjects in these films to “make and perceive the rhythms in .... ‘adopted’ homelands and how these rhythms merge into the quotidian life of the diasporic Indian in New York, as depicted in these movies.” The another paper on the similar theme is by Dr. Sudhir Narayan Singh and Dr. Padma Singh’s “‘Diasporic Concerns’ and Picturization of ‘Predominance of Isolation’ of Indian Woman in *The Namesake: A Film Study*”.

There are also two papers on English language. Afroza Akhter Tina’s paper, “Conversational Code Mixing among Jahangirnagar University Students: A Threat to Bengali or Not”, is based on new ideas and methods to find out the facts about the status of English and Bangla in Bangladesh in the context of code mixing. The another paper, “Developing English Vocabulary of EFL Learners in Elementary Institute in Iran by Improving Long Term Memory” by Saheleh Kheirabadi deals with new methods to teach English.

The paper “Mind Versus Heart or Vice Versa: Semiotic Reading of *Harrison Bergeron* by Kurt Vonnegut” by Dr. Necat Kumral presents a “comprehensive process approach to the reading of literary works to display a scheme on how a reader can develop literary competence by moving from the sense to the value, and consequently to the critique of the work concerned.”

There is one paper on international relations by Dr. Rasmita Sahu in which she brings to light the massive influence of the programme of Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iran.

In Book Reviews section, there are four book reviews: Dr. Jagadish Gan-Choudhuri’s *Folk-tales of Tripura* reviewed by Dr. Bhaskar Roy Barman; K. Srilata’ *Writing Octopus: A Collection of Poems* reviewed by Dr. Jaydeep Sarangi; Jaydeep Sarangi’s *The Wall and Other Poems* reviewed by Patricia Prime; and Pashupati Jha’s *Awaiting Eden Again* reviewed by Dr. Vijay Kumar Roy.

The Poetry section of the journal has poems by Prof. Ada Aharoni, Dr. Sudhir Narayan Singh, Mr. Vinay Kumar Dubey, and Dr. Vijay Kumar Roy.

**–Dr. Vijay Kumar Roy**

Editor-in-chief

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# Religion, Science and Literature: An Integrated Vision of World Peace

–Bir Singh Yadav\*

## Abstract

Religion, being lamp of soul is one of the potent primordial instincts in human beings, finds expression in divergent ways in literature. Literature not only nurtures and promotes this religious instinct but simultaneously it also saves it from the dross of superstition and ostentation, consequently by adopting the process of purification and filtration it reflects its real nature. All literary bards of the East and the West in their literary compositions have reflected upon religion in their own way. The universe with its cosmic nature also reveals this religious feeling in a peculiar way as the divine postulate embedded within its structure. Refined and filtered religious feeling has its roots in rationality and scientific thinking; therefore, the great scientists, philosophers, poets, saints and seers also build a bridge between science and religion. Religious light comes from the innate divinity with positive, constructive and altruistic outlook to life which ultimately takes us to world peace with love and sympathy towards human and non-human world. Thus literature is the powerful expression of real religion with overt sentiments and covert reasoning and rationality, hence it may be instrumental to promote world peace, progress and happiness; consequently it may lead the world to bright and better future in 21st century.

The present paper intends to surface the real nature of religion with scientific thinking embedded in the works of some eminent literary bards. The religious undercurrent in the sublime literary works reflecting true spirit of religion may pave a way to world's unity, peace and fraternity.

**Keywords:** Culture, materialism, morality, rationality, religion, science, spirituality.

Covering a long journey from Stone Age to Space Age mankind has presently reached the most inspired age of the science to enjoy this wonderful world by liberating itself from the tyranny of the environment. But the proper adjustment and meaningfulness of life in this new world requires liberation from the tyranny of our inner nature

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through the realization and training of the spiritual self. The crowning achievement of the modern scientific culture is that it has created in man a rational and intellectual being, but this image of man is not its real dignity as it has inherent weakness which is sure to destroy this most advanced and beautiful civilization one day in the near future as Pratibha Ray, the recipient of the Bharatiya Jnanpith's Moortidevi Award in 1993, articulating her voice in *Yajnaseni* through Draupadi says:

From lord Vyas I have heard that five thousand years from now man will reach the pinnacle of achievement of civilization, culture and science. With the help of science he will establish contact with planets and stars. Then if, because of a wrong decision, power hungry persons launch a great war, what a terrible situation will arise on account of the weapons created by that very science. (396)

We have come to this world in human form to love and create, not to hate and destroy. Therefore, the most challenging task of the day is how to transform this rational and intellectual man accomplished with techno-science knowledge into spiritual and moral being by eliminating all kinds of baser passions from its nature. Socrates was also of the considered opinion "that there could not be fulfillment of human personality without adequate attention to the spiritual dimension of man." (Radhakrishnan 1976, 14) Alexander when he invaded India was also impressed by the austerity of the majestic wisdom of spirituality as he realized that natural desires like thirst and hunger are quenched by water and food but the craving for possession, being an artificial one, can never be satisfied, therefore shortly before his death he celebrated a banquet inviting nine thousand people and prayed for peace, for the partnership of all peoples of the world to live in amity and concord. Ashoka was also impressed by the spiritual power as he realized that real victory could not be established by war and violence but by the power of *dharma*, therefore after Kalinga war he made a declaration that hence onward the drums of *dharma* would be beaten in place of the drums of war. So far as the impact of spirituality is concerned, it won't be an exaggeration to state that the hoary wisdom of ancient Indian culture emerging out of the minds of its sages, saints and seers not only shaped the mind of her people, but also influenced the mind of Asia, and in turn Asia influenced the mind of Europe and the world as a whole.

Religion is not a dogmatic conformity or ceremonial piety, but is an insight into the nature of Ultimate Reality and mystery of the world. It is the state of awakening according to Buddhists, and change of consciousness according to Christians. It is self discovery or recovery, the soul's dialogue with itself. It is self-scrutiny, inner cleaning with a change of heart. Moreover, it is a science of life with a set of values and standards. With the true spirit of religion a person conquers the self and that conquest is greater than the conquest of the world as M.K. Gandhi asserts that "To conquer the subtle passions seems to me to be harder far than the physical conquest of the world by the force of arms." (511) Hence religion in its high ideal is a spiritual adventure taking all beings in the fold of one family. Sankaracharya, *advaitavadi*- a non-dual philosopher, the great prophet of reconciliation and universal harmony, takes religion to the supreme stage stressing on spiritual and ethical exercises for the happiness

of the world by articulating its goal –*bahujana hitaya, bahujana sukhaya*. Hence, the thinkers of the East and the West have felt the need of integrating scientific and spiritual life for the great future of humanity. Literature may be the best refinery for the purgation of religious feeling with logic, reasoning and rationality. R.N. Tagore in the poem “False Religion” ridiculing false religion implores God to save mankind by destroying it:

O Lord, breaking false religion,  
Save the blind!  
Break ! O break  
The altar that is drowned in blood  
Let your thunder strike  
Into the prison of false religion. (30-35)

‘Knowledge gives us power, love gives us fullness’ (Radhakrishnan, 1984:171) and the mingling of the moral power of love and the vision of the spiritual unity forms the higher nature of man which solves all problems of the existence. Science and technology can save humanity from degrading conditions by adding comforts, health and enjoyment but the true dignity of spiritual wholeness can be provided only by religious dialogues through sublime literature. The ideal of truth, goodness, love and beauty are the expression of our spiritual self, therefore, *The Bhagavadagita* says that “of all types of knowledge the knowledge of the self is the most important” and Radhakrishnan also rightly asserts that “Religious life is the life lived in the power of Being.” (Radhakrishnan, 1984:99,101) Therefore, the fulfillment of man’s life lies in spiritual experience in which man’s being is raised to its highest point. When we realize the innate dignity of the soul, we are impelled to think that the science of the self is the greatest of all sciences.

Human beings are in the ‘*fallen state*’ and are living in ‘*the fallen world*’, therefore, worldly considerations and temptations corrupt the great ideals in the world., consequently human mind becomes badly crippled in religious thinking. But Indian idealism has a ray of hope as it projects the world under moral laws wherein man’s life being *dharma kshetra* becomes the scene of moral choice. But it is also right as *The Bhagavatagita* states that “It is the law of spiritual world that whenever evil and ignorance darken human affairs, morality and wisdom will come to our rescue.” (IV, 7-8). Therefore what is needed most today is that our minds should have spiritual freedom. They should be free from bigotry, and superstition, dogmas and rituals, and emphasize the central simplicities of religion. The Indian culture best known to the outer world is that of *tat tvam asi- the eternal is in one’s self*. Thus religious pursuit becomes the goal of life putting all human beings on equal footing regardless of caste, creed, culture, religion and nation as the death-bed statement of Socrates shows, “I am not an Athenian or a Greek but a citizen of the world” (Radhakrishnan 1984:112).

Science and technology have made the world not only a unified world community by removing all kinds of physical barriers but they have also placed great powers in our hands which may lead mankind to better and bright future if they are used in the

right way or may push to chaos and destruction if they are misused. The destructive power of this progress is so terrifying that the whole world may be destroyed within a few minutes by pressing a button, hence the material, economic, political, scientific and technological advancement can not materialize the dream of world solidarity in the real sense. Therefore, if mankind is to be saved with sustainable development, we must take the spiritual coherence as the axis of our thought and action. We should not think that religion is against the spirit of the science, though it is true that any religion which is insensitive to human ills and social crimes, and creates division, discord and disintegration and fails to promote unity, understanding and social harmony is not the real religion. The spirit of science contributes to the refinement of religion as Albert Einstein opines that “science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.” (Einstein 46) In his book *The World As I See It*, Einstein observes that the scientist’s ‘religious feeling takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection. This feeling is the guiding principle of his life and work, in so far as he succeeds in keeping himself from the shackles of selfish desire. It is beyond question closely akin to that which has possessed the religious geniuses of all ages.’(qtd. Radhakrishnan 1984:10) Religion is not only intellectual conformity or ceremonial piety; it is spiritual adventure in which latent possibilities are realized as the being moves from imperfection to perfection.

Religion is not an escape from social struggle as spiritual wisdom and social affairs are inextricably connected to each other. It also teaches us to raise our voice and fight against injustice and degradation. To make people morally and spiritually strong is also the duty of a religious person. Gandhi along with political freedom also fought a religious battle of freedom as he said, “A fallen and prostrate India will not be of any help to herself or to the World. A free and enlightened India can be of help to herself and to the World”. And he also stated, “I want my country to be free so that one day, if necessary, she may die for the sake of humanity”. (Radhakrishnan 1976:104-5)

Such was the enlightened religious vision of Gandhi who regarded religion as a positive force and weakness as a sin and connected religion to altruism. He also believed that if we have brute forces within us we can not be human beings in the true sense. Taking non-violence in positive and broader aspect he connected it to the largest love and the greater charity. With his true religiosity he provided a new color and meaning to education and science. To him education is not only confined to life-adjustment but more than this it is life-enhancement. He also saw the superiority of human spirit to the material world in the light of science. Nehru followed Gandhi’s religiosity in a more positive and constructive way. Mahatma used to say, “I wish to wipe every tear from every human eye.” (Radhakrishnan 1976:122) Nehru was fond of repeating the statement that by the application of Science and Technology to the reconstruction of our social order, he would remove the suffering of the people. So he adopted science and technology to promote the welfare of the masses and decided to use nuclear energy only for the peaceful purposes. He also regarded narrow nationalism

a form of political bigotry, hence he wanted to establish a state based on science and socialism and not on fanaticism and monopoly. He was of the opinion that two currents of thought are essential for a balanced development of the youth—scientific and spiritual because the mere study of science without humanities may lead to dehumanization. Therefore in developing science and technology man should be half creator and half god. In this way Nehru taught us to practice morality in state affairs as often he followed the statement: *dharma rakssati raksatah* —‘If we protect *dharma*, it will protect us. If we neglect *dharma*, we will also be neglected by *dharma*. He was also of the opinion that if our economic and political interests come into conflict with our spiritual interests, we must throw away our economic and political interests for the sake of our spiritual interest. On the historic day 14<sup>th</sup> August, 1947, looking into the past, present and future history, he said, “I have come to the conclusion that it will not be possible for us to regain our past glory unless we observe certain moral principles.” (Radhakrishnan 1976:124) Both Nehru and Radhakrishnan were of the opinion that the rational man should grow into the spiritual man for the welfare of the humanity.

In Marxian ideology, a religious or righteous person works for the society in which man can be free and fearless, a subject, not an object. He fights against all kinds of terror, cruelty and injustice. Such a person becomes the voice of the voiceless and stands by the outcasts and refugees. Religion in this sense becomes the binding force that deepens the solidarity of human society. Faith without wisdom, without tolerance and respect for others’ in life is a dangerous thing. Religion is not blind faith; therefore those people who commit crimes against humanity in the name of religion are irreligious as Tagore in the poem “False Religion” articulates:

Those who in the name of Faith embrace illusion,  
Kill and are killed. (1-2)

.....  
The bigot insults his own religion  
When he slays a man of another faith,  
Conduct he judges not in the light of Reason,  
In the temple he raises the blood stained banner  
And worship the devil in the name of God. (8-12)

.....  
All that is shameful and barbarous through the Ages,  
Has found a shelter in their temples. (14-15)

Herbert Spencer also doesn’t see any justification for blind religious faith. A blind and self-righteousness in any religion may be in the name of Holy War is a sin in the name of God. Radhakrishnan rightly asserts: “A religion which brings together the divine revelation in nature and history with the inner revelation in the life of the spirit can serve as the basic of the world order, as the religion of the future.” (Radhakrishnan 1984:18) Gandhi, stressing on the tolerance, also said, “I hold that it is the duty of every cultured man or woman to read sympathetically the scriptures of the world. A friendly study of the world’s religions is a sacred duty.” In non-Christian system of thought or worship or conduct as Plato, Zoroaster, Buddha and Confucius conceive

that the same divine light is visible by which man is enlightened — the wisdom of all human traditions. Professor Arnold Toynbee also stresses the same point when he writes that he would, “express his personal belief that the four higher religions that were alive in the age in which he was living were four variations on a single theme and that, if all the four components of this heavenly music of the spheres could be audible on each simultaneously, and with equal clarity to one pair of human ears, the happy hearer would find himself listening not to a discord, but to a harmony” (Toynbee 428). It is of course, identical to Plato’s vision of an irresistible harmony with the deepest reality of the world inspired and sustained by the spiritual in us what William Wordsworth experiences in contemplative and meditative mood in the lap of nature. The ascending movement of spirituality reaches its climax when the poet surpassing the matter-of-fact observation beholds cosmic vision with mystical insight as he articulates:

And I have felt  
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
 Of something far more deeply interfused,  
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
 And the round ocean and the living air,  
 And the blue sky and in the mind of man;  
 A motion and a spirit, that impels  
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
 And rolls through all things. (Tintern Abbey: 93-102)

Spiritual truth is far more sublime and greater thing than contained in scriptures. The Upanishads and Plato regard man as a celestial plant. The Veda is a record of inspired wisdom and deep inner experience stressing on *tat tvam asi* — the Supreme is in the soul of man as Radhakrishnan writes:

Religion reflects both God and man. As religion is a life to be lived, not a theory to be accepted or a belief to be adhered to, it allows scope and validity to varied approaches to the Divine. There may be different revelations of the Divine but they are all forms of the Supreme. If we surround our souls with a shell, national pride, racial superiority, frozen articles of faith and empty presumptions of castes and classes, we stifle and suppress the breath of the spirit. The Upanishads are clear that the flame is the same even though the types of fuel used may vary. (Radhakrishnan 1984: 25-26)

*Yog-sutra Bhasya* says that the stream of mind flows in two directions, the one leading to virtue, the other to vice: *citta- nadi nama ubhayanto vahini, vahati-kalyandya vahati ca papaya*. (*Rig Veda* 12. 1 12) With the help of religion man is to overcome the conflict and integrate the personality. In order to descend into the world of spirituality, man has to close his physical eyes to the external world in order to visualize reality with the opening of the inner eye—the eye of knowledge as we see Wordsworth’s articulation in ‘Tintern Abbey’:

....., we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things. (46-50)

The *Katha Upanishad* also says that man is turned outward by his senses, thereby loses contact with his own deepest self, consequently the soul is immersed in external things, in power and possessions, therefore it loses in place of gaining as Shakespeare in *The Merchant of Venice* speaks through Gratiano that those who have, “much respect upon the world. They lose it that do buy it with much care” and Antonio makes it clear when he says that “I hold the world but as the world” (Act—1, Sc-1:78-79).

In order to hear the sweet melodies of the spirit, we must shut off the noise of the world as John Keats in the poem “Ode on Grecian Urn” articulates: “Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter” (11-12). It is possible through the opening of the inner eye to spiritual reality to capture the sound coming from the spiritual world. The reflection of true religious life comes through love which aims at the equality and unity of all beings including human and non-human world as Wordsworth in the poem “Nutting” imparts a powerful message to mankind through his dear sister Dorothy:

I felt a sense of pain when I beheld  
The silent trees, and saw the intruding sky  
Then dearest Maiden, move along these shades  
In gentleness of heart; with gentle hand.  
Touch- for there is a spirit in the woods. (52-56)

Coleridge in “The Ancient Mariner” through the Mariner also imparts a powerful message of eco-centric or bio-centric world which is the real religion and divine postulate of this universe:

He prayeth well, who loveth well,  
Both men and birds and beast.  
He prayeth best, who loveth best,  
All things both great and small;  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all. (613-620)

Gandhi also says that “To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself.” (510)

True religion is far away from ostentations. Bead necklaces, rosaries, triple paint on forehead, or putting on ashes, pilgrimages, baths in holy rivers, image worship cannot purify a man as duty, service and love to fellow creatures can do, as Tagore in *Gitanjali* striking the point articulates:

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou  
worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open

thy eyes and see thy God is not before thee!  
 He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the  
 pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and  
 his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like  
 him come down on thy dusky soil. (Song - XI)

Non-violence, mercy, self-control and enlightenment which are supposed to be the strong pillars of religion also find expression in literature in varied ways. Tulsidas articulates that mercy is the main root of religion and Shakespeare regards the quality of mercy as a divine postulate of the universe. T.S. Eliot in his epic-poem *The Waste Land* also highlights *data, damyata and dayadhvam* as the cardinal principles of religious conduct. Jaina Religion emphasizing on self control declares that one who gets control over the self is *Jina or Mahavira*, one who has battled with his inward nature and has got triumph over it. Buddha directs us to be *Bodhi* through enlightenment in order to enjoy peace and happiness in the world as Sarojni Naidu in her poem "To a Buddha Seated on a Lotus" articulates:

LORD BUDDHA, on the lotus throne,  
 With praying eyes and hands elate,  
 What mystic rapture dost thou own  
 Immutable and ultimate?  
 What peace unravished of our ken,  
 Annihilate from the world of men? (1-6)

Religions direct us to regenerate and enlighten our nature to replace *avidya*, ignorance, by *vidya, wisdom*. The dream of the world peace and unity can be achieved through religion replete with scientific thinking. Ashoka who became a convert to Buddhism, repenting bitterly over the carnage involved in the conquest of Kalinga, taught his people to love one another, to be kind to animals, to respect all religions. If scientific advancement is not integrated with spiritual values the day is not far away when a great danger will threaten the peaceful co-existence of the so-called civilized and advanced modern world and the picture in the absence of spiritual and moral values will be as Matthew Arnold in the concluding lines of the poem "Dover Beach" depicts, "And we are here as on a darkling plain/Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, Where ignorant armies clash by night". (25)

Religion is the hope of man and can sustain the world if it is saved from fanaticism and the persons of fixed ideas who are the enemies of truth. In the present global scenario we have such a mingling of peoples, races, cultures and religions that has ever witnessed in the history of the world. We want to utilize the powers of advanced science and technology for human welfare but it is possible only if we can conquer our inner nature. Science can get control over the physical nature but the task of conquering and reshaping the inner self is assigned to the discipline of religion. The brute within man may also be more powerful by the advances in science and technology. In the scientific age incredible dogmas are not acceptable but must commend to the spirit of reason and for the world unity religion must have universal outlook as

Radhakrishnan thinks, "I feel that there is no opposition between religion and science, between religion and highest social morality, between religion and cooperation among religions." (1984:54) In the cosmic evolutionary process religion takes us from the world of intellect, the world of divided consciousness with its discords, dualities, to a life of harmony, of freedom, of love. Being an active participant in this cosmic evolution man with his creativity rises above the world to defy nature and moves from intellectuality to spirituality. Religion brings a spiritual change, an inward transformation within resolving all kinds of discords and dualities because all religions are human attempts to reach the Ultimate Reality.

The sublime and lofty aim of literature is to kindle the flame of true religion in the soul of human beings so that the children of the earth should live with love as one family. No doubt in this world we are in 'fallen state': hence we possess the image of God only potentially and not actually. Therefore, it is essential to create a new man and a new world by shaping the soul in the light of true religion for which literature may be the most effective means as it can awaken the truth latent in our spiritual consciousness. Since man is incomplete and unfinished and is in the process of becoming to achieve perfection and completeness, therefore his inner nature should be trained in such a way not directly by religious dogmas but through creative literary writings that it can achieve its goal. Literature has the power to harmonize and synthesize the different religions of the world in an idealistic frame of universality for the bright future of mankind in the world and beyond. The cross fertilization of ideas among the prevailing faiths of the world through literary writings replete with scientific thinking is sure to foster and enrich spiritual values which ultimately will contribute to shape man a spiritually, morally and socially creative being in the world for peaceful co-existence.

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## The Refugees' Predicament: A Select Study of Indian Fiction

–V Pala Prasada Rao\*

### Abstract

The paper seeks to explore how democratic countries in the Indian Sub-continent try to appropriate power in their own clandestine ways in order to engineer thought control and it is held that it is as vicious and blatant as in the authoritarian countries. To acclimatize the Hindus and to empower the Muslims through its discriminatory laws as shown in Taslima Nasreen's *Lajja* (1993), the government devised all ways to employ all state machinery to hush minorities. In fact, the lunatic fringe ran amuck during the fateful days of rampage of holy places as mentioned in the novel. It is common knowledge that some individuals, mostly self-seeking politicians, play upon the emotional chords of mobs in order to gain political leverage. Murad Ali in *Tamas* (1987) Master Tara Singh, Jinnah and Congress leaders in *Cracking India* (1993) Ram Charan Gupta and Bhushan Sarma in *Riot* (2001) and the Muslim political leaders in *Lajja* are all set to foment tensions and fish in the troubled waters.

**Keywords:** Genocide, partition, trauma, minority, refugees, demolition.

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In his work on *Necessary Illusions* (1989), Noam Chomsky while documenting the history of propaganda and other sinister designs of the State observes that it seeks to control the thoughts and opinions without consent of its citizens. Thought control is generally associated with totalitarian countries, the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, Cuba etc. But democratic countries like Bangladesh in their own clandestine ways engineer thought control and it is as vicious and blatant as in the authoritarian countries. In order to acclimatize the Hindus and to empower the Muslims through its discriminatory laws as shown in Taslima Nasreen's *Lajja* (1993), the government uses all its machinery. The blatant acts, intended to confiscate Hindus' property, the mushrooming of madrasas, "a pretty sizeable" budgetary allocation to Islamic religious institutions, the army's villainies against the Hindus, the nonchalance of the police, the gradual Islamization of State polity, all degrade Hindus as second citizens. As a consequence, noxious communal elements enter state machinery. It is common knowledge that

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some individuals, mostly self-seeking politicians play upon the emotional chords of mobs in order to gain political leverage. Murad Ali in *Tamas*, Master Tara Singh, Jinnah and Congress leaders in *Cracking India*, Ram Charan Gupta and Bhushan Sarma in *Riot* and the Muslim political leaders in *Lajja* are all set to foment tensions and fish in the troubled waters. Murad Ali, a Muslim Leaguer, for instance, is behind the murderous wrath of the mob as he got a pig slain and thrown in the precincts of a mosque. Ram Charan Gupta is on the prowl to work up the Hindus during the Ram-Sita Poojan by making inflammatory speeches. Once incited, the mobs imbued with fanaticism, can wreck vengeance without remorse. As the SP, Gurinder Singh in *Riot* puts it: “The mobs want only one thing. Revenge” (Tharoor 134).

## I

With the announcement of partition, the Hindus and the Sikhs of Sialkot in Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* fear the visitation of prehistoric monster. The novelist brings the crudeness and panic it accompanies before the reader’s mind. While the Hindus shut themselves in their homes bemoaning their lot, the Muslims want to show off their strength to the Hindu traders by taking a procession through the Hindu streets. The procession stops outside the entrance to the street: “It was a wild sight. The mob was in transport, which exceeded panic or hysteria .... The bazaar was a sea of heads. They were split up into many small groups, and before each group there were two of three drummers... Many of them were dancing the Bhangra, the Punjabi dance of victory. The drummers hit wildly at the drums with their sticks, and the dancers bent forward and bent backward and swing on their toes. And frequently the drummers and the dancers stopped. And together they shouted, ‘Pakistan, Zindabad. Long live Pakistan. The din that ensued was deafening. They were in a madness of the purest kind” (Nahal 72). Their xenophobia for India is well articulated since they regard India belongs to Hindus. Hence, they are intent on airing their grievances on the local Hindus, their fellow countrymen.

In *Tamas* too, the novelist Bhisham Sahni gives a graphic picture of riotous mob whose drumbeats make Harnam Singh and his wife shudder at the thought the ensuing violence. They flee their ancestral home as slogans “Ya Ali” and “Allah-o-Akbar” reach their ears. But their son, Iqbal Singh, who lives in another village, is waylaid by a Muslim mob. While he is running for life through the dark fields, he hopes to evade the mob’s attention. But the unrelenting mob chases him. It pelts a hail of stones at him and feels self-congratulatory when the Sikh, cowed into submission, agrees to change over to Islam. The relish on their faces and sentiments of righteousness almost convince one that it is an act of pedagogy. The group feels an exhilaration of power that compensates for its everyday helplessness. It targets not the gangster, or a hoodlum. The petty worker will do. The mob’s sense of violence and being violated is intense.

In the same novel, the irate Hindu youth brigades are afflicted with siege mentality. Their leader, Ranvir, pacing outside his arsenal, urges his “warriors” to pounce upon the enemy – a Muslim. Accordingly, they chance to find a portly Muslim hawker and “a Hindu warrior” plunges his knife into his belly with little regrets for killing an innocent one.

A motive that has nothing to do with religious fervour is more often behind the attacks on minorities. It is greed, a simple, often carefully orchestrated effort to grab the lands, shops and wealth of their neighbours. Sahni debunks the squalor of politicians, who under the garb of some political party lead the mob. Led by Ashraf and Latif, the mob loots Harnam Singh's teashop. Harnam Singh and his wife reflect: "The rioters would not chase them. They had no use of their lives. It was the shop they wanted. It meant so much loot (Sahni 158). In another village, the Sikhs of Sayyedpur, when their ammunition has been exhausted, come to terms with the Muslims who demand two lakhs. When the Sikhs start haggling, the Muslims aspiring for much plunder, break off the negotiations for they yearn to rob the Sikhs of all their wealth. Here it is pertinent to quote Frantz Fanon who observes in *The Wretched of the Earth*: "Violence in the colonies does not only have for its aim the keeping of these enslaved men at arm's length; it seeks to dehumanize them" (13).

## II

Unable to stand the ferocity of onslaughts of the marauders, the atavistic instinct to escape takes over the minorities. The instinct to migrate to the land of safety is very perceptible during the division of India. It is not just a brief trip to another village those helpless minorities are making. Indeed, theirs is a protracted trek of the uprooted, a journey with no return across hundreds of miles; each mile menaced with exhaustion, starvation, cholera, attacks against which there is often no defence. In their utter helplessness, they may be likened to those victimized by colonialism portrayed in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* or even worse.

Partition has wrought havoc on peasants' lives. Their only life has been the fields they work laboriously. Most of them do not know what a viceroy is, and have never been bothered with issues like partition or boundary lines or even the freedom in whose name they have been plunged into despair. Stalking from one end of the horizon to the other is the remorseless sun compounding their miseries. In *Tamas*, Harnam Singh feels an alien in a single shattering moment when the rioters have plundered and burnt the shop down. They would have killed him but for the loot his shop fetched for them. Walking across the fields under the veil of darkness, they dread some ambush. "In a few hours the darkness would fade, exposing them to the pitiless eyes, like a woman suddenly finding herself, naked, with nowhere to go" (Sahni 158). There are thousands of others like them who are wandering about in the countryside in search of shelter.

The people have never cherished the idea of abandoning their homes and hearths for good. Bapsi Sidhwa, employing interrogation brings to light their utter misery: "Where can the scared Muslim villagers go? How can they abandon their ancestors' graves every inch of their land they own, their other kind? How will they ever hold up their heads again?" (Sidhwa 70) Similarly, Lala Kanshi Ram in *Azadi* undergoes the same turmoil when he is uprooted, along with other Hindus and Sikhs. His predicament is like Sudhamoy's in *Lajja*, who develops natural fascination for the land he was born and raised. With a gush of feelings, he licks the land.

The rural population of Punjab is not at all prepared for the big holocaust, as the partition turns out to be big destabilizing factor in the smug and contented self-sufficiency of rural life. The army trucks arrive to Pir Pindo to evacuate the Muslim villages. Ranna in *Cracking India* is confused by the flurry of activity going on at the village: “Soldiers, holding guns with bayonets sticking out of them, were directing the villagers. The villagers were shouting and running to and fro, carrying on their heads charpoys heaped with their belongings. Some were herding their calves and goats towards the trucks. There were dumping their household articles in the middle of the lanes in their scramble to climb into the lorries”. (Sidhwa 205)

The holocaust that follows the demolition of the Babri mosque is unreasoned in savagery forcing the Hindus to leave Bangladesh. In *Lajja* Sudhamoy is aggrieved by the sad turn of events taking place in Bangladesh. His young daughter was kidnapped and his son shows signs of psychological trauma. He feels insecure, forlorn and unprotected and his wife is certain that Bangladesh is no country for Hindus. He has forgone many precious things for the privilege of allowing him to stay in the country he was born. Towards the end of the novel, the awful reality dawns upon him when he has come upon his son who seems to fear safety in his nightmare. Sudhamoy makes up his mind to leave for India with a great burden in his heart.

After the announcement of partition, there is the unparalleled tide of human misery washing across the face of the Punjab. The enormity of anguish and suffering is almost beyond human competence to imagine or the human spirits’ capacity to endure. The ant-like herds of human beings are walking over open country slipping in droves, while the fires of the villages burning all around them.

It is only on the ground, however, among those wretched creatures, that the awfulness of what is happening becomes apparent. Eyes and throats raw with dust, feet burnished by stones, tortured by hunger and thirst, enrobed in a stench of urine, sweat and defecation, the refugees wade dumbly forward. They have to endure their burden not for a mile or two but scores of miles for days on end. In *Azadi*, the column in which the protagonist Kanshi Ram makes for India is ten miles in length with twenty thousand people. The trains would become the best hope of feeling for the refugees. For tens of thousands of others, they would become rolling coffins. In many a Punjabi village they provide the same frenzied scenes. Waiting for days, the crowd would throw itself on the doors and windows of each wagon in a concert of tears and strikes until each cluster of humans enfolded each compartment like “a horde of flies swarming over a sugar cube”. While setting out for Delhi by a train Kanshi Ram comes upon a scene of stampede as hundreds of Hindus and Sikh refugees tried to board the Delhi train. “Hot words were exchanged and there were also scuffles as they struggled with each other” (Nahal 328).

As the pace of the flight in both directions grow, those trainloads of wretched refugees have become the prime targets of assault on both sides. They are ambushed while they stand in stations or in the open country. In *Train to Pakistan*, the Muslims in Mano Majra are dazed at the predatory advances of the Sikhs in the surrounding villages. But the unrelenting Sikhs refuse to leave the Muslims unscathed and a wire

rope across the bridge is stretched in order to massacre the Muslims sitting on the roof of the train.

While violence has affected everyone, Sidhwa seems to show that the Sikhs stand out in this respect. She does not show a train massacre as she did in her earlier novel *The Bride* earlier, but she describes one briefly through the eyes of Ice-candy man: "A train from Gurudaspur has just come in... everyone in it is dead. They are all Muslims. There are no young women among the dead. Only two gunny-bags full of women's breasts" (Sidhwa 149). In *Azadi* too, the same ghastly scenes are reported and the protagonist takes it to heart when he comes to know that his daughter and son-in-law were killed in train tragedy. The novelist, Chaman Nahal's sister is done away with the same brutality and it prompts Nahal among other causes, to leave for India.

The trains of death, as they have become known, many an occasion spark off communal riots. As the refugees relate the grisly stories of horror, the majority of the community nourishes the will to retaliate. Ice-candy-man seethes with anger on learning the horrors and so would like to avenge those deaths, rapes and mutilations. He cannot get the murderers but he can get Sher Singh. Though Sher Singh has not committed the atrocities, he is made accountable for his community has perpetrated genocide against the Muslims.

In the beginning of partition holocaust, killing is an act of stray individuals, or of isolated, small groups of individuals, and though as yet there is no movement behind the violence to annihilate minorities belonging to Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. But in no time, the violence has grown to alarming proportions. More than murders it is the fires that are frightening and demoralizing. Sidhwa describes at length the Shalmi bazaar burning to ashes: "It is like gigantic fireworks on display ... Trapped by the spreading flames the panicked Hindus rush in droves from one end of the street to the other. Many disappear down the smoking lanes. Some collapse in the street" (Sidhwa 137). In *Azadi* too, the grain market in Sialkot owned mostly by the Hindus is gutted in fire.

As communal virus strikes down people, they fall upon one another with the ferocity of cannibals intending to chase the minorities out of their own lands. In *Tamas*, the Hindus and Sikhs have pulled out of Muslim areas and the Muslims have evacuated from the Hindu and Sikh pockets. In *Azadi*, there is a mention about the Hindu population, which has been either driven out or completely exterminated. It is the show of strength and unable to withstand minorities run away from their own land. Running for life, Ranna in *Cracking India* comes upon a deserted village. Except the animals, lowing and bleating and wandering ownerless, there is no one residing in it. Later he watches the lurid scene of the mob of Sikhs and Hindus approaching the village. What happened to the Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims in 1947 was genocide or ethnic cleansing.

The treatment meted out to the Hindus in eastern Pakistan, later called Bangladesh, equally tantamount to ethnic cleansing. Unable to withstand torture and onslaughts on their life, the Hindus start pouring in into India. Sudhamoy in *Lajja* cannot prevail upon many Hindus not to migrate but they brush aside his pleas as they dread hooliganism.

The demolition of the Babri mosque has incurred the wrath of the Muslims and fearing assaults, the Hindus leave the country for good. The statistical information furnished by the novelist corroborates the fact that the Hindu population is on the decrease over the years: "In 33.1 per cent of the population of East Bengal was Hindu ... In the early 1990s Hindus constituted around twenty per cent of the population" (Nasreen 10). It stands to reason that they have been driven out or else they, resenting the unfair treatment as aliens in their own land, move towards an uncertain address like hunted deer.

The plight of the refugees is excruciating for they cannot justify their presence even amongst their kith and kin. Kanshi Ram has hoped that the refugees would be given a fair treatment in India. When they knock at their relatives' doors, they have discovered that they are not welcome: "Some offered them tea. Some offered food. Yet none offered them shelter" (Nahal 325). The government's attitude is even more discouraging. To his dismay, the Area Custodian of Evacuee Property has demanded bribe for some refuge flat, which is beyond his means.

The story on the other side of the border is same. Initially the local inhabitants of Pakistan are kindly disposed towards the new arrivals from India calling them Muhajirs meaning migrants after the refugees who accompanied the Prophet Muhammad to Medina. However, once the fear of Hindu domination has gone, internal rivalries and tensions have emerged between the refugees and the local residents. The local residents resent the presence of the refugees. Towards the end of *Azadi*, Arun, the protagonist's son cycles fast as he fears a riot would break out: "If not the Muslims, the Punjabi refugees might be attacked" (Nahal 365). Embittered, they start indulging in acts of hooliganism. Thus the poor refugees meet with the similar fate in the aftermath of holocaust.

The truth about a communal riot has so many shades that it is rarely possible to define anything in black and white. However, when the so-called guardians turn into communal armies the whole order begins to crumble. Many innocent lives get destroyed or traumatized when the state presumes an entire community to be responsible for an untoward incident. The engineered mistrust between people of diverse faiths further consolidates with each riot. Here they are charged with the heinous crimes or guilt that the vast majority of them intensely abhor. As a result, they find their eyes lowered, their spirit crushed, for crimes which they oppose no less than their neighbours. This labeling and blanket condemnation of people merely because of their identities – now a global phenomenon – is not confined to common people. It extends more dangerously to how states respond to riots, in effect holding the entire community guilty unless they prove their innocence. How this can destroy innocent lives forever is well illustrated starkly in the novels. They show that victimization and demonization of Muslims in the guise of investigation, is having a very serious psychological impact on the minds of not only the victims but also other members of the community. It leads a very strong sense of insecurity and alienation. Nasreen shows the discriminating attitude of the army against the Hindus. She also brings to light the stark communal mindset of officials and ministers of India during the demolition of the Babri mosque. "The entire drama had unfolded in the presence of high ranking officers and ministers ... stood by without moving a muscle as the destruction of the mosque had continued" (Nasreen 2).

In *Riot* too there is a mention of excesses of the police directing ire against the Muslims in Zailgarh. Mohammed Sarwar confirms the complicity of State: "The police response to a riot simply sows the seeds of the next one" (Tharoor 258). If authority is to be lenient to the communal elements, there must be a kind of waywardness or irregularity at its heart. But this should not be allowed to undo the law, thus jeopardizing its protection of the weak against the powerful. Human law should exemplify humanity. This is not a contradiction, which can escape, since it must resort to force to protect the powerless that take shelter beneath it.

The role of State to curtail communalism cannot be underestimated for one important reason. It has immense power for good or for evil. Moreover, in certain areas of life it alone can act. It alone can initiate action against malicious and provocative communal propaganda, vicious lies and rumour mongering. It alone can take preventive or punitive measures and punish the guilty as they generally cow down before State machinery. It can address the immediate task of containing the violence and tackling the serious humanitarian crisis. Those who have had to abandon home and hearth should be enabled to return. Transport links with the rest of the country need to be restored; thousands of people would be stranded in railway and bus stations and many other public places. Therefore the administration should react quickly after the first signs of trouble. Considering that there was a build-up of tensions over years, vulnerable areas ought to have been identified and adequate forces deployed. While talking about the might of the British, Richard in *Tamas* states that when the mob goes wild, Jackson, a British officer, "with just a revolver in his hand, chased a mob away single-handed" (Sahni 45). In the same novel, *Tamas*, the Muslim mob has to submit itself to the will of the Britishers who bring about a semblance of peace by sending an aeroplane and the mere sight of it makes the Sikh community see a ray of hope amidst rioting Muslim mobs. On seeing it, a Sikh "started dancing like a mad man" (Sahni 201). However, the novelist shows the connivance of State in watching violence without bothering about it. In many places overrun by violence, the forces were not visible at all! The deployment of forces seems to have come too late in the day. Richard is rather reluctant to initiate action against the warring communities for he conceives that a foreign ruler is safe when the natives are involved in fighting. When the riots spread he sees the need to curb violence lest the rationale of white man's burden should be misconstrued and their future at peril.

It is shown that only a national state, a state that is interested in national integration and nation-building can undertake the necessary administrative measures to minimize or stem in the tide of riots. Unlike the colonial power, a secular state can reduce and manage communal tensions and promote a secular outlook through its numerous channels. For decades since partition, there have been riots in many parts of the country. As Priscilla says in *Riot*: "Indian government has apparently become rather good at managing these riots" (Tharoor 21). Officials like Gurinder Singh and Lakshman act against all miscreants with firmness and they resolve to restore peace without firm manipulation. It is an outcome of genuine conviction and courage. They take punitive measures in a forthright manner against the criminals who have stabbed sweet Mohammed to death and despite pressures from some ministers who are able to pull

strings they stick to their guns. They respond by the book of law doing everything in their capacity, calling meetings of the two communities, advising restraint, registering strong criminal charges against rabid communalists energizing peace committees. The state should stop people from wreaking vengeance on each other. The mapping of stress-points on the basis of adequate intelligence inputs should be a priority.

The Collector, Lakshman is convinced of the “kind of affirmative action programme for India’s underprivileged” (Tharoor 93). The long-term of the state, obviously, is to re-envision the riot-torn places where ascriptive identities do not disrupt civic relationships. The state needs to keep working on achieving the right balance of development activity. The key to this will be restoration of mutual trust. This should be based primarily on systematic measures to address fears over loss of ownership and concerns over denial of access to resources, development and means of livelihood. The Collector urges: “Let everyone feel they are as much Indian as everyone. Ensure that democracy protects the multiple identities of Indians, so that people feel you can be a good Muslim and a good Bihari and a good Indian all at once” (Tharoor 44-45). He has high faith in the resilience of Indian democracy.

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## **A Clinical and Textual Analysis of Stephen Gill's Epic *The Flame***

–*Shobha Diwakar\**

### **Abstract**

Stephen Gill's *The Flame* is a highly thought provoking epic. It springs out of the philosophical and visionary farsightedness of the poet and has compelled world literary critics, researchers and politicians to contemplate upon this terror- stricken world and spread the message of peace and tolerance and do away with fanaticism to establish world peace.

*The Flame* evokes the readers and attempts to rouse him from his doused ethical values, to instill in him the epistle of hope and resurrection, wrapped up in the rising flames of fire, which destroys and also regenerates like the volcanic eruptions that pave the way for growth after the sinister destruction. It is this message, which Gill seeks to impart in *The Flame*.

As a cultivated work of art *The Flame* is a blueprint on the theme of Ahimsa (non-violence), a plea to unite and overcome the 'maniac messiahs' from in human activities in the name of religious fanaticism and enlighten the path of righteousness.

Gill justifies his title and states, "The eternal flame knows no occupation, faith nor complexion and cannot be imprisoned within human bonds.... The flame is known to engulf mortals even today, melting unknown metals into one."

**Keywords:** Flame, peace, tolerance, hope, resurrection, maniac messiahs, ahimsa, non-violence.

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The birth of Gill's *The Flame* encompasses his alkaline wounds wrapped up with those of others he beheld during the partition of India and Pakistan, when reckless inhuman massacres of the innocent erased empathy. The wounds of yester years to date remain unhinged, and periodically emerge in the poet's poetic compositions because they are irreversibly rooted in his psyche. Gill is aware that the global world of today saturated with bomb blasts and terrorist attacks, has mutilated the altruistic conscience of man. The human wreckage, carcasses lying distorted in the most obnoxious manner:

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limbless bodies, trussed up in bags, (Part 2-6) is a ghastly blot on the wrinkled fabric of the dwindling structure of society. The churlish visage and impertinent veneering of national leaders, and their debasing and bristling accusations on flimsy political issues like border disputes and geographical boundaries and dissensions, set them on verbal warpaths so that they are unable to witness and mourn the combustion spreading around by “maniac messiahs” as Gill refers to them.

These “maniac messiahs” are none other than men dressed in human skins externally while internally they are viciously piqued. Their blood curdling activities are like those of the wild beasts who prey, sometimes converting them into man-eaters. The ‘maniac messiahs’ fall into the latter category feathered in the garb of religious fanaticism who creep and crawl stealthily into churches, mosques, busy market areas, temples and *gurdwaras* to fulfill their in sipid and unsavory activities in the name of Jihad.

However, why does Gill append the term “messiah” to “maniac?” The biblical meaning of the word ‘messiah’ means a ‘redeemer’ sent upon earth by God to absolve the sins of man. Gill uses the term in a controversial manner and addresses the terrorists as “maniac messiahs,” although these men are not redeemers because they are obsessed with false religious fervor and grilled with the idea that they are direct messengers of God upon earth sent to annihilate disbelievers of their religion. By indulging in such gross and heinous terrorism, they will sail to paradise.

The title of Gill’s epic is therefore significant. Out of the rubble and decaying humanity blazing grossly, he visualizes a peaceful world only if nations negotiate amicably, cross borders and pledge to serve humanity rather than bicker and bite. Hence, Gill dedicates this prestigious work to the “Eternal Flame” because along with its destructive power it has the property to regenerate as is observed after the fiery and flaming volcanic eruptions. Joseph Campbell defines it (fire), in this manner, “...Fire is luminous, like the sun and lightning.... Also, it is alive: in the warmth of the human body it is life itself, which departs when the body goes cold...” He further adds, “... it has been frequently identified with a demoness of volcanoes, who presides over an afterworld where the dead enjoy an everlasting dance in marvelously dancing volcanic flames” (35).

Consequently, if the fire is “luminous” it holds that the human body is illumined by its luster: the Soul. Nevertheless, the very same fire or flame (both are inseparable elements), converts into “volcanic flames” when identified with “demoness,” which may be co-related with Satan, the lord of the devils residing in hell burning with sulphur all around. Inferentially, Gill’s *The Flame* symbolizes that “eternal flame” which scintillates the human spirit/soul, unlike that of the terrorists who consume their spirit in “volcanic flames,” that converts them into maniacs. According to Gill, these men are misguided individuals who “... generate the blizzards of fear and panic,” and “commit horrendous crimes against humanity” (Preface 7). In this manner Gill concedes to the views expressed by Chevalier & Gheerbrant who state, “... unlike the flame which casts light, the fire which smokes and devours symbolizes an imagination inflamed... the subconscious... the hole in the ground... hell... fire an intellect in rebellion, in short, all sorts of psychic regression” (Fire 382).

Scholastically, Gill's dedication of his epic to "the eternal flame" is a very speculative and clairvoyant periscope that illustrates the destruction of that spark of life that glitters the human world. Thematically Gill eulogizes it in this manner, "The eternal flame knows no occupation, faith nor complexion and cannot be imprisoned within human bonds..." (Preface 28), i.e. the flame or fire cannot be subjugated or confined to any creed. Its blessings and destruction is common to all humanity.

Gill states that the first part of *The Flame* is devotional. In this section, the poet witnesses the regenerative forces of nature and applauds the goodness bestowed upon earth by its sparkling azure. Gill as a true Christian, expresses his humble gratitude for the bounty, which all human beings commonly enjoy irrespective of caste, creed or religion. Ellen G. White expresses a similar view when she writes, "The sunshine and the rain, that gladden and refresh the earth, the hills and seas and plains, all speak to us of the Creator's love...God...supplies the daily needs of all His creatures" (8). Albeit, the Hindu Rig Veda also celebrates nature in its hundreds of Vedic hymns.(MacDonnel. Preface V). Gill therefore extols the flame as a harbinger and writes, "You bind the earth and the sky/ and rule to relieve/ the rusting monotony" (Canto 1, Stz 6, L. 6-8). In the second canto of Part 1 stanza 4, Gill emphasizes the flourishing and restorative effects of the flame and writes, "You are the spectacular light / of the first appearance of light / that dissolves discomforts / of the pilgrims of peace..." (L. 1-3. 35)

Strikingly, in these lines Gill delineates a verbal picturesque image of the sun in all its glory. The idea conveyed is how the sun dispels darkness by its flaming rays that glow and outspread the message of peace, kindle the spirit and renew the essence of life. However, the deceased mind of the "maniac messiahs" remains overshadowed with darkness. On the other hand, Gill refers to the peace loving people as "pilgrims," which superimpose the idea that human beings are mere travelers, traversing a holy place. This imbibes the biblical idea that "... earth is linked with heaven" through Christ who was sent upon earth as God's messenger (messiah), to bridge the gulf between earth and heaven (White 14). This also conveys the pantheistic concept that God created Nature, and Nature created Man, so God, Nature and Man are co related, which is also what the great Romantic poet Wordsworth stated and which is also expressed in the Hindu Vedas.

Parts 2, 3, 4, & 5 of the epic condemn these maniacs. In Canto 10, Gill refers to them as "avatars of savagery [who] mow down defenseless innocents" (Part 2, Stz. L. 2-3). Writing in the same frame of mind he says they are, "Spiders of sinister news/ [who]/ crawl in and out of the cracks" (Stz 2, L. 2-3). Metaphorically, these deranged men blasting innocent human lives are like lethal reptiles and insects who reside in the "cracks of walls" and 'crawl' out in search of victims to prey upon them. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> stanza Gill alludes to them as "...locusts of threat." The degrading word (locusts), appended to these deceptive men also has a biblical allusion. In the Old Testament locusts are presented as an "image of destructive scourge (Exodus 10:14). Albeit in the New Testament Revelation 9:1-6, "a swarm of locusts becomes spiritual and moral torment" (Chevalier 615).

In the 12<sup>th</sup> Canto of Part 2, Gill dresses up the environment in dismal shades of woe and the idea of the locusts destruction is carried forward because the ‘structure’ of “tranquility is rocked,” with the sound of an explosion. The dreary environmental gloom is so irksome that it intimidates even the ‘birds,’ “sparrows, roses and dawns/ forgot their songs... (i.e. nature stands still)... (Stz 3, L. 5-8, 50), while “Brutes flickered tongues / over the lips of normalcy,” and “Time” stopped amidst the thick black smoke of “explosion” (Stz. 4, L.1, 51). Gill’s conception of the dead lying bereft of eyes, ears, heads, limbs, fingers legs torn apart , twisted eyes jutting out among the debris shocks the readers’ sensibilities even as he visualizes the depraved massacre of human life by the “locusts of hell.” (Canto 15, Stz 5, L. 1, 60)

Parts 3, 4, & 5 recount chilling and grisly episodes of the dead where the cops, volunteers and firefighters, ransack the human wreck only to discover a decaying arm or leg of a victim. They make a vain attempt to match it to the dead before disposing the body by trussing it up in gunny bags, wrapping them up “in white sheets” to be cremated. (Part 4, Stz 2, L. 3, 76). Gill further relates how the nurses are soaked in blood and plead over the “radio stations” for people to “donate blood to save a life” (Part 5, Canto 23, Stz 2, L.1-2, 81-82).

In Part 6 of the epic Gill questions these maniacs as to how they could commit such barbarous crimes against humanity. The poet is convinced that the souls of these maniacs are engulfed in darkness so that bombs, machine guns and other armaments have become the “toys of these robots... to free their unfed tigers / from the cages of depravity” (Canto 31, Stz 31, L. 4-5). Since they are “robots,” they kill mechanically as soon as they receive orders from their heads. They are “unfed tigers” because they are man- eaters.

Parts 7 & 8 mourn the loss of the dead and ends on the note of hope that these rising flames of bloodshed, fanaticism, hatred and communal violence will perish because of the innate goodness of man. (Canto 35).The poet pleads that someone will light the “fire glowing in the hearth / of emptiness” to protect humanity from the “vultures of the bloodshed” (Canto 34, Stz 3, L.6, 108). The animal imagery that recurrently appears in these cantos exposes the inflamed and pensive cogitation of the poet who deplores the rueful annihilation of human life. Gill denounces such men and so alludes to these deserters as fiends (animals), who retreat and evade justice once their evil spirit has committed crimes. The foregoing lines “...cages of depravity...,” significantly asserts the poet’s view. The noun “cages” discloses their animalism.

Even as the poet’s ruminations present a desultory picture of society gripped in the hands of these maniacs, his emotional outbursts seek respite in the hope that someone will light the “... fire glowing in the hearth/ of emptiness...” (Canto 34, Stz 4, L.7-8, 109). Gill’s wounded heart, swaddled in his own insipid childhood memories seeks for the comfort of the flame and pleads that the flame’s light will ‘weed’ out darkness (Canto 35, Stz 1, L.1, 110), to restore faith in humanity. Yet, the poet’s own harrowing trials spur him on to ponder over his racial segregation in India, and

the grueling tortures he and his family underwent. He perceives the same in the global dislocation of the world so he writes "...Snakes of personal migraines/ raise their strained necks... while irresistible memories flow by" (Canto 39, Stz. 1, L. 1-7, 114). Despite these reverting thoughts of yesteryears, Gill's tranquil suppositions do not permit him to lose hope for peace or in the initial goodness of man. He writes "When hope sails/on drooping wings/ and a thick fog settles/ over the slender shoot of thought/ you navigate to anchor my boat /to a bay for security...." (Canto 47, Stz 1, L. 1-6, 125).

In the 52<sup>nd</sup> Canto of part 7, Gill introspectively summons his Christian beliefs and embarks upon the idea that he is an "unclaimed lamb" who needs a "good shepherd" (Canto 52, Stz 6, L. 2-3, 129). Thus Gill craves to break away from the 'tethered,' disintegrated' 'wilderness' ( Canto 51, Stz. 2, L. 3-6, 128) of Time and begin a new life "floating in the waters of your presence" (Stz 3, L.3). "Floating" signifies the beneficial effect of the flame's presence and God's benevolence.

In the final section, Part 8 of *The Flame*, Gill seeks solace from the mundane and disintegrated life. He pleads for a peaceful world where he can live and breathe freely, gaze at the beauty of nature, listen to the whispering wind and discard "the arrows of despair" and "kiss/the lips of the sunrays" (Canto 53, Stz 7, L. 1-2, 133). Gill is convinced "... where there is no light/ there is darkness of the grave/where vermin grow/ on the bodies of speculative creeds" (Canto 55, Stz 1, L. 8-11, 135), therefore "life disintegrates/where the rays of flame/ do not reach" (Stz 2, L. 6-8).

Aesthetically, the flame's regenerative power is visualized and Gill's epic, *The Flame* becomes a written symbol of values that need to be cultivated. The flame burns in the life of human beings until he departs to the next world, till then it lives in the veins and "in the flame of your temple" (Canto 58, Stz.10, L.6, 141). It is the flame, which dispels darkness because everyone drinks "...contentment of the warmth/in the company of the flame" (Canto 61, Stz 13, L. 4-6, 151).

This paper humbly presents some critical views about the global world in the grip of terrorism. Most of the discords center round religious fanaticism. Gill is firmly convinced that violence can only be controlled with patience, restraint and mutual understanding.. Crimes committed by 'maniac messiahs' in the name of religion against humanity need drastic political reforms among all the nations of the world. In this global multicultural scenario, a sense of goodwill amongst all communities, can build bridges of peace. Gill does not moralize he expresses his profound views on racism and religious frenzy. No religion teaches man to draw daggers against men of different beliefs. In fact, religion inculcates a sense of good-fellowship. Ross & Hills rightly state, "...to persecute in the name of religion is the very denial of man's humanity as well as proof of how stunted one's own faith is..." diversity of religion should not be seen as a battle unto death. "*The Flame* asserts 'humanity's true oneness" lies in acceptance of the good in every religion because, "Divinity is around us – never gone" (188-89).

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## Women Characters in the Works of Sarat Chandra

—*Bhaskar Roy Barman\**

### Abstract

The paper aims to discuss the women characters in the works of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, one of the major Bengali novelists who pioneered the Bengali novel. Sarat Chandra was interested in social sciences and he was well-conversant with Western literature and philosophy. But the roots of his literature are struck deep into the soil of his country. He owed the primeval images of his characters to Indian literature, philosophy and the Puranas. The paper talks about the kind of realism revealed in his works which determines the novelist's characterizing the characters, particularly women characters, in his novels and short stories.

**Keywords:** Literature, philosophy, primeval images, Puranas, realism, roots.

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In order to discuss the women characters in the works of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, let us peep deep into his literary domain. And before peeping deep into his literary domain, I should like to say that all the sentences and passages quoted are given in my English translation.

No good number of books have been written and published since the death of Sarat Chandra to deal with literary and historical perspectives of his life, literature and art. The writers, more or less conversant with Western literature have attempted to discern the influence of Western literature and philosophy in the works of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, and quoted Dickens, Herbert, Galsworthy, Spencer and other Western writers to show Sarat literature as realistic as theirs. Sarat literature is certainly realistic; there is no denying this fact. But the realism in it greatly differs from the realism in Western literature. Perhaps the realism characteristic of Sarat literature may have eluded the grasp of majority of the writers having written treatises on different aspects of Sarat literature.

But the question is: what kind of realism is revealed in the work of Sarat Chandra? If we cannot grasp that kind of realism, it is not possible to get through to the heart of his work. It can be interpreted in its proper perspective.

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Realism is possessed of different meanings and they are apt to overlap with one another. The first meaning of realism consists in creating in the reader's mind a perception of characters and situations and in this sense folktales are, too, realistic. The second meaning is enlivening of characters and incidents through meticulous description. The third meaning is vivid portrayal of the contemporary life and society. The fourth meaning consists in making action and reaction of characters consistent with psychology. There are many other meanings of realism that could be mentioned here, but the four meanings of realism will do at this moment to interpret the kind of realism, Sarat Chandra took into consideration in delineating his characters, particularly female characters. Many critics are of the opinion that all realistic works hinge on the flow of consciousness. Sarat literature mirrors life, as it is lived and thus, is realistic in his portrayal of characters and his works abound in contemporary problems- social, economic and political.

In dealing with the works of Sarat Chandra we find ourselves confronted with two pertinent questions, one posed by Rabindranath Tagore himself and the other by a young novelist belonging to the 'Kollol' group.

In a letter addressed to Sarat Chandra, Rabindranath Tagore said, "You may rest content with exacting prices out of the present time; what will you leave behind for other times that follow?" Still today the popularity of Sarat literature is unparalleled, but popularity can never vouchsafe literary worth. The problems and the questions that deeply stirred the consciousness of Sarat Chandra and impregnated his work with richness - racial antagonism, casteism, cruel social canon, social humiliation of widows and fallen women, the hauteur of the British rules and the pangs of dependence, are losing their intensity to cope with the changing of time and are being replaced by other problems and questions to face up to the changing of social and political and social milieu. The rural life portrayed so dexterously in his work has considerably changed and the concept of joint family which is the mainspring of his work is rapidly dwindling away. Now economic problems monopolize man's attention and thought and overshadow social problems. Human values are being drowned in the whirlpool of poverty, ignominy, misrule, class struggles and other social evils. Though his work hints at this social decadence, the problems are now threatened with a possibility of receding into history.

The second question was thrown into the gauntlet, as I have said a bit earlier, by a young novelist belonging to the 'Kollol' group. He said, 'If any mess in Kolkata had had a maid servant like Savitri we would have stayed on in that mess forever, forgetting our families.' We cannot put this comment down to the young novelist's intrepidity, for in this comment there is a suspicion of truth. This comment stands on the question: Are all the characters Sarat Chandra has portrayed in his novels and short stories real or true to life? Is undaunted love of a step- mother for her step-son, of a sister-in-law for her husband's brother real or psychologically proven? Jadav Mukerjee of the short story 'Bindur Chhele (Son of Bindu), is the record-keeper of the zamindar and has doubled the ten thousand rupees of Bindu by laying it out on interest, but he is indifferent to worldly affairs. Girish Chatujje of the short story Nishkriti (Deliverance) is a just-

established legal practitioner. But he cannot distinguish between the broking in straw and the broking in jute and is indifferent to property and money, to boot. Human mind and body is controlled by biological needs. But majority of Sarat Chandra's main characters, both male and female, have transcended the biological barrier. Though the side-characters and social backgrounds are starkly true, it is well-nigh difficult to analyse his major characters on the same scale. The truth to tell, we should not analyse the works of Sarat Chandra on the same scale as we analyse other works. We should not search for the likes of the characters in our real life and in the society we are living in. On his mind's background there remained painted the primeval images of ethereal love and affection and the idols that symbolize unworldly indifference such as Maheshwari, Uma, Jasoda Gopal, Radhika. These idols culled from the epics, the Puranas, Sakta literature, Vaishnav literature, and Indian philosophy got entangled with his mental set-up. Different philosophical thoughts and their contradictions did not cast shadows over his imagination. Sarat Chandra has embodied these images in his characters by synchronizing natural and supernatural entities and placed them in contemporary social milieu. His characterization aims to bridge the gap between heaven and earth.

Sarat Chandra was interested in social sciences and he was well-versed with Western literature and philosophy. But the roots of his literature are struck deep into the soil of his country. As I have said earlier, Sarat Chandra owed the primeval images of his characters to Indian literature, philosophy and the Puranas. To bring home this point, I shall mention two characters here. They are Savitri of *Charitrahin* (Characterless) and Saraju of *Chandranath*. The character of Savitri gave rise to a controversy much before the novel was published. Even the editors of *Bharatbarsha* did not dare publish the story around Savitri, the maid-servant of the mess. In reaction to this controversy, Sarat Chandra wrote from Rengun to his friend Pramathnath Bhattacharya: "You have seen Savitri as the maid servant of the mess, Pramath, but you have mistaken the diamond for a glass-piece." In his letter dated 13 May 1913 to Upendranath Gangopadhyay he compares the character of Savitri to diamond, as in: "You have seen Savitri as the maid servant of the mess. If you had that eye...if they had understood which priceless diamond comes up from which coal mine, they would not let slip that diamond."

Many years later in a letter written from Samataber to Radharani Devi, Sarat Chandra compares true love to diamond. "True love does not come in the life of all men. If this rare thing comes in one's life and if one can recognize it, then his life achieves success. You know many ignorant people throw a rare diamond, mistaking it for a glass piece. True love is tasted in sacrifice."

In our eyes, Savitri is a maid servant of a mess and a fallen woman. But in the eyes of Sarat Chandra she is an embodiment of ethereal love and affection, never profaned and polluted by human craving. He had recourse to a folktale in delineating the character of Savitri in the following passages:

Behari was devoted to Savitri and addressed her as Maa. He regarded her as a cursed goddess (*Charitrahin*, Chapter 28).

Behari was saying, “It is written in the scripture that Mother Laxmi (Goddess of Fortune) once worked as a maid-servant, cursed by Narayana for a certain fault. My mother (Savitri) too, for a certain fault, had come over here to work as a maid-servant and went away, subjected to much suffering” (*Charitrahin*, Chapter 38).

Sarat Chandra mentioned this legend in a letter to Dilip Kumar Ray:

Buddhadev Basu wrote if we had had a maid-servant like Savitri in our mess we would stay on in the mess....The boy...doesn't understand that Savitri doesn't belong to the maid-servant class. The legend has it that even Laxmi had but to work at the house of a Brahmin.

The primeval images of the goddesses Laxmi and Annapurna and the unchaste Radhika have got juxtaposed in the character of Savitri, Wrote Radharani Devi in her *Sarat Chandra: Manush o Shilpi*, “The character of Savitri resembles that of a girl of Bankura. Her brother-in-law brought her over to Calcutta on the pleas of marrying her. She was a very spirited girl and a girl of a rural well-to-do -family.” Sarat Chandra mixed freely with prostitutes. He might have seen in a prostitute an inkling of the character of Savitri. He has synchronized his real experience and the primeval images in creating his women characters and they remain ever-fresh. This synchronization is vividly exemplified in the story of Chandranath. Chandranath abandoned Saraju for fear of public scandal; Ramchandra, too, sent Sita into exile for fear of public scandal.

They must go down to the station before dusk, to catch the train. The old sarkar (accountant) wrapped a few cloths in a napkin and sat beside the coachman. He found himself thinking of the plight of Sita and his eyes were sopping wet with tears”. (*Chandranath*, Chapter 10)

The primeval images are clearly and vividly perceptible on the background of the characters of Savitri and Saraju, but they did not dominate the portrayal of the characters in other novels and short stories, though we can discern a suspicion of their presence in them.

You are talking about my scandal. No. I have no scandal. If people calumniate me for my meeting you clandestinely, this calumny won't touch me. (*Devdas*, Chapter VI)

Then I could not understand the plights of Sita and Damyanti, nor did I believe in Jagai-Madhai. (*Devdas*, Chapter 13)

We did never see the wish-yielding tree of Heaven. The people in Brajbabu's family have got a wish-yielding tree. They stretched their hands out beneath it and returned, smiling. (*Baradidi-Eldest Sister*, Chapter 3)

I could give so many examples in my translation to show how unworldliness and worldliness mingled in the characters, particularly women characters, I did not, because they would not add much and would burden this article

It is much easier to draw pictures of sin, ugliness and poverty, inasmuch as we are gaining the first-hand experience of these things day by day in our society. What

unworldly Sarat Chandra painted in his characters is not reduced to mere puppetry; it is rather imbued with striving of human life after spiritual consciousness. In the words of Rabindranath Tagore, “the body and mind is full of joy”. Human beings have enslaved themselves to passions and incarcerated themselves in the prison of selfishness, self-centredness and narrowness. Other contemporary novelists drew upon these wonted pictures in writing their novels and short stories. In the midst of these wonted pictures Sarat Chandra embodied his idols.

Annapurna, the bestower of all happiness and bliss, is a well-known divine image manifested in women characters. Unworldly is Annapurna’s love and it cannot be daunted and profaned by selfishness. Sarat Chandra presented a good number of mother-images to the readers of his novels and short stories, such as: Shubhada (Baradidi), Abhaghi (Abhagir Swarga – Abhagi’s Heaven), Haima (Dena-Paona – Assets and Liabilities), Bhuvaneshwari (Parinita) and so on. But his portrayal of these characters was not tainted by unbridled imagination. In our country motherly love is given a unique place. Sarat Chandra got knowledge of social sciences from his intimate. He learnt that love and affection are vulnerable to physical attachment and dominated by narrowness and selfishness. Sarat Chandra gave expression to this physical attachment in a few stories. To bring home this physical expression he had recourse to jest and cruel ignorance displayed by his woman characters.

Elokeshi said, ‘There would have been no delay, Chhotobou (Youngest daughter-in-law), there would have been no delay. By this time he could have passed four examinations. He could not pass them because of that wicked master....Out of jealousy he kept him in the same class’  
(*Bindur Chhele*, Chapter 4)

Kadambini was saying in anger, ‘Khuri (aunt) is our own woman. Panchugopal is very Fond of the head of a rui fish, didn’t she know it? Not giving it to him she cast the pearl into wilderness.’ (*Mejdidi*, Chapter 3).

I think these two examples will suffice to drive home how Sarat Chandra revealed the narrowness and ignorance spearheaded by physical attachment.

But Annapurna stands at the opposite pole. Her unparalleled nature is not confined within biological bounds. Sarat Chandra searched for her place in those relationships which transcended the narrowness and selfishness. She is presented as an image of love and affection. The love of step-mothers for her step-sons is vividly revealed as in Devdas, Baikunther Will, Panditmashai, Shrikanta. The earthliness of Annapurna is manifested in the undaunted love for brother-in-laws and brother-in-laws’ sons, as in Ramer Sumati, Mamlar Phal, Nishkriti, Shrikanta (Vol. 3). They appear unnatural and unbelievable to us. The following instances serve to beguile the readers into thinking of the characters portrayed as unnatural and unbelievable.

You’re fondling your brother-in-law, but your own son is loitering hither and thither. (*Ramer Sumati*, Chapter 2).

As mother is, so is her son. I have seen so many boys, but have never seen such ungrateful boy as he is. (*Bindur Chhele*, Chapter 7).

Hearing the description his smiling pace paled. Have you got mad, Barothakurum?

I thought you would say something else. They have taken their son, what will you do? (*Nishkriti*, Chapter 8)

There is some similarity between ‘Ramer Sumati’ and ‘MamlarPhal’ in the treatment of theme. On the background of these two stories is the manifestation of Govinda-Jasoda, eternal love. But in the character of Narayani in “Ramer Sumati” the Jasoda-image of Annapurna vividly reveals itself. In “MamlarPhal”, Shibu and Shambu are own brothers; but in “Ramer Sumati” Shyamlala and Ramlala are step-brothers.

Devotion to one’s husband harmonizes with the unworldly love of Annapurna. The pictures of all-renouncing Shiv and Annapurna proud of her husband scattered over Sarat Chandra’s novels and short stories. But Sarat Chandra thought that love and chastity are not the same thing; full-fledged humanness is by far greater than chastity. Devotion to one’s husband is glorified in many short-stories and novels of his. Annapurna in “Bindur Chhele” said, bubbling over with anger, ‘Sati committed suicide. I swear I would rather eke out my own living by cooking in other house than eat your rice! What did you do? You humiliated him!’ Deserving of mention here are Annadadi (*Shrikanta*), Shubhada (*Baradidid*), Kangali’s Mother (*Abhagir Swarga*), Bimala (*Darpa Churna*), Sati (*Bipradas*), Surabala (*Charitrahin*), Siddheshwari (*Nishkriti*) and so on. Women like Siddheshwari and Annapurna are blessed with the presence and love of their husbands who endear themselves to their wives. Annadadi, Mohini (*Birajbau*) and their likes are deprived of this blessedness, but they do not deviate an inch from their devotion to their husbands and their devotion touches deeply the heart of the readers. The woman who glorifies and idealizes the chastity amidst trials and tribulations is Annadadi in *Shrikanta*.

I turned round and saw Indra’s elder sister (Annadadi). She appeared to me as if she were an ash-covered fire, as if she had spent many years in meditation and had just risen up from the meditation. (*Shrikanta, First Part*, Chapter 4).

In the eyes of the society, Annadadi forsook her family with a man. But she eloped with her own husband. This is an example of undeviating love. According to the Vaishnavsect Krishna is the real husband of Radha. Rup Goswami has shown Shrikrishan in one of his plays as having been married to Radha. But on the earth and in the eyes of the society she is the forsaker of the family. Rup Goswami and Jib Goswami have not supported the extramarital love between Shrikrishna and Radha; they have referred to it as marital love. But the Vaishnavsect and literature has given a prominent importance to extra-marital love. Sarat Chandra had a deep attachment to the Vaishnavsect and literature.

The aim of the Vaishnav-sahajiya sect is to delve deep into the nature of the love between Radha and Krishna. Sarat Chandra did not enter into this complex theory, but was mesmerized by natural and preternatural love and romance and this love and romance reverberates in his novels and short stories.

Sarat Chandra collected histories of many forsakers of families and behind his search for the histories were the inquisitiveness of social sciences and his compassion for the fallen women. He saw the extreme ugliness of the prostitutes, but their greatness and steadfastness in love did not evade his notice. In delineating the characters of Tagar Bostabi (*Shrikanta*, Part 2), Kamini Bariuli (*Charitrahin*), Mokshoda (*Charitrahin*) and so on, Sarat Chandra pinpointed the ugliness and dirtiness of the society. Still today the influence of Sarat literature has not diminished with general readers, as is evident in selling like a hot cake of his novels and short stories. The influence is greater, so to say, with women readers, inasmuch as they love to consider themselves like the women characters aggrandized by the image of Annapurna.

Sarat Chandra is a magician in delineating of characters. But he is not immune from adverse criticism levelled against his works by the critics who interpret the characters portrayed in his work from the viewpoints of their own experience; their criticism is more or less moulded by western literary criticism. But they could not deny the popularity of the works of Sarat Chandra. Here I reproduce a comment (in English) by Buddhadev Basu, quoted by Himabanta Bandyopadhyay in his book, *Galpa Niye Upanyas Niye* published in 2005 by Bangiya Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata on page 39, which testifies to the popularity of the novels and short stories of Sarat Chandra: “No other authors, not Rabindranath himself had Saratchandra’s measure of immediate success. Like Dickens he was the idol of the public.”

Side by side with the never-diminishing popularity of his works, there have erupted some adverse questions centring on the delineating of characters divorced from the reality we often find ourselves confronted with. Readers and critics are divided into two groups. One group lavishes unreserved praise on Sarat Chandra’s novels and short stories and the other group subjects them to their knife-sharp criticism. They opine that Sarat Chandra wrote novels and short stories just to cater to the transient needs of ordinary people who love spending their time in poring over them. Some of them have gone to the extent of calling Sarat Chandra a script writer. But they seem to be not literarily or rather, critically tutored enough to be able to judge Sarat Chandra’s works. Even Buddhadev Basy did not do proper justice to his work by merely saying ‘immediate success.’ Again he belittled Sarat Chandra as in the following passage quoted by Himabanta Bandyopadhyay on page 40 and I reproduce it:

This, however, is worth mentioning that the early Rabindranath and Sharat Chandra do not represent two different schools of fiction...Sharat Chandra defiantly lacks the predecessor’s poetry. He has been lucky in so lacking, for it had made him a Rabindranath Made Easy, and won him a spectacular success through those heart-wringing and tear-bringing qualities in which he has had many imitators, but nota competitor.

It is certainly wrong in calling Sarat Chandra ‘a Rabindranath Made Easy.’ By any stretch of imagination we cannot call him ‘a Rabindranath Made Easy’, for Sarat Chandra never suffered himself to be influenced by Rabindranath’s short stories and novels. As we have seen Sarat Chandra drew upon the epics, Puranas in delineating his characters. The critics have been so mesmerized by the uniqueness of

Rabindranath's creativity, they seem to be seeing the ghost of Rabindranath in the works of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay. Rabindranath and Sarat Chandra ascended two different flights and, thus, different are the modes of their expression and their uses of language. There is no denying the fact that Rabindranath's subtle philosophical thought is completely absent from Sarat Chandra, but Sarat Chandra had the power of giving vivid expression to human appeals which made his works so popular with the readers and their popularity stubbornly persists. His novels and short stories were translated into many Indian languages. He is perhaps only Bengali novelist to have almost all his works translated into major Indian language, which proves the undiminishing popularity of his works.

Though I have set out at the initial stage to write on his women characters and how they influence his readers, particularly women readers, I could not resist the temptation of dealing with the nature of his novels and short stories.

It should be noted in this connexion that the genius of Sarat Chandra manifests itself in his novels. Though he has written no mean number of short stories, they are more or less imbued with the characteristics of the novel. Though 'Parinita', 'Arakshaniya', 'Baikunther Will' were written in the form of short story, many critics object, considering them short stories. The editors of the centenary edition of *Sarat Works* placed them in the short story section, but did not place 'Birajbau' in the short story section, even though Shrikumar Bandyopadhyay considered it one of the best short stories. Shrikumar Bandyopadhyay, on the other hand, regarded *Darpachurna* and *Kashinath* as novelettes, but many won't agree with him in regarding them as novelettes. It is really well-nigh difficult to distinguish in case of Sarat Chandra's works between short stories, long stories and novelettes. There is no denying the fact that no writers contemporary with Rabindranath could succeed in writing short stories, conforming to the characteristics of the short story. Perhaps no writer can create anything worth while by doggedly adhering to the standards foisted on them. We should not bother about which are short stories, which are long stories, or which are novelettes. We should leave this distinction up to the critics who bother about it and write treatises, classifying them.

Now a days computer and TV adorn every house and dominate social and literary spheres. The romantic films of the sixties and seventies telecast over TV still appeal to middle-aged middle-class Bengali people. Sarat Chandra's love stories likewise attract them; no theory can explain this attraction.

What had made his short stories and novels attract readers is his compassion and respect for woman. Sarat Chandra developed a compassionate mind for woman and this compassionate mind appears sort of backdated. In his novels the questioning and protesting women characters could not stick to the zeal and sort of pale to insignificance towards the end. Achala of 'Grihadaha' or Rama of 'Pallisamaj' is not different from the intellectual Kamal of 'Shesh Prashna'; they speechified on the value of woman, but could not become free women. Perhaps it was not historically possible for them to turn into free women. In a feudatory state governed by foreigners it was not possible for any woman to achieve rights. In the male-dominated society female rights

were suppressed and the socio-economic aspects of the society chained them to male and familial needs. Sarat Chandra could not completely go beyond the social strictures on women, yet, through the delineation of women characters, he fuelled their inherent desire to slide out of the Slough of Despond. Standing on the ground reality they could find in him a saviour of their down-trodden self. Intellectuals tend to brand his love for women fake, but they can't bring themselves to deny the fact that he brought into the lime light those women who were socially and economically oppressed by society and he very subtly paved the way for women liberation movement. Sarat Chandra tried to vivify the plights of young widows and prostitutes who forsook their families. The plights were not of their own willing, but foisted off on them by the male-dominated societies. Though Vidyasagar had a law enacted in favour of widow marriage, the law has not still been executed. The traditional customs and the greed of male people scattered thorns along the path for women to tread on. Rama of 'Pallisamaj' and Aparna of *Mandir* were torn to pieces by the sword of the conservative society. More wretched was the fate of Savitri of *Charitrahin* and that of the family forsaking Gauri of *Ekadashi Bairagi*. Their premature widowhood drove them into taking to a wrong path. In fact the short stories and novels of Sarat Chandra abound in the characters of prostitutes like Chandramukhi of *Devdas*. Though they did not claim respect in the society, Sarat Chandra gave them the respect that they deserve in his short stories and novels. We cannot put it down to a 'heart-bringing, tear-bringing' quality.

It is not possible to deal with all the short stories and novels of Sarat Chandra, we would rather touch upon a short story entitled 'Sati' Sarat Chandra wrote towards the end of his life. In our culture and tradition there is no male equivalent for the term 'Sati'. The word 'sati' cannot be taken to connote 'chaste' or 'virgin'; it is unique in itself. Sarat Chandra himself pondered over this term, while writing on *Narir Mulya*, that is, value of woman. He thought that there is some hidden aspect associated with the term 'Sati'. 'Sati' does not merely imply chastity, something else, as well. To stress that 'something else' he wrote 'Sati'.

'To remain sexually chaste is regarded here as a criterion for judging human character. But everyone knows, it is next to impossible to adhere to chastity throughout one's life. This concept passed down through generation after generation has bound men and women to the cruel social strictures and tugs at them. Harish, in the story 'Sati', is a flourishing pleader and belongs to a well-to-do family. He was now close on forty. When he was young he had fallen in love with a girl named Labanyaprabha. Their love did not culminate in marriage. Though Labanyaprabha was equal in respect of education to him, his guardians married him to a certain girl, Nirmala. But their marriage did not turn out to be a happy one. Nirmala suspected her husband and this suspicion made his life hellish.

One day Harish was afflicted with small pox. When everyone was busy nursing him, Nirmala came out of the room and announced to the world, 'If I am sati (chaste), my mother's chaste daughter, no one can wipe the vermilion mark off my forehead.' Saying this she lay down before the image of the Goddess Sitala at Her temple. No one blamed her for her irresponsible and blind behaviour, but rather congratulated her,

because coincidentally Harish completely recovered from the small pox. Then her chastity stood asserted to the village people.

Nirmala increased mental torture of Harish and on every opportunity she used harsh and ugly words on him. Harish gradually grew fed up of the humiliation and the harsh and cruel words. He started seeking an outlet from this torture and humiliation.

He did not wait long for the outlet. The outlet appeared before him of its own accord. Labanya came back as mistress of the Girls school. She was widow. He refreshed his love for her in order to get relieved from his humdrum and humiliating married life. His visits to her got spread through the village. When this news reached the ears of Nirmala, she stood as if transfixed and her pride of chastity left her.

Here, in this story, Sarat Chandra mocked at the concept of chastity that the society imposed upon woman and how it shattered conjugal life.

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## **Resisting and Assertive Stance of Pahari Women in Raman's "Gaachi" and Bhatia's "And a Song She Became"**

–Hem Raj Bansal\*

### **Abstract**

A woman in society has often found herself in a subservient role long since the evolution of human species. Her role as a mother, daughter and wife has often led to the erasure of her identity as a human being as her freedom is largely circumscribed by these roles. Seen mainly as an object of sex, a woman often encounters insurmountable difficulties. Many feminist works have depicted the vulnerability of women and their precarious situation in a male controlled society. The experiences of Black women in Africa, white women in European countries and Asian women in Asian countries have found expression in major literary works. However, the experiences of Himachali women have not attracted wide attention so far. Though there are writers of repute such as R.S. Harnot, Yashpal, Sudershan Vashisth, Sadhu Ram Darshak, Gautam Vyathit, Sushil Kumar Phulland others who write in Hindi and Pahari languages, they are hardly translated into English and hence do not get the recognition that such works warrant. The present paper attempts to make a study of two Himachali short stories that poignantly capture the poverty and the resultant deprivation, the spirit of resilience as well as assertive and liberating stance of Pahari women. Translated by Meenakshi Faith Paul in *Short Stories of Himachal Pradesh* (2007), "And a Song She Became" by Badri Singh Bhatia addresses the life of the protagonist Mahajanu who tries to seek love in her marriage. However, not getting it from her husband, she enters into two more marriages and asserts her choice. The second story "Gaachi" by Tulsi Raman recounts the poverty ridden existence of Murto who not only takes care of her aged in-laws but also rears her children as her husband often fritters away the money on liquor. It also shows how she defies village customs and tills the field, a male occupation. The paper would also attempt to show how the writer echoes Rousseau (1712-1778) when he blames the cities or so called civilization as breeders of vice and a cause of degeneration. Both the stories bring women to the front stage and make them take their own decisions in adverse circumstances.

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**Keywords:** Assertion, deprivation, choice, marriage, poverty, vice.

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Narrated in a flashback, “And a Song She Became” begins with the nameless narrator being told by her brother about the story of Mahajanu. It takes into account the Raddowal village situated at the height of 6750 feet where now a water project is inaugurated by a minister. The writer here describes the hard life of the Pahari people who earlier had to fetch water from far off places, other villages. Women bore pitchers of water over their heads in sultry as well as cold weather. Mahajanu, the protagonist of the story, is brought to the fore when the brother of the narrator mentions: “Mahajanu used to fetch water from here. She could carry two big pitchers” (155). Women in the hill states would work from dawn to dusk. Mahajanu is known and celebrated in her village and surrounding villages as she lived her life “to the hilt” (156). Her own brother-in-law wants the dancer in his village to sing the song of Mahajanu despite the fact that she had eloped, deserting his brother. The lyrics of the song make Mahajanu a legend:

Situated in village Gyau  
Is a temple of the goddess  
Runaway bride, Mahajanu  
Left her weeping *devar* hapless (156)

However, the other people in the village consider it against social norms to sing a song about a woman who deserted her husband: “See how arrogantly these Thakurs have asked for the song that ridicules them? Do they not care for their honour?” (157)

Mahajanu would trudge a distance of two kilometres to fetch water from Vanauni to her village Raddowal. She rues the day she was born in this village at the top of the hill where no one wanted to marry their daughters as the life was too hard. On the contrary, everyone wanted to affect the marriage of their boys with the girls of that village. She further describes the scarcity of water in the village: “One even has to drain off water from the bathroom to give to the cattle” (158). The author delineates the hard life of women in the hills. Mahajanu falls in love with Ramsaran’s son, a soldier, as his home was there on the midway between Vanauni and Raddowal. Their love affair becomes the talk of the adjoining villages and the parents hastily marry her off with a middle-aged widower to avoid gibes of the villagers as Mahajanu had conceived from the soldier. Strangely enough, her soldier-lover runs away without any trace of his hereabouts. Her fate here is like that of Leela Benare in Vijay Tendulkar’s (1928-2008) *Silence! The Court is in Session* (1968). In that play too Leela Benare has to bear the brunt of pregnancy as Professor Damle refuses to marry her and the whole vicious circle of males dissects her personal life to pieces. Like Mahasweta Devi’s Dhouli in the short story “Dhouli”, Mahajanu is also impregnated by *Fauji* and thereafter deserted.

Mahajanu’s fate with her widower husband turns her life colourless. She becomes rather a battered woman who suffers immensely from her marriage as the old husband only demands work and a son from her for procreation. Her husband, immersed in patriarchy, wants her to behave as per feminine aspects and remain a mute spectator.

Leghorn and Parker contend: "Good women are benchmarked as those who keep quiet, don't argue, do their work diligently, and have no needs or demands independent of their families" (114-15). On return to her mother's house, she also questions her daughter's decision to leave her husband as she had conceived from someone else. However, Mahajanu becomes a victim of domestic violence as her husband treats her mercilessly and does not even allow her to buy bangles: ". . . with her husband she lived like a corpse—the cursed fellow knew neither love nor how to honour a woman. He only wanted his household work done. A woman to cook and look after the cattle . . . When he spoke it seemed like he were chopping wood" (162). Judy Brady (b. 1937) in her satirical essay "Why I Want a Wife?" exposes male chauvinism:

I want a wife who will keep my house clean. I want a wife who will keep my clothes clean, ironed, mended, replaced when need be, and who will see to it that my personal things are kept in their proper place so that I can find what I need the minute I need it. I want a wife who cooks the meals, a wife who is a good cook. (326)

Mahajanu resists the cruelty of her widower husband and makes her will prevail even in the *panchayat* where she refuses to return to the spiteful husband. She is allowed on a condition that her next husband would pay the expenses of wedding to the former husband. The writer here presents women in an empowered state where by a verdict of the local *panchayat* the woman could exercise her choice. Following her heart's desire, she now "was a free woman" (163). Though she thinks for a while of her soldier-lover, but she imagines an impossibility of their marriage as "caste and class stood between them" (162). The writer presents the multiple oppression of caste, class and gender barring Mahajanu to seek the soldier as her lover.

Intent on seeking love, Mahajanu is drawn towards Laxmi, a man who performs *kariyala* and is a replica of her soldier-lover. She dreams of getting closer to him. She confides in her mother who rightly advises her as to how a woman who leaves her husband loses respect in society and people view her suspiciously: "It takes only one blemish for other blots to follow" (163). Overlooking her mother's advice, she marries Laxmi who leaves her in the lurch after adding fuel to her desires. Instead of love and respect, bitterness envelops their relation. She now longs for a child who would have kept her occupied and sustained her as "Laxmi has no time" (164). Mahajanu's wish to find fulfilment even in this marriage yields no fruit as Laxmi does not keep his word: "Does a woman want only two square meals a day or a new set of clothes every six months? A give and take of bodies in the name of love . . . Laxmi does not even have a word of love to spare...men are always used to letting out their frustrations of the outer world on the women at home" (164). She rues the day she fell in love with Laxmi. She echoes Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) who in her *The Second Sex* (1953) also says that a man looks on a woman primarily as a sexual object. But even a man's dependence on a woman for sexual need does not liberate her: "Biological need—sexual desire and desire for posterity—which makes the male dependant on female, has not liberated women socially" (Beauvoir 30). What adds further to her woes is that Laxmi finds about her affair with the soldier and does not allow her a visit

to her parents' home. She even curses *fauji* for having spread the word which renders her life more miserable. Bereft of love, Mahajanu refuses to succumb to the pressures of this loveless marriage: "Love stems from the soul. The heart connects with the heart. The body is only a medium . . . She did not want to become the sheep whose wool is sheared every summer and winter. Nor a cow who at will could be tethered to any stake" (164). Refusing to be confined like an animal to the four walls of the house, she resists oppression of any kind, subtle or overt, and leaves Laxmi. She does not fret over her decision but faces the situation unflinchingly and deserts her husband for mistreating her.

The writer projects Mahajanuas a strong character for whom there always remains a choice to enter into another marriage. After she leaves Laxmi, yet another proposal awaits her. Deviya, whose sister-in-law had just died, wants her to marry with his brother, Sudama. Another proposal from Miyan revives her otherwise sagging spirit, making her feel that "she was not dirt" (166) and lands her in a dilemma of "whom to choose? Whom refuse?" Comparing the two proposals, she finds it advantageous to marry Deviya's brother as Deviya's wife was her friend. Still, her widower husband, Dalpat's threat looms large. She attacks him for demanding only a son from her to perform his *kapaalkriya* during cremation. She asserts her dignity and respect. On the assurance of Deviya of settling scores with Dalpat or even Laxmi if they intervene, she does make up her mind to marry Deviya's brother, Sudama. The ample drinking water in Sudama's village Gyanpur, Sudama's job in Shimla and her fancy about visiting it after their marriage, pull her more towards Sudama but she resolves that if Sudama does not return on the day of wedding, she would choose other way. As per the custom of *gaadar* marriage, three people from the village visit the bride's house to bring her back. This ritual seems to be quite dull and boring as she misses the charm and din of a proper marriage. Since Sudama does not make it to his home on the day of the *gaadar* ceremony, Mahajanu feels betrayed and runs away to Miyan's house unnoticed. Feeling rudderless, she decides to live with Miyan and also gives birth to a girl.

The narrator's brother's further revelation that Mahajanu's daughter has also changed three homes signals towards the question of the exercise of choice. The writer drives home the point that in the hills of Shimla the question of choice often remained open to women who could not otherwise withstand the stifling environment in an oppressive household. The further revelation that Mahajanu later ran away to Shimla as Miyan would 'beat' her is again indicative of the exercise of her will. Mahajanu starts to eke out her living by offering her services to a British woman who did not have anyone left in India as all had gone back to England after Independence and was leaving alone in Shimla. Her bequeathing to Mahajanu her bungalow after she dies is simultaneously the triumph of Mahajanu as readers are led to infer that here she would be the master of her own. Though these customs or *reet* "liberate and chain her simultaneously" (Paul 19), the question of money to be returned to the former husband was anti-woman. In present day, it is the husband who has to pay alimony on divorce, but in the hills it is the woman who has to pay this money. The writer imparts power

to women, nonetheless, as they had the right to leave their husbands if they subjugated them. However, now process is difficult and complex.

Mahajanu's life and her leaving one house for another becomes a legend. She becomes the subject of major social occasions or feasts. It is the same song that Deviya, the wrestler, now wants the singer and dancers to sing despite the fact that she was his sister-in-law and that her elopement was a blot on the family. The writer beautifully captures the narrative of Mahajanu to show the culture of the *Pahars*, the tough life of people and a woman's social position. Though Mahajanu's morality is questioned, she cares a fig about it as she does not want to be subsumed under suffocating, insensitive husbands. Her leaving alone at the end is an attack on the institution of marriage which inhibits women's liberty. "the advantages of matrimony are all on the male side . . . Women debase themselves like animals in marriage and the end they meet is widowhood, poverty and grief" (Laura Cereta qtd. in Ross 152).

## II

"Gaachi" depicts the poverty-ridden existence of Murto and her persistent struggle to see her family through trying times. The family has only one room which is used for cooking, sleeping, storing and underneath the room is the cow shed that gives a free passage to flies to buzz around. The very beginning of the story presents the uneasiness of Murto as she wakes up slightly late and busies herself in domestic chores, ranging from milking the cow to giving them fodder or grass. The penury of Murto and her husband Motu may be discerned from the fact that "they were unable to add anything more than a small veranda to the house inherited from their ancestors" (107). Driven by poverty, whenever she borrows flour from the neighbours it gives them "fodder enough to gossip for an entire month" (107).

The writer underpins a crucial aspect of their family as Motu spends the little money on liquor. *Gharaat* is situated at a distance of nearly three miles from Motu's village Devali where people throng to get flour, play cards or buy ration items. He often leaves the house on the pretext of going to *gharaat*, but never returns before four or five days and that too in an inebriated state. What is worst is that after spending the little money on wine, he sells the flour to buy more. The writer attacks this negative trait in Motu's character which aggravates the family's troubles.

Murto's parents-in-law, Parma and Phuli are too old to work while her children Shamu and Resma are also three and five years old respectively. Though initially the mother-in-law would not hear a single word of reproach against her son, but now feels pity for Murto over Motu's indulgence. The narrator reveals how the *Gharaatu* bazaar grew from a small shop of Nasib Chand to many shops sprawled over a large area and that how the vehicles would stop there to relish the fish. The writer like Wordsworth and other Romantic writers show concern for nature and its inhabitants. Since people use dynamite to kill fish and even sell pure ghee, fruits and honey for making money, Tulsi Raman views it a transgression or rather a move from nature to materialism. The aged Hariyasensitizes: "This way the very seed of the fish will rot.

The way big and small, all fish are being blasted thoughtlessly; soon the river will be barren of all creatures” (114). The transformation of this small *hati* to a big bazaar also brings along degeneration in values. The opening of the wine shop and other shops leads to a consumerist culture where Motu unwisely squanders his money: “Motu was lost to the family with the coming up of Gharaatu bazaar”(118). The writer, like Rousseau, reveals the decline in values when one moves from nature to the so called civilization. Rousseau in his *A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1755) relates how the movement from nature to civilization disrupted the ‘nascent society’ and thus brought along feelings of jealousy, hatred, greed as neighbours started amassing wealth and vied with each other.

Tilling and sowing the fields at right time yields good crops. As it rains, the farmers plough their fields. However, Motu does not return even after the lapse of four days which makes “Parma’s heart shrivelled as he watched the *Aasharhsun* drying up the soil” (116). The old man vomits his anger out at his daughter-in-law for not controlling her husband: “Between Parma’s wrath and Motu’s worthlessness, Murto’s suffering truly broke one’s heart” (116). Though Murto entertains for a moment the thought of ploughing the fields on her own, the bragging of her husband thwarts her plan who considers it a manly activity: “These are big and difficult tasks fit for the men. Women can do the remaining light work” (116).

Parma and Phuli, now unable to work due to old age, recall how they would work relentlessly in fields some of which were really hard to till. Moreover, Parma would never remain away from home as his son does. Murto harvests the whole field by afternoon when her daughter brings her food. The whole flavour of food is diminished as she realizes that her husband had not so far returned. However, she loves him dearly and whenever he returns after three-four days, she lets her anger subside. She rues, however, that he had stopped taking any interest in her as well as farming. Sevati, another woman working in the field, hurls insult at Murto: “Why Murto, where on earth is your husband. I hear he wears clothes like a *neta* now a days. Has he found a lady *neta* for himself that he cannot be bothered even about the moistness of *Aasharh*?” (123) Though the words pierce her like a sword and she prepares to teach her a lesson, Mahajanu placates at her husband’s indolence. She prepares *sirkus* to celebrate the rains but it does not whet the appetite of the family as Motu does not return home even that evening and thus spoils the occasion. Miffed by such circumstances and irresponsible attitude of her husband, Murto wishes to get rid of him, however, the concern for her children prevents her taking such a step: “These *Devtas* conspired that Resma and Shamu were born, otherwise, if she were on her own, she would never set foot in this house again” (128).

Tulsi Raman also brings to the fore corruption in politics. Raghu, one of the associates of local MLA and childhood friend of Motu, seizes all the public work contracts and instead of “cement, uses sand and mud” (118). Though Raghu was initially skinny, his belly protrudes as he takes too much bribe. Motu feels obliged to Raghu for registering his name in below poverty line families. However, Motu becomes oblivious to his family’s worse condition and sells the items of his ration to others at

a bit higher price to save for liquor. He brags about his relation with MLA's friend Raghu. He even wears khaddar outfit to look like a political leader and when people humorously call him a *neta* he puffs with pride. He even loses his last ten rupees in gamble and sells the grain to buy a bottle of wine. Though he thinks for a while of his worried parents and wife, the sight of bottle outweighs all other concerns.

*Gaachi* is a long piece of cloth that women tie around their waist in hills to support themselves while doing many chores. When things turn hostile, Mahajanugains strength from this *gaachi*. The writer considers Murto the *gaachi* of her family. She signifies hope, strength and a resilient and indomitable spirit against all odds: "Murto is the *gaachi* of this family of five. Without her the land would become fallow. Every stone of the house would fall away. The old parents would die before time and the children fall to begging" (128). However, when her neighbour Shibbi teases her that her husband has got her a new *gaachi*, she overcomes with a feeling of dissatisfaction at looking at her two year old, hole-ridden *gaachi*. Going against the village custom that "did not allow women to touch the runner of a plough", Murto yokes the oxen and tills the field. Though her aged in-laws feel ashamed initially, they take heart as their *bahu* ploughs to save the family from dying of hunger. Since a woman was not allowed to plough while her husband was alive, it invites the condemnation of the villagers. They recall an incident when a widow had ploughed and how it had dumb founded people. A song was then composed and sung many times about the widow, Phul Dei. Murto's unprecedented resolution and its execution also signals her strength and the immortality that she would enjoy as a song would also be dedicated and sung in her honour. Her attempt is a welcome step to discard the yoke of normative feminist servitude and alleviate the burden of poverty. Her act is rather subversive where she not only threatens the male-demarcated boundaries but also supports her family.

Both the women presented in the stories are strong, ready to fight their battles till the end even though slurs or ostracization be the result. Both the women protagonists refuse to accept the fixed notion of identity and rather forge a new one as the situation demands. Mahajanu and Murto transgress and debunk the traditional roles ascribed to them and start a crusade against anything oppressive, thereby charting out their own paths. Refusing to remain passive, disempowered and wretched, the protagonists wrest power to shake commonly received beliefs. Mahajanu asserts her individuality and dignity by rejecting her husbands one after the other who ill-treat her while Murto questions the male-female binaries by undertaking a masculine activity. Both the women, thus, destabilize the patriarchal sphere and assert their will in the face of insurmountable difficulties.

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## Glossary

Aasharh	:	Rainy Season
Bahu	:	Daughter-in-law
Devar	:	Brother-in-law
Devtas	:	Gods
Fauji	:	Soldier
Kapaal Kriya	:	Funeral Ceremony
Kariyala	:	A humourous skit
Neta	:	A Political Leader
Panchayat	:	A group of people in a village with a Head deciding on village matters
Sirkus	:	Sweet cake made of wheat



## Cultural Conflicts and Hyphenated Existence in Meera Syal's *Anita and Me*

–Mohan Lal Mahto\*

### Abstract

A second generation immigrant in Britain and a versatile personality, Meera Syal portrays the Indian diasporas in Britain who try to preserve their Indian traditions and cultural values alive in Britain and adapt to the culture of the adopted country. This paper attempts to explore cultural conflicts and hyphenated existence of the Indian diasporas dealt in her debut novel *Anita and Me*. The novel is set in 1960s and the story moves round the nine year old protagonist Meena and her British friend Anita Rutter. Meena is the daughter of the Kumars the only Punjabi family living in Tollington, a mining area near Birmingham. Through the consciousness of Meena the cultural conflicts between the Indian and the British culture are presented. Meena tries hard to escape her community and become the member of general British community. To achieve this end she befriends Anita Rutter. As she grows up she experiences racial hatred at the hands of her British friends whom she loved from the core of her heart. She has also seen her parents being humiliated there. Ultimately she realizes their secondary status in Britain, and also realizes that she cannot desert her community, and decides to be a traditional Punjabi girl. Thus the immigrants are trapped between two cultures and are forced to lead a hyphenated existence.

**Keywords:** Immigrant, humiliation, racial hatred, alienation, rootlessness, diaspora.

Meera Syal, a second generation immigrant in Britain was born on 27 June, 1961 in Wolverhampton and grew up in Essington, a mining village (U K). A versatile personality, Syal is a writer, playwright, scriptwriter, journalist, singer, actress, producer and social activist. As a writer she portrays candidly the Indian diaspora in England whom she finds struggling to preserve their valuable ethnic traditions and also adapt to the culture of the adopted country. Her debut novel *Anita and Me* (1996) won the prestigious Betty Trask Award, and was adapted into a film in 2002 in which Syal acted brilliantly as the aunt of Meena Kumar. Her second novel *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* (1999) also brought her laurels in the literary sphere.

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In Meera's novels women protagonists undergo the conflicts of cultures and battles of fixing identity. *Anita and Me* is a semi- autobiographical novel wherein the story revolves round Meena Kumar, a Punjabi girl and her relationship with her English neighbor, Anita Rutter as they grow up in the fictional Midland village of Tollington near Birmingham in 1960s. Meena, the nine year old girl (protagonist) is the daughter of Mr. Shyam Kumar and Mrs. Daljit Kumar, the only Punjabi family living in Tollington, a mining village. Thrown into the milieu of multi cultures she has intense desire to become the integral part of the general community. The novelist portrays Anita as a typical Tollington wench. Through the consciousness of the protagonist the novelist presents the perennial cultural conflicts experienced by the immigrants. Meena considers Anita, the local lewd beauty, her best friend and "my passport to acceptance" (148), and hopes her friendship will bring acceptance among the British girls and boys of her age and she will be a popular member of their community. She believes that Anita, "the undisputed cock of the yard" (38), who "always seemed older than her peers" (246), will give her official stamp of being one of them. She feels fortunate enough to become Anita's friend, "I'd been having the best day of my life being Anita Rutter's new friend" (60). The novelist also delineates the upheaval of her mind caused by her brown colour. The question haunts her mind whether she will be able to have intimacy with a guy due to her brown colour. Though Anita becomes her fast friend, helps her and proves a passport to acceptance, yet betrays her too as she has intrinsic racial prejudice against the non-whites.

The novelist presents the mindset of the first generation immigrants who preserve their native culture, faith and value system in the alien country. They have get - together in each other's house every weekend. The Kumars take Indian food such as chapattis, dal and sabzi. Mr. Kumar usually sits on the floor and eats food with fingers. They speak Punjabi at home. Other Indians when meet speak their mother tongue instead of English. Diwali is celebrated by the Kumars, and other Indians like Mr. Amman and Mrs. Shaila come to their home. They put on Indian clothes on this occasion. The protagonist says, "I glanced at my elders who looked so shiny and joyous in their best Diwali clothes" (112). She describes how they along with Uncles and Aunties celebrate Diwali at her home. Mr. Kumar being good singer would sing Urdu *ghazals* and Indian songs, and plays on harmonium, and Uncle Tendon would play on tabla. In fact, in this novel Meera Syal presents Indian microcosms in UK. The words of Charu Sharma are applicable to Meera's portrayal of Indian diaspora, "The Indian microcosms are pulsating with Indian customs and traditions; festivals and rituals; Indian music and dance; language and cuisines; dress and religion; film and art. Women play an active role in expanding various practices" (Charu Sharma 34). They believe in their own religion and also practice rituals in the adopted nation. Auntie Shaila has images of Lord Rama and Krishna and Lord Ganesha in her shrine surrounded by incense sticks, *diyas*, fruits offerings and photographs of departed souls. She offers prayers and *artis*. While talking to Meena she reveals the essence of her religion, "...that we believe whatever you do in this life will come back to you in thenext. If you are good, you will come back as a good-hearted, rich person. If you are not, you will have to pay, at some point." (93). The immigrants keep themselves abreast with

the social, political and cultural happenings taking place in their mother land. When Nanima, the mother of Mrs. Kumar, arrives in Tollington on the birth Meena's brother Sunil, they anxiously ask her about the political happenings in Delhi or activities of films in Bombay. In the words of Syal, "The rest of the evening passed in a stream of constant visitors bearing gifts of sweetmeats and homemade *sabzis*, anxious to meet one of the generation they had left behind and to catch up on the latest news from the Motherland" (201). The immigrants inculcate their native cultural values in their offspring so that the grand cultural legacy of their native country may pass on to the younger generation. The novelist mentions how Auntie Shaila's daughters and other girls of Indian origin, are "pleasant, helpful, delicate, groomed" (149) docile and obedient. The Kumars also wish their daughter to be docile, obedient and noble and imbibe the Indian value system. But she is inclined to be different. As she says, "I knew I was a freak of some kind, too mouthy, clumsy, and scabby to be a real Indian girl, too Indian to be a real Tollington wench" (149-50). Her neglect to Shaila's daughters and preference to the company of British girls and boys as seen by her parents creates fear that their only daughter is "turning out to be a social deviant" (60). They also present an ideal picture of their native land before her which is situated five thousand miles away.

The Tollington area is well populated by other Asian immigrants forming Asian community with a sense of unity and affinity as they are from the third world. They are considered as others by the British people. Instead of identifying with the Asian community, Meena establishes unity with neighbouring British people of the locality. She avoids the company of typical Indian girls like Pinky and Baby, daughters of Auntie Shaila. To achieve her end, i.e. to be the part of British community, she takes to falsehood, pretention and fabrication. She fabricates false stories about her grandparents to impress Anita and other British girls and boys of her group. She hopes they will consider her like other English children and not stranger. She confesses, "I'm really not a liar, I just learned very early on that those of us deprived of history sometime need to turn to mythology to feel complete, to belong" (10).

Meena experiences cultural conflicts as the ethnic culture, customs, traditions, and food habits are sometimes unacceptable to her. For instance, she does not like style of dress/clothing of the Asian people. On the other hand, she is attracted towards the British white women with big hats doing creative works with a pair of pruners, and "wanted to see mama in a big hat doing something creative with a pair of pruners" (16). Meena desires that their garden should be decorated with "ornamental well" (33) etc. like the gardens of the British neighbours, but her mother considers simple garden frippery as English. We notice that Meena's actions are guided by her intense desire to assimilate in the British culture, but her inability to part ways with her culture is also explicit. Once, her mother forcefully dresses Meena in bright loose outfits "dinky pleated dress" with "frills and flowers" despite her unwillingness. When confronted she tells a lie to Anita about the dress that "this was not me" (17). She is torn between the expectations of her parents that need to be fulfilled and her desire for acculturation. Her mother tells her to wear frilly skirts which she does not like. Meena always finds

herself on double paths, struggling which one to tread. Her parents wish her to be an obedient, docile and traditional Indian girl/daughter. Her mother insists Meena should learn only good habits of the host culture and avoid the bad habits." You take the best from their culture, not the worst" (53). On the other hand, she has launched a tirade against the Indianness and craves to achieve the British concept of liberty, freedom and democracy. Meena expects presents from her parents on the occasion of Diwali, their Christmas as the British children receive during Christmas.

The immigrants experience a sense of exile, alienation, rootlessness, and divided identity in the adopted country. In this novel Syal gives a true portrait of such type of existence. The Kumars along with other Asian Immigrants living in Britain often become the victims of racial abuses unleashed upon them. They are "others" (313) there. The British community makes them realize that they are outsiders, and is not willing to give them equal status. Deep rooted racial discrimination in the British people is revealed in the words of Mr. Kumar when they wish to help Anita and Tracey whose mother has run away with a butcher leaving them to their father. He says, "If they ask for help, that is different matter, but we can't just take over the way we do with our friends. Think about it please. They have their pride" (251). The immigrants with their vibrant native soul find peace and contentment in following their native values in a foreign country. Syal presents their state through delineation of Mrs. Kumar, "She did not follow the news, no telly, no radio, no inclination, being a simple Punjabi girl suffering from culture shock, marooned and misplaced in Wolverhampton" (9). People of Asian community usually get-together in her house. But instead of staying with them, Meena runs away and gets companionship with Anita, other white girls like Sherrie, Fat Sally and boys like Sam Lowbridge, Kevin and Karl of the locality. On the other hand, Meena's parents don't find the British culture agreeable. To her mother the British people are "*Bakwaslok!*" (55), meaning "Bloody weird people" (55). She remarks, "They treat their dogs like children, no better than their children. They expect their kids to leave home at sixteen, and if they don't they ask for rent!... They don't like bathing, and when they do, they sit in their dirty water instead of showering.... The way they wash up, they never rinse the soap off the dishes.." (33)

In the beginning, Meena is unable to understand the glory and rich cultural legacy of India. The image of India as a backward country inhabited by secondary race is in her mind. But the arrival of her Nanima, and her association opens her eyes and brings about a miraculous change in her perception of India. The grandmother becomes the embodiment of motherhood and symbol of love affection, devotion, loyalty and sanctity of the family, and inculcates pride, reverence and longing for her motherland in Meena. Discrimination based race forces Meena to ponder over her existence in UK. Gradually she understands the glory of Indian culture. Prompted by her pride of her culture she serves vegetarian food to Anita and her sister in a dinner party which she organizes at her home, and she also feels pride in eating food with fingers in front of English friends.

Humiliation of the immigrants is a common phenomenon in an adopted country. Being in minority groups their cultures, social values, habits and practices are ridiculed.

Racial abuses are hurled at them. Meena's parents have experienced derogatory treatment at the hand of the British. Her mother undergoes insults while driving on road on account of being an Indian. She narrates how they have been insulted during their visit to gurudwara in Birmingham by their car being driven by her mother. Their car starts rolling back at top of the hill and it creates inconvenience to other vehicles. Meena gets out her car, and humbly requests the old lady sitting in a car to move her car a little back to rid the inconvenience. But the English lady reacts in humiliating tone "Bloody stupid wog. Stupid woggywog. Stupid" (97). Meena feels as if she has been punched. She is haunted by this incident whole day, "...my mind was too full of the old lady to think of God" (98). This incident forces her to think that her father must have faced this kind of racial hatred so many times. "... I felt right now, hurt, angry, confused, and horribly powerless because this kind of hatred could not be explained" (98). Meena gradually realizes that she is a secondary citizen in a country where she is born and reared. She considers Anita, Sam and others as her bosom friends, but young adolescent Meena feels betrayed when they show racial bias against her and unleash attacks on Asians. She senses racism when she reads the news under the headline of a newspaper MAN ATTACKED IN TOLLINGTON, "The victim, a Mr. Rajesh Bhatra from Tettenhall was found in a ditch on the side of the Wulfrun Road. He was suffering from head injuries and broken ribs and had been robbed of his suitcase and wallet" (275). This incident forces her to ponder over her status in Britain. Her attempt for acculturation begins to weaken. She exclaims, "This was too close to home, and for the first time, I wondered if Tollington would ever truly be home again" (275). In the hospital she lying beside the bed of injured bank manager. She is confident that it is Sam who has assaulted the manager because he is an Indian. Feeling of affinity for the manager arises in her heart. She says, "Anita and I had never been meant for each other: Sam and Anita, Anita and Sam, it sounded as natural as breathing. And me and the Bank Manager, we both lay in hospital beds, whilst the boots and heels rode the highways of Tollington together, turning us into drunken, boastful anecdotes" (282).

Racial hatred is vividly presented by the novelist during the Spring Fete held there. Though Sam Lowbridge is Meena's friend, yet he cherishes hatred against the non-whites and he is supported by a large numbers of the British. His rude attitude is revealed when he opposes the decision of sending the collected charity money for African victims. He shouts at Uncle Alan, "You don't do nothing but talk, 'Uncle'. And give everything away to some darkies we've never met... This is our patch. Not some wogs' hand out" (193). It is extremely shocking for Mr. Kumar and Meena. Meena reacts, "I felt as if I had been punched in the stomach. My legs felt watery and a hot panic softened my insides to mush" (193). However, Mr. Kumar advises her, "If anyone ever says anything rude to you, first you say something back, and then you come and tell me. Is that clear? (195). He is proud of being the son of Mother India and any insult towards an Indian by the British in the name of colour, race or culture is the insult of the whole Indian nation. So he advises his daughter, "Don't give them a chance to say we're worse than they already think we are. You prove you are better. Always" (45).

The novelist reveals the traumatic experiences of the first generation of immigrants when they search for boarding and jobs in the alien country. The Uncles and Aunties during their get-together disclose how they had to look for a boarding house “that did not have that sign ‘No Irish, Blacks or Dogs?’” (165) This caption is enough to indicate status and position of Indians/people of third world in the UK. They would say, “... You know that old trick, you ring up and get an interview in your best voice, then they see your face and suddenly the job is gone” (166). The Indian immigrants live in the margins in the adopted country and often feel threatened by the majority and wish to be the part of native land. The novelist mentions how her father and the Uncles have been upset due to Powell, an Englishman. Her father said, “That Powell Bastard with his bloody rivers’ and had added, ‘If he wants to send us back, let him come and damn well try!’” (267).

The novelist also delineates the nostalgia of homeland and emotional bond of the Indian Diaspora in this novel. Mrs. Kumar requests her husband to return to their own country. She says, “I can’t cope anymore, Shyam. Back home I would have sisters, mothers, servants....” (196). They believe that their country is the best as it the country of tolerance where people of various religions live in peace and harmony, and are proud of their homeland. Mrs. Kumar tells Meena, “Here so many religions so happily co-existed in India-Budhism, Christianity, Judasim, Sikhism and specially Islam. There are more Muslims in India than in Pakistan” (92).

Meena’s awareness towards racism gradually strengthens and she returns towards her community. Ultimately she realizes that she cannot rid her community in this alien country. We see the awakened Meena boldly fighting for the honour of self, her community, and her people in attacking Sam her friend who has been hurling racial abuses against the blacks and the Asians — the Indians and Pakistanis. She shouts at Sam, “You mean the others like the Bank Manager? The man from the building site. The Indian man. I know you did it. I *am* the others, Sam. You did mean me” (313-14).

We see a radical change in Meena’s attitude. She promises that she will remain the part of her family try to fulfill the aspirations of her parents. A sense of realization comes to her how much her parents have undergone humiliation while living in this alien milieu. She decides to discard bad habits like speaking lies, respect the sentiments of her parents and grow feminine like other Indian girls in her locality. She also decides to write letters to her relatives in India, become an ideal woman like other Indian women and respect Indian values. As she declares, “...I would grow my hair long and vaguely feminine, I would be nice to Pinky and Baby and seek out their company willingly, I would write letters to India and introduce myself properly to that anonymous army of blood relatives, I would learn to knit, probably, and I would always tell the truth” (284). The novelist thus presents the change of her heart and mind. She says, “I climbed into bed and for the first time in years, said a prayer. I told God I was sorry for blaming Pinky and Baby for stealing Mr. Ormerod’s tin and I wished fervently that they were lying next to me in their matching pyjamas and co-ordinated bed socks, listening to me telling then about Sam, because I knew that they would understand” (274). Her longing for the motherland aggravates. She underlines her purpose to explore

her parental lineage in India. Her eyes open towards the duality of identity in England. She cannot be the part of British culture despite of her birth and rearing in England. The immigrants will have to face racial prejudice.

To conclude, Syal has portrayed comprehensively the cultural conflicts and hyphenated existence of the Indian diaspora in Britain. Meena's relationship with Anita, her British friend is an attempt to achieve belongingness with general community. But she fails as she remains in the margin and is treated as other. In fact, she feels that the immigrants cannot completely assimilate the foreign culture because they are treated as others by the British and often undergo humiliation in the adopted land. They too cherish their ethnic and cultural values in their heart. Thus they live psychologically, culturally and geographically in two worlds, and always experience the pull between the two cultures.

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## **Feminist Perspective of Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman***

–Rupal S. Patel\*

### **Abstract**

Manju Kapur is one of the famous Post-Independence Indo-English writers. She is a feminist writer as she concerns for the pathetic and oppressive situation of Indian women in all her novels. Her novels denounce the Indian women's socio-cultural predicament caused by their entrapment in the male dominated, patriarchal society. Her leading novels are *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*, *Home*, *The Immigrant* and *Custody*. Most of her female protagonists are educated wives and belong to the middle class families of India. They face struggle for freedom, identity and equality with men and space of their own. Their suffering and suffocation in the family and the marital bonds are clearly reflected in her novels. The present paper is a study of Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* in feminist perspective.

**Keywords:** Manju Kapur, *A Married Woman*, feminist, women, patriarchal, Indian woman, suffering.

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*A Married Woman* (2002) is the second novel of Manju Kapur which focuses on the revolt against the deep-rooted family values and the institution of marriage. In this novel, the novelist concerns with Indian woman who strives to gain name and space in life and social-cultural domains. She focuses mostly on the woman and her wishes, desires, actions and reactions. Manju Kapur writes:

I am interested in the lives of women whether in the political arena or in the domestic spaces. One of the main preoccupation in all my books is how women manage to negotiate both the inner and outer spaces in their lives what sacrifices do they have to make in order to keep the home fires burning and at what cost to their personal lives do they find some kind of fulfillment outside the home. (Kapur 1)

Astha is the female protagonist of *A Married Woman* who belongs to the middle class family and is in search of her identity against the existing patriarchal set up and

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appears as an independent woman. She is a well-educated married woman and has everything a married woman desires to have in life – a well settled husband, loving children and happy and comfortable life. In the views of Gupta:

Though she seems to be happy being a teacher and mother of two kids, there is always an undercurrent of resentment against being treated as one of the inferior sex (Gupta 13).

*A Married Woman* is a search for identity of Astha out of frustration, alienation, suppression, isolation and distress in the manmade culture. She is a daughter of the traditional middle class parents who are conscious and worried about her education and marriage. In the Indian culture, the middle class parents are always anxious about the future of their daughter, her education and marriage. Marriage of a daughter for them is a burden as they have to find a proper life partner for a daughter. Even after marriage, some problems like dowry, joint family system and her adjustment in the in-law's family etc. are some of the critical issues for them to solve. Astha's mother is a traditional Indian woman who cannot think out of the narrow gender biased roles of the patriarchal society. Astha's mother wishes to perform her daughter's marriage ceremony at the proper time. Her mother teaches and trains her how to live and adjust in the in-law's house, how to obey or worship her husband as a God like a traditional Indian woman. Her mother advises her:

When you are married, our responsibilities will be over. Do you know the Shastras say if parents die without getting their daughter married, they will be condemned to perpetual rebirth? (Kapur 1)

Like many other grown up girls, Astha has her own dreams and desires. She has her own romantic world. She has her dreams of a prince. The result is, she falls in love with Bunty. Her love towards Bunty is narrated beautifully by the novelist:

Day and night the thought of him kept her inside churning, she was unable to eat, sleep or study. Away from him her eyes felt dry and empty. Her ears only registered the sound of her voice. Her mind refused to take seriously anything that was not his face, his body, his feet, his hands, his clothes (Kapur 8-9).

As generally happens with a teenage girl in the Indian culture, Astha's affair meets tragic end. Leaving behind all these affairs with Bunny, she enters the college where she again falls in love with Rohan, a professor of the college. Out of love she establishes physical relations with him but Rohan refuses to marry her after sipping her body and leaves her alone and goes for higher studies at Oxford University. He does not love her but only uses her to satisfy his physical needs. She is caged by middle class values and she has to accept her fate. Eventually, she agrees to marry Hemant, a man who is chosen by her parents for arranged marriage. Hemant is a well settled, foreign returned man who belongs to a bureaucrat family. Both of them settle down at the posh area of New Delhi. But Astha is not happy and satisfied with her married life. She gets fed up with the boring and dull life as she has to live alone at home for the whole day. She has to wait for long hours to be a part of Hemant's company. She is trapped in the traditional role of a wife, daughter and daughter-in-law. As she thinks:

What was she to do while waiting for Hemant to come home? Her in-laws were not demanding, for the housework they had help, and supervision, no matter how painstaking, still left her with enough free time to be restless (Kapur 46).

To come out from the dullness of life, she decided to do the job of a teacher at St. Anthony's School. Her job brought her a change in her life and she started involving into the external world and came to know about the boundaries and limitations around her. Now she has changed her status from a housewife to a working woman. She has started to come out from the four walls of the house. She is no more a caged bird but starts to live like a free bird. This is the beginning of her search for identity. Like a traditional Indian woman, she tries to balance her personal and professional duties. Like every Indian wife, she performs dual duties of a dutiful wife by serving her husband and a teacher. Besides, she performs her all household duties like cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, upbringing children and taking care of husband and in-laws. By doing this, she realizes her subordinate position in her husband's house. Through the character of Astha, Manju Kapur exposes the position of thousands of traditional wives who are considered as the 'subservient' to their husbands. As Astha feels:

Her subservient position struck her. She had no business kneeling, taking off his shoes, pulling off his socks, feeling ecstatic about the smell of his feet (Kapur 68).

According to the Indian culture, for a woman giving birth to a child is very important. It is a dignified position for a woman. The life of a woman can be fulfilled only when she gives birth to a child. Astha also wants to fulfill her life with the dream of a child. Therefore, she tells her husband to have a child. In the course of time, she becomes a mother of two children: Anuradha and Himanshu. Astha becomes involved with the upbringing of the children.

As the time passes, Hemant turns out to be a busy man and gives more emphasis to his business for building up their future and does not care for Astha and children. In fact, he refuses to help her in the nourishment of children. Due to changed attitude and carelessness of Hemant towards Astha, their married life is disturbed. Astha is always dissatisfied with the attitude of Hemant towards them. This disturbed relationship has snatched the happiness of the house. Though she manages everything, both inside of the house and outside of the house, she has been claimed by her husband for mismanagement, wastefulness, inefficiency and incapability. She cannot find the same care, warmth and attention from her husband as she had been acquiring in the past. Astha cannot find some way to come out of the situation and therefore she finds her own remedies to relief the feelings of insolence and loneliness in writing poems as well as involvement in sketches. Drawing and painting are the source of relief for her. By writing poems and drawing sketches, she expresses her pain, suffering, anguish and grief.

Through, the character of Astha, the writer wants to reflect the hard and struggled life of an Indian woman. In the patriarchal culture, woman does not have her own identity. She is like a caged bird without wings who does not have right to fly

independently. Indian woman has to follow the instructions of male. Before marriage she has to obey her father and after marriage she has to obey her husband. She doesn't have right to select the path of her wish. Under the particular pressure and control, woman has been suffering a lot till the present day. She is discriminated and biased in lieu of her sex. This reality of the society is reflected in Manju Kapur's novels. Here, she reveals the secondary position of a woman in spite of her quest for equality and a worthy member of the patriarchal society. Wife is always forced to follow the husband while the husband does not care for the feelings of wife. Astha's feelings and emotions are not taken into consideration by Hemant.

Another female character in this novel is Astha's mother. The novelist very tactfully portrays the character of Astha's mother. She is a typical Indian woman who strongly follows the patriarchal norms like a traditional Indian woman. She is habituated to live under the male dominance and she personally favours the male dominance in the family. She also advises Astha to worship her husband like God. That is why, when she sells one of her plots, she hands over the large amount of money to Hemant, not to Astha. When Astha asks her about it, she replies: "He is a man, he knows about money. He will invest it for you and the children." (97)

Both the characters are in sharp contrast with ideologies. One represents the typical Indian woman and the other represents the modern or new woman of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with new thoughts and ideologies. Astha raises her voice against the male dominance and fights against the family and the society to establish her identity. Like an Indian woman she does not want to turn her face from the familial responsibilities of a wife, daughter-in-law and a mother but she wants to participate in all the decisions of the family.

The novelist portrays Astha as an independent woman. But there are various occasions where she faces the problems of identity. During the family holidays the family visits Goa. In Goa, she wants to purchase a silver box but her husband refuses to purchase it. She is badly rejected by her husband that hurts her a lot. This is the condition of most of the working Indian women who earn for the family but has no independent right to spend it for themselves. Out of hatred, she claims:

I also earn. Can't I buy a box if I want, even if it is a little overpriced? You earn! snored Hemant. 'What you earn, now that is really something, yes, that will pay for this holiday. (Kapur 165)

Such suppressive and oppressive attitude of Hemant harms the dignity of Astha. It proves that due to the dominance of male in the family and the society, a man has a right to take every decision. When Hemant denies Astha to buy the silver box, her dignity is hurt and her self-respect and independence are shattered which promotes her to develop a feeling of guilt, negativity and lack of self-respect in facing the challenges of life. Sharma and Maheswari remark on Astha:

Astha understands a married woman's place in the family to be that of an unpaid servant or a slave and the thought of divorce brings social and economic death in Indian status. (Sharma and Maheswari 145)

Her inner turmoil and quest for identity leads her to “The Street Theatre Group”. Aijaz is a lecturer of History and a founder of the theatre group. Astha’s social spirit and attitude is motivated and boosted by Aijaz. Aijaz appreciates her for her intelligent and talented mind when he reads her script on the burning issues of Babri Masjid and Ram Janmabhoomi to be dramatized in the school. Though Astha’s husband knows very well that she is a good and intelligent writer and a poet, he never appreciates her while Aijaz appreciates her every time. Astha constantly compares her husband with Aijaz and feels that Aijaz is better than her husband as he always helps her, favours her in every difficult situation and appreciates her for what she does while Hemant blames her every time of mismanagement and incapability. In result, Astha involves more and more in outside works. She is deeply involved in workshop organized by the theatre group. Meanwhile, a tender feeling is developed between Astha and Aijaz. Unfortunately, Aijaz and his troupe members are dragged and murdered while performing the play on Babri Masjid and Ram Janmabhoomi. Their death motivates and leads Astha to emerge as a social activist and starts taking part in rallies for justice in spite of the resistance of her husband. She is also busy with the painting for the donation of an exhibition set up in memory of The Street Theatre Group. Due to her all these activities, it is not possible for her to pay attention to the family and house. So Hemant becomes angry and advises her to give up all these activities. But Astha refuses as she wants her own identity, self-independence and self-fulfilment. It is clarified when she utters, “I want something of my own” (148). Like Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One’s Own*, she wants to have her own. Her words “I need more space” (156) are important to understand the character of Astha. She even asks for the room which belongs to Sangeeta, his sister but Hemant becomes angry and refuses to fulfil her demand.

Astha desires a space of her own. She also wants to enjoy her life not only within the house but outside the house. So, she decides to go to the meeting of the Sampradayakta Mukti Manch to protest and condemn the decisions of building up the temple of Lord Rama at the place of Masjid outside Rashtrapati Bhavan. But Hemant and her in-laws refuse it. Ignoring them, Astha decides to go to Ayodhya as the Manch insists her to deliver a speech on the public meeting. Now she has made up her mind to fight against old taboos of the patriarchal society. She visits Ayodhya where she meets Pepeeelika, the wife of Aijaz. They visit various places and temples altogether. They come close and understand each other very well. They share common pain and suffering and at last establish new relationship i.e. lesbian relationship. As Ashok Kumar narrates:

Astha likes to have a break from dependence on others and proceeds on the path of full human status that poses in threat of Hemant and his male superiority. Although, she finds herself trapped between the pressure of the modern developing society and shackles of ancient biases she set out on her quest for a more meaningful life in her lesbian relationship. (Kumar 134)

Astha finds satisfaction in the arms of Pipee. Unlike her husband, Pipeelika seems to be more understanding, caring and loving towards her. Astha refuses being close with Hemant when she finds a condom from his bag and instead she shows more

interest in Pipee. Her association with Pipeelika gives a new turn to her quest for identity. There is a clash between the roles of a wife, mother, daughter-in-law and that of a lover. But she feels that being a wife and a mother, she cannot deny her responsibilities of the family. Astha decides to leave her home, husband and children for Pipee but Pipee receives a letter from her brother regarding Ph.D. registration in an American University. Pipee leaves her and Astha returns her own conventional married life. Meanwhile Hemant also develops a chest pain due to the burden of his work and Astha's attention is diverted towards him. Like an ideal Indian wife, she takes proper care of Hemant's health, diet and exercise. Though Astha has sought lesbian relationship to take revenge upon the patriarchal society, its tradition and especially upon her husband, emotionally she cannot get free from her marital home. Even when she is busy with Pipeelika, she is always worried about her children.

The end of the novel is very important. It shows that an Indian woman fails to break the bondage of the family. In her quest for identity and full independence in life, Astha comes across various stages through various relationships. She also enters the socially forbidden relationship: lesbian relationship. Astha finds some kind of fulfillment outside the home by establishing lesbian relationship with Pipeelika. She has everything – husband, children, familial status and comfortable surroundings. But she feels lacking in her life what she wants to fulfill. This time Astha's decision to return to her family and not to abandon it is not forced upon her, it is her own decision which she as a mature woman chooses. She comes back to the traditional roots but with her own decisions. Thus, Astha represents the image of a New Woman who longs to have her own space in the orthodox patriarchal culture. She fights for freedom and raises her voice against the male dominated society. She has tried to be her best to break the silence of suffering, tried to move out of the caged existence and asserted the individual self. She has tried to be herself and yet she does not break up the family ties.

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## **A Study of Alienation in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors***

–*Vinay Kumar Dubey\**  
*B.N. Chaudhary\*\**

### **Abstract**

In Greek there are two words for alienation - 'anomie' and 'anomia'. While 'anomia' stands for self-alienation, 'anomie' refers to alienation from society. In fact, self-alienation and alienation from society are the two basic forms of alienation. If a person's spontaneous individual self has been stunted or stifled that person is said to be in a condition of alienation from himself or herself. The female characters of Shashi Deshpande suffer from both anomie and anomia. The reason in both the cases is patriarchal codes governing the society. Since ages they have deprived women of the right to live according to their own will. Deshpande's treatment of alienation in her women characters has a different dimension. Her protagonists, unlike the protagonists of Anita Desai, neither commit suicide nor go into self-exile because of an oppressive sense of alienation.

**Keywords:** Anomie, alienation, patriarchal, consciousness, protagonists.

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The marginalization of women in a patriarchal society has resulted in their alienation. Encyclopaedia Britannica defines 'alienation' as "A term used with various meanings in philosophy, theology, psychology and the social sciences, usually with emphasis on personal powerlessness, meaninglessness, cultural estrangement, social isolation or self-estrangement." Alienation implies an individual's feeling or state of dissociation from self, from others and from the world at large. In Greek there are two words for alienation - 'anomic' and 'anomia'. While 'anomia' stands for self-alienation, 'anomie' refers to alienation from society. In fact, self-alienation and alienation from society are the two basic forms of alienation. If a person's spontaneous individual self has been stunted or stifled that person is said to be in a condition of alienation from himself or

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herself. An alienated person is a stranger to himself as his fellow man is stranger to him. Thus alienation from self leads to alienation from society.

The female characters of Shashi Deshpande suffer from both anomie and anomia. The reason in both the cases is patriarchal codes governing the society. Since ages they have deprived women of the right to live according to their own will. Women have been forced to live a dependent life under the control of men. Even education, though it has brought some changes in their lives, has not changed it fundamentally. Whether they are earning women or housewives, they are not leading a life of their own choice. This has alienated them from themselves. With changing times they have also not remained, at least in the case of the educated urban women, the mere puppets in the hands of their men. This has alienated them from society. This is the case with the protagonists of Shashi Deshpande. Highly sensitive, intelligent and educated protagonists of Deshpande represent modern Indian women. They suffer from alienation because if they listen to the voice of their heart and mind they are called undutiful daughter, sister and wife and find themselves alienated from society and other members of their family, and if they conform to the male concept of the traditional woman, they become alienated from themselves. Therefore, Deshpande's heroines try to adopt a middle path where they can perform their domestic or social duties without compromising much with their individual desires and values. Thus Deshpande's treatment of alienation in her women characters has a different dimension. Her protagonists, unlike the protagonists of Anita Desai, neither commit suicide nor go into self-exile because of an oppressive sense of alienation.

Alienation can be an essential condition for man's awareness of himself as an individual. It gives him an opportunity to address to such questions as to who he is in essence and what he should do or not do in the broader sense of the term. This is true in the context of the 'heroines of Shashi Deshpande. Put under certain circumstances they are set on the path of self-discovery. The process begins with their sense of alienation both from themselves and those around them. They all try to know who they are besides a secondary sex. Deshpande's women of the younger generation refuse to tread the beaten path of staying at home, looking after the children and their husband and meekly accepting whatever is given to them. They prefer to make their own decisions. They are not always happy about it and have to make compromises but ultimately they reach a better understanding of themselves and their lives. This is what makes them so individual.

With the change in the social and cultural milieu of India in the post- Independence period, Indian urban women with education find themselves at crossroads. Women have adopted professional careers but they are not free from the roles assigned traditionally to them by the patriarchal society. This has created a divided mentality in them. Shashi Deshpande's female protagonists also face this crisis and undergo a sustained period of self-doubt and mental agony but they finally succeed in overcoming them and gaining a sort of mental equilibrium. They neither break completely free from the traditional fold nor do they lose their individuality. Charu Chandra agrees with Deshpande's concept of feminism where achievement of individual identity and

female autonomy is not the only goal but is balanced against life in the family and career:

After having accorded that autonomy to her, she should accept the basic human values like motherhood and responsibility of the family, thereby of society, at least on her own terms. There is need to harmonise the man-woman relationship as equal partners. Victory is there, not in the subjugation and destruction of the male, rather in bringing him to see the indispensability of each other's space. (86)

All the protagonists of Shashi Deshpande suffer from alienation. This begins with her very first novel, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. Sarita or Saru nourishes a sense of alienation since her childhood as she became a victim of gender bias after the birth of her brother, Dhruva. Like the typical Indian parents, her parents had also wanted a male child. So her birth had disappointed them and when a male child was born to them, they were ecstatic over it. She is therefore unwanted at birth and neglected during childhood and adolescence. Dhruva is showered with special affection and pampering because he is a male child who will propagate family lineage. In contrast, Saru is neglected and ignored, perhaps because she is viewed, as daughters usually were, as a burden who is to be married off at the expense of family's fortunes. She is not paid much attention even on her birthdays. In contrast, Dhruva's birthdays are celebrated with great enthusiasm, fanfare and religious rituals. This creates a sense of jealousy in her for her brother. When her father takes Dhruva in his lap and talks to him, she desperately wants to have her father's affection and attention:

I must show Baba something, anything to take his attention away from Dhruva sitting on his lap. I must make him listen to me not Dhruva. I must make him ignore Dhruva. (32)

Dhruva's death by drowning proved a turning point in her life. She could never get over the hysterical words of her mother, "You killed him, why didn't you die? Why are you alive, when he's dead?" (191) These words load Saru with a sense of guilt and reduce her sense of self-worth. This leads to self-criticism and terminates her childhood prematurely. For long she pondered over these screeching words "that followed for days, months, years all her life." (191) She was extremely hurt and felt insecure and tried to devise ways to end her sense of alienation. Saru is a victim of cultural conditioning where a male child is favoured. A girl has to strive hard to make her presence felt. Growing in an atmosphere of hatred, hostility and lovelessness, Saru nurtures a seed of rebellion within herself. She considers her mother to be her greatest enemy. More than her father, it is her mother who tries to make her conform to the traditional concept of woman in the Indian society. When Saru declares her intention to study medicine, her mother reminds her father:

You don't belong to that class. And don't forget, medicine or no medicine, doctor or no doctor, you still have to get her married, spend money on her wedding ... Let her go for a B.Sc .... You can get her married in two years and our responsibility will be over. (130)

This further alienates Saru from her mother. Her father, however, comes to her support and sends her to Bombay to study medicine. On other issues also Saru has differences with her mother. Her mother belongs to that generation of Indian women for whom the choices were very limited and their whole life was centred on marriage - first to acquire the eligibility to get married and then conform to the concept of 'an ideal housewife to continue successfully in the household and the society. Women from this point of view were supposed to look after their beauty and make themselves attractive. The conversation between Saru and her mother shows this:

'Don't go out in the sun, you'll get darker'  
'Who cares?'  
'We have to care if you don't. We have to get you married.'  
'I don't want to get married'  
'Will you live with us all your life?'  
'Why not?'  
'You can't.'  
And Dhruva?'  
'He is different. He is a boy.' (45)

The sense that they don't belong to the family where they are born creates a sense of alienation in girls since their childhood. Saru's mother repeatedly tells her 'You are growing up' and 'You are a woman now' (62) and she admonishes her and restricts her movement. These words remind Saru constantly that she is not a boy and that discriminates her from her brother. Sex discrimination begins at home and also brings out forcefully the attitude of a traditional woman towards her daughter. These words turn a mother into a symbolic figure carrying within herself the patriarchal culture. She is the instrument through which the patriarchal culture is kept alive. It becomes the duty of the mother to remind the girl child again and again that her parents' home is not her home. Saru resents all this, all the more so because Dhruva as a male child is supposed to belong to the family. Though their birthdays were celebrated almost in the same way, but the difference marked the difference in the attitude towards both the child:

There was always a Puja on Dhruva's birthday. A festive lunch in the afternoon and an aarati in the evening, during which Dhruva, as an infant, sat solemnly on Baba's lap, and as a child, by his side ... while I helped my mother to do the aarti. My birthdays were almost the same ... a festive lunch, with whatever I asked for ... an aarti in the evening, but there was no Puja. (168-69)

Dhruva was also taken to the studio for a photograph; but Saru was not. This difference in attitude obviously hurt little Saru so deeply that she could not forget them all her life. She is filled with the grief of not being wanted. In reaction she turns into a rebel. For example when she wants to attend the marriage of her friend's sister, her mother refuses to let her go. Saru begins to fight and has ultimately her way. Though she does not enjoy the function as much as she had imagined, she has a feeling of triumph for having succeeded in her demand.

The worst incident in Saru's life takes place when her brother, Dhruva gets drowned in a pond. She had a love-hate relationship with her brother which is not uncommon among children. Once when she wanted to escape to a lonely place she had found by chance, Dhruva insists upon accompanying her. Their father is away in the bank where he serves and their mother is asleep. So they come out of the house stealthily. On their way Saru keeps scolding Dhruva and keeps instructing him not to do this or that. Dhruva, being a pampered child, is not so obedient. Saru starts sulking and ignoring him. When they come to the pond, which is deceptive as the watery part is concealed at places, she asks him not to go ahead, Dhruva, however, does not heed to her and goes forward. Saru feigns indifference and does not listen to him when he cries for help. Dhruva is ultimately drowned and a bewildered Saru fails to realize what exactly happened. She is blamed for her brother's death. In anger, her mother accuses her of having killed him. She lashes out at her, "Why didn't you die? Why are you alive and he dead? (34) These words haunt Saru throughout her life and alienate her both from herself and her family.

Saru's love marriage with Manohar or Manu is also an act of rebellion. Her parents, particularly her mother, oppose this marriage as Manu is not a Brahmin but a low caste person. She also did not have what the middle class considers to be a respectable job. Her mother says, "You won't be happy with him. I know you won't. A man of a different caste, different community ... what will you two have in common?" (98) Saru does not listen to her. Her marriage alienates her finally from her family.

In the beginning, Saru's marriage with Manohar makes her very happy. She bears all physical inconveniences without remorse as her love for him makes her forget everything. Her alienation with herself seems to have come to an end. But this happiness does not last for very long. Manohar does not prove to be what he promised earlier. He at last becomes a lecturer in a private college. Things go on well for quite some time. She becomes the mother of two children, a daughter and a son. But things begin to change when Saru acquires professional success. She becomes the object of admiring attention of her neighbours who come to her regularly for advice and help. She feels exhilarated with a dignity and importance that her status as a doctor seems to have given her. But she soon realizes that success for a woman in the patriarchal Indian society can cause subversion of roles in the family and destroy happiness. The social acceptance and recognition she gains as a doctor and demands on her time alienates her from her husband. As a typical male, Manu cannot tolerate his wife's higher stature in society:

When we walked out of the room, there were nods and smiles, murmured greeting and *namastes*. But they were all for me, only for me. There was nothing for him. He was almost totally ignored . . . and so the esteem with which I was surrounded made me inches taller. But perhaps the same thing that made me inches taller made me inches shorter. He had been the young man and I his bride. But now I was the lady doctor and he was my husband. (36-37)

Manohar does not exhibit any resentment outwardly. Nonetheless, the responses of the people and the talks he has to listen to often do affect him mentally. This results in a dichotomy in his personality. In the day he is a normal husband, but at night he suddenly turns into a sadist whose sexual behaviour amounts almost to rape. The first time that it happens, it is nightmarish for Saru:

The beginning was abrupt. There had been no preparation for it. There were no preliminaries either. At first it was a nightmare of hands. Questing hands that left a trail of pain. Hurting hands that brought me out of a cocoon of a blessed unreality ... I'm dreaming this - is not -real ... into the savage reality of a monstrous onslaught. And then, the nightmare was compounded of lips and teeth as well. . . . The dream, the nightmare, whatever it was, continued. Changing now, like some protean monster, into the horror of rape ... It was more as if my mind had deserted my shamefully bruised body, disowning it, making it insensate. And then the two came together. I knew where I was and what had happened. Panic and sensation came back simultaneously. I turned my head slightly, fearfully, and saw him. No more a stranger, but my husband. (11-12)

This pattern is repeated night after night. Saru feels entrapped. She thinks of discussing it with her husband, but his behaviour in the morning is so normal that she is at a loss what to say. This alienates her from her husband: "And each time it happens and I don't speak, I put another brick on the wall of silence between us. May be one day I will be walled alive within it and die a slow, painful death." (96) Saru hears from a patient that her mother is no more. So she decides to go to her father. She goes there apparently to see her father but in fact she is running away from her marriage which has become painful for her.

There after a few days she opens her mind to her father. For the first time she is able to establish a relationship and communication with her father in the absence of her mother. Her father advises her to get rid of her past and asks her to talk to her husband as the solution of her present crisis. Saru realizes that her alienation has been accepted and overcome by herself: "All right, so I am alone. But so is everyone else. Human beings ... they're going to fail you. But because there is just us, because there is no one else, we have to go on trying. If we can't believe in ourselves, we are sunk." (220) It is with this realization that Saru's alienation ends.

Thus alienation is a recurring feature in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. Her characters, mainly the leading female characters suffer from alienation. For women the most prominent reason is the patriarchal system of society. Discrimination against the girl child by parents, mainly by mother, makes them alienated from the family. Arranged marriage brings upon a woman certain stereotyped roles in each of which she is supposed to sacrifice her own self for somebody else, most of all for her husband. Even if she marries for love very soon her lover turns into a conventional male who cannot bear his wife walking ahead of him. All this alienates the woman from herself. Shashi Deshpande has very beautifully brought this tragedy of an Indian

woman in her novels. But her female protagonists, all of them educated middle class women with a strong personality do not surrender before the tragic odds in their lives. They overcome their alienation and finally redefine their selves.

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## **Love as Divine Power and Spiritual Gratification: An Analytical Study**

*–Neelam Agrawal\**

### **Abstract**

This research paper is based on the study of the work of William Shakespeare (1564-1616), John Donne (1572-1631), Michael Drayton (15163-1631), and Kamala Das (1934-2009). Shakespeare, John Donne, and Michael Drayton were contemporary poets. All the four poets mentioned herein have presented very strong views about love in their literary works. Analysis of their literary works establishes love as divine power and source of spiritual gratification. This research paper focuses on various aspects of love-its strength, its purity, its need, and above all its genuineness.

Love is an inevitable emotion common to all living beings. It is the path a human being can take to reach out to another and to connect to nature, and to the universe. Love is like a waterfall which flows naturally and unhindered. Simultaneously love flows spontaneously from our heart. Thus we should let it flow uninterrupted.

Shakespeare's famous poem 'True Love' which ranks among the finest products of the lyrical genius of Shakespeare, Donne's one of the masterpieces 'Present in Absence' which is a protest in favour of absence (absence of beloved), and Drayton's 'Since There is no Help' which is a realization of power of love, are focused herein. Kamala Das is the queen of love poems. Love is the soul of her poems; thus her various poems are discussed herein to present her viewpoint about love in her life.

**Keywords:** True love, divine, strength, undying, obstacles, heart, sacrifice, time, place, unchanged.

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### **William Shakespeare**

Shakespeare was an English poet, playwright, and actor, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon". His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright. Shakespeare produced most of his known work between 1589 and 1613. His early plays were mainly comedies and histories and these works have been regarded

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as some of the best works produced in these genres. He wrote mainly tragedies until about 1608, including *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, which are considered some of the finest works in the English language. In his last phase, he wrote tragicomedies, also known as romances, and collaborated with other playwrights.

Shakespeare has a firm conviction that true love is undying, and it remains unchanged in all circumstances, places and times. It overcomes all obstacles of class, colour, caste, status, and religion. It remains unaffected of all worldly problems. His famous poem 'True Love' is regarded as a perfect sonnet. It is one of the greatest sonnets in English poetry. This poem exposes the divine quality of true love. In this poem the poet writes:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove.  
(“True Love”, Lines 1-4)

The poet here tells his friend that no hurdles stand in the way of the spiritual union of true lovers. Their love remains unchanged in all circumstances, places and times. Love dwells in hearts. It is an internal feeling which is not affected by external forces. If love changes in the face of adverse weather; if it alters at anybody's instigation, and if it fluctuates with the passage of time, it is not true love at all. True lovers have divine courage to face all impediments in the way of love. In spite of great sufferings, they never surrender before worldly powers. They don't care even for life and sacrifice it for the sake of their true love. Not only this, he further elaborates:

O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
(“True Love”, Lines 5-8)

The poet here illustrates with the help of metaphors how true love is unchanging, undying, and sacred. He compares it with a light-house on the sea-shore, which shines constantly in the midst of violent storms. He further compares it with the Pole-star which always rises in the North, remains in the constant position, and guides the ships and sailors misled in the uncharted sea in the thick darkness of the night. Just as the height of the Pole-star from the earth can be measured but its influence on mankind cannot be calculated, similarly the value and impact of love cannot be described in words. Selfless love leads a person from darkness to light, from falsehood to truth, and from death to immortality. To establish his concept of immortality of love he writes:

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
(“True Love”, Lines 9-12)

The poet depicts with the help of personifications and Greek mythological allusions the holy, unchanging and undying nature of true love. True love is not the subject of 'Time' as it is far beyond the reach of 'Time'. Physical charms, being skin-deep are within the range of 'Time' and also the laughing stock of 'Time'. The ravages of 'Time' leave their mark on rosy lips and cheeks but they cannot touch even the circumstances of selfless love. Physical love fades away with the passage of time but true love continues unaffected. The true minds united in love remain united till the Day of judgement. His conviction about the nature of true love is so firm that he speaks with conviction that nobody can disprove his views about true love. He writes:

If this be error and upon me proved,  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.  
(“True Love”, Lines 13-14)

He emphatically claims that if all that he has said about the nature of true love is incorrect, and if it is proved against him that he has not lived upto the definition of selfless love, he would gladly accept that he is not a poet at all, and none has ever loved truly in this world.

Ultimately Shakespeare says that true love is everlasting. He speaks with conviction that nobody can disprove his views about true love. As none can say that Shakespeare did not write this poem, nobody can say that true love is transient.

## **John Donne**

John Donne is considered the pre-eminent representative of the metaphysical poets. His works are noted for their strong, sensual style and include sonnets, love poems, religious poems, Latin translations, epigrams, elegies, songs, satires and sermons. His poetry is noted for its vibrancy of language and inventiveness of metaphor, especially compared to that of his contemporaries. Donne's style is characterized by abrupt openings and various paradoxes, ironies and dislocations. He is particularly famous for his mastery of metaphysical conceits.

He has expressed his conviction about true love in one of his greatest amorous poems 'Present in Absence'. This poem is a protest made in favour of 'absence'. John Donne's firm belief about true love is like that of Shakespeare. He says that time and absence cannot destroy true love. The true love for the beloved is reinforced in her absence. The strength, distance and length of physical absence of the beloved cannot change his love for her because their love is beyond time, place and death. He writes in the poem:

Absence, hear thou my protestation  
Against thy strength,  
Distance, and length;  
Do what thou canst for alteration:  
For hearts of truest mettle  
Absence doth join, and Time doth settle.  
(“Present in Absence”, Lines 1-6)

Here, in these lines, the lover feels separated from his beloved due to her physical absence caused by death. But he firmly believes that the strength, distance and length of her physical absence cannot change their love because it is true and strong and above time, place and death. Her physical absence rather intensifies their love, and time has no effect on it. The lover makes a protest against absence which has no power to change his love for his beloved. Asserting how her physical absence rather intensifies their love, the poet further writes:

Who loves a mistress of such quality,  
 His mind hath found  
 Affection's ground  
 Beyond time, place, and all mortality.  
 To hearts that cannot vary  
 Absence is present, Time doth tarry.

(“Present In Absence”, Lines 7-12)

These lines expose Donne's conviction that a person who loves his beloved from the depth of his heart, he feels her presence in spite of her absence. For true lovers, time stops and death becomes powerless. Since love sprouts and blossoms in hearts, and the hearts of true lovers never change, thus their love, in fact, is metaphysical; it is timeless and deathless / immortal. How the lover feels presence of his beloved in her absence, and decodes her secret gesture can best be seen in the following lines:

My senses want their outward motion  
 .....  
 Redoubled by her secret notion:  
 Like rich men that take pleasure  
 In hiding more than handling treasure.

(“Present In Absence”, Lines 13-18)

Here the poet wants to express his heart-felt emotions about his departed beloved through his outward senses but his thinking power and the secret gesture of his beloved living in the high heaven do not allow him to do so. The urge to conceal his emotions becomes stronger when he thinks of the secret gesture of his beloved. Just as the rich take more pleasure in hiding their wealth than in showing it, likewise the secret gesture of his beloved touches him so deeply that he takes more delight in concealing his heart-felt emotions than in revealing them in public. Though his beloved is absent (dead) but their love is alive yet and will always be that's why he is able to see a distinct vision of hers. This strength of true love, he claims in the following lines:

By absence this good means I gain,  
 That I can catch her,  
 Where none can watch her,  
 In some close corner of my brain:  
 There I embrace and kiss her;  
 And so enjoy her and none miss her.

(“Present In Absence”, Lines 19-24)

Further at the end of the poem the poet firmly speaks that absence of his beloved has not affected their love at all. Instead the physical absence and separation of his beloved has proved good for her lover because he can see her presence in his mind's eye any time. She exists there where nobody except him can reach, watch, catch her, embrace and kiss her. His beloved lives, after her death, in some close corner of his brain where nobody except him can enter. Thus he enjoys her presence in the bottom of his heart in spite of her physical absence and separation. Hence celebrating the immortality of metaphysical love, he establishes the truth that true love is beyond place, time and death.

## **Michael Drayton**

In 1591 Drayton produced his first book 'The Harmony of the Church', a volume of spiritual poems dedicated to Lady Devereux. It is notable for a version of the Song of Solomon, executed with considerable richness of expression. He made his real beginning with 'Idea, The Shepherd's Garland' in 1593. In 1594 he published his first sonnet under the title of 'Idea's Mirror'. In 1596 he turned to historical poetry and wrote 'The Baron's War'. After the great sonneteers like Sidney, Spenser and Shakespeare, it is Michael Drayton who bears reading best. His collection 'Idea' opposed from 1594 to 1619. Its every edition was augmented so much so that it became a sort of encyclopaedia in which all the familiar themes recurred. His poem 'Since There's No Help' is his one of the best sonnets ever written and it appears in the same collection of sonnets 'Idea'. This sonnet is addressed to a woman with whom the lover does not have good relations. Their relations are so bad that they want to part their ways from each other. The poet writes in 'Since There's No Help':

SINCE there's no help, come let us kiss and part;  
Nay, I have done, you get no more of me,  
And I am glad, yea glad with all my heart  
That thus so cleanly I myself can free; (Lines 1-4)

The lover says that since there is no other option except to part from each other, they should kiss each other and part for ever. The lover has already made up his mind to do so. He tells his beloved that she would not be able to enjoy his company from that day. He is glad from the bottom of his heart that he could get rid of her so easily and cleanly.

Drayton's philosophy of love is very practical, it is not platonic. The young lovers often quarrel and try to get rid of each other and live like strangers in future. They come to realize the power of love when they get old and have no company. The lover who is on his death bed realizes that one breath of love from his beloved could recover him from death to life. He writes:

Now at the last gasp of Love's latest breath,  
When, his pulse failing, Passion speechless lies,  
When Faith is kneeling by his bed of death,  
And Innocence is closing up his eyes,  
Now if thou would'st, when all have given him over,  
From death to life thou might'st him yet recover.

(“Since There's No Help” Lines 9-14)

Here the poet expresses his strong belief that true love has the power to recover a dying lover. The lover who is separated from his beloved is on his death bed. He is speechless and his pulse is failing. His faith and innocence are about to leave him forever. Nobody is with him. He is all alone and is about to leave his world for ever. If there is anything in this world, that can recover him from death, it the love of his beloved for him. One breath of her love could give him life.

### **Kamala Das**

Kamala Das, who was also known by her one time pen name Madhavi kutty, was one of the most distinctive and original of Indian poets writing in English. She was also a leading Malayalam author from Kerala (India). The credit of her popularity in Kerala goes mainly to her short stories and autobiography. Most of her poems deal with the theme of unfulfilled love and yearning for true love. Through her poetry, Das reveals her concern for woman and search for genuine love. Love is the central theme of her poetry. Her greatness as a love poet arises from the fact that her love poetry comes out of her own personal experience. Though Das's concept of love and her own experience about it is different from that of Shakespeare, John Donne and Michael Drayton but like them she too believes in the strength of love that's why throughout her life she longed for love. Her yearning for love can best be seen in her poem 'Love' (*Summer in Calcutta*). She writes:

Until I found you,  
I wrote verse, drew pictures,  
And, went out with friends  
For walks...  
Now that I love you,  
Curled like an old mongrel  
My life lies, content,  
In you.... (Lines 1-8)

Here in these lines the poet reveals her feelings that before she met her lover, her life was totally different. She was engaged in activities like writing verses, drawing pictures and whiled away the time in worthless activities. Her life changed after she met her lover. Now her focus shifted from her past to present. She attempted to get contentment in her man's love. Das's earnest desire to attain love can best be seen in her honest attempt, 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, a human  
Shape to envelope its wealth.

(“A Phantom Lotus”, Lines 1-6)

The poet is so desperate to get genuine love that she is ready to shower all her love and looks out for a suitable container that can hold her uncontrolled emotions. She wants

to love her man from the bottom of her heart and wants to be loved with the same depth. She just longs for an unconditional and ideal love, nothing else.

The poet seeks love so intensely that life for her is meaningless without love. She says that she would prefer death to life if she can't have love in her life. She writes:

O sea, i am fed up  
I want to be simple  
I want to be loved  
And  
If love is not to be had,  
I want to be dead, just dead.  
(“The Suicide”, Lines 50-55)

Let's have a look at her another poem ‘Morning at Apollo Pier’ and see her plea for love:

But, hold me, hold me once again,  
Kiss the words to death in my mouth, plunder  
Memories. I hide my defeat in your  
Wearing blood, and all my fears and shame.  
Your flawed beauty is my only refuge  
O love me, love, love me till I die. (Lines 23-28)

Her yearning for love is so intense that she clings to her lover and pleads him to hold her once again. She seeks her ultimate place in her lover where she wishes to take refuge. She wishes to submerge all her “defeat”, “fear”, “shame” and wishes to be loved till her death.

In her poem ‘The Gulmohur’ the poet celebrates her emotion of love and its strong impact on her. She compares her present condition with that of the past and explains how her life has changed after she met her lover:

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.....(Lines 1-3)

The poet here says that before she met her lover, her hands were as cold as dead body. She felt uneasy with her hands but after she met her lover, the love rejuvenated her life. In her man's love she felt the warmth of pleasant summer. All her feelings of uneasiness and her corpse-like feeling disappeared with the warm and loving touch of her lover.

This analytical study of the work of foreign as well as Indian writers, finally establishes the fact that love has divine power, its strength is infinite and it has the power to provide spiritual gratification to lovers. True love continues till the day of judgement. It is timeless and deathless. True love has the power to save a man (lover) from death. Lovers, if can't have love in their life, prefer death to life without love.

## **Conclusion**

The most beautiful flower that can blossom on this earth is that of love. Just as a beautiful flower blossoms naturally, even from a small plant, likewise love sprouts in

our hearts, blossoms and expands. We should just allow this flowering from within. Is there anything more profound than the strength and beauty of two hearts that love each other? Love has the cool freshness of the full moon and brilliance of the sun's rays. Just as cool and fresh breeze, and brilliance the sun's rays will not enter into our room unless we keep our doors/windows open, the same way this flower of love will not blossom unless we permit this flowering from within. Love is not something to be imagined or faked, but lived. It is life itself. It is a state of being active. If we just stand by a clear river and look, will our thirst be quenched? Certainly not; to quench our thirst, we must bend down and drink water. All we have to do to fill ourselves with the crystalline waters of love is to surrender. Though many relationships suffered, are suffering, and will suffer but still we have not lost love forever, because if love dies, universe will die. The eternal ember of love is in everyone. We simply need to blow on it and it will be fanned into flames. We all are observing that many species of animals, birds, and plants have become extinct or are on the verge of extinct. Are we going to allow love to become extinct as well? To prevent extinction of love, we must return to respecting, worshipping and having faith in a divine power. That power is not outside, it is inside, and to explore it we need to adjust our perspective. And it can be done only when we expand our vision and make it sharper.

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## Ecological Harmony in William Wordsworth's Selected Poems

–Raj Kumar Swami\*

### Abstract

William Wordsworth (1770-1850), who is variously called the 'harbinger of Nature', the 'high priest of Nature' and the 'worshipper of Nature', was a major English Romantic poet. He is considered as a forerunner of English Romanticism. He was England's poet laureate from 1843 till his death in 1850. And historically speaking, Wordsworth lived in the age of Britain's Industrial Revolution, which apparently left a great influence on him. He was greatly disappointed with the adverse impacts of industrialization on Nature and man. So he composed a substantial number of poems to promote equality and harmony between Nature and human beings. His poems prove his ecological and environmental concerns. Therefore, this paper is an effort to analyze Wordsworth's selected poems like "Lines Written in Early Spring" (1798), "The Tables Turned" (1798), "The World is Too Much With Us" (1807) and "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (1807) in the light of ecological study in order to shed light on relationship between Nature and man.

**Keywords:** Romanticism, Industrial Revolution, equality, harmony, ecology, Nature, man.

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William Wordsworth is a representative of romantic poets. His love for Nature is easily noticed in his poetry. His poems deeply explore the interconnectedness of Nature and man. The ideas of ecological harmony and holistic unity between human being and Nature are pervasive in his poetry. He condemns the Industrial Revolution and appreciates Nature, and by doing this, he apparently encourages ecological equality and environmental protection. Wordsworth's fame primarily lies in the general notion that he has been considered as England's greatest Nature poet who viewed Nature superior to man whose existence depends upon Nature. In his influential book, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Imagination*, Bate (1991, p. 57) proclaims that Romantics were "the first ecologists" due to their challenging and countering "the ideology of capital" and originating a "holistic vision" of Nature. In his *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology*, McKusick (2000, p. 19) contends that "English Romantics

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were the first full-fledged eco-critical writers in the Western literary tradition” in that they shared a holistic view of Nature and called the arrival of an amicable relationship between man and Nature. Wordsworth’s emphasis on man’s dependence on Nature for existence is clearly shown in his poems.

Wordsworth is regarded as a famous “Poet of Nature” as he was to the Victorians, and this key point proves his ecological and environmental concerns in his poetry. Here, it would be helpful to begin with Bate (1991, p. 40) as a true follower of Wordsworth, who in his *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Imagination* maintains, “The ‘Romantic Ecology’ reverences the green earth because it recognizes that neither physically nor psychologically can we live without green things”. As an eco-critic, Bate does not intend to draw a line between the “material world” and natural one. The new mentality that Romantic poets spoke of is what Bate explains as, “a respect for the earth and scepticism as to the orthodoxy that economic growth and material production are the be-all and end-all of human society” (9). Wordsworth’s sonnet, “The World is Too Much With Us”, written in 1802 and published in 1807, can be a good justification for Bate’s argument wherein the poet says:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon! (Lines 1-4)

Wordsworth is disappointed with the modern man’s passive treatment of Nature and shows that man is banished from the natural elements of Nature, e.g., the poet says:

This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;  
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;  
It moves us not... (Lines 5-9)

This poem is a philosophical sonnet and is full of poetic beauty. In it, the poet condemns the growing materialistic and mercenary age when men have become money-minded and are totally unaware of true happiness which is found only by loving Nature. The poet says that we are much engrossed in worldly affairs, and constantly think about the world. We are devastating all our energies in earning and spending money. But we have little time to appreciate beauty of Nature which provides us true and everlasting peace and happiness. Nature gives us perfect education to develop our mind and health. But “we have given our hearts away” to worldly wealth or material gains.

A remarkable example of the emphasis on the interdependence of man and Nature is Wordsworth’s lovable poem, “Lines Written in Early Spring” (1798), wherein Wordsworth places the speaker in the middle of Nature and shows that Nature is right and loyal to man, and it is man who should be responsible for the broken relationship between him and Nature. For instance, the poet says:

I heard a thousand blended notes,  
While in a grove I sate reclined,  
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts  
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link  
The human soul that through me ran;  
And much it grieved my heart to think  
What man has made of man? (Lines 1-8)

...

If this belief from heaven be sent,  
If such be Nature's holy plan,  
Have I not reason to lament  
What man has made of man? (Lines 21-24)

As the main purpose of this paper is to shed light on the ecological awareness of many readers of Wordsworth's poetry, his poem "The Tables Turned" (1798) is a great example to prove the fact that Wordsworth strongly believes in the great power of Nature that educates human mind and leads it to the perfect direction. In this poem, the poet rejects all human knowledge, i.e. acquired by reading books. The poet says:

Up! up! my friend, and quit your books;  
Or surely you'll grow double:  
Up! up! my friend, and clear your looks;  
Why all this toil and trouble? (Lines 1-4)

...

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:  
Come, and hear the woodland linnet,  
How sweet his music! on my life,  
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!  
He, too, is no mean preacher:  
Come forth into the light of things,  
Let Nature be your teacher. (Lines 9-16)

Further, Wordsworth goes on saying that Nature is the ultimate source of perfect health, wealth, and cheerfulness. He writes:

One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;  
Our meddling intellect  
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things-  
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;  
 Close up those barren leaves,  
 Come forth, and bring with you a heart  
 That watches and receives. (Lines 21-32)

Here, Wordsworth honours our imagination, but he criticizes “Our meddling intellect” that brings destruction to the world. The poet wants the reader to come out with such a heart “That watches and receives”.

Another great example of interconnectedness of man and Nature is Wordsworth’s remarkable and lovable poem, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” (1807). It is a great Nature poem wherein Wordsworth appears as a devotee of Nature. He strongly believes that Nature is a store house of infinite joy and delight:

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
 That floats on high o’er vales and hills,  
 When all at once I saw a crowd,  
 A host, of golden daffodils;  
 Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
 Fluttering and dancing in the breeze. (Lines 1-6)

...  
 The waves beside them danced; but they  
 Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:  
 A poet could not but be gay,  
 In such a jocund company:  
 I gazed-and gazed-but little thought  
 What wealth the show to me had brought: (Lines 13-18)

In this poem, the poet describes “a host, of golden daffodils” that he saw one spring day when he was walking in the English countryside. The daffodils were under the trees and next to the lake. The daffodils were “tossing their heads” from side to side, appearing to dance in the breeze. The memory of the daffodils brings the poet great pleasure, and he feels that his own heart is dancing along with the daffodils:

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
 In vacant or in pensive mood,  
 They flash upon that inward eye  
 Which is the bliss of solitude;  
 And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
 And dances with the daffodils. (Lines 19-24)

Here, it is the breath which, in the climax of recollection, fills the poet’s heart with pleasure and sets it to dancing with the “golden daffodils.” For Geoffrey Durrant, in *William Wordsworth* (1969), the poem “is only superficially about the daffodils.” Instead, it is “an account of the experience of poetic creation.” Durrant concludes his analysis by pointing out the following:

Wordsworth in this poem is describing an experience of which all are capable, but which is increasingly neglected as men become preoccupied with business

and profession. It is the imagination that enables man to enter into and give life and significance to the world. (William Wordsworth, 1969, pp. 20, 25)

To conclude, Wordsworth's "ecological" poems provide the modern man, who lives in a world i.e. haunted by materialism and technology, with a new lens through which he can see the inseparable relation and harmony between Nature and man in a vast ecosystem of the world.

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## **Poetic Sensibility of Jaydeep Sarangi: A Study of *The Wall and Other Poems***

–Sandeep Kumar Sheoran\*

### **Abstract**

Indo-Anglian poetry is an established genre with a wide range of practitioners and themes. There are poets who catch readers by their hand and take them on an intellectual flight which is something like an addiction afterwards. Modern Indo-Anglian poetry can boast of a few such poets and Jaydeep Sarangi is a true son of the Muse who captures the authentic emotions of the people and presents a universal picture through it. *The Wall and Other Poems* by Jaydeep Sarangi is a collection of forty eight poems of movement from personal sensibility of borders to the wider presence as well as urge to collapse all that separates men, geographies and minds. Sarangi wants the walls to die at least “in mind’s cabin”. Many of the poems leave the readers thinking about some corrective measures for the issues around us.

**Keywords:** Modern poetry, walls, boundaries, regional colour, autobiographical.

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Indo-Anglian literature has covered a long journey from pre-independence days of the Western influence to the modern times of ultimate freedom of expression in terms of literary themes and style. Trends have been set, changed and wiped out with the passage of time. Now a days, when readers want entertainment without irking nerves, it’s time for thrill in literature too and anything that doesn’t cater this is counted obsolete. Indo-Anglian poetry is an established genre with a wide range of practitioners and themes. P.C.K. Prem remarks about the present state of Indo-Anglian poetry:

During recent times, poetry has begun to exhibit a legitimately Indian outlook, and genuine love for heritage and culture. That, Indian poets in English display comfortable control on universal themes will be transparent as one starts to relish English poetry of India. (Prem ix)

The English poets in India with varied regional flavours, languages and cultural roots express individual and collective aspirations drawing inspirations from various sources. There are poets who catch readers by their hand and take them on an intellectual flight

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which is something like an addiction afterwards. Modern Indo-Anglian poetry can boast of a few such poets and Jaydeep Sarangi is a true son of the Muse who captures the authentic emotions of the people and presents a universal picture through it. Prof. Mohan Ramanan remarks in the foreword of *The Wall and Other Poems*, “He writes in English no doubt but is aware like A.K. Ramanujan, that his inner forms are Bengali, while outer forms are English and European”. K.V. Dominic highlights the sensibility of the contemporary poets in terms of themes:

Since the contemporary scenario is full of inconsistencies, contradictions, violent bitterness, fake love, distortion and infidelity in relations, dichotomy in socio-economic and political thought, vicious corruption, rise in killing instinct, militant outlook, mounting terror and creeping sense of insecurity, all these features of this age ought to find expression in poetry also. (Dominic xx)

*The Wall and Other Poems* by Jaydeep Sarangi is a collection of forty eight poems of movement from personal sensibility of borders to the wider presence as well as urge to collapse all that separates men, geographies and minds. Sarangi himself defines his job as a poet in “Bio data of a Poet”:

He holds the world in one hand.  
Shakes it  
Rubs it  
Crushes it  
He takes the skin out  
With both hands. (5-10)

According to Sarangi, a poet cannot be passive. It is not the nature of a poet to just be a witness. His blood boils, his mind jolts the thoughts and his creativity makes an impression on the world. A poet can even take the skin out the dead hopes to rejuvenate them. Possibility is always lurking in the heart of a poet. The central idea of wall as a separating and demarking metaphor is dexterously borrowed from Robert Frost’s poem “Mending Wall”. Frost makes it clear that wall is both desirable as well as hateful. Frost leaves it upto the reader to support or opposes a wall because “there is something that doesn’t love a wall” and simultaneously “good fences make good neighbours”. However, Sarangi is clear about the wall that he referring here. His metaphor is of wider implications. There is whole range of boundaries, walls and restrictions curbing human emotions, freedoms and thoughts. *Wall and Other Poems* opens up with a long cherished dream of all Bengalis in “Friendship beyond Borders”. The collection takes its flight highlighting something unavoidable that has created walls and something that doesn’t want these walls. In his heart of hearts, poet knows that a reunion is not possible still efforts are always there to search for a common ground by using various similes and metaphors. Rivers, birds, rain, wind, poet and thoughts are always ready to crush the walls that distinguish and are adamant in distinguishing even after many pious efforts:

Walls stand up and shake hands,  
Crossing borders of the mind  
And then, two hands extending a friendship (1-3)

Sarangi lets us listen his heart throbs for our heart responses. The poetry of Sarangi rises from the reality and actuality of life in the way plant rises from the ground of truth to bloom the flowers of facts. The optimism and positivity of the poet is noteworthy in the very first poem. He wants “for once, let us forget time” and “let us wear sari in the same way”.

Sarangi has moved ahead of the physical wall. He has noted this wall separating people, countries, *Zenana* and *Mardana* too. For a sensitive creature like poet, the silence on the other side of the wall is painful as he cannot go dumb about it all the time. In “Sailing through Ichamati”, the poet presents both sides of the coin in front of us when a country is divided and brothers are separated overnight even without asking their wish. He understands that “we are a very old wall”, but he leaves the pen on this burning desire for all hearts:

We are twins.  
 Our veins have one blood  
 Even when we are separate souls on the map (13-15)

The poet has very sensibly declared that it is not only physical wall that is to be scorned, but there are many walls in the minds of people demarking between man and woman, Hindu and Muslim, native and foreigner. Jaydeep Sarangi is ready to invite the readers in breaking the wall in “Black Hole” when he remarks:

You break all norms  
 With one strike. I follow. (7-8)  
 .....  
 Somewhere the systems are in reverse order:  
 All eyes on the black hole. Life springs from there. (18-19)

People “wear the colours of land” and sing the song for the land where they live caring little about any other land on earth as they are tough patriots cheering their cricket team. The poet sketches a picture of the tea-stall where people break all walls and discuss a range of topics with open hearts and a lot of stories are always ready there:

Each time I go there  
 I have a story to write.  
 Each one over there  
 Is a character. A protagonist, perhaps (25-28)

India is a land of multiple languages and these languages bind as well as separate people and Jaydeep Sarangi firmly believes that “Language is a master”. “Living on the Edge” is a saga of the people who reside in the confusion of the territory. Sarangi is critical of the hollow economic progress. He wants economic progress to reach to the lowest level when common people are able to live a comfortable life. The difference between the classes is widening and “The *aamaadmi* survives/with nerves in their mouth”. The poet questions the present economic growth in “Let my Children have Enough Rice and Milk for their Meals”:

What is wrong with my land?  
Each stone has a history. Each pillar whispers a story.  
Let us ask for a simple boon,  
“Let my children have enough rice and milk”. (19-22)

There is a great responsibility on poets for dismantling the walls because “a poet writes back on the walls for a better society”. Every human being has to decide to which side he/she belongs and “We prepare our mind to land somewhere/This side or that side of the wall” as sense of belonging gives us an identity. The poet is very much hopeful of an amicable world around him and solace is claimed in personal relationships when he says, “Life is a harp. We must know/Where to touch. It’s a song”. There is a unique freshness about the poems loaded with rich Indian flavours and more importantly, the poet is very successful in touching the right chords of every sensitive soul. Jaydeep Sarangi is one of the most convincing modern Indian poets who catches the reader with his hand and invites him to take a dive deep into the problematic issues of the world around us, still holding his hand with a lot of faith in the goodness of human heart. Nissim Ezekiel remarks about the duty of a poet in “At 62”:

I celebrate the familiar,  
the routine,  
and the unexpected.  
.....  
I want my hands  
to learn how to heal myself  
and heal others,  
before I hear  
my last song. (Ezekiel 273-74)

Jaydeep Sarangi matches Ezekiel in terms of highlighting the duty of a poet in “Why is This Neglect”:

There is a reason for poetry to respond.  
A poet writes on the back of wall for a better society:  
Those who are unable to speak  
Will have a say. (20-23)

Bengali colour of the poet is well evident in his “Growing up in Kolkata” where he uses a lot of words highlighting the life in Kolkata in general through his own routine. Use of words such as “Bangla sounds”, “Hilsa”, “Bengali meal”, “Rosogolla”, “Darjeeling tea”, “Rabindra sangeet”, “Political discussion”, “Uttam Kumar”, “Suchitra Sen”, “Kalighat” give authentic contour to the poet’s life and experience.

Jaydeep Sarangi is deeply involved in the issues where the future of man is concerned. He is not only addressing people at the intellectual level, but he is also participating at many levels to correct the world around him in one way or the other, and he “carry/Life sketches of man crossing the horizons” (“Diabetic Bones” 2-3). Emotional attachment with day to day mis-happenings around the poet disturbs him, still he believes in what “A traveler to India once said/God smiles here” (“Night

Flowering Jasmine” 5-6). The poet wants everything in black and white because he acknowledges walls that create confusions. In “Captain, Crew, Please Prepare the Captain for Landing”, Sarangi clearly puts it:

All creations die  
 In mind’s cabin.  
 We prepare our mind to land somewhere  
 This side or that side of the wall. (18-21)

In the heart of his hearts, Sarangi wants the walls to die at least “in mind’s cabin”. The poet’s outlook and presentation of the world around him compels the readers to examine it closely and one cannot finish *The Wall and Other Poems* without diving deep at the wish of the guide. Many of the poems leave the readers thinking about some corrective measures for the issues around us. The poet speaks for everyone, though the autobiographical touch is prominent. Many valid questions about life and existence in the modern world arise out of the prolonged deliberations of the poet trying to extract truth. Sarangi seems to agree with Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in believing, “Truth is not the exclusive possession of any one individual or class or race or religion. The one truth has many faces. The real is one; wise men speak of it in many ways” (Radhakrishnan 78).

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## Silent Days Speak Aloud: A Critical Study of Jaydeep Sarangi's *Silent Days*

–Sibasis Jana\*

### Abstract

Jaydeep Sarangi, the poet, critic, academic, and reviewer produces poems full of hopes and aspirations, dreams and allegories standing on the ruins of time and tide with problem ridden socio-cultural modern framework. His *Silent Days*, a collection of fifty poems, was published after his successful release of the collection of poems *From Dulong to Beas*. His silent days are eloquent in the pages of his poetic veins and blood. He is the perfect “son of the soil” with realistic approaches showered by intellectual corners. He is the ‘silent pilgrim’ on the bank of the river ‘Dulong’ invoking the mother earth to get back the ‘land of red hearts’ for the hungry people of the red soil. His heart oozes for the people who have lost their lands, cultures, prayers and vibrations to protest against the suppressed authority. He opines for the land and life of his inheritors gunned down and long trudges by night— “the loose strand from Ma’s ‘Saree ‘reminds me/That my own ones dwell, in the land of red soil.” His sensual organs also drugged with the alluring red, emotions touched with vegetation, visions revisit bows and arrows. And he does not hesitate to confirm his psyche with them in his flowering “I am on your side”— “the red soil... Leads to another.” (17) Their folk dance, oral history, wild fabrics give breath in his sweet heart— “you are not ....side” (17). Dalit...My dream ...I am “(17). How optimistic he is to voice the voiceless indigenous world. His dream is to reach their stories and histories to the windows of the world. So he expresses “It’s my dream ...In indigenous ink”. He stressed on how fore fathers are connected in the mindscape. By meditation he can connect with his ancestors, their feelings, their voices and advices. The smell of the red soil still lingers in his prayer ploughed heart, his heart bleeds, and his pen draws the plough with its sweats and toils. He is hungry with intellectual blessings riding on a chariot culturing the experiences of silent days. Days are coloured, days are romanticized, days are modernized, and days are blessed with rhythmic dance of life drama. So my article is an attempt to stress how sarangi’s poems highlighted and portrayed the seamy side of the lives of dalits and have- not’s, the poor and downtroddens and slum-dwellers and how he voices the voiceless to arise and awake to fulfill their dreams.

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**Keywords:** Voiceless, dalit, folk, silence, eloquence.

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Are you feeling tired of thinking new things? Do you think deeply about yourself? Have you the heart to feel deeply about the downtrodden and have-nots? Are you exhausted with questions and questions? Do you dream for the future generations? Do you want to get satisfactory notes from all such questions? Then wait is over. Sarangi's *Silent Days* has answers to all these questions. This is a collection of fifty poems, which was published after his collection of poems, *From Dulong to Beas*. It is in a continuation of his journey from Dulong, where he grew up. Perhaps we should say it is from Dulong to Perth, where the *Silent Days* was released at the Westerly Center, University of Western Australia.

Sarangi was born in Jhargram, "beyond the Gangetic plains of Bengal, with the most exotic beauties of undulating topography culminating in hill ranges of Belpahari and Kankrajhor and near the Dulong river. "Dr. Dora Sales says about Sarangi his "poetic voice delves into the question of identity, India, Bangali.... only to transcend limits and become, above all human. The images are deeply grounded in, contextualized in India, in particular and precise places. But the hues and meanings are openly universal.....As we all know; India has a rich literary tradition. Jaydeep Sarangi is a splendid member of this endless family. Truly, a poet of note." Dulong, where Sarangi had started not only his life journey but his poetry too, is a small river flowing slowly through the Midnapur forests in West Bengal. Beas or Vipasha is one of the five rivers of Punjab, known by the Greeks as Hyphasis. It is also said to be the river where Alexander stopped.

His silent days are eloquent in the pages of his poetic veins and blood. He is the perfect "son of the soil" with realistic approaches showered by intellectual corners. He is the 'silent pilgrim' on the bank of the river 'Dulong' invoking the mother earth to get back the 'land of red hearts' for the hungry people of the red soil. His heart oozes for the people who have lost their lands, cultures, prayers and vibrations to protest against the suppressed authority. His nostalgia grips down memory lane and he is:

Longing for the red soil  
Corrodes me day by day  
Like the ticking of a clock  
Tick. Tick. Tick.....

I know, I'm controlled among the hunting freak tribal children. (p. 14)

He opines for the land and life of his inheritors gunned down and long trudges by night—

... the loose strand from Ma's 'Saree' reminds me  
That my own ones dwell, in the land of red soil.

His sensual organs also drugged with the alluring red, emotions touched with vegetation, visions revisit bows and arrows. And he does not hesitate to confirm his psyche with them in his flowering "I am on your side"—

the red soil...  
Leads to another. (p. 17)

Their folk dance, oral history, wild fabrics give breath in his sweet heart:

you are not ....side (p. 17)

Dalit...

My dream ...I am (p. 17)

How optimistic he is to voice the voiceless indigenous world. His dream is to reach their stories and histories to the windows of the world. So he expresses "It's my dream ...In indigenous ink". His poem "I am" speaks of being oneness. As a writer, he is a part of them. His pen burns and speaks "the seed ...liquid." His silent days are touched with bitter sweet days. His sweet days with earthen touch and simplicity awaken the peaceful energy. He expresses, "And I am ...Castor oil". (p.19)

His poem "Refugee" strikes his alienation from the homeland. Time and again his mind elopes to his native land and living in a new land is like living like 'flying fish' between home and away. The poet is vigoured with the voices of the soil, water, and air. His versatile fertility in every sphere of human life waves in the eternal flow of 'lifetrans'. In the poem "In a way away from home", he firmly determines his presence with the "aborigines". He affirms, "I landed and announced ...helpness!" (p. 33) He feels homeless in his own land and so his pen becomes sword to fight against the injustice done to the voiceless.

Standing on the bank of river Dulong his heart springs in mythic history. In "The Torch" he opines, "with conch ....feelings." (p. 43) In his vision "the white flocks of book fly across.. Dulong stream." He also paints how village girls suffer and how they depict their stories in disorderly letters. They sing of their lost glory: "singing woes ....wordy pool." (p. 43) He also expresses his family history in full throated ease with outburst of emotion and in melancholy strain. "The sap of History .../Black ink" (p. 52).

Time and again his Dalit spirit congratulates but sometimes how people neglect to speak out his identity as 'dalit'. So he speaks – "she counts ...Pain". (p. 60). He, like Chandidas, gives the clarion call to

wake up ...hilly heights.

Above all humanity

He not only speaks of the Dalits but his pen fluids to the modern mask shaped society. His versatile credit blooms the garden with love, selfhood, time, modern life with personal sketchy notes.

His opening poem is an attack against the modern mask shaped humanity. He thunders - "dear old sucker for light ...superb." (p. 11) And he protests with words, "I take your clothes off."

In the poem "The Guest" the poet refreshes the process of his poetic zeal. His heart is ready to accept thoughts which come spontaneously. He invites them like guests - "Rolling time ....thoughts." (p. 13) His poetry sketches the modern hurry in this mobile age. Mobile is the medium of great communication but it snatches the peace of mind of the modern people. With the busy routine he does not miss to have an affectionate love through his poetry. His daughter Titas's fanciful ideas get fulfilled by cartoon network:

with small steps  
You discover  
Newer lands—  
Imaginative and your very own.

Like Derozio's poem in his "Sonnets to the pupils of Hindu College", the poet also envisions the dreaming future through her daughter's eyes:

oneday  
Our treasured dreams  
In your eyes  
Would reflect  
and give shade to burning old age. ("For Titas" p.16)

He depicts the sad history of women crushed under the brutal youths. In a very mournful note he expresses —

brutal within is voiced  
When her innocent body crumbles  
She bleeds  
As the nation under a colonial rule.  
Our youth is touched  
With blood at their mouth.

("A Rose is a Rose" p. 20)

He also gets fear for her flower like daughter's flowery imagination that may be smashed —

I am a man too  
I too have a darling daughter  
And I fear, the world where she is a flower.  
The sky is deep blue today  
But, we never know what follows the next day.

Living in this is a problematic situation. He protests against the injustice of the society. In his poem "As you go" his protestive voice erupts—

turn left  
To right  
Draw straight lines  
On the white blank papers.  
("As you go" p. 23)

Theme of time is vastly reflected in his poem "Growing old with time". Time's immortal journey scheme is inevitable. It is the invader of all things -

time has become reflection  
A mirror and a flame,  
Of my petty little corner of mind,  
The silent underground in the barrels of bones.

“Selfhood” theme pervades his poem. Formation of “self” as reflected in the *Gita* is also dealt in the form of self-realisation in his divine poetry. In the poem “Where are we going”? he expresses-

I am a flowing river,  
Evolving every moment.  
So many things remain under the cover.

He changes and reforms within and with the process of purification he recreates within his selfhood -

I destroy and preserve my within  
In every changing hour,  
with a little palpation of the Brahminical order.  
(“Where are we going?” p. 25)

His silent days are eloquent in his poetry. He thinks each small thing has its own complete life of its own and in its own way it nourishes the thoughts of sorrows and sufferings, hopes and aspirations, joys and happiness. He is a great votary of time. Every time has its own value and new oratory lesson. Like T.S. Eliot and Jayanta Mahapatra he signifies the importance of time and moment. He is engaged in utilizing time in the recharging battering of time. A day will come when he will get the achievement of his hard toil in time’s sketchy framework. He pines to save the value of time present and time past—

It is true and fair,  
I’m waiting for an announcement,  
Fast losing my long cherished red rose  
Its charm and colour  
In daily gospel of preparing my face;  
What are really my native and loving own.

How excellently he strikes the keynote of work culture and its achievement. The imagery of ‘Shadow’ and ‘sunrise’ are really touchy with the framework of darkness to light-

I shall ask the Woodcutter  
To cut my shadow as it is difficult to wait for sunrise (“Silent Days” p. 26)

He protests against the pollution in Kolkata in the beautiful morning. Modern urbanization shadowed the beautiful morning sun. Dawn is delayed to the city dwellers. Night is favourite, morning is rejected. Still the poet enjoys Church bells and twittering seeps. He writes in the poem “Morning” -

The day in Kolkata opens, delayed by  
A dim sun, to the haze of  
Last night’s fervour. The note of  
Church bells and twittering seep into every details.

Through the Yogic rhythm and meditative mood he bridges the gulf between noisy and the sublime inner peace of mind. Being an ardent follower of Yoga therapy he recharges his Kundalini Shakti and wipes out the corrupted carbonated pollution of mind.

Yogic chants follow a  
Rhythm of bridge between a noisy head and a calm mind.  
("Morning" p. 27)

Days after days our environment is getting polluted, but is there any Lord Shiva, the Nilkantha to devour the poisonous elements. In the poem "My Other" he stresses on the habit of waiting and waiting. Waiting gives a new grandeur to our life. With time's rosy wings he flights to the new blossom of life with mature outlook. He expresses-

my colleagues trace a few snow-white lines on my hair  
And wrinkles here and there.

There is always a process to be old  
To hold the handle of the chair tight.  
("My Other" p. 28)

His poem "We are connected" stresses on how fore fathers are connected in the mindscape. By meditation he can connect with his ancestors, their feelings, their voices and advices. Images after images piled with the touch of red and green symbol. The smell of the red soil still lingers in his prayer ploughed heart, his heart bleeds, his pen draws the plough with its sweats and toils. He mourns and draws the lines –

Like a plough head on the back of a farmer  
I carry my ancestors.  
Images huddle together  
In a collage dipping signals  
Red and green!

He respects the farmers for their harvesting and greening the fields with their hard toil and sweats of their physic. He utters-

Familiar faces paint green fields  
When a harvest ripening  
In seasons of renewal.

("Life without You" p. 30)

The shadow imagery reflects in his untitled poem –

My shadow follows me  
As I walk down my dreams  
I know myself well, as deep –sea animal.

He is hungry with intellectual blessings riding on a chariot culturing the experiences of silent days. Days are coloured, days are romanticized, days are modernized, days are blessed with rhythmic dance of life drama. He is always introspective as self-judgment becomes the key factor of his poetic album. He wants to judge and recreate within self. His thoughts are one with Stephen Gill's poem "Self"-

Every day  
I check the mirror  
To be sure

If the reflection is  
Mine.

Sarangi's silent mind movie depicts the inner conflict and the battle between loss and gain of life. He paints —

I discover my pains painted in brush  
Of truth  
Or lost in the bush in an alien land,  
Forbidden to share with you.  
(“In Front of Me” p. 41)

In his poem “Friendship” his friendship opines with creative opening of the heart. Creativity unlocks the door of our heart, and creativity comes spontaneously in profuse strains. We may be reminded of the lines of Jayanta Mahapatra in his “Door of Paper”- “There is a door in the heart of man which never opens. Or if it does at times, we are not aware of its opening. When it does it goes on to reveal another world—a world where time falls away, and space grows; perhaps the self-fills with vastness and light.” (“Door of Paper” p. 1)

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## Realistic Approach of Life with Special Reference to Dalvir Singh Gahlawat's Poem "Self"

–Nidhi Gehlot\*

### Abstract

Dalvir Singh Gahlawat is one of the leading voices in Indian English poetry. He is the author of *Smile from the Veil: A Collection of Poems*, and a number of academic books. His poems deal with various issues of life and the ways for its betterment. He shares his sweet and sour experiences and underlines the contemporary situation of the society suggesting and fixing the accountability for the betterment of mass which is easily convincible by the so called contractors and reformers of the society. The difficulty he raises in his poetry is faced by everybody in his life from cradle to death.

“Self” is one of his important poems that vindicates difficulties, courage, vision and positivity towards life. It represents the common man’s celebration of self who is recollecting the memories of birth and development of his self. The poet symbolizes man’s self with a little sapling in dexterous manner. He puts up whole process of development of man’s self and tiny sapling. What can be more realistic and more just to compare one’s self other than a sapling? Self and sapling both are created by God; both come across hurdles of life; both suffer in adverse situations right from the start but they develop beautifully and secure a splendid as well respectable place in the world. Both are the symbols of truth, courage and confidence.

The paper is a comprehensive study of the poem “Self” in which the poet shows that self and sapling both celebrate their victory over negative situations but life is not so smooth so they are destined to put themselves in the troubles again and again. It is the very truth of life that one has to go and go towards the path of ambition without any malice in order to achieve one’s goal.

**Keywords:** Difficulties, courage, vision, positivity, confidence, symbol, truth.

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### Introduction

Whether a winner swims with the current or swims against the current he/she is not out of the current. In the same way whether a poet or writer supports the establishment

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of his/her day or opposes it he/she is tied up to the dominant ideas of his/her day and so he/she is an inseparable part of his/her age. As far as the poet is concerned by and large he replicates the portrait of the contemporary society and shares his experiences through which he has undergone. He returns the society what he receives. Therefore before routing further in the direction of pragmatic study to the poem of Dalvir Singh Gahlawat, it is essential to have a glance on the circumstances he went through as he mentions in the very first paragraph of "Preface", "The idea of writing a book on poetry did not come suddenly into my mind but it has an environment and circumstances which compelled me to write poetry" (Gahlawat "Preface").

Of course, in the contour of poets Dalvir Singh Gahlawat may not be very ingenious yet one who goes through his artistic and poetic views can't help putting him in the genre of genius because his poems published in the reputed national and international journals, magazines, anthologies and *Smile From The Veil: A Collection of Poems*, have the quest for quantum of quality for the real life wherein he has shared his sweet and sour experiences and underlined the contemporary situation of the society suggesting and fixing the accountability for the betterment of mass which is easily convincible by the so called contractors and reformers of the society, for which he was internationally acclaimed and scholarly criticized as he further writes in his "Preface" of anthology:

It is perspicacious to say that some of the poems are rational and having profound fathom of contemporary societal norms and have openness remedies of not only trivial but also drastic maladies occur on quotidian basis in the life of each and every man who perceives the dark side of his life and who is addicted to boast and accustomed to beat about the bush and fails to distinguish between right and wrong and becomes the prey of disparagement. (Gahlawat "Preface")

Such a profound literary man had to cross a long way to achieve this profoundness as his life was not so simple and conditions were not so favourable to him. It is necessary to go through his life background to understand him. Gahlawat (b. 1961 in a small hamlet, Raipur, of District Jhajjar, Haryana) got graduation from M.D. University, Rohtak, Haryana and subsequently joined Delhi Police. In spite of uncongenial atmosphere in his department he got M.A. in Political Science, M.A. in English, M. Phil. in English and PhD in English. Having rural background he suffered more in his childhood but never lost heart. His Poem "Boat of Life" was selected one of the best poem in the International Poetry Fest. He has five books to his credit: *Turmoil and Turn: Women in Shashi Deshpande's Novels*; *Post Feminism in India: Myth or Reality*; *Psycho Socio Analysis of Indian Police System*; *Smile from the Veil (A Collection of Poems)*, and *Feminine Consciousness: Glimpsing Indian Perspective*. The sixth book on police is under print.

### **The Poem "Self"**

"Self" is the podium of a mixer of scholarly quest, intellectual spirituality and physical practicality which brings both earthly and heavenly abode together. The poem may be

difficult to understand in detail, but its general purpose is not so obscure. In this poem Gahlawat delineates his belief that the tougher we are on ourselves the easier life will be for us. The way he indicates the problems encompassing the life seems to be generalized. In spite of bearing all hurdles, the existence of self remains intact just like a building which remains standing in spite of heavy rains, storms and conflagration. Although they may hurt outwardly to some extent, yet their interior still remains intact. The self is indestructible which remains intact in all conditions therefore the poet suggests to remain firm on the podium of pursuit in all circumstances either it is propitious or inauspicious. After going through the poem “Self” it looks as if the poet has confronted the occurrences mentioned in the poem and wants to share all these with the readers with pragmatic suggestions. The most important impression made by Dalvir Singh Gahlawat in his poem “Self” is the difficulty faced by everybody in his life from cradle to death and the way of deals with the difficulties. In this way the poem is full of difficulties, courage, vision and positivity towards life.

The definition of self is much soothing to feel rather to understand. Self is a place where all the feelings and emotions gather. In other words self is the subject of human’s own experience of perceptions, emotions, and thoughts. In easy manner it can be conceived that anything that is being experienced cannot be experienced without an experiencer, and that experincer is none other than self. In some other trends of philosophy, the self is seen as a reflexive perception of oneself, the individual person. The line, “Hallo! I am here”, repeats after every stanza time and again from its very beginning to the end that indicates that self exists in spite of difficulties confirming its immortality.

The present research paper is an attempt to throw light upon the realistic depiction of one’s self in Dalvir Singh Gahlawat’s poem “Self”. On the hard cover of his anthology readers find poet’s connection of self to his wife. It is pertinent to say that soul is the echo of self as soul is calm but self is the bundle of all existing emotions. Such piece of art by Gahlawat is so soothing that it connects the term self to every human being and his soul. As self is pure, simple and very essence of the last layer of man’s personality so the language of this poem is.

### **The Philosophy of “Self”**

Self is not visible but it exists. Every phenomenon either it is living or non- living, has its self. Self is the basis and the root. Self is the breath and without self, man is lifeless, then why self is being challenged by anyone, why someone has to prove his or her self? So many times in life man has to assure himself that he too has his own self or he should be proud of himself.

Gahlawat represents the common man’s celebration of self who is recollecting the memories of birth and development of his self. The opening lines of the poem seem to maintain poet’s pride and confidence upon his self as Ulysses had who as per Mazzotta, Guiseppe, the Sterling Professor of Humanities for Italian “begins his journey by placing himself outside the pattern of temporal generation” (Mazzotta 43). The poet compares the self with a sapling which faces so many hurdles even in its early

stage and grows as a big tree by the support of nature. Difficulties can't stop one to grow big. Though, it encounters both internal and external world. The poet is not ready to accept even the way of hurdles, the way of natural calamities as he accepts that this may be the way but it may not be his way and that is why he remains struggling through his whole life from his very childhood to his juvenility to make his remaining period probably a happy one.

The poem opens, "Hallo! I am here... Between you and them" (Gahlawat, "Self": 13). "I" is the pronoun used here for the one's self. Though "I" is the symbol of ego but here "I" is the sign of existence of one's self. One's presence between "You" and "Them" i.e. between the man (who belongs) and the vast world can be proudly accepted. The man was not fully aware of his self but self existed there with him as David Hume gives the theory of self:

We are never intimately conscious of anything but a particular perception; man is a bundle or collection of different perceptions which succeed one another with an inconceivable rapidity and are in perpetual flux and movement". (Hume, 6)

"I" reminds his upbringing to that man in following lines;

Once was a sapling,  
Watered by someone ("Self" 13)

"I" took a long period of time to come at this juncture. He was like a sapling, an infant at the beginning of life. He took birth as an individual's self but his immature questions and dilemmas are answered and solved by other people. His thirst for knowledge was satisfied by outer world. Perhaps this is the reality of life to which the poet describes by the activity of watering by others means self gets experiences from other than the man who belongs to him so "I" nurtured and nourished by man's dearest people in the same realistic manner as an infant fondles by his family.

Hindered by the foes,  
By the grace of God,  
Still, standing there. ("Self" 13)

Like sapling "I" too had to suffer various problems but such obstacles could not shake his self-confidence because the almighty God always showered blessings upon him and helped him to stand strong. Once again the poet presents a view from real life where man faces different negative situations but God does not let down man's self and his self turns out into confidence.

"I" still stands firm and reminds the man that it exists between him and the world, when the poet describes such thing it seems that all living thing of the world gets power and hope from their selves. It seems that whenever they find that they are in dilemma they get proper directions from their own selves; it also seems that the self assures one that though you ignored me but I was there and will be always when you need me. The poet uses these lines again and again after every stanza and increases the essentiality and importance of self in everyone's life.

Further the poet expresses the struggle of “I” in different inverse situations of life:

Tried to become a tree,  
By thunder, could not be free. (“Self” 13)

A sapling has to come across immense adverse situations to bloom, to become a fruitful tree. In reality, the self of a man goes through varied conditions to achieve fullness. Just as a little sapling has to face thunders alone without the shelter of its gardener, but in spite of all the oddities it survives so proudly, in the same manner as a man’s self (“I”) encounters a number of painful circumstances.

Felt alone, gardener gone,  
Strived much, faced such, (“Self” 13)

In realistic manner the process of maturity of one’s self faces difficulties in a synchronized manner, it is shaken and broken in oddities and at one point of time it finds a little ray of hope that fills enthusiasm in it.

Someone came, got gain,  
Gradually enthusiastic again,  
Caught the train,  
In the middle, stood there. (“Self” 13)

Once again the self caught the train i.e. though the difficulties try to shake self-trust but once they go through the self of man they find his self more strong and once again self reminds the man that it still exists between man and the world as the poet repeats in the line once again.

The poet symbolizes man’s self with a little sapling in dexterous manner. He puts up the whole process of development of man’s self and tiny sapling. What can be more realistic and more just to compare one’s self other than a sapling? Self and sapling both are created by God; both come across hurdles of life; both suffer in adverse situations right from the start but they develop beautifully and secure a splendid as well respectable place in the world. Both are the symbols of truth, courage and confidence.

Self and sapling both celebrate their victory over negative situations but life is not so smooth so they are destined to put themselves in the troubles again and again. It is the very truth of life that one has to go and go towards the path of ambition without any malice. The achievement and valour of one’s self and the sapling continue in concluding lines: “ Rejoiced glancing branches.” (“Self” 14)

In the concluding stanza, the poet presents the universal truth of life that more damages give more finishing to the metal, in the same manner the scars and wounds give strength to self and enhance its capacity and stamina to survive in unfavourable phases of life. In this stanza the poet’s outlook towards life seems positive because he is happy to see the human beings; to be happy in the world as branches flourishing and spreading all over the tree in the same way the farmer becomes happy to see his crops waving and prospering. The poet suggests that whenever we find golden opportunity to flourish we must avail it by avoiding the petty things of life:

Thought there are chances,  
Came out from the silly dances, (“Self” 14)

The poet also suggests that the journey of self is not a bed of roses but it is too tough to cover the way without hard work. He emphasizes upon the suggestion to keep always learning something even in the adverse situation:

Entered into the literary houses,  
Saw the sea of pursuit of podiums,  
Tried to dip avoided the whip,  
It was deep, needed not weep, (“Self” 14)

If we do hard work and have faith and control upon ourselves then the ultimate result becomes positive as it is rightly said: “Mastering others requires force. Mastering the self requires strength.” (Laozi 35) God also helps those who help themselves, therefore, the poet through this poem suggests to be positive, confident and dynamic in order to find conducive result.

Knew how to swim by chance,  
Got the support knot of Reed,  
Touched the shore, stood there. (“Self” 14)

The essence of the poem is to face difficulties in order to be great, to have the knowledge of self as, “Self-knowledge alone eradicates misery” (Alladi 22). The self and the sapling both go through various difficulties of life but their trust and their knowledge of self do not let them fall.

## **Reconciliation**

The poet describes some similarity between ‘I’ and ‘Sapling’. Both have their existence in the world; they take birth as an infant and later get nourishment by nature. Both get upbringing by other people, as they both get love and affection by their near and dear. While ‘I’ gets attention of his family, sapling gets the same from the gardener. Both have to face a lot of difficulties during the process of completion. They are tortured by different adverse situations but the support of the Almighty and self-belief never let them fall. After every passing situation negative or positive, favourable or unfavourable, they achieve victory because of self-reliance. In such comparison one can find that how beautifully the poet maintains the pride and valour of one’s self symbolized by sapling. No one can challenge God’s will but trust in God and self-confidence that always find a better way to survive in all the oddities of the universe.

## **Conclusion**

Thus in this poem Gahlawat explains the philosophy of self and defines it as the essential qualities that make a person distinct from all others, i.e. self seeks to describe essential qualities that constitute a person’s uniqueness or essential being. Such uniqueness exists in every one in this world, whether man or woman, plant or animal.

The rationalization of the poem lies in need to be brave to face the truth because the difficulties which the poem mentions are the difficulties of everybody and thus

they become generalized. The generalization becomes truth and therefore we should be ready to face this truth. The poem offers verifiable account of the world describing the exposure of a ‘reality’, making a ‘region of awareness’ which each reader has to pass through for himself. The poem has coherent time –sequence i.e. childhood, adolescent and youth period. It seems that the poet is far from the old age when he uses social networking sites to unlock his treasure and obtain the knowledge: “Sometimes I attended the Facebook account for enhancing my knowledge in literary field” (Gahlawat “Preface”) and that is why he could not unfold the experience of that age.

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## Tagore's Modernist Predilections: Incursions into an Uncharted Territory

–*Sravasti Guha Thakurta\**

### Abstract

Literary criticism on Rabindranath Tagore in his relation to English literature has been largely misleading, for it has largely limited itself to elaborating on possible similarities and comparisons between nineteenth century English poets like Shelley, Keats, Thompson and Tennyson on the one hand, and Rabindranath Tagore on the other. An undue and unjustified emphasis has been laid on his early works; and as a result, the traits of romanticism and mysticism in Tagore's poetry have been highlighted and augmented out of all proportion. The fact that Rabindranath Tagore is essentially a modern poet who lived and wrote during the twenties and the thirties of the twentieth century has been needlessly and heedlessly overlooked. It is imperative that the literary works of Rabindranath Tagore produced during the post-*Gitanjali* period be compared and contrasted with those of the Modern English poets. It is only then that scholars and researchers in the field of Tagorean literature will attain a comprehensive understanding of the art of Rabindranath Tagore.

**Keywords:** Tagore, Romanticism, mysticism, modernist, post-war, modern civilisation.

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English poetry from the West has gifted readers Romantic poets like P.B. Shelley and John Keats, mystic poets like Francis Thompson and modernist poets like T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden and Stephen Spender, who were influenced by realism. However, Rabindranath Tagore holds a unique position in the entire world of poetry by virtue of the fact that he has uniquely combined in his verse the romantic fervour of Shelley and Keats, the mysticism of Francis Thompson, and the realism of Eliot and Auden. It would perhaps, be relevant to recall, in this context, the observation made by Sisir Kumar Ghose, the well known critic, and scholar: "Tagore's poetry is so vast, various, and voluminous, that it escapes any easy schematisation or categorising, even if attempts to find a pattern have not been given up." (Ghose 1986: 32)

From his early childhood, Rabindranath Tagore had a rather uncommon exposure to music, poetry and drama from all over the world. Vedic chants and recitations from

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Shakespeare were both commonly heard in the Tagore household at Jorasanko. Bengali, Sanskrit, Persian and English, were the languages that the children were taught at home, along with the Physical Sciences. Brojeshwar, the servant who took care of the young children - and, who had, at one time, taught in a village school - often recited from the ancient Indian epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The young poet was also exposed to the songs of Dasu Rai and Kishori Chatterji. Vaishnava literature and the mystic cult of the Bauls also left an indelible mark on the poet's psyche. Sanskrit literature, especially the works of the great poet Kalidasa, left a deep impression on Tagore, and many of his works reflect a debt to these earlier masterpieces. The Upanishadas were a formative influence on the developing consciousness of the young poet. The poet's father, Maharshi Debendranath Tagore initiated him to the mantras of the Upanishadas in 1873, before the ritual of the sacred 'thread ceremony' was performed. The "Gayatri Mantra" in particular left a deep impression on Tagore's mind. Tagore subsequently accompanied his father on a tour of the Himalayas; and in the close proximity of the Maharshihe learnt to respect the teachings of the great religious texts, to appreciate the teachings of religions apart from his own. These early experiences left an enduring mark on the poet's psyche, and found expression in many of his subsequent literary works. As A. K. Basu Majumdar has so aptly pointed out: "The hymns of the *Rigveda* and the songs of the *Samaveda*, after thousands of years, have been presented again to us through the songs of Tagore. The deepest thoughts of the Upanishads, and their message to humanity, the ideas of love, amity and pity of Gautam Buddha and Asoka, have all been revived in Tagore's writings." (Basu Majumdar 1993: 14) Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Browning and Whitman were among the Western poets with whose poetry Tagore was familiar with from a relatively young age. Tagore had, in fact, asserted, quite vehemently, that a good English Education was of immense worth to an Indian poet, artist, or intellectual. In an essay published in the leading periodical of the day, *Bharati*, Tagore opined:

In fact, due to the influence of English education, suddenly a current of great change has burst into the calm and placid waters of Bengali society; some banks of this society are falling, and others, are being formed. The earth around some of the most deep rooted beliefs are being washed away, and hundreds of new beliefs are taking new roots. When so much outside and inside us is falling topsy-turvy, should we even then remain tied to the strings of ancient poetry, disregarding all sense of time and space. It would be extremely unnatural to expect that such a tremendous change would have no effect on our poetry. (Sharma 2012: 131)

Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats mainly influenced him as poets of nature. Browning's vigorous optimism finds reflection in Tagore's "Phalguni" and other plays, and some of his poems. Tagore also admired Whitman's humanism, which he had himself developed. He was also deeply impressed by the poems of John Donne. Many were the Western philosophers with whom Tagore was in direct contact, and they influenced and shaped his thoughts to a certain extent. Bertrand Russell, Bergson, Gilbert Murray, Albert Einstein and Stopford Brooke were among those with whom he

came into close personal contact, and who influenced him one way or the other. Although Tagore was against any sort of blind, uncritical show of respect towards the West, he was in favour of according the positive aspects of the western civilization the esteem that it deserved:

Contemporary India has its ancient civilisation as a mine has its coal. When the law of give and take, growth and decay operated in it, it thrived as a great forest. There was the activity of spring and rain in it, and the natural growth of flower, blossom, and plant. Now it does not change and growth has become superfluous. The light and heat of many ages is still latent in it but for us it is dark and cold. As we do not have the flame that can light it, we produce out of it only columns of pitch black smoke. What we collect by digging tunnels of research to this past is also useless—and even this natural wealth we are not collecting ourselves. All our coal comes from the Englishman's shores. (*Rabindra Rachanavali*, Vol. XI, 1961: 483)

However, literary criticism on Rabindranath Tagore in his relation to English literature has been largely misleading, for it has largely limited itself to elaborating on possible similarities and comparisons between nineteenth century English poets like Shelley, Keats, Thompson and Tennyson on the one hand, and Rabindranath Tagore on the other. An undue and unjustified emphasis has been laid on his early works; and as a result, the traits of romanticism and mysticism in Tagore's poetry have been highlighted and augmented out of all proportion. The fact that Rabindranath Tagore is essentially a modern poet who lived and wrote during the twenties and the thirties of the twentieth century has been needlessly and heedlessly overlooked. As George E.G. Catlin has aptly pointed out: "It is an indication of his stature that, whereas some think he "dates" so much, actually he survives as a spokesman of India, dating so little." (Catlin 1964: 11) It is imperative that the literary works of Rabindranath Tagore produced during the post-*Gitanjali* period be compared and contrasted with those of the Modern English poets. It is only then that scholars and researchers in the field of Tagorean literature will attain a comprehensive understanding of the art of Rabindranath Tagore. As the noted author and critic Bhabatosh Chatterjee has pointed out: "... Tagore's grasp of the complexity of the modern temper would help today's readers, writers and critics remodel the familiar portrait [of Tagore as a predominantly Romantic and Mystic poet]..." (Chatterjee 1996: 171)

Hopkins is rightly regarded as the harbinger of new trends in English poetry, but it is the poems of T. S. Eliot which ushered in a distinctly new era in English poetry. Eliot's *Waste Land*, published in 1922 has been hailed by many prominent critics as a distinctive landmark in the history of modern English poetry. The "waste land" referred to in the poem symbolises the spiritual bankruptcy of the modern civilisation. The degeneration of morality, of spiritual values, the aridity of the human soul, the aimlessness and the chaos that are predominant in modern society, are some of the themes and motifs which recur again and again in this poem which is very often referred to as the representative modernist poem. Raymond Tschumi, commenting on the philosophical element in T.S. Eliot's poetry, observes:

The philosophical element in Eliot's poetry consists mainly in his criticism of contemporary life, and his satire is—perhaps arbitrarily—related to his religious convictions. Eliot is the witness of a world which is crumbling down because it has lost its foundations, of a world which exploits its resources but no longer creates. He is moved to write poetry partly by a desire to show an evidence of both the decadence of Europe and the necessity of a superior truth. (Tschumi 1951: 155)

The anarchy, turmoil, disorder and meaninglessness that are relentless constants in the life of the modern human being are perhaps best summarised in the following lines from the section 'What the Thunder said':

If there were only water amongst the rock  
 Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit  
 Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit  
 There is not even silence in the mountains  
 But sterile thunder without rain  
 There is not even solitude in the mountains  
 But red sullen faces sneer and snarl  
 From doors of mudcracked houses. (Eliot 1969: 72)

Eliot depicts in his poems the dejection, hollowness, meaninglessness and aridness of life in the post-war civilization. The entire modern world appears to be inhabited by de-spiritualised, de-vitalised, hollow men, who lead a completely empty and purposeless existence. "Choruses from The Rock", one of Eliot's most celebrated poems, also deals with a similar theme:

Where is the Life we have lost in living?  
 Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?  
 Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?  
 The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries  
 Bring us farther from God and nearer to the Dust. (Eliot 1969: 147)

W. H. Auden, the other celebrated architect of the modernist movement in English poetry, also focuses again and again on the themes of the hopelessness, meaninglessness, emptiness and barrenness of modern human existence. Auden repeatedly speaks of the ugliness of modern human life, of the mindless destruction of nature that is an integral part of industrialisation, of the "progress" of the human civilisation.

Get there if you can and see the land you once were proud to own  
 Though the roads have almost vanished and the expresses never run:  
 Smokeless chimneys, damaged bridges, rotting wharves and choked canals,  
 Tramlines buckled, smashed trucks lying on their side across the rails;  
 (Auden, "Get there if you can and see the land you once were proud to own" 39)

Auden, in his poems, has dwelt again and again on the purposelessness, futility, and emptiness of modern human existence: "Here am I, here are you/But what does it mean? What are we going to do?" (Auden 1937: 19)

Tagore's play *Red Oleanders*, first published in 1925, chronicles a similar modernist preoccupation with the sterility of human existence and anxiety about the eventual consequences of such a barren and de-spiritualised way of life. Nandini's remarks about the ill effects of rampant industrialisation, the adverse effects of destroying nature indiscriminately, about the sterility and the hollowness of modern human existence echo the anxieties and the preoccupations of Eliot and Auden: "It puzzles me to see a whole city thrusting its head underground, groping with both hands in the dark. You dig tunnels in the underworld and come out with dead wealth that the earth has kept buried for ages past." (Tagore 2012: 4) Nandini's words highlight the destructive tendencies that mark the modern age, which is viciously bent on extracting all that it can from mother earth, on exploiting the weak and the marginalised: "The living heart of the earth gives itself up in love and life and beauty, but when you rend its bosom and disturb the dead, you bring up with your booty the curse of its dark demon, blind and hard, cruel and envious. Don't you see everybody here is either angry, or suspicious, or afraid?" (Tagore 2012: 15) Through the utterances of the King of the Underworld Tagore articulates his apprehensions about the direction in which human civilization seemed to be heading:

One day Nandini, in a far off land, I saw a mountain as weary as myself. I could not guess that all its stones were aching inwardly. One night I heard a noise, as if some giant's evil dream had moaned and moaned and suddenly snapped as under. Next morning I found the mountain had disappeared in the chasm of a yawning earthquake. That made me understand, how overgrown power crushes itself inwardly by its own weight. (Tagore 2012: 19)

With its relentless obsession with material well being, with power, with a blind groping after a "success" which was sure to, eventually, lead to spiritual sterility and emotional void, modern human civilisation appeared to be doomed to intense anguish, melancholy and wretchedness.

*The Waste Land* ends with a message of hope, with the anticipation and the possibility of a possible redemption:

*Damyata*: The boat responded  
Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar  
The sea was calm, your heart would have responded  
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient  
To controlling hands  
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.  
Shantih shantih shantih (Eliot 1969: 74)

In Rabindranath Tagore's collection of poems entitled *Balaka* one can detect a similar strain of optimism, in spite of the dreadfulness and terrors of war that several of the poems deal with and highlight. The poem "The Oarsmen" clearly points towards this particular aspect of Tagore's poetry: "And we die with the faith that Peace is true, and Good is true, and true is the eternal One!" (Tagore 1955: 54) Both T. S. Eliot and Rabindranath Tagore highlight the sad plight of the modern civilization, the aridity of

the soul of the modern man—but both the poets voice their hopes of a possible redemption, of the possibility of deliverance, of salvation by following Upanishadic ideas of sacrifice, sympathy and control of our all that is negative within ourselves.

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## **A Commentary on Locales and Treatment: O.V. Vijayan's *The Legends of Khasak***

–Neerja A. Gupta\*

### **Abstract**

The texts used as locales for rustic characters are in majority texts into which history, social fabric, and cultural contexts play a major role. The local imagery and context are found in abundance in such writings. In defining a text's "regional-ness," the matter of its genre might not seem a touchstone of much value. The plots themselves form motifs which are rich in history and manners, which rely upon relatively static, periodic, historical reference points to arrange and provide nomenclatures for such writings. The present paper stresses the rustic setting of characters, motifs, and stylistic conventions that can delineate the shape and presentation of a text (the text's genre, in other words) but also understands these matters as inevitably representing and promoting specific versions of culture.

Kerala is substantially recognizable as contingent upon certain identifiers: geographic, social, cultural, political, as well as historical and linguistic contingencies that make up what is known and named as "the Southern." We might begin to address definitional questions by noting that in the given time O.V. Vijayan's *The Legends of Khasak* has itself become a genre. The ideological as well as artistic processes that identified the introduction continued to do so throughout the novel against a national urban-education complex in the country.

Khasak is in a valley in the inner space of Mother Earth. Twelve mosques in ruin form a ring, a mandala around the village, holding the infinite time of Khasak stagnant. *The Legends of Khasak*, rich in imagery and thought sets itself into the task of interpreting the ramifications for traditional assumptions about their place within a conservative society. It combines pastoral thematic with modernist technical attitudes. The novel doesn't have any specific storyline. Instead a disjointed series of events brings forth a rich environment of myths driven society. Its stories, have not constructed idealized myths of a romantic or tragic past but by confronting falsely based narratives of dominance as found in any typical Indian setting.

**Keywords:** Locales, regional-ness, southern, legends, Khasak.

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## Introduction

The texts used as locales for rustic characters are in majority texts into which history, social fabric, and cultural contexts play a major role. The local imagery and context are found in abundance in such writings. In defining a text's "regional-ness," the matter of its genre might not seem a touchstone of much value. The plots themselves form motifs which are rich in history and manners, which rely upon relatively static, periodic, historical reference points to arrange and provide nomenclatures for such writings.

The present paper stresses the rustic setting of characters, motifs, and stylistic conventions that can delineate the shape and presentation of a text (the text's genre, in other words) but also understands these matters as inevitably representing and promoting specific versions of culture.

... Long before the lizards, before the dinosaurs, two spores set out on an incredible journey. They came to a valley bathed in the placid glow of sunset. My elder sister, said the little spore to the bigger spore, let us see what lies beyond.

This valley is green, replied the bigger spore, I shall journey no farther.

I want to journey, said the little spore, I want to discover. She gazed in wonder at the path before her.

Will you forget your sister? asked the bigger spore.

Never, said the little spore.

You will little one, for this is the loveless tale of karma; in it there is only parting and sorrow.

The little spore journeyed on. The bigger spore stayed back in the valley. Her root pierced the damp earth and sought the nutrients of death and memory. She sprouted over the earth, green and contended.

... A girl with silver anklets and eyes prettied with surma came to Chetali's valley to gather flowers. The Chempaka tree stood alone-efflorescent, serene. The flower gatherer reached out and held down a soft twig to pluck the flowers. As the twig broke the Chempaka said, My little sister you have forgotten me!

(Vijayan: "Introduction" *The Legends of Khasak*)

### ***The Legends of Khasak in Relation to "The Southern":***

Kerala is substantially recognizable as contingent upon certain identifiers: geographic, social, cultural, political, as well as historical and linguistic contingencies that make up what is known and named as "the Southern."

To claim that there are "southern" genres found in *The Legends of Khasak* might seem to divorce the South's writing from some larger concept of value, and indeed O.V. Vijayan has chafed under the sectional or regional label, regardless of how the term "southern" was being applied to the novel.

We might begin to address definitional questions by noting that in the given time *The Legends of Khasak* has itself become a genre: a body of texts bound together and meeting expectations of readers through similarities in areas of theme, setting, mood, message, structure, plot etc. The ideological as well as artistic processes that identified the introduction continued to do so throughout the novel against a national urban-education complex in the country. He invoked an ideal of communal memory in order to rebuke the disordered present, an agenda that identifies their productions as pastoral, a genre defined by its practitioners' intention to provide social critique within clearly defined literary conventions.

Khasak is in a valley in the inner space of Mother Earth. Twelve mosques in ruin form a ring, amandala around the village, holding the infinite time of Khasak stagnant. Ravi by entering the magic circle is submitting himself to its magic which in turn offers his self-healing and a degree of perfection. (LOK, 1)

### **Genre: Similarity and Difference**

The selection of theme, characters and plot indicates a key element of the genre approach but *The Legends of Khasak* thrives and depends upon differences, not only differences in conventions and forms, but differences in the ways that groups within the same geographical places experience history. O.V. Vijayan, being a self-conscious writer, produced both what we might call an establishment modernist narrative and, as counter forms, the grotesque narrative and the "grit" narrative.

*The Legends of Khasak* presents life gnarled by harsh existence, women in love, children playing with the village idiot, and supernatural beings colour the land. Ravi starts living here, an outsider observing fantastic characters like Naizam Ali, Maimuna, interacting with Madhavan Nair, and teaching children that include the idiotic Appukili. Severely introspective, Ravi dives into his past. His mind carries layers of sin and guilt. His bed-ridden father, his relationship with his stepmother, and his girl-friend, dreaming to build a future with him, haunt his thoughts.

Meanwhile the village succumbs to a pestilence, smallpox. Ravi gets cured while many die. He becomes an insider by now. In the course of five years, the land with its sensuality sucks him like a quagmire. Finally, he is liberated when bitten by a snake.

The novel is a reminder of how we have lost our roots and our feel for our environment a glow with legends. The Indian philosophy of life as the consequences of our action and reaction is built into human life in its simplicity and subtlety. A life of contradictions where two rival religious groups, the Hindus and Muslims co-exist has an ironic tinge.

Vijayan turned out to be the most one of the most imaginative authors in Indian writing in English. His style has been described as a landmark, expanding the use of the language and allegories of conveying the mystery of post-apocalyptic world. *The Legends of Khasak* brought revolutionary change in Malayalam fiction. The former era was romantic and realistic; the latter is modernist, post-modernist, and post-postmodernist, with tremendous experimentation in style and content. Vijayan released Malayalam fiction writing from the shackles of tradition.

## Organizing by Genre: Scope and Limitations

The culture of pastoral Kerala is embedded in the novel as a subdued story of resistance. While *The Legends of Khasak* began to develop the rural setting as an idealized literary world populated by characters who developed into types, each expected to convey a set of personal qualities—virtues or vices—as well as to act according to fixed mannerisms of dress, gesture, and language. In the grab of superstitions, beliefs, myths, legends and patterns of life, certain writing codes also developed for regional writing as to project the background as popular social form. Often during the course of narrative the environment seems to belong to the genre of the historical romance that used Sir Walter Scott’s works as a model.

This novel is tightly bound within conventions designed to accomplish anti-modernist goals. The “formula” of the rural narrative is something that the ex-rural writer understood only too well.

Vijayan drew upon specific details and situations that he took directly from several local environmental beliefs, but he also found his own form, combining epic, realism and sentiment to reach the largest reading audience. This attempt has brought the narrator’s voice into public with modern practices through the genre of “neo-rustic narrative.” In *The Legends of Khasak* we see how persistently the local identity, within and beyond its literature, was formed by and remains tied to its “peculiar institution” and its moment of attempted nationalism.

### ***The Legends of Khasak: A Narrative:***

The narrative of *The Legends of Khasak* is abundant with fictionalized accounts, used to leave inner revelations, such as expressions of self-discovery and individuality, in the background and to foreground the verifiable facts of representative experience, without adornment. The rural ordering of life in a Kerala village well into the twentieth century creates influence in the readers’ mind. The village itself becomes a genre seeking to resolve the conflict between memories of a simpler past, associated with myths and rural society, and experience in a more complex present world. Vijayan has tried to undergo a dislocation from a familiar home world to turn to the conventions of the pastoral to envision that simpler locale from the vantage point of inevitable loss and removal. In pastoral, then, the past looms large, not so much as a particular historical time and place as an idealized, mythologized lost realm.

*The Legends of Khasak* is encouraged to make village settings into the “good lost land” of pastoral, in part to satisfy the longings of readers increasingly removed in the late nineteenth century from any real experience of country life. Its enchanting tales take into the mythologized local colour backdrop. Nevertheless, the tension between mythologized past and diminished present that characterizes all pastoral is embodied in *The Legends of Khasak* at many different places and times.

### **Local Colour:**

*The Legends of Khasak* has found the advantage of devising a literary agenda to advance a political one and found in local colour writing a successful formula for this

program. For Vijayan, local colour fiction became a convenient tool for insinuating regional and religious paternalism into pastoral evocations of a traditional society. Popular taste dictated many of the properties of the novel: quaint locales, attention to details of dress, manner, and speech, colourful vernacular dialects, social plots which both highlight and overcome difference (between families, classes, and regions). The double structures are designed to highlight the gap between simple and “peculiar” or exotic folk, colourful and sympathetic though they may be, and the educated, realistic, framing voice that the reader has no choice but to accept as a higher authority. This comes swiftly in the characters of Ravi and Mullah. Here in the rural tension between the sophisticated man of the world like Ravi and the rural rustic like Mullah who has been left behind meet within a dual narrative structure. The people living in Khasak are Allappicha Mollakka, Appukkili, Shivaraman Nair, Madhavan Nair, Kuppuvachan, Maimoona, Khaliyar, Aliyar, and the students in Ravi’s school are Kunhamina, Karuvu, Unipparadi, Kochusuhara and others. These are typical characters from the superstitions cherished environment.

Ravi’s arrival in Khasak is as mysterious as the village itself. His guilt driven conscience leads him to a suicide that’s caused by a snake-bite. Ravi is placed against the backdrop of the villagers and their connection to the land. His wish to purify is deep and his efforts to escape from guilt are widely exposed:

I wish to escape nothing, Ravi answered from within his silence, I want to be the sand of the desert, each grain of sand; I want to be the lake, each minute droplet. I want to be the laya, the dissolution. (*The Legends of Khasak*, 79)

Against the rustically rich environment the modern world is reflected through Ravi. He is exposed to the scientifically advanced society. ‘Looking back, I thank Providence, because I missed writing the ‘revolutionary’ novel by a hair’s breadth,’ Vijayan wrote in the epilogue to Khasak. ‘Had I written it, I would have merely made one more boring entry in Marxism’s futile, repetitive bibliography.’

His ‘Stalinist claustrophobia’ was broken. ‘Destiny was in command, Khasak was waiting,’ he wrote. He wrote about his affable protagonist Ravi, evidently himself, a school teacher who comes to teach in the hamlet of Khasak. He wove palpable characters into the fabric of his tale, and for many years after the novel was written, Thasarak drew among its visitors both the sceptical and the curious, who came there charmed by its magnetic allure. (Venugopal)

Vijayan places Ravi in the novel like a literary category and the regional bias dominates and leads to religious bias. Modern institutions are looked down with suspicion; the girl refuses to go to the “Kafir’s” school as she takes oath on the “snake” and the “tamarind branch”. Appu Killi-the parrot is the balancing force since it has the freedom of both the religions. It is intelligent enough to swing according to the demand of the situation. Nowhere the novel is pretended to be an educational journey. It simply forwards into haunted locals with spirits and superstitions. Amazing thing is that almost everyone has a story. Almost each character is possessed with some sort of nightmarish dream. Laden with myths, superstitions and legends Khasak

is a village that struggles to come in terms with the diverse communal population that lives there.

Satchidanandan writes that, “This novel literally revolutionised Malayalam fiction. Its interweaving of myth and reality, its lyrical intensity, its black humour, its freshness of idiom with its mixing of the provincial and the profound and its combinatorial wordplay, its juxtaposition of the erotic and the metaphysical, the crass and the sublime, the real and the surreal, guilt and expiation, physical desire and existential angst, and its innovative narrative strategy with its deft manipulation of time and space together created a new readership with a novel sensibility and transformed the Malayali imagination forever.” (<https://en.wikipedia.org>) Satchidanandan further elucidates that “The characters of the novel have now become legendary: There is Ravi, the protagonist who lives at two levels, a mundane, instinctive level of lust and longing and a transcendental meditative level of detachment and spiritual quest. He is haunted by a sense of guilt for his past incestuous relationship with his stepmother and his desecration of an *ashram* by committing a sin with a *yogini* that prompts him to leave the peace of that shelter and walk into the blazing sun of Khasak to run a single-teacher school in that remote village. An intellectual who had tried to correlate astrophysics and Upanishadic metaphysics and was all set to go to the United States for higher studies, Ravi was driven by his shame and came to Khasak to expiate his sin: he is an alien among the rustic folk, seeing them with a kind of philosophical detachment, even while mixing with them at the level of everyday experience. But here too, desire overwhelms him and at the end of a series of events, facing the threat of suspension, he keeps his word to his beloved Padma to leave Khasak: he lies down in calm detachment in the white monsoon rain, waiting for his bus, affectionately watching the blue-hooded serpent that had struck him withdrawing content into its hole surrounded by the newborn grass.” (Satchidanandan: *Frontline*)

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## **Shashi Tharoor's *Riot*: A Postmodern Study**

*–Rushiraj Waghela\**

### **Abstract**

Postmodernism is an extension to the modernism. It serves as a reaction to the supposed stylistic and ideological limitations of modernist literature and it is characterized by fragmentation, paradox, unreliable narrators, often unrealistic and downright impossible plots, games, parody, paranoia, dark humour and authorial self-reference. Postmodern authors are likely to reject outright meanings in their novels, stories and poems, and instead, highlight and rejoice the prospect of multiple meanings, or a complete lack of meaning, within a single literary work. Shashi Tharoor is one of the makers of new pattern in writing novels with post-modern thoughts and emotions in India. His *Riot: A Novel* (2001) is an influential work that employs the postmodernist perspectives in the form and content. The fundamental features of postmodernist fiction such as experimentation with the formal and thematic content of the novel, self-reflexivity, conscious handling of narrative, fragmentation, discontinuity, subversion of conventional modes of narration, multiple viewpoints, intertextuality, metafiction, mixing of the genres are all present in this novel. The present paper attempts to analyze *Riot: A Novel* in the light of postmodern perspectives.

**Keywords:** Postmodernism, literature, *Riot*, experimentation, revolt, self-reflexivity, fragmentation, multiple viewpoints, intertextuality, metafiction, mixing of the genres.

“Postmodern literature is literature characterized by reliance on narrative techniques such as fragmentation, paradox, and the unreliable narrator; and often is (though not exclusively) defined as a style or a trend which emerged in the post–World War II era. Postmodern works are seen as a response against Enlightenment thinking and Modernist approaches to literature.” (Wikipedia) The conspicuous transformation in the novels published after the First World War, is called, modernism and the literature produced in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially after the Second World War, is considered postmodern literature. The term postmodern literature is used to explain indefinite characteristics of post–World War II literature and a reaction against Enlightenment ideas embedded in Modernist literature.

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Postmodernism is considered to be an extension of modernism, a revolt against authority and established norms. Postmodern literature serves as a reaction to the supposed stylistic and ideological limitations of modernist literature. It is characterized by fragmentation, paradox, unreliable narrators, often unrealistic and downright impossible plots, games, parody, paranoia, dark humor and authorial self-reference. Postmodern authors are likely to reject outright meanings in their novels, stories and poems, and instead, highlight and rejoice the prospect of multiple meanings, or a complete lack of meaning, within a single literary work. Postmodern philosophy asserts that knowledge and facts are always relative to particular situations and that it's both pointless and impractical to endeavor to establish any specific meaning to any idea, theory or event. Postmodern philosophy is inclined to reject the possibility of grand narratives and, instead, claims that all belief systems and ideologies are developed for the purpose of dominating others and maintaining particular political and social systems.

The publication of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* in 1981 is considered to be the turning point in the history of Indian English novel writing and the literature after that underwent a radical change in form and content. The novelists started adopting the postmodern perspectives in their novels. Vikaram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Ruth Pravar Jhabwala and Amitav Ghosh are the other makers of new pattern in writing novels with post-modern thoughts and emotions in India. They question the function of history and mythology in determining the political, cultural and ideological dimensions of the nation and its subjects. They challenge and streamline the processes of history and mythmaking in their efforts to define the complex, fragmented and pluralistic nature of collective as well as individual identity in postmodern time and space.

Shashi Tharoor is certainly one of the noteworthy novelists in Indian writing in English whose unconventional narrative modes, pluralistic approach and experimental use of the myth and history in fiction, largely characterize the postmodern perspectives in life and literature. His *Riot: A Novel* (2001) is an influential work that employs the postmodernist perspectives in the form and content. The fundamental features of postmodernist fiction such as experimentation with the formal and thematic content of the novel, self-reflexivity, conscious handling of narrative, fragmentation, discontinuity, subversion of conventional modes of narration, multiple viewpoints, intertextuality, metafiction, mixing of the genres are all present in this novel. The novel takes communal riot in 1989 following the Babri Masjid–Ram Janmabhoomi agitation which results in the death of an evidently innocent young American student as its central theme. It addresses an extensive range of controversial concerns like religious fundamentalism, political corruption, east-west encounter, multiculturalism, bias based on caste, race or gender which deeply problematize the predicament of a so called free, secular and democratic country. It is a story of angry outburst of religious hatred that roused during the Babri Masjid and Ram Janmabhoomi issue and of love and passion between two persons of differing cultures. The novelistic matrix, thus, includes the problematization of race, culture, gender, class as well as the issue of

religious conflicts and ideological clash. Besides, the way Tharoor surpasses the generic boundaries through unconventional plot and multivaocal narrative gives it a postmodern touch. The novel disregards all sorts of prevailing or authoritative stance in terms of form. Let's examine elaborately the *Riot: A Novel* in the light of postmodernism.

### **Multiplicity of Truths**

One of the conspicuous traits of postmodern literature is the flaunting of multiplicity of truths. The idea that the truth is one is extinct. There can be more than one truth. Truth can be relative. In *Riot* Shashi Tharoor has challenged the Indian Government's official motto: "Satyameva Jayate", "Truth Alone Triumphs" when Lakshaman says, "But sometimes I'm tempted to ask, whose truth? There is not always an easy answer." (236) It is wrong to say that truth always triumphs. We can say that the one who triumphs gets an opportunity to prove his truth and the one who loses doesn't. India is a country with diverse colors. There are five major sources of divisions in India – language, region, caste, class and religion. Now with so much of divisions, differences, variety and multiplicity of truth in India is inevitable.

Of the five sources of division mentioned above, the last one i.e. religion is the most sensitive one. Shashi Tharoor's *Riot* portrays multi-perspective truths about the Hindu-Muslim communal tension. Tharoor, in his fiction uses the rapid acceleration of Hindu fundamentalism that preceded the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 as the main framework. The central theme of the novel is the communal riot that took place in highly charged communal atmosphere in a fictional north Indian town of Zalilgarh. It examines the ideological concerns involved in this issue. He presents both the Hindu perspective which supports the repossession of the Ram Janmabhoomi from the Muslims, and the Muslim edition of the whole confrontation. The Hindu perspective is presented through the views given by Ram Charan das when he says:

.... Lord Ram was born in Ayodhya many thousands of years ago, in the treta-yuga period of our Hindu calendar... In Ayodhya there are many temples to Ram. But the most famous temple is not really a temple anymore. It is the Ram Janmabhoomi, the birthplace of Ram. A fit site for a grand temple you might think. But if you go to Ayodhya, you will see no Ram Janmbhoomi temple there. In olden days a great temple stood there. Amagnificent temple. There are legends about how big it was, how glorious. Pilgrims from all over India would come to worship Ram there. But a Muslim king, a Mughal emperor Babar, not an Indian, a foreigner from central Asia, he knocked it down. And in its place, he built a big mosque, which was named after him, the Babri Masjid. Can you imagine! A mosque on our holiest site... Naturally our community was very much hurt by this... But what could we do? For hundreds of years we suffered under the Muslim yoke. Then the British came and things were no better. We thought then that after independence, everything would change. Most of the Muslims in Ayodhya left to go to Pakistan. The mosque was no longer much needed as a mosque. Then, a miracle occurred.

Some devotees found that an idol of Ram had emerged spontaneously in the courtyard of the mosque. It was a clear sign from God. His temple has to be rebuilt on that sacred spot. (53-54)

Hindu's perspective towards Muslims and their hatred towards Muslims are again encapsulated in below given words of Ram Charan Das:

Now these Muslims have already divided our country once, to create their accursed Pakistan on the sacred soil of our civilization. Some of greatest sites of Hindu civilization—the ancient cities of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro, the world's oldest university at Takshshila, even the river Indus from which India gets its name in your language—are all now in foreign country. It galls me to say this. But we have swallowed our pride and accepted this vile partition. But is this enough for them? Oh no! Muslims want more! And we had Muslim-loving rulers, like that brown Englishman Jawaharlal Nehru who was our first prime minister, to give it to them. Muslim men want four wives., Whom they can divorce by chanting a phrase three times—so Nehru gives them the right to follow their own Personal law instead of being subject to the civil code of the rest of the country. Muslims want to go abroad to worship at their Mecca, so the government pays for the ships and planes to take them there every year and the hotels and lodges for them to stay in on the way. I ask you, why should my tax money go to helping Muslims get closer to their foreign god? (55)

Besides, Tharoor has meticulously mentioned reasons for Hindu's grudge for Muslim community by citing the issues of Kashmir, the case of Shah Banu, the support Muslims get from secularist government etc. in detail through Ram Charan Das's conversation with Diggs.

The insecurities, the non-belongingness to the country and the ordeals of Indian Muslims are echoed in the arguments of Professor Mohammed Sarwar. He is the representative of those Indian Muslims who feel that their birth right as an Indian citizen has been sold by Jinnah for the bowl of soup. Some of Indian Muslims like Prof. Sarwar think that their birth right as an Indian cannot be sold so easily, but it is precious that sense of loss that drives many of them to rage and sorrow—the feeling that, since the country was divided in their name, they are somehow less entitled to their due in what remains of it. They feel that the part of their birthright has indeed been given away. It leads to some Muslims into a sort of as Tharoor mentions “self-inflicted second class citizenship” (110) Tharoor has shown the Muslim's suffering when Prof. Sarwar says, “Pakistani will never understand the depth of the disservice Jinnah did us, Indian Muslim as a whole, when he made some of us into non-Indians. There are so many Indians who—out of ignorance as well as prejudice—think of us as somebody different from them, somehow foreign.” (111) Arguing against Hindu's charges of Shah Banu case and Muslim men's right to have four wives, Sarwar says, “The Rajiv Gandhi government's action on Shah Banu was pure political opportunism; it was a sellout to Muslim conservatives, but a betrayal of Muslim women and Muslim

reformers.”(114) Addressing the charge, the Hindus lay on Muslims, regarding their intension of increasing the population overtaking Hindus by having four wives, he says, “If Muslims have four wives –and not many do –how do that increase the number of reproductive Muslim wombs, which still remains four whether by one husband or many?” (114) Tharoor has faithfully captured the minority complex Hindu chauvinists want to impose on Indian Muslims. Sarwar has rationalized the truth of minorityhood when he says, “What makes me a minority? Is it a mathematical concept? Well, mathematically, Muslims were always a minority in India, before partition, even in the mediaeval Muslim period I spent my life researching and teaching. But when Mughals ruled on the thrones of Delhi, were Muslims a “minority” then? Mathematically no doubt, but no Indian Muslim thought of himself as a minority... Minorityhood is state of mind.” (114-115)

The Muslim’s truth about the issue of Ram Janmabhoomi is represented by the historian, Professor Sarwar. He argues:

Isn’t it amazing how these Hindu chauvinist types claim the history on their side? People like me spend years trying to establish the veracity of an event, a date, an inscription, but the likes of Ram Charan Gupta have not the slightest doubt that their Lord Rama was born at the Ram Janmabhoomi, and what’s more, at the precise spot they call the Ram Janmasthan –not ten yards away, not ten feet away, but right there. Their own beliefs are that Rama flourished in the treta-yuga of Hindu tradition, which means that their historical exactitude goes back, oh, about a million years. What is a mere historian like me to do in the face of such breathtaking knowledge? (180)

As Rama is the hero of the great epic Ramayana, Muslims tend to believe that there cannot be any certitude whether Rama was born at all or simply emerged from the creative mind of Valmiki.

The way Hindu secularists look at the issue of the Hindu-Muslim communal divide in India is another aspect of the truth. Lakshaman is the one of such secularists who feels ashamed of the Hindu activists’ intention of assaulting Muslims. The rationalist voice of Hindu secularist is heard when hesays, “why should today’s Muslims have to pay a price for what Muslims may have done four hundred and fifty years ago.” (145) If the Muslims in 16<sup>th</sup> century acted out of ignorance and fanaticism, Hindus need not act the same way in 20<sup>th</sup> century. By doing so, Hindus hurt the feelings of today’s Muslims and provoke their rage and violence. This in turns damages the image of Hindu across the world.

Tharoor tries to analyze the concept of secularism in which Hindus and Muslims are proud of being Hindus and Muslims respectively but with tolerance and respect for each other and united through their common identity as Indians. Lakshaman condemns the activities of Hindu fundamentalists of assaulting the Muslims by defining Hinduism not as a religion but a way of life. He has rightly expressed how Hinduism accepts the multiplicity of truths and embraces all the faith systems. He says, “Hinduism embraces an eclectic range of doctrines and practices, from pantheism to agnosticism

and from faith in reincarnation to the belief in the caste system. But none of these constitutes an obligatory credo for a Hindu: there are none.” (143) Multiplicity of truth accepted by the Hinduism is seen by the fact that it gives one the right to reject it. One can be atheist and still can be a Hindu. Further, Lakshaman says:

Above all, as a Hindu I belong to the only major religion in the world that does not claim to be the only true religion. I find it immensely congenial to be able to face my fellow human beings of other faiths without being burdened by the conviction that I am embarked upon a “true path” that they have missed... Hinduism, however, asserts that all ways of belief are equally valid, and Hindus readily venerate the saints, and the sacred objects of other faiths. There is no such thing as a Hindu heresy. (144)

Thus, different layers of truth about the Hindu-Muslim communal divide are discussed through the juxtaposition of Ram Charan Gupta, Prof. Mohammed Sarwar and Lakshaman. Lakshaman having the balanced view regarding the issue, reaming two have valid agreements against the other. Thus, Tharoor has presented truths of two communities trying to establish and reinforce their identities.

### **Uncertainty of the Truth**

If postmodern literature is inclined towards the multiplicity of truth, the uncertainty of truth is the obvious phenomena. If the truth is more than one, there cannot be any certain truth. *Riot* begins with the newspaper report of *The New York Journal* which reads, “A rioting mob attacked and killed an American woman in a town east of New Delhi yesterday, a few days before she was to return home, the U.S. embassy announced.” (2) The report triggers to range of political, cultural, and historical interpretation and possibilities. It raises a chain of questions. Who killed Priscilla Hart? Why was an American Christian killed in the communal riot of Hindu and Muslim? What was she doing in the small, sensitive and infamous town of India during riot? Was she killed just by an accident? Or, was she killed precisely because of her American identity? The mysterious death of Pricilla during communal riot in a fictional Indian village of Zalilgarh is the pivot around which Shashi Tharoor’s *Riot* imposes a range of viewpoints about the so called facts of history. History is not a web woven with innocent hands. History is just someone’s version of the facts. In the words of Nishat Haider, “History is always a matter of telling a story about the past, using other texts as intertexts. History is not a matter of dates and great events but of politics, ideology, power, authority and subversion” (247). If there is the interplay of truth and imagination, reality and fiction in history, the novelistic representation of any historical event is bound to be a muddle of contradictory standpoints. The apparent pursuit in the novel is to find out the conditions which resulted into the cruel killing of Priscilla Hart. Though the story begins with some probable questions and moves further with the attempts to fathom the truth behind the unexplained murder of Pricilla, it ends with the more complexities and leaving readers more confused with contradictory accounts of bunch of characters. The story, unlike murder mystery stories, does not please reader’s

desire for certainty but disappoints their longing for final resolution. Tharoor hides the identity of the murderer and allows the multiple possibilities. It could have been Makhan Singh, or Ali, or the Swami's goondas, or any other anonymous participant in the riot. By shrouding the identity of the murder, Tharoor conveys that the exact knowledge is rather irrelevant and that the only thing that matters is that she got killed. Perhaps he wants to accentuate the inaccessibility of truth. The novel ends with uncertain conclusion which may sound inconclusive, "that she was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time." (267)

### **The Unconventional Narrative**

Postmodernism tends to use unconventional narrative style, embraces the idea of fragmentation and uses it to create playful texts that reflect and explore the chaos of the world. The present novel adroitly begins at the end, with a newspaper report of the murder of Priscilla Hart, who was in India as part of her fieldwork for her doctoral research. But the novel does not just outlines the incidents of her life in a linear pattern. Rather, it is avowedly polyphonic and multivocal. "Unlike the prevalent customary literary style of a single narrative voice dominating the novel, it is aligned to Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia and consists of differing utterances." (Parween 56-60) The narrative develops through different voices of fundamentalists and secularists, Westerners and Indians, men and women. "Its polyphony provides space to representatives of different groups from the diehard fanatic Ram Charan to the tolerant pacifist Laxman or Sarwar, from the American Priscilla and Randy Diggs to the native Fatima bi and Geetha." (Parween 56-60)

On a structural level, *Riot* is divided into seventy eight segments of changing sizes. The segments are not traditional chapters but are the spoof columns, letters, diaries, excerpts from notebooks, telegrams, scrapbooks, greeting cards, interview transcripts, and the style varies from the funny Indian English of Shankar Das to the literary English by Laxaman, Pricilla and Prof. Sarwar with a wild wealth of abusive words and weird forms of profanities by the IPS Gurinadar and other politicians. The novel turns into a jumble of varied genres with the poems written by Lakshman and Priscilla, and the long discourses on history and politics by Ram Charan Gupta and Prof. Mohammed Sarwar. The novel is the amalgamation of tragedy and romantic saga, solemn criticism and witty anecdote, a fantasy world and dreadful realism; formal literary language, a naive child's wavering English and informal talks caught up in slangs and foul language. There is a blend of various genres like verse and prose, myth, romance and mystery, poem and epistle, historical writing, political critique and literature.

While both modernism and postmodernism literature break from the realism and idealism and explore fragmentariness in narrative and character-construction, what makes them different is the fact that while Modernist literature sees fragmentation as an existential crisis, or Freudian internal conflict, a problem that must be solved, and the artist is often cited as the one to solve it, Postmodernists, on the other hand, often demonstrate that this chaos is insurmountable; the artist is impotent, and the only

recourse against chaos is to play within the chaos. The playfulness of the form becomes central in the text. Solution remains secondary. *Riot* starts with a newspaper report describing the murder of an American girl amidst communal riots. However, Tharoor doesn't identify the murderer signifying that in riot no one is responsible or everyone is responsible. Riot is a collective crime. However, Tharoor doesn't give any solution to the problem of the communal hatred. The novel starts with murder but ends leaving readers clueless with the U. S. embassy spokesman arriving at the naïve conclusion which rather sounds inconclusive "that she was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time." (267) However, the novel ends with Lakshman's question whether there is such a thing as the wrong place, or the wrong time. He says, "We are where we are at the only time we have. Perhaps it's where we're meant to be". (267) This certainly signifies the inevitability of chaos. The novel explains the issue of Hindu-Muslim communal rift and agitation from multiple perspectives but by leaving the readers dazed, he signifies the impossibility of solution to the chaos. The fragmentariness and disorder of the form is the way Tharoor has expressed the insurmountable chaos and disorder.

### **The Ploy of Pastiche**

Pastiche is a post-modern ploy that uses many sources and comes up with a new piece of literature. It is equivalent to collage in photography. It is not about creating something from scratch but drawing on what already exists.

As admitted by Tharoor himself, the origin of *Riot* can be traced back to two historical events – the first being the boiling Hindu-Muslim restlessness of 1980s resulting in the bloodshed and brutality regarding the disputed Babri Masjid at Ayodhya, areport of which he received from his friend in the form of a detailed description about a riot in Khargone, Madhya Pradesh, and the second being a report of the death of an American woman in a racial riot in South Africa. Tharoor combines both these events with commendable luminosity and agility crafting the story of his text *Riot*. This amalgamation of the two historical events is example of the use of pastiche.

### **Metafiction**

One of the techniques abundantly found in postmodern novels is the technique of metafiction. The word 'metafiction' indicates the kind of text that highlights its status as a text. The technique of Metafiction keeps the readers completely aware of the fact that it is fiction—some literature may try to be naturalistic or realistic, but postmodernism doesn't conceal what it is. In fact, it flaunts it. Rather than hiding its structure and techniques, metafiction lays its cards on the table. In other words, postmodern texts are self-referential. There are many different ways in which authors can create this effect—story-within-a-story, making obvious references to storytelling conventions—but what they have in common is that they draw attention to the methods of writing and reading.

Tharoor has discussed the theory of his novel in one of the chapters of the book entitled 'From Lakshman's journal: June 2, 1989' (135-7) In this chapter, Tharoor

talks about the art of writing a novel. Lakshman, the aspiring poet and writer, is the fictional surrogate of the author here. He writes:

"I'd like to write a novel," I tell her, "that doesn't read like a novel. Novels are too easy – they tell a story, in a linear narrative, from start to finish. They've done that for decades. Centuries, perhaps. I'd do it differently."

She raises herself on an elbow. "You mean, write an epic?"

"No," I reply shortly, "someone's done that already. I've read about this chap who's just reinvented the Mahabharata as a twentieth-century story – epic style, oral tradition, narrative digressions, the lot. No, what I mean is, why can't I write a novel that reads like – like an encyclopedia?"

"An encyclopedia?" She sounds dubious.

"Well, a short one. What I mean is, something in which you can turn to any page and read. You pick up chapter 23, and you get one thread of the plot. Then you go forwards to chapter 37, or backwards to 16, and you get another thread. And they're all interconnected, but you see the interconnections differently depending on the order in which you read them. It's like each bit of reading adds to the sum total of the reader's knowledge, just like an encyclopedia. But to each new bit of reading he brings the knowledge he's acquired up to that point – so that each chapter means more, or less, depending on how much he's learned already." (135-6)

## Intertextuality

The poet John Donne once wrote that "no man is an island," and for postmodernists, no text is an island. Postmodernism is all about the connections between texts, including the various ways in which one text references another or many others. For postmodernists, it is clear that no text exists in isolation and that works of literature can only be created using stuff that already exists.

In its intertextuality the *Riot* employs real historical and political events of the issues of Ram Janmabhoomi and the Babri Masjid for its central theme of communal riots in India in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The novel brings into play the references of principal mythologies and epics as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and thoughts of real personages as intertexts. The novel is loaded with the quotations of Oscar Wilde used by Lakshman very now and then. He also makes references of the ancient Sanskrit text of *Natyashastra*. The references of Vatsyayana's *Kamasutra* by Gurinder, Freud by Lakshman and Lawrence of Arabia by Priscilla are few of the examples of intertextuality employed in the novel.

## Conclusion

To conclude, with its pluralistic approach, multiplicity of voices, heterogeneity of forms, inclusion of variety of genres, unconventional narrative, lack of narrative closure, fragmentation, problematization of the past, concern with politics and history with an

ingrained futuristic bent, self-referentiality, intertextuality and acknowledgement of plural truths, the novel can be aptly described as a postmodern fiction.

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## India as the Uncivilized Other: Reading Kipling's *Letters of Marque*

–Sunil Sagar\*

### Abstract

While various critics have explored the mainstream literary works to deconstruct imperialism, the alternative sites such as letters, diaries, and travel writings have not yet been sufficiently investigated. It would be interesting to read and subject some of Rudyard Kipling's other writings which he termed as 'the bulk of the special correspondence and occasional articles', published between 1887-89, and later compiled in a volume titled, *From Sea to Sea*, to a fresh and thorough investigation.

The paper explores the first part of the volume titled *Letters of Marque* containing articles that throw open a rich site of a 22-year old Kipling's unsubstantiated value judgments on India. These articles are mostly Kipling's description of life in the semi-Independent States of India but they are interspersed with observations which brand India as the uncivilized other as against the sophistication and profundity of the English. Kipling's *Letters of Marque* vividly captures the imperial mind in its rare moment of lapse when a young Kipling abandoned political correctness and brazenly depicted India as the uncivilized other whom perhaps only the Empire had the wisdom and where withal to civilize, modernize and liberate by colonizing!

**Keywords:** Other, imperialism, deconstruction, travel writing.

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### Lead In

For those who still believe in categories such as centre and margin, there is a statutory warning that while you hunt for the truth in the centre, truth has the inclination to sit on the margin and watch you grope in the dark at the centre. For those who understand the world in Derridian terms, there is no centre and hence, logically, we now operate in centreless world. In a centerless world, it seems that margin is the new centre because discourses seem to be guided by margins. As Mary Louise Pratt comments in *Imperial Eyes*:

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For one of the things it brings most forcefully into play are contestatory expressions from the site of imperial intervention, long ignored in the metropolis; the critique of empire coded ongoingly on the spot, in ceremony, dance, parody, philosophy, counterknowledge and counterhistory, in texts unwitnessed, suppressed, lost, or simply overlain with repetition and unreality. (2)

While various critics have explored the mainstream literary works to deconstruct the imperialism and modes of empire building, the alternative sites of knowledge such as letters, diaries, and travel writings have not yet been sufficiently investigated. Apart from the popular works of Rudyard Kipling, it would be apt to subject some of Kipling's other writings, which he termed as 'the bulk of the special correspondence and occasional articles', published between 1887-89, and later compiled in a volume titled, *From Sea to Sea*, to a fresh and thorough investigation. Travel writings have long ceased to be innocent, harmless writings, as Marry Pratt says:

Travel books by Europeans about non-European parts of the world went (and go) about creating the "domestic subject" of Euroimperialism; how they have engaged metropolitan reading publics with (or to) expansionist enterprises whose material benefits accrued mainly to the very few. (4)

Marry Pratt raises a number of questions with respect to travel writings:

How has travel and exploration *writing produced* "the rest of the world" for European readerships at particular points in Europe's expansionist trajectory? How has it produced Europe's differentiated conceptions of itself in relation to something it became possible to call "the rest of the world"? How do such signifying practices encode and legitimate the aspirations of economic expansion and empire? How do they betray them? (5)

To turn to the text in question, the origin of the term Letter of Marque is quite interesting as we find in Wikipedia:

In the days of fighting sail, a letter of marque and reprisal was a government license authorizing a person (known as a *privateer*) to attack and capture enemy vessels and bring them before admiralty courts for condemnation and sale. Cruising for prizes with a letter of marque was considered an honorable calling combining patriotism and profit, in contrast to unlicensed piracy, which was universally reviled. In addition to the term *lettre de marque*, the French sometimes used the term *lettre de course* for their letters of marque. "Letter of marque" was sometimes used to describe the vessel used: a "letter of marque" generally refers to a lumbering square-rigged cargo carrier that might pick up a prize if the opportunity arose. A "privateer" was a fast and weatherly fore-and-aft-rigged vessel heavily armed and heavily crewed, intended exclusively for fighting. (Wikipedia)

A "letter of marque and reprisal" would include permission to cross an international border to effect a reprisal (take some action against an attack or injury) authorized by an issuing jurisdiction to conduct reprisal operations outside its borders.

The first part of the volume titled *Letters of Marque* containing articles that throw open a rich site of a 22-year old Kipling's unsubstantiated value judgments on India. These articles are mostly Kipling's description of life in Rajasthan but they are interspersed with observations which evidence not only the quintessential Englishman's rejection of native traditions but also brand India as the uncivilized other as against the sophistication and profundity of the English.

Colonialism has its roots in the complex issues of civilization, race, nation and religion. The colonizers always had a dim view of the colonized spaces. They seemed to believe that these regions probably needed the colonizers to intervene and lead the march to what they termed as civilization and progress. They had a tendency to dismiss the native culture and its time-honoured traditions as outdated and whatever they had developed in the West as superior and scientific. Macaulay's Minute has served as the classic reference point for colonizers' view of India. They could find no rational design to this country's many religions, traditions and languages and they found it absurd that there is no single and specific book of worship or law to govern them. Their view of the Indian contribution to arts is equally biased. In all, it appears that the colonizers seemed to believe that civilization is something that the West invented and they hold the patent and distributor rights as well. They decided to dish it out in selective installments such as railways and universities as they deemed fit. In spite of rich intellectual traditions and pronounced contributions to knowledge domains, the colonizers always believed at a deeper level somewhere that India was a land of uncivilized and uncouth people and its native traditions, arts and other timeless treasures were a thing of the past.

In order to critique such tendencies of the imperial West, it may not suffice to read the mainstream works of writers such as Kipling because as creative writers they can play with the layers of meaning and shadows of characters they portray without much of accountability. But in the margin, where we locate alternative sites of insights such as memoirs, diaries and letters, there is a lot of excavation possible with respect to the imperial mindset that these apparently great writers possessed and the kind of image of India they projected through these alternative discourses.

It is fascinating to study how colonization affects the human psyche. Colonization weakens people to their core. When a fairly good scholar who has spent years in research in India has to go and address an audience in the West or write a book for the Western readership, she/he feels nervous or desperately looks for the sanction of the West. On the other hand, we have the curious case of a 22-year old Kipling having the audacity to pronounce value judgments one after another. It is not that he finds fault with any one aspect of Indian life and culture; he finds fault with the culture, religion, languages, architecture and so on and so forth. Moreover, he equates every apparent folly or limitation with being uncivilized and projects the aspect as the evidence of an uncivilized society.

To cite a few instances, he considers visiting India as someone would pay a visit to the zoo, "Except for those who, under compulsion of a sick certificate, are flying

Bombaywards, it is good for every man to see some little of the great Indian Empire and the strange folk who move about it.” (*Letters of Marque*17)

Kipling was publishing these travel articles and conveying a message to the world that please come and see these ‘strange folks’ in India. What he seems to mean by ‘strange’ means ‘not quite British’ and hence, ‘not quite civilized’, same human race but a class of inferior quality.

Kipling comes across as a self-proclaimed expert on civilizations and non-civilizations as he concludes that Udaipur is “as backward as Jeypore is advanced—if we judge it by the standard of civilization”. (36) One wonders what could be the rationale behind such a statement. For better or worse, he clarifies by saying that “It does not approve of the incursions of Englishmen, and, to do it justice, it thoroughly succeeds in conveying its silent sulkiness.” (36)

One marvels at his courage to state this without much of either expertise or research. He also points out that “The modern side of Jeypore must not be mixed with the ancient.” (26) Of course, how can we? We must follow Kipling Sahib’s instruction and go by his word on what is modern and what is ancient and what these categories mean. For him, ancient seems to mean outdated and irrelevant. While we are prohibited, Kipling marches on to make further pronouncements:

Let us consider now with due reverence the modern side of Jeypore. It is difficult to write of a nickel plated civilisation set down under the immemorial Aravalis in the first state of Rajputana. The red grey hills seem to laugh at it, and the ever-shifting sand-dunes under the hills take no account of it, for they advance upon the bases of the monogrammed, coronet-crowned lamp-posts, and fill up the points of the natty tramways near the Waterworks, which are the outposts of the civilization of Jeypore. (28)

Although it is difficult to interpret what hills convey, but Kipling reads between the hills and concludes that they are laughing at Jaipur!

To him, the history and glory of Rajasthan means nothing as he goes on to simplistically and summarily dismiss its history as he pronounces, “If any part of a land strewn with dead men’s bones have a special claim to distinction, Rajputana, as the cock-pit of India, stands first.” (20)

Kipling seems to be conveying that the British are the only people who fight wars and earn glory and hence, the rest are backward and inferior. As if it is not enough, he seems to be suggesting that a lot of what we honour as our history is a bunch of lies:

It should be noted, none the less, that in this part of the world the soberest mind will believe anything—believe in the ghosts by the Gau Mukh, and the dead Thakurs who get out of their tombs and ride round the Burra Talao at Boondi—will credit every legend and lie that rises as naturally as the red flush of sunset, to gild the dead glories of Rajasthan. (88)

When he writes about the use of weapons, one begins to develop the image of Kipling as a Gandhian, who believed in non-violence and world peace:

There is a certain amount of personal violence in and about the State, or elsewhere would be the good of the weapons? There are occasionally dacoities more or less important; but these are not often heard of, and, indeed, there is no special reason why they should be dragged into the light of an unholy publicity, for the land governs itself in its own way, and is always in its own way, which is by no means ours, very happy. (41)

By 'our' means, says Kipling which is different from India, 'the uncivilized other' who has no clue about how to govern itself.

To Kipling, education is the only way India could have been civilized but there too, we seemed to have disappointed him. He comes across a school where he observes:

Thirty or forty little ones, from five to eight years old, were sitting in an open verandah learning accounts and Hindustani, said the teacher. No need to ask from what castes they came, for it was written on their faces that they were Mahajans, Oswals, Aggerwals, and in one or two cases, it seemed, Sharawaks of Guzerat. They were learning the business of their lives, and, in time, would take their father's places, and show in how many ways money might be manipulated. (153)

The Durbar supports the school, which is entirely free and open; a just distinction being maintained between the various castes. The old race prejudice against payment for knowledge came out in reply to a question. "You must not sell teaching," said the teacher; and the class murmured applaudively, "You must not sell teaching." (87)

By this account, all we have taught our children in India is how to manipulate money. Of course, it is completely irrelevant that it was the West which mastered the art of manipulating money by establishing giant banking institutions. Even if India did manipulate money, which is certainly not the case, but even if it did, it was Indian money, it was not like the British who went out of their way to manipulate the economy, politics and culture of the half of the world! But how can Kipling Sahib be wrong?

He denounces the education system and he does not stop at this and goes on to write off the languages, particularly the languages on the margin, "Now the little Bhil is an aborigine, which is humiliating to think of. His tongue, which may frequently be heard in the City, seems to possess some variant of the Zulu click, which gives it a weird and unearthly character." (42)

He also denounces and maligns the local language at another place when he remarks, "The Englishman caught a camel-driver who talked to him in Mewari, which is a heathenish dialect, something like Multani to listen to." (40) Or sample this:

They speak a pagan tongue in Boondi, swallow half their words, and adulterate the remainder with local patois. What can be extracted from a people who call four miles variously *do kosh*, *do kush*, *dhihkas*, *doo-a koth*, and *diakast* all one word? The country-folk are quite unintelligible; which simplifies matters. It is the catching of a shadow of a meaning here and there, the hunting for directions cloaked in dialect, that is annoying. (90)

Of course, there is only one great language in the world—English. The other dialects and languages are evidence of our being further uncivilized. Long live English, long live the Empire. The native, heathenish languages may very well be damned. Kipling championed the cause of imperialism in ways that will call for a completely different sort of research and investigation.

His scorn for Indian architecture mixed with criticism of Indian religion is of particular significance. At various places where he observes the architecture, he denounces it as uncivilized carvings of an uncouth race. Upon visiting a Shiva temple, he finds ‘no repose in this architecture’, and for him, ‘the entire effect is one of repulsion’ leading him to conclude that it only had ‘the clustered figures of man and brute seem always on the point of bursting into unclean, wriggling life.’(42)

He elaborates upon his special disdain for the architecture:

Those who care to look, may find elsewhere a definition of its architecture and its more striking peculiarities. It was in kind, but not in degree, like the Jugdesh Temple at Udaipur, and as it exceeded it in magnificence, so its effect upon the mind was more intense. The confusing intricacy of the figures with which it was wreathed from top to bottom, the recurrence of the one calm face, the God enthroned, holding the Wheel of the Law, and the appalling lavishness of decoration, all worked toward the instilment of fear and aversion.

The builder had left no mark behind him—not even a mark on the threshold of the door, or a sign in the head of the topmost step. The Englishman looked in both places, believing that those were the places generally chosen for mark-cutting. So he sat and meditated on the beauties of kingship and the unholiness of Hindu art, and what power a shadowland of lewd monstrosities had upon those who believed in it. (60)

One might ask, what is the yardstick by which Kipling evaluates the architecture? The answer lies in one of his remarks:

The first impression of repulsion and awe is given by a fragment of tumbled sculpture close to a red daubed *lingam*, near the Padal Pol or lowest gate. It is a piece of frieze, and the figures of the men are worn nearly smooth by time. What is visible is finely and frankly obscene to an English mind. (58)

Therefore, for the record, whatever is obscene to an English mind is not great art. Art that is sanctioned, validated and recommended by Kipling and his tribe is the only great art. The rest is all uncivilized stuff, meant to be forgotten in time.

Where Kipling approves of India, it is also done in a humiliating way, “The Rajput is a man and a brother, in respect that he will ride, shoot, eat pig, and drink strong waters like an Englishman. Of the pig-hunting he makes almost a religious duty, and of the wine-drinking no less.” (49)

Among many, there is one passage that is especially significant and stands out is one which contains all the varieties of Kipling’s scorn; he ridicules almost everything, denounces the native traditions, passes value judgments on the people, and their education, and upholds what he calls ‘the European standards’:

The last resting-place of the Maharanas of Udaipur is at Ahar, a little village two miles east of the City. Here they go down in their robes of state, their horse following behind, and here the Political saw, after the death of a Maharana, the dancing-girls dancing before the poor white ashes, the musicians playing among the cenotaphs, and the golden hookah, sword, and water-vessel laid out for the naked soul doomed to hover twelve days round the funeral pyre, before it could depart on its journey toward a fresh birth.

But to return from the burning-ground to modern Udaipur, as at present worked under the Maharana and his Prime Minister Rae Punna Lal, *C.I.E.* To begin with, His Highness is a racial anomaly in that, judged by the strictest European standard, he is a man of temperate life.

The one drawback in the present Maharaja, from the official point of view, is his want of education. He is a thoroughly good man, but was not brought up with the kingship before his eyes, consequently he is not an English-speaking man. (47)

## Lead Out

The reason why Kipling fails to appreciate anything that is Indian is because as he innocently admits, "They were all Mahometans, and consequently all easy to deal with. A Hindu is an excellent person, but ... but ... there is no knowing what is in his heart, and he is hedged about with so many strange observances." (96)

Kipling writes about how to explore India:

There are many, and some very curious, methods of seeing India. One of these is buying English translations of the more Zolaistic of Zola's novels and reading them from breakfast to dinner-time in the verandah. Yet another, even simpler, is American in its conception. Take a Newman's *Bradshaw* and a blue pencil, and race up and down the length of the Empire, ticking off the names of the stations "done." To do this thoroughly, keep strictly to the railway buildings and form your conclusions through the carriage-windows. These eyes have seen both ways of working in full blast; and, on the whole, the first is the most commendable. (28)

To put it simply, if reading English translation of Zola's novels in the verandah is the best possible way of seeing India, that is what Kipling should have done. If he had read Zola's novels and not travelled and not written about it, it would have saved us from his travel articles called *Letters of Marque*. Further, it would have saved him from fall from grace like this, and a dent in his otherwise, fine literary reputation!

Kipling's *Letters of Marque* vividly captures the imperial mind in its rare moment of lapse when a young Kipling abandoned political correctness and brazenly depicted India as the uncivilized other whom perhaps only the Empire had the wisdom and wherewithal to civilize, modernize and liberate by colonizing! As Marry Pratt remarks:

While the imperial metropolis tends to understand itself as determining the periphery (in the emanating glow of the civilizing mission or the cash flow of development, for example), it habitually blinds itself to the ways in which the periphery determines the metropolis—beginning, perhaps, with the latter’s obsessive need to present and re-present its peripheries and its others continually to itself. Travel writing, among other institutions, is heavily organized in the service of that imperative. (*Imperial Eyes* 06)

The future of the discourse on imperialism lies in re-reading of these writings on the margin and ask questions to Kipling and his clan, be it travel writings or other genres.

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## **Rythmanalysing New York through Diasporic Lens: A Study of Nikhil Advani's *Kal Ho Naa Ho* and Karan Johar's *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna***

–Minu Susan Koshy\*

### **Abstract**

Bollywood movies set in New York form a significant part of the oeuvre of the cultural expressions of diasporic India. Part of the appeal of the city for Indian film-makers lies in the intensity of its rhythms and the ability of the diasporic subject to perceive these rhythms as a 'rythmanalyst'. The diasporic subject thus becomes the perfect rythmanalyst in that (s)he is both a part of the city's rhythm and yet, essentially outside it. He/she contributes to it, yet, (s)he can be a passive spectator, gazing at the street and the city from a location that is unique to him/her. The everyday spectacle of the street, the music of the city, can be perceived in all its complexities by the diasporic subject with his/her ability to be both internal and external to the city. The city as a text unfurls itself before the diasporic rythmanalyst, thereby making it possible for him/her to perceive an alternate vision of the new 'homeland'. My paper attempts to explore how the diasporic subjects in Nikhil Advani's *Kal Ho Naa Ho* (2003) and Karan Johar's *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna* (2006) make and perceive the rhythms in their 'adopted' homelands and how these rhythms merge into the quotidian life of the diasporic Indian in New York, as depicted in these movies.

**Keywords:** Rythmanalysis, diasporic subject, spectacle, street, city spaces, homeland.

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Bollywood movies set in New York form a significant part of the oeuvre of the cultural expressions of diasporic India. Part of the appeal of the city for Indian film-makers lies in the intensity of its rhythms- the noises, the movements, the subtle breath of leaves on an empty road, the blaring of vehicle horns, the shutters of a shop opening or closing, the occasional accident- and the ability of the diasporic subject to perceive these rhythms as, to adopt Henri Lefebvre's term, a 'rythmanalyst'. As Lefebvre

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says, rhythms can be analyzed only by one who is within and at the same time, outside them. “To understand and analyze rhythms, one has to let go...but not completely. To capture a rhythm, one needs to have been captured by it” (Lefebvre 219). The diasporic subject thus becomes the perfect rhythm analyst in that (s)he is both a part of the city’s rhythm and yet, essentially outside it. He/she contributes to it, yet, (s)he can be a passive spectator, gazing at the street and the city from a location that is unique to him/her. The everyday spectacle of the street, the music of the city, can be perceived in all its complexities by the diasporic subject with his/her ability to be both internal and external to the city. The city as a text unfurls itself before the diasporic rhythm analyst, thereby making it possible for him/her to perceive an alternate vision of the new ‘homeland’. My paper attempts to explore how the diasporic subjects in Nikhil Advani’s *Kal Ho Naa Ho* (2003) and Karan Johar’s *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna* (2006) make and perceive the rhythms in their ‘adopted’ homelands and how these rhythms merge into the quotidian life of the diasporic Indian in New York, as depicted in these movies.

The characteristic that marks any diasporic community distinctively is the conscious or unconscious trauma of the absence of the original homeland. The adopted homeland has to be appropriated if the diasporic subject is to feel ‘homed’. And this appropriation is possible only through an observation-active or passive of the new homeland. To observe is to stand at a distance and watch as an outsider, without being totally outside the scenario unfolding in front of one. The diasporic subjects in the two movies under consideration, by virtue of them being conscious of the ambiguity of their belonging, have to be rhythm analysts if they are to appropriate, or rather, get assimilated into the city.

Both *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna* and *Kal Ho Naa Ho* employ the first person narrative technique, with Dev and Naina commenting on the incidents in their lives and introducing the lives of the other characters, both from within and outside the scenes. Both are long-term residents of New York, who introduce New York as one of the characters in the movies. The movies begin with screenshots of the sky-scrapers that mark the geography of the city. In *Kal Ho Naa Ho*, Naina begins her narrative by introducing the city as perhaps the most important character in the movie. She says:

New York. One of the biggest cities in the world. The business capital of the world. Every breath of the city, every heartbeat, is filled with speed. Though miles away from India, there’s no dearth of Indians in this city. In fact, they say every fourth face in New York is an Indian’s. (Advani)

The necessity to make a homeland for oneself in the busy city is evident in the desire to stress the fact that it is home to people from one’s original homeland. For Naina, the city becomes the site for identity formation and her deepest memories are rooted there. “This city taught me to be independent. It taught me to fulfill my responsibilities. ... Whenever I stepped back and watched the city from a distance, I felt even closer to Papa” (Advani). ‘Watching’ and “walking in the city” (Badmington, and Thomas 149) becomes integral to Dev’s understanding of it. It is his interactions with the other characters that happen in the street, parks, metro stations and cafes of

New York that shape the course of the story. The turning points in the story occur in public places in the city. Dev is crippled by an accident while walking on the road; Dev and Maya meet for the first time in a park; their second encounter takes place in the metro station; so do the third encounter when Dev confesses his love for Maya and the final scene where the two are at last reunited. Sam and Kiranjeet's conversation with them, which turns out to be a turning point in Dev's and Maya's lives, the meetings between the lovers, all take place in cafes. The same happens in *Kal Ho Naa Ho* as well. Aman marks his presence in the neighborhood the first day with the half-Hindi song "Pretty Woman", thereby marking his identity as an Indian, enabled to view the city as an outsider, as opposed to Naina's view as a marginal insider to the city. Rohit and Naina meet in cafes and indeed, Aman sees his beloved for the first time in one such café and the love triangle between the three get established when they are walking back home from a pub.

In *Kal Ho Naa Ho*, it is his observation of the city and its residents that make Aman a much-adored character. He perceives his neighborhood as "a boring sort of a street", which becomes colorful with his arrival. While Naina becomes a rhythmanalyst observing the city as a diasporic subject, and hence as an outsider-insider, in Aman's case, his rhythmanalytic observation of the city arises due to his infirmity. For Dev, there are two factors that make him the perfect rhythmanalyst- his status as a diasporic subject and his disability- both of which situate him at once both inside and outside the rhythms of quotidian existence in the city.

"The question of rhythm raises issues of change and repetition, identity and difference, contrast and continuity" (Lefebvre xii). The cyclical rhythms that Lefebvre talks about in *Rhythmanalysis* – night and day, sleep and wakefulness, seasonal changes, rain and sunlight- get intertwined with the linear rhythms – work and rest, mundanity and novelty, routine and carnival- in the city of New York. Dev and Naina, with their insider-outsider status, have a privileged vantage point in terms of observing these rhythms. The movies utilize elements of cyclical rhythms, intertwined with those of the linear rhythms in order to communicate the states of mind of the characters. Thus, winter and autumn, night and day, rain and sunlight etc. are used to convey the emotional turbulence that the characters undergo. And this becomes significant only because the protagonists themselves are aware of the rhythms surrounding them. As Dev and Naina tell us about their lives, their consciousness of the changes in the city around them becomes evident. As night changes into day, radical changes occur in Dev's life, after he tells his wife about his relationship with Maya. In a way, it is the work-culture of the city and his consciousness of it that makes the rhythm of the night and day important. It is their respective spouses' work schedule that determines Dev's and Maya's trysts. In *Kal Ho Naa Ho*, Naina associates Aman's arrival with a change in the season. "And suddenly the season changed. I don't know how, but the sun moved aside the dark clouds" (Advani). A major reason for the acceptance of Aman as a member of Naina's family is his location as an Indian in a foreign land, capable of analyzing the rhythms of the city in much the same way as Jennifer or Naina.

In fact, when Aman arrives, he brings with him, an element of the lost homeland, for Naina and her family- the diasporic nostalgia for the homeland. The rhythm of the homeland, i.e., India becomes incorporated into the neighborhood with his arrival. And Naina and her family do not fail to notice this. Lefebvre says: "...for there to be *change*, a social group, a class or a caste must intervene by imprinting a rhythm on an era....A group must designate itself as an *innovator or producer of meaning*. And its acts must inscribe themselves on *reality*. Occasionally, a long time after the action, one sees the emergence of novelty" (15). Thus, Jennifer's 'Café New York' is turned into 'Café New Delhi' and the American flag is replaced by the tricolor flag of India. That becomes the way in which the lost homeland, India is "brought to New York" (Advani). They realize it when Aman explains to them, the rhythm of their street, where people queue in front of the Chinese restaurant, as the Chinese culture and food served there mark it as significantly different from the other establishments in the street. The rhythm of the street changes with the change in Jennifer's establishment. The rival Chinese restaurant loses its customers to the Indian one. There are no more queues in the former. The city's attention shifts to the latter, marking a significant change in the rhythm.

Another instance where the bringing of the lost homeland to the adopted one, changing the daily rhythm of the city and highlighting the changed rhythm which is more conducive to the diasporic imagination is when festivals and weddings are celebrated the Indian way in New York. Festivals and ceremonies form a part of what Lefebvre calls "public/social rhythms"(18). The import of the public rhythms of the lost homeland to the new one occurs when Rohit and Naina in *Kal Ho Naa Ho* and Maya and Rishi in *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna* get married the traditional Gujarati and Punjabi ways respectively, with all the associated Indian music, dance baaraats, sweets and costumes. This occurs in other, subtler ways as well. When Aman tells Jennifer to invite him over since he is the new neighbor, he is importing to the New York street, an element of the music of Jennifer's lost homeland and hence, she is unable to refuse him. These elements pertaining to changed rhythms help the diasporic individual in breaking out, albeit in subtle ways, of the dressage imposed by the foreign land.

Another aspect of the city that is highlighted in both the movies is its polyrhythmia. Multiple rhythms abound in New York, thanks to its melting-pot culture and this gets showcased the best when the racial diversity of the city is brought to the forefront as when in the song sequence 'Pretty Woman', Indians, Chinese, African-Americans, Mulattoes etc. dance to the song in the street and when, in *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna*, we see Dev and Maya embracing on the pavement while people of different ethnic categories move past them. The costumes of the characters, with the Indian women of the older generation wearing the Indian salwar-kameez and the younger generation wearing traditional Indian dresses only for weddings and functions, and changing according to the seasons and the occasions, showcase the multiple rhythms that characterize the city of New York. These multiple rhythms converge to create a state of eurhythmia when "rhythms unite with one another in the state of health, in normal (which is to say, normed!) everydayness" (Lefebvre 16). In the films, this everydayness

is disrupted by a disruption of the quotidian rhythms of the diasporic households, with the extra-everyday arising in the form of the illicit love between Maya and Dev in *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna* and the love triangle between Aman, Naina and Rohit, in *Kal Ho Naa Ho*. As Lefebvre remarks, this “extra-everyday rhythms the everyday and vice-versa” and this is especially so for the characters involved in the amorous relationships, who begin to attribute to the city, another aura, wherein each place becomes a meeting place, and a place of chance encounters, away from the controlling gaze of spouses and relatives.

The body becomes an important reference point in the analysis of rhythms by the characters. In both the movies, the characters in the frame become the focus when they are located static amidst a sea of moving bodies or moving traffic. Again, it is with reference to the rhythms of the body that the rhythm analyst measures the rhythm of the city. While Naina, Jennifer, Maya and Rishi see the city from the vantage point of being diasporic subjects, Dev and Aman watch it from that of the infirm. After the accident, Dev’s perception of New York changes considerably. Bitter and disappointed, in one instance, he says: “Why are people in New York so happy?” (Johar) For him, the new homeland consists of people who are happy and at ease, unlike him, who is an outsider to the city as well as his family. As for Aman, his heart condition allows him a view of the city as a beautiful place which he craves to embrace with full life. The rhythm of his neighborhood, of Naina’s family, of the streets hold unattainable promises for him. It is his consciousness of his inability to embrace these that he desires to create in the people around him, an attainable happiness with reference to the city and its rhythms. It is his infirmity that makes him conscious of the individual rhythms of the city, much as Lefebvre argues in *Rhythmanalysis*. Here, it is interesting to note that the background music that accompanies Aman’s gradual deterioration resembles heartbeats, once again, pointing to the possibility of a rhythm analysis of New York city with the body as a reference point and musical time and biological time coinciding in the process.

Thus, the diasporic subject with his/her unique vantage point becomes the rhythm analyst of New York city, with the multiple rhythms of the adopted homeland appropriated in their full intensity and incorporated into the everyday experience of the diasporic Indian in New York. The rhythms of the city never cease. There is and will be traffic, pedestrians, shoppers, benches and cafes, chance encounters, footfalls, seasons, colors. . . . The beauty of the movies lies in their portrayal of the characters as the temporary owners of rhythms belonging, yet at the same time, not belonging to them.

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## **'Diasporic Concerns' and Picturization of 'Predominance of Isolation' of Indian Woman in *The Namesake* : A Film Study**

–*Sudhir Narayan Singh\**  
*Padma Singh\*\**

### **Abstract**

At times people are placed in different spheres of the globe for various reasons and consequently they are exposed to numerous non-familiar situations and subjected to go through multiple new and unforgettable experiences. Since Nineteenth century American continent has been 'a land of dreams' in its true sense and it keeps inspiring fortune seeking persons belonging to other parts of the globe. For many this richest utopia on this earth proved to be "a land of making dreams in their pursuit of happiness" and at the same time for many others this has been proved a nightmarish 'dystopia, a land of breaking dreams'. Even in the era of post-colonial and post imperial American society the journey of an outsider may prove to be a series of painful experiences due to multiple reasons. Isolation is the bi-product of many such experiences which are articulated vociferously by the portrayal and picturization of one of the female protagonists Ashima Ganguly in *The Namesake* which receives a uniqueness by the subtle and symbolic use of the immortal lines from Wordsworth's famous poem "Daffodils" ("I wandered lonely as a cloud... golden daffodils"). This study attempts to locate isolation, as faced by Ashima, who was born and brought up on Indian soil and transplanted on American soil due to matrimonial reasons. Here in her homeland (West Bengal) India, Ashima holds the centre of affectionate attention amongst her paterfamilias; but after her migration to America, she suddenly realises that this cross-cultural matrimonial migration brought her to socio-cultural and emotional periphery where she finds herself totally uprooted and marginalized. She cannot exercise even the cultural and ritualistic way of naming her own baby as the societal practices of the land was somewhat prohibitive in nature. Life itself subjects

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her to multiple but very subjective experiences. Though the experiences themselves were intensely personal but they definitely can be applicable to the citizens of both the nations 'India as well as the United State of America' in general.

**Keywords:** Diasporic experiences, alienation, isolation, marginalization.

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## **Introduction**

Though Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* appears explicitly simple, yet it opens multifaceted vistas by offering sumptuous food to the intellect of its readers or to those who visualize it as film critics. On one hand, it is a very deep and fulfilling love story lived with the hopes, dreams and wishes by a couple Ashoke and Ashima, while at the same time on the other hand it is rich with the ethos of the varied experiences of isolation and alienation in Diaspora by picturizing experiences of a family faced in the country of hope and dream i.e. America. At the outset, it would be appropriate to make it very clear that this study is not inspired by, or conducted with the motive to serve, plead or coin any - 'ism' and if it must serve any that may be accepted or considered as humanism. This fiction of Jhumpa Lahiri was beautifully screened by Mirabai Films and Cine Mosaic Production as Mira Nair's film with same name *The Namesake*. As film it scaled and scripted the following achievements.

## **Top Ten List**

1. 6<sup>th</sup> – Peter Rainer— The Christian Science Monitor
2. 8<sup>th</sup> – Carrie Rickey — The Philadelphia Inquirer
3. 8<sup>th</sup> – Claudia Puig — USA Today
4. 9<sup>th</sup> – James Berardinelli— Reel Views

## **Awards and Nominations**

### **Won**

1. Love is Folly International Film Festival Award- Bulgaria

### **Nominated**

1. Casting Society of America “Best Feature Film Casting” Cindy Idon.
2. Gotham Award – 2007— “Best Film” Mira Nair & Lydia Dean Pilchar.
3. Independent Spirit Award— “Best Supporting Male” — Irfan Khan.

## **Setting of the Movie**

American continent has been 'a land of dreams' in its true sense. For many this richest utopia on this earth proved to be “a land of making dreams in their pursuit of happiness” and at the same time for the many “Dystopia, a land of breaking dreams”. The story of *The Namesake* dwindles between India and America. But it has an India while it runs in America and at the same time it has an America while it has been set in India. Throughout the movie these two nations could never divorce each other.

## **Isolation: One of the Diasporic Bi-Products**

Many a times persons are placed in different spheres for various reasons, and as a result of that they are exposed to numerous non-familiar situations going through new and unforgettable experiences. Isolation is also the bi-product of many such experiences. Even in the era of post-colonial and post empirical American society, the journey of an outsider may prove to be a series of painful experiences due to multiple reasons. This study attempts to locate isolation, as faced by one of the female protagonists Ashima, born and brought up on Indian soil and transplanted on American soil due to matrimonial reasons. There is a great contrast between American and Indian values when Gogol falls in love with Maxine who draws him into a wealthy American family. So, there is an alienation and indifference towards family values and that sort of alienation was also successfully picturized by Mira Nair.

## **Isolation and its Treatment in *The Namesake***

*The Namesake* portrays the alienation and immigrant experiences in America as imbibed by Ganguly family. The novel also highlights each and every character and their loneliness in one way or the other. Portrayal and picturization of one of the female protagonists Ashima Ganguly in *The Namesake* receives a uniqueness by the subtle and symbolic use of the immortal lines from Wordsworth's famous poem "Daffodils":

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils; (1-4)

While at her parents' home in Calcutta, (West Bengal), India Ashima holds the centre of affectionate attention amongst her paterfamilias; but after her migration to America, the above lines of "Daffodils" proved to be her destiny. It didn't take her much time as brutal experiences that she came across in her post marital life gradually that made her to realize that this cross-cultural matrimonial migration brought her to socio-cultural and emotional periphery where she finds herself totally uprooted and marginalized. She cannot exercise even the cultural and ritualistic way of naming her own baby as the societal practices of the land was somewhat prohibitive in nature.

Ashima, who is facing the reality of life, finds herself all alone at every stage. Starting from an arranged marriage in India, immigrate to America with her husband Ashoke, also feels loneliness in some way or the other. While in hospital at the time of Ashima's delivery, she finds herself all alone, cut off by curtains from three other women in the room.

It is first time in her life she has slept alone, surrounded by strangers; all her life she has slept either in a room with her parents, or with Ashoke at her side. She wishes the curtains were open, so that she could talk to the American women. (Lahiri 3)

She wonders that she is only Indian in the hospital, but a gentle twitch from the baby reminds her that she is not alone. She thinks and feeling strange to give birth to her child at that place where ‘most people enter either to suffer or to die’.

“There is nothing to comfort her in the off-white tiles of the floor, the off-white curtains, the off-white ceiling, the white sheets tucked tightly into bed.” Now she thinks and compares the care given by the parents and in-laws in India at the time of giving birth to a child. A sense of insecurity and restlessness came on her face. The situation becomes more painful when:

She cries out, pressing her head against the pillow. Her finger grip the chilly rails of the bed, but no one hears her, no nurse rushes to her side. She reminds the time from being separated by her parents at Airport and tears rolled down from her eyes. She never tried to foot-out from her parents’ home all alone but now the situation is against her to lay in bed in foreign land with no one familiar at this crucial moment where more care is required.

American second tick on top of her pulse point. For half a minute, a band of pains wraps around her stomach, radiating towards her back and shooting down her legs and then, again, relief. She only calculates the Indian time on her hands. (Lahiri 4)

In spite of her growing discomfort, she has been astonished by her body’s ability to make life so far from home, unmonitored and unobserved by those she loved. A sense of loneliness and fear runs in her eyes to give birth to a child in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems so tentative and spare.

Their son Gogol, named for the Russian writer, rejects both his unique name and his Bengali heritage. When at one point, Ashoke gifts his son a volume of Nikolai Gogol’s short stories for his fourteenth birthday, hoping to explain the book’s significance in his own life, Gogol seems to be indifferent to it. Such quietly revealing moments show a little feeling of happiness and loneliness in Gogols’ mind. He does not want to accept the name Gogol as his friends started making fun of it. The loneliness of lives in exile is most poignantly revealed in the late night family telephone calls from India, always an announcement of illness or death which was nicely picturised by Mira Naire. When Ashoke informs Ashima about the death of her father the background itself was very suggestive by projection of the shade of a hoofed snake on the wall.

In one way or the other it won’t be an exaggeration to infer that Gogol’s marriage with Moushumi Mazumdar was hardly a marriage of minds, which further proves to be nothing but an intensive and poignant failure ending in divorce. Ashima also starts blaming herself for everything that has gone wrong in her son’s life. Life itself subjects her to multiple but very subjective experiences. Though the experiences themselves were intensely personal but they definitely can be applicable to the citizens of both the nations ‘India as well as United States of America’ in general. After the death of Ashoke, Ashima finds herself totally alone in the American soil. She divides her time between America and Calcutta and ultimately decides to sell her house.

## Conclusion

As movie, it pleads for a balance overview of human life, looks for the establishment of a golden mean (The Madhyam Marg) of Man-woman relationship, a gradual shift towards harmonious relationship and philanthropic human relationship and cultural amalgamation instead of the portrayal of radical feminism. Its filming delineates the subtle inter-dependence of husband-wife relationship with minimum conflict of masculine dominance or female subjugation. Its many fold canvas also carries the colours of amalgamation and assimilation of cultures of east and west. It also breaks the limitless boundaries of cross-cultural-communications by surpassing the threshold of all its known classified barriers. The east-west encounter also reaches the final and amicable cultural amalgamation towards the end of the movie where the final remarks of Ashima Ganguly becomes the binding notes of a humanistic thesis.

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## **Conversational Code Mixing among Jahangirnagar University Students: A Threat to Bengali or Not**

–Afroza Akhter Tina\*

### **Abstract**

The various factors of conversational code mixing in Bangladesh include the personal opinions of the respondents towards code mixing, the possibility of bilingualism and multilingualism, causes of and motivations behind code mixing and how it is a threat to the purity of Bengali. Code mixing is a very important issue in the context of Bengali language as codes from other languages have been used extensively in the linguistic behaviour of the Bengali speaking people. This paper focuses on Wardhaugh's (1992:107) definition of conversational code mixing which "involves the deliberate mixing of two languages without an associated topic change." This paper adopts interview method to collect data which have been collected by a linguistic survey conducted in two departments of a public university. Analysis of the data reveals that code mixing is not a threat to Bengali and is not exploiting the purity of Bengali rather opens up the horizon for the development of Bengali by including suitable components of other languages by proper language planning and careful handling of the situation for the enrichment and beautification of Bengali language. The paper also discovers probable causes of and motivations behind such code mixing.

**Keywords:** Code switching, code mixing, borrowing, bilingualism, monolingualism.

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### **Introduction**

As language bears the culture of a society, change of a language is strongly influenced and motivated by the change of cultural phenomenon of a society. Chomsky has noticed the widespread distinction between the 'linguistic competence' and 'linguistic performance' for which 'register' has been evolved to adopt the language according to the demand of situation. The people of Bangladesh who speak Bengali, register language a lot. The condition of Bengali language was remarkably different in the middle and old ages. If we compare the present Bengali with the Bengali of *Charjapada*, remark of the old age, we can mark the differences. With the spread of globalization,

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open market economy, revolutionary technological development, widespread of satellite channels, Bengali has often been contacted with other languages. Because of this language contact, constituents of one language can be found in the constituents of other languages, namely lexical borrowing, code mixing, code-switching, transferring, interference, diffusion etc. Code-mixing is one of the linguistic phenomena claimed to be the most prevalent and common modes of interaction among bilingual speakers and for this borrowing and mixing a language may lose its purity and a new type of language emerges in some cases. Because of the constant contact with English and Hindi, now Bengali tends to be in such a state.

### **Objectives of the study**

- To detect the extent of conversational code-mixing in Bengali.
- To uncover the reasons of and motivations behind code-mixing of the Bengali speaking people.
- To find out whether conversational code-mixing is a threat to the purity or not to the existence of Bengali in our country.

### **Literature Review**

Spolsky (1998:45) says, “..... it is very common that people develop some knowledge and ability in a second language and so they become bilingual. The simplest definition of a bilingual is a person who has some functional ability in a second language. This may vary from a limited ability in one or more domains, to very strong command of both languages.”

Hudson (1996:53) defined code mixing as “a case where a fluent bilingual talking to another fluent bilingual changes language without any change at all in the situation. He also said, to get the right effect the speakers balance the two languages against each other as a kind of linguistic cocktail.”

According to Haugen (1953:280), “The strongest possible motive for language learning is the need of associating with the speakers of the language.”

The definition of Wardhaugh says (1992:107), “Conversational code-mixing involves the deliberate mixing of two languages without an associated topic change.” He also remarks that code mixing is not a random combination of two distinct codes, rather, “it requires conversant to have a sophisticated knowledge of both languages.” He says that in code switching and code mixing situations, the norms vary from group to group within a single community itself.

In code-mixing as opposed to code switching, there is a harmony that the speeches (though bilingual) belong to the structure of one language. There is also agreement among researchers that code-mixing should be distinguished from its more celebrated counterpart ‘borrowing’, whilst acknowledging that the boundary is very thin that separates them. This observation is justified by Muysken’s (2000) typology of code-mixing. At present, researchers also focus on universal approaches to include issues

such as the bilingual context, the period of contact between languages, the status, the typology, the competency of speakers, and the motivations for activation of certain languages over others. In post-colonial countries where code-mixing with English is a relatively widespread phenomenon, fostering and nurturing it has received importance by the local governments after independence, so the attitudes towards languages need to be considered with great concern.

## **Methodology**

### **1. Participants**

70 students along with 3 teachers have been selected from English and Bangla departments of the university. 40 students of 20-24 age range and 30 students of 25-26 age range have been the target group.

### **2. Interview method**

Informal and semi-structured interviews were taken regarding four different parts to elicit the opinion of the target group by using tape recorder. Formal and well organized interviews of the teachers were taken as well to have some precious opinion and statistical data about Bengali language usage.

### **3. Observation method**

In order to overcome the shortcomings of interview method, close observation of the target group has contributed a lot to explain the phenomenon. Different sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic theories have been used according to the need of the analysis of the paper.

## **Findings and discussion**

### **1. Discussion and findings of the first part of the interview**

#### **1.1. Personal attitude toward code-mixing regarding age:**

From the observation of the respondents, the paper finds that about eighty percent (80%) students of 20-22 ages are in the process unconsciously. Some of them have internalized certain words and phrases of other languages and apply them in their everyday conversation. The paper tries to analyze this kind of language behaviour from theoretical perspective of psycholinguistics. According to the behaviourist theory, effective language behaviour is the production of correct responses to stimuli. If a particular response is reinforced then it becomes habitual or conditioned in the urban society and also in rural areas. The language behaviour of the people ageing 24-26 is very much conscious while using code mixing. About or more than ninety percent are consciously involved in the process.

#### **1.2. Personal attitude towards code-mixing regarding educational background:**

It shows that about seventy percent (70%) of the English medium students make code-mixing consciously. They have justified their position by saying

that they are not clear about some specific Bengali objects or ideas and hence they borrow from other languages. For example; an M.A respondent of English doesn't know the proper Bengali meaning of the words chair, table, internet etc and this happens with almost everyone. However, the rest thirty percent (30%) use code mixing unconsciously. One of the professors of Bangla department expressed that English medium students, and more specifically students of English department of the university are very much conscious about the facts and they use code mixing as a sign of pride and prestige.

## 2. Discussion and findings of the second part of the interview

This shows that almost all the respondents use code mixing in both formal and informal setting. Only a small number of respondents, the students of Bengali department avoid it in formal setting like classroom and seminars/workshops. The respondents who use code mixing asserted that they do it for showing off or to prove their competencies in English mostly though some other provided different opinion. One respondent replied that; "...when I find problem in expressing something specific in Bengali I use code mixing". Some respondents said that they use code mixing in arguments and some use in different formal settings.

## 3. Discussion and findings of the third part of the interview

This part deals with two questions; one is about the respondent's personal opinion and attitude towards code mixing and another is their observation of the existence of bilingualism/monoligualism in Bangladesh.

The respondents have given mixed opinions to answer the first part of the question about conversational code-mixing and it includes the following ideas:

1. We should take new words from other languages to enrich our own language. (a teacher, department of Bangla)
2. A language can't be confined to a nation. So code-mixing in Bangladesh can run smoothly. (student, department of English)
3. It's dangerous. Code-mixing corrupts the purity of Bengali language. (student, department of Bangla)
4. Code-mixing should be confined in certain places and situation. Its excessive use should be avoided. (student, department of Bangla)
5. Code-mixing can make our language more beautiful, it will help language develop rather corrupting it. (student, department of English)
6. Code-mixing develops smartness. But we should not neglect our own language as it deserves special honor. (student, department of English)
7. One student quotes "I like code-mixing. As English is an international language and due to globalization we must use code mixing to express us to the world. But we should keep in mind the status of Bengali as mother tongue as well". (student of English)
8. Mixing language is mainly done to promote communication and to have better expression. So we should practise it. It will not harm the purity of Bengali. (student, department of English)

From the observation of the respondents, this paper finds that despite some negative opinions, almost all respondents consider code-mixing as a means of enhancing communication to express frequently in a better way. The observation of the Bangla department teacher is worth mentioning who focuses on the fact that as long as a language is alive it would be changing its form. It will definitely take new words in its vocabulary when it comes into contact with other languages and it is not a threat to the mother tongue.

The second part of the question also gets ambiguous observation regarding the possibility of multilingualism in Bangladesh. Many observations have opined that Bangladeshi people don't use only English but also Hindi and some other languages besides Bengali. So there is a possibility to evolve multilingualism like India, Singapore in near future. Another male professor of Bangla does not agree with such observation of the respondents. He opines that it is true that people use English or Hindi in their everyday conversation frequently these days but we have to keep in mind that they are a minor group only. Moreover, people who speak English in office do not use English in their personal life. Additionally he said that, bilingualism does not exist in Bangladesh in that sense. People speak English for their habitual obedience. In this regard, only the Pakistani refugees in our country can be considered to be bilingual as they use both Bengali and Urdu appropriately.

#### 4. Discussion and findings of the fourth part of the interview

This part deals with the key factors whether each code mixing is contaminating the purity of Bengali or not. From the respondents' opinion regarding the first part, we get a positive idea about the conversational code mixing which is enriching Bengali language rather than harming it. Only a small number of respondents have responded negatively in this regard. The opinion of one of the Bengali teacher is worthy enough to justify the opinion of the respondents; "As a nation we are hybrid, mixed like our language", she said further; "Bengali has been polluted long ago, nothing to be exploited again but we must try to preserve our standard form of language. Her observation echoes the history of exploitation of Bengali language. From the perspective of sociolinguistics, change of a language comes with the change of its socio-cultural condition. Change of a language is a natural process which happens very slowly and consistently. Sometimes changes become radical with the changes of political condition and of globalization, and hence the changes are evident in word, syllable and meaning as well. But the basic grammatical structure may not change. It means that the main structure remains the same, only the elements may change or abolish. Accordingly, code mixing is changing some elements of Bengali language. It is not changing its basic structure."

To talk about the purity of Bengali language and its future, a professor of the Bengali department has given a statistic report of the Bengali languages. Statistically there are only around twenty pure Bengali languages. It has enriched its vocabulary by borrowing words from Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Portuguese, Dutch, French, English, Turkish, Japanese and many other languages. As Bengali is a mixed language, code mixing would not do any harm to its purity rather it will enrich its

vocabulary likewise. Moreover, question of losing purity would occur when the basic of our language along with its grammar would be changed. From the close observation and analysis of the participants the paper reveals that this conversational code mixing is not a threat and the purity of it would not be hampered by such consequences.

#### 5. Discussion and findings of the observation

After observing the comments and interviews, the following reasons are found to be the most important reasons of such code mixing in this regard:

1. Habitual obedience: People use code-mixing because of their habitual obedience. Environment plays the most vital role here. For example, they usually mix English code “May I come in?” which is the result of their habitual obedience.
2. Easy to express thoughts: Sometimes people find it easy to express them in a particular situation and hence code mixing occurs from other languages.
3. Emotion: Code mixing happens sometimes because of the sudden outburst of some particular emotions. For example, when people become angry they often switch to another code.
4. Status: Using codes from English is a matter of status in the context of Bangladesh as it is considered as a prestigious language in Bangladesh. From that sense, people often mix English in their conversation to align them in the royalty.
5. To show off: From the research it has been found that the ability to use English is a proof of good background regarding education and social status. Using English gives them an opportunity to let others know about their qualifications.
6. Euphemism: As Bengali is a mixed language, appropriate meaning of some expressions and words are not found all the time and may sometimes sound ridiculous as well, for example, Bengali of some words like mobile, internet, email, and telephone etc. would hear ridiculous and even may evoke laughter.

### **Conclusion**

Language is the witness of the socio-cultural changes of a nation or a civilization. The language-change of a society occurs with the change of its culture, political condition, geographical change, etc. By adopting proper language planning and careful practice of the language, the purity of a language can be preserved. Code-mixing in every day conversation in formal and informal places has become a part of our linguistic behaviour. The penetration of one language into another cannot be stopped as it is the time of satellite, globalization and open market economy. The nature of language is that it changes its shape by the passing of time. We have to adopt with the situation by proper language planning and policy and through proper education and awareness. We should not abhor other languages rather accept the positive vibe to enrich our culture. We have to colour our language by using the power and potentiality that it holds.

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## Developing English Vocabulary of EFL Learners in Elementary Institute in Iran by Improving Long Term Memory

–*Saheleh Kheirabadi\**

### Abstract

The study investigated links between long term memory skills and students' abilities to learn the vocabulary of English language taught in class. The purpose of this study is to realize the relation between the left and right hemispheres on learning vocabulary. In this paper we can look at the causes of long term memory and how students can improve it through many techniques such as, Microsoft PowerPoint, Imagination, Leitner box, Pictures and drawing. The aim of this study is to demonstrate that the relation between memory and language remain poorly specified for many years. The learners learn English words by their long term memory. The study's purpose is to examine how a teacher can encourage students to communicate orally in class.

The left hemisphere keeps information for a short time but the right hemisphere keeps data for a long time in memory. In this paper, the researcher wants to study the hypothesis learning vocabulary in the second language for a long time that is possible by utilizing the right hemisphere. The researcher acquired the data collection and also data analysis of the study. Forty learners of 8 to 11 years old attended in this experiment at Amin Institute in Iran to justify methods and techniques. The teacher divided learners into two groups. In group (A), the participants (10 males and 10 females) learned with a memory enhancing method. The last result shows that the learners of group (A) have significant progress on vocabulary learning rather than the learners of group (B). The data analysis proves that use of audio visual tools improves learners' memory in learning vocabulary for life time.

**Keywords:** Long term memory, vocabulary, Leitner Box, PowerPoint, learning, imagination.

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## **Introduction**

The main focus of this study is about memory enhancement carried out by cognitive scientists, and presenting some insights that form this research of English language teaching (ELT) theory and practice. The basic premise underlying this research is improving long-term memory for learning English vocabulary. When students learn new vocabulary, they remember it for a short time but they may forget it over a long period of time. To remember what students have learned over the short term, they need to move information from short-term memory into long-term memory. That is why teaching foreign language vocabulary by using simple Memory Techniques is useful. The methods for teaching vocabulary are completely different from the methods for teaching other skills. Learning vocabulary needs more practice and takes a longer time. However, there are techniques to teach students how to train their minds to grasp new words and understand how to communicate in other languages.

Many researchers have focused on people who speak only one language. However, some researchers have are interested in studying people who have learned a second language. Many questions remain unanswered about the similarities and differences between first and second language learning, storage, and usage. Substantial evidence suggests the existence of a critical learning period for first languages. A critical period for language is defined as the time period during which a person must be exposed to the spoken language in order to best learn the language. In most cases, if a person is not exposed to a language during the critical period, he or she will never be able to speak the language as well as someone who has learned it normally. Although the person may be able to learn many words, his or her syntax will probably never reach a normal level. Children who suffer from brain damage are often able to regain their language abilities with practice. Adults who suffer from damage to language areas, however, are rarely able to achieve their previous language proficiency. This research further supports the concept that there might be a difference between learning language in childhood and in adulthood.

## **Significance of the Study**

Memory consists of recalling information that you have learned or experienced. Many students struggle with remembering what they have read and recalling information for tests. In order to be successful in school, the learners need to remember the information which has been learned. Although there is not any 'magic' memory pill, it is possible to improve their memory using the following strategies. Long-term memory is the ongoing storage of unconscious and conscious information. We can break down long-term memories into two categories: declarative memory resides in our conscious mind and procedural memory is a largely unconscious or automatic response to our environment such as how to ride a bicycle or play the piano. Students can recall procedural memory without consciously thinking about it. In this study, we will look at the causes of long-term memory loss and how students can actively improve it through cognitive techniques. There are also a lot of techniques that humans use to

improve their long-term memory such as mnemonic devices. All these things can be classified as important issues in the study of human memory and ways of learning.

This research has the potential to influence the way vocabulary is taught by providing a strategy that encompasses the components of instruction designed to help students for a better understanding of word meanings. Teachers can choose items which are relevant to their lives and experiences and use a variety of presentations to appeal to different learning styles and provide interest. Students should be encouraged to make associations and decisions about the new items to promote cognitive processing and thus improve storage in memory. Memory is the storing of information over period of time. It is one of the most important concepts in learning; if things are not remembered, no learning can take place.

### **Rationale of Research**

The aim of this study is to investigate the function of the brain in learning vocabulary of the English language. The subjects of the study comprised students in English courses in academic year 2015. The participants of the study were forty male and female learners at a Private Institute in Iran. They were randomly selected among the eighty students who studied English courses at Amin Institute. All participants were EFL learners who were aged between 8 to 11 years. They had three hours of English per week with the same instructor. Hence, all the students came from the same linguistic background and the teacher was the same for the two groups.

### **Instruments**

There are some vocabulary learning strategies which can be used to improve students' vocabulary, like using authentic language, making creative activities, encouraging self-motivation, creating mental linkages, and doing memory strategies which are used to organize words like using flashcards, imagination, Microsoft PowerPoint, and Leitner's box (Schmidt and McCarthy, 1997). Long-term memory allows us to retain the material learnt over a long period of time. It has been noticed that in order to acquire long-term knowledge, you have to periodically come back and re-learn or repeat the material.

In the research on the psychology of learning English vocabulary by Leitner box, a series of experiments with the goal to improve learners' long-term memory were carried out. Leitner used a physical box to store learners' flashcards. The box contained several compartments. Flashcards, which were new, were put into the first compartment. This compartment contained the flashcards, which were repeated every day. Flashcards that were correctly answered were moved to the second compartment. The repetition interval in the second compartment is set to two days. Flashcards that are successfully answered in the second compartment are moved to the third one, etc.

PowerPoint presentations can be used in the classroom for initial teaching, for student projects, practice and drilling, games, reviews, and for tests as well. This format is attractive to learners, and it appeals to learners' diverse learning styles, such

as visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and creative by employing multimedia methods, such as sounds, images, colour, action, design, and so on. Therefore, it is believed that PowerPoint presentations can improve the efficiency of English language in classroom instruction.

The imagination effect occurs when learners who imagine a procedure or concept perform better on a subsequent test than learners who study materials physically. Cognitive load theory predicts that information is more likely to be transferred from working memory to long-term memory under imagination conditions.

Pictures are more complex than the words that label the pictures, so more time and attention is needed to identify, or “name” a picture. We spend more time looking at pictures (or real-life objects) before we can name them, so we remember pictures better. We spend less time looking at words in sentences, so we do not remember the sentences exactly—though we remember the gist. Pictures are also more distinctive and more unique than the words that label them, which further make pictures more memorable. Adults gain experience with reading words, so reading becomes faster and faster.

## **Methodology**

This research investigates whether Microsoft PowerPoint presentations improve student learning and attitudes compared with traditional classroom presentations. The effect of Microsoft PowerPoint on long-term memory might depend on other factors such as the topic under discussion and the students’ preferred representation styles.

## **Direct Method**

In group A, the participants were taught with a memory enhancing method. In this group, there were 20 participants (10 males and 10 females) who were taught the English language by Microsoft PowerPoint, imagination, and Leitner box. This class was conducted three times a week for an hour. We tested and witnessed that using Microsoft PowerPoint in an English course enhanced students’ long-term memory and attitudes toward the class presentation and the instructor. This research investigates whether Microsoft PowerPoint presentations improve students learning and attitudes compared with traditional classroom presentations. The effect of Microsoft PowerPoint on long-term memory might depend on other factors such as the topic under discussion and the students’ preferred representation styles. For example, for more difficult and challenging chapters, students with higher use of imagery performed better on quizzes in Microsoft PowerPoint section than did students in the traditional section. The teacher also used imagination for teaching English. Imagination develops creative thinking among students for learning new vocabulary. Imagination helps to reduce the effect of boredom in learning vocabulary. So, the teacher taught vocabulary to the learners by Microsoft PowerPoint and forced them to use their imagination for better comprehension and at last used Leitner box for improving long-term memory and also for learning vocabulary for a long time. The teacher should provide many flashcards

and put them in the first step of Leitner box. He drew the picture of one word on a side of a paper and wrote the word on the back side of the paper.

## **Grammar Translation Method**

The traditional vocabulary learning method (TVLM) is mainly referred to as the grammar-translation method as defined by Richards and Rodgers (1986).

In group B, the control group (n= 20) was taught by using the traditional vocabulary teaching method when introducing all the words.

Grammar translation classes are commonly conducted in the native language of the students. Students learn the vocabulary and grammar rules from the teacher or a book and practise by doing drills and translation exercises from the target language. In my opinion, the GTM has a number of disadvantages in so much that it lacks speaking practice, reduces creativity in the class, and leaves students with very little working knowledge of the spoken language. Learners need the security of the mother tongue to translate vocabulary into the target language. This method is teacher-centered and students memorize vocabulary which they forget after a long time. The teacher used the grammar-translation method for teaching vocabulary and taught them five words in each session while the learners participated in the class three times a week for an hour.

Sometimes also known as the classical method, this was a traditional teaching technique that was used to teach Latin and Greek and was particularly in vogue in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The focus at this time was on the translation of texts, grammar, and rote learning of vocabulary. There was no emphasis on speaking and listening comprehension, because Latin and Greek were taught mostly as academic subjects rather than means of oral communication. It was a traditional technique of foreign language teaching based on explicit instruction on the grammatical analysis of the target language and on the translation of sentences from the native language into the target language. It was originally used to teach 'dead' languages such as Greek and Latin. It was a way of teaching students to study grammar and translate words into their own language. They do not practise communication and there is little focus on speaking. A teacher presents a grammar rule and vocabulary lists and then the students translate a written text from their own language into the second language.

## **Scope for Further Research**

The teacher tries to improve long term memory of learners for better vocabulary learning in English language. For the collection of data, the participants of the study were forty learners who are aged between 8 and 11 at Amin School in Iran.

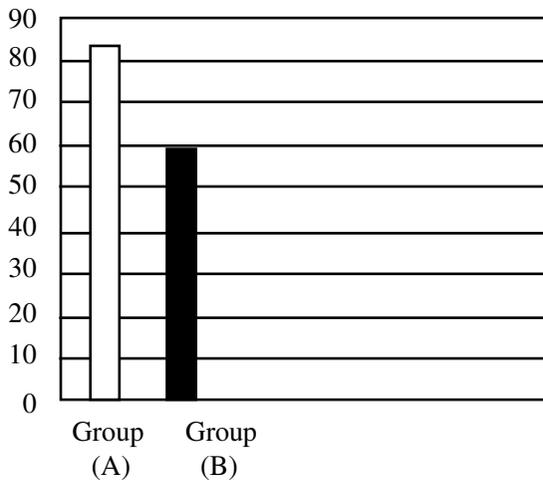
- (1) The study focuses on techniques like Ppt, Leitner Box, can be used for other language skills as speaking, reading, writing skills.
- (2) The study of grammar is taught indirectly. The learners learned grammar rules in sentences without teaching grammar in class. Grammar is important

within the English language, in fact the glue that holds the language together. This study shows that how teacher can improve learner’s grammar indirectly.

- (3) Speaking skills can be significant area of study. The study’s purpose was to examine how a teacher can encourage students to communicate orally in class. Teachers need to create situations where students get the chance to speak and communicate with each other. Speaking activities in the classroom are an important part of teaching English since they help students to develop their language and fluency when talking.
- (4) Writing skills can be a purpose of the study. The learners learn spell words by using Leitner Box, that is why they can write words after a long time.
- (5) Reading skills can improve in this study. Good reading skills can improve learner’s language skills. Reading is the best way to learn and remember the proper spelling of words. The constant repetition of words and patterns in reading helps learners learn and remember vocabulary and grammar structures.

### Main Finding

**The average Percentage marks of Group (A) & Group (B) in the third exam**



The chart shows us comparative learning of English vocabulary of two groups (A & B) within 12 weeks and 36 hours in classes. This chart proves that visuals tools as Ppt and picture and also the use of Leitner box and imagination were useful effects in learning language. The last exam result shows us the learners group (A) passed the exam with 83.4% and learners group (B) passed the exam with 58.7% score.

- (1) These percentages prove that learners of first class have significant progress on vocabulary learning after three months. They can remember the words better than the learners of second class.

- (2) This progress shows that Ppt and Leitner box tools have positive effects on the learning of the learners in three months.
- (3) Teacher finds that Ppt helps to direct the student's attention. She teaches English words and the real learning experience is actually doing class exercises and student participation. She can easily insert videos, pictures and even games for reviewing materials. So, Ppt can be an effective and powerful communication tool.
- (4) The learners often forget words which learnt that's why teacher wants to create a good Ppt for helping to learn them. Additionally, it helps students learn and also can help students to better understand the complexities of the words. She teaches her students how to improve their speech by Ppt. The aim of the teacher is to teach to them to think and evaluate, to be able to decide what is important enough to learn. For better vocabulary learning, the teacher forces the learners to practise by the Ppt.
- (5) Although the students of group (B) learn these words by GTM . This study finds that the learners cannot remember the words which they learnt after a long time, because they emphasize on the rules rather than the meaning and understanding of the words. In addition they donot have repeated practice of the words. In fact, they learn by rote, that's why they forget the words after some time.
- (6) This study shows that it is possible to improve long term memory of learners while learning English words. The memories are encoded and strengthened every time with practice and more practice makes the bonds between the surrounding cells increasingly stronger and gets more neurons involved.
- (7) Students can improve their long term memory by participating in activities that they enjoy and recollect such memories through Ppt and Leitner's box games.

## **Conclusion**

Thus, before boys or girls are born, their brains are developed with different hemispheric divisions of labour. The right and left hemispheres of the male and female brains aren't set up exactly the same way. For instance, females tend to have verbal centres on both sides of the brain, while males tend to have verbal centres on only the left hemisphere. This is a significant difference. Girls tend to use more words when discussing or describing incidence, story, person, object, feeling or place. Males not only have fewer verbal centres in general but also, often, have less connectivity between their word centres and their memories or feelings. When they have to remember the vocabularies, girls tend to have an advantage, and they tend to have more interest in talking about many things.

Teachers can help students to be better learners and acquire good learning habits by setting structured learning tasks that can be done out of class. Materials

should give space to personal learning logs, like Leitner's box, and encourage students to continue learning outside class. Students now have access to vast resources such as the Microsoft PowerPoint, Leitner's box, and pictures. If students are trained to use these resources and understand how they can provide information on improving long-term memory, they can exploit these resources more effectively and become more independent in their learning. Materials can also provide students with ideas to activate and practise vocabulary in their everyday lives, which is especially useful for students who live in non-English-speaking environments. When students watch Microsoft PowerPoint and pictures, multiple areas of their minds become engaged and active. In this research, we test whether using Microsoft PowerPoint, picture, imagination, and Leitner's box in an English course enhances students' long-term memory and attitudes toward class presentation and the instructor.

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## **Mind Versus Heart or Vice Versa: Semiotic Reading of *Harrison Bergeron* by Kurt Vonnegut**

–Necat Kumral\*

### **Abstract**

This article proposes a comprehensive process approach to the reading of literary works to display a scheme on how a reader can develop literary competence by moving from the sense to the value, and consequently to the critique of the work concerned. Semiotic reading as a process approach to the reading of literary works is based on these three consecutive steps mentioned above: (1) reading for the sense, (2) reading for the value, and (3) reading for the critique. *Harrison Bergeron* is the literary work selected for the sole purpose of presenting the steps of semiotic approach, and the reader will be guided all the way through this systematic analytical reading process to acquire the dimension of depth necessary for deeper understanding of human nature by means of symbolic expressions of fixed thought patterns. Literature offers immense source of study on human nature; literary works simply hold up a mirror to reflect on the dark corners of human mind and heart. Through the objective in-depth study of the story the reader as the learner finds ample opportunity to develop a deep perception of life and a sharp awareness of social problems in a cruel, wicked world without dealing with fictional pseudo-facts of much communicative methodology.

**Keywords:** Semiotic reading, literature in EFL classes, pedagogical effectiveness of language teaching, stylistic and narrative analysis of literary works, (post)modernism.

Semiotic study of literary works has to do with developing a deeper understanding of what they communicate across by guiding the reader in a gradually becoming complicated reading process: (1) sense based on the literal meaning of the carefully selected words and phrases and how they come together in a particular configuration of ideas expressed in the natural domain, (2) value is the symbolic message hidden behind the whole text reached through second order signification process carried out in the symbolic domain, and (3) critique is the meaning proposed by the reader based

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on his own perception of the author's message reached through higher order signification process and what he can put forward against the author by evaluating and raising a counter argument (Kumral 31-44). The reader comprehends the text and then moves beyond it to find out what it really communicates, as words gain symbolic dimension meaning more than what they actually say. The reader as an active agent feels to bring more to what he finds in the text where these two world views represented by the author and the reader respectively converge in the narrative, the world created by the author (Eco 12-16). Sense is the first layer of meaning; it is the surface—literal meaning—reached through reading for comprehension, for words as verbal signs stand for what they refer to in the natural domain.

## **Sense**

The narrative structure of the story Vonnegut published in 1961 is one simple action plot given through two different settings: the TV set showing the studio where the tragic end of Harrison broadcast live and the living room portraying a microcosm within a broader macrocosm representing the 21<sup>st</sup> century America and American society. Hazel, George and 14 year-old Harrison Bergeron, who is now in jail on suspicion of plotting to overthrow the government, set an example of a stereotype kernel family of such a dystopian society. Hazel is a woman with a 'perfect average intelligence' for an ordinary woman who does not need any electronic device or some extra weight put on her body to be equal to anybody in the same society. George is made handicapped by a radio chip placed in his ear, as his intelligence is 'way above normal'. Hazel and George are watching television in the living room. On the screen are some ballerinas with masks hiding their beauty dancing, or rather, swaying like a willow because they are also made handicapped with metal scraps in order for them not to take any advantage of their beauty and/or grace. If they had such a chance to display any of them, it would cause 'competition' by violating the rule of equality. Then there comes breaking news, but the speaker cannot read it, as he himself is also speech impaired, another typical handicapped member. He simply hands the bulletin to a ballerina to read. She first reads it with a voice that sounds like 'a luminous, timeless melody'. Then she changes it not to sound as attractive as it can be, because she may cause trouble by arousing interest in the viewers, taking unfair advantage of her beautiful voice and violating the rule of equality among the fellow speakers. Meanwhile, Harrison escapes from prison with 300 pounds of scrap metal placed on his body likened to a walking junkyard, as he is 'an athlete, a genius and a dangerous revolutionary'. He goes into the studio, and challenges the government agents by breaking all chains and begins dancing with a ballerina who accepts his instant offer to become his empress. "A blindingly beautiful girl appears when he plucks the mental handicap from her ear, snaps off her physical handicaps and finally removes her mask." They dance for a while reaching the ceiling and kissing each other as long as they wish. Then HG, Handicapper General, comes in and shoots both of them with a double-barrelled gun. They fall dead onto the ground. His parents feel sorry and even cry, for what they see is deeply moving (!) They look at the screen with blank eyes for a while as if they felt something sad inside but cannot understand what it is all about.

The scene narrated in the story seems to be the beginning of a process of questioning the system maintained by the constant vigilance of the agents of the Handcapper General, Diana Moon Clampers, modern Roman virgin goddess of the hunt and the Moon. The 3<sup>rd</sup> person omniscient narrator never mentions the absolute power that is invincible for being absolutely invisible but ubiquitous every where to observe what happens and take every measure beforehand to prevent any riot against the governing system. State is the real sender ( $S_1$ ) of the HG ( $O_1 \rightarrow S_2$ ) who conducts whatever necessary to keep the society under incessant control. All HG men ( $O_2 \rightarrow S_3$ ) act upon the order of the HG to obstruct all the possible efforts through constant surveillance (Kurtul 81-92).

The semiotic analysis of the story with all the sign-based references helps clarify the sense relations in the first-order signification process. The second higher order signification process helps the reader to move onto the value as the all the signs turn into signified that gain symbolic dimension in the cultural domain meaning more than what actually say or refer to in the natural domain, the real or the fictional world depicted in the story. The Figure 1 given below indicates semiotic analysis with all these sign relations in place.

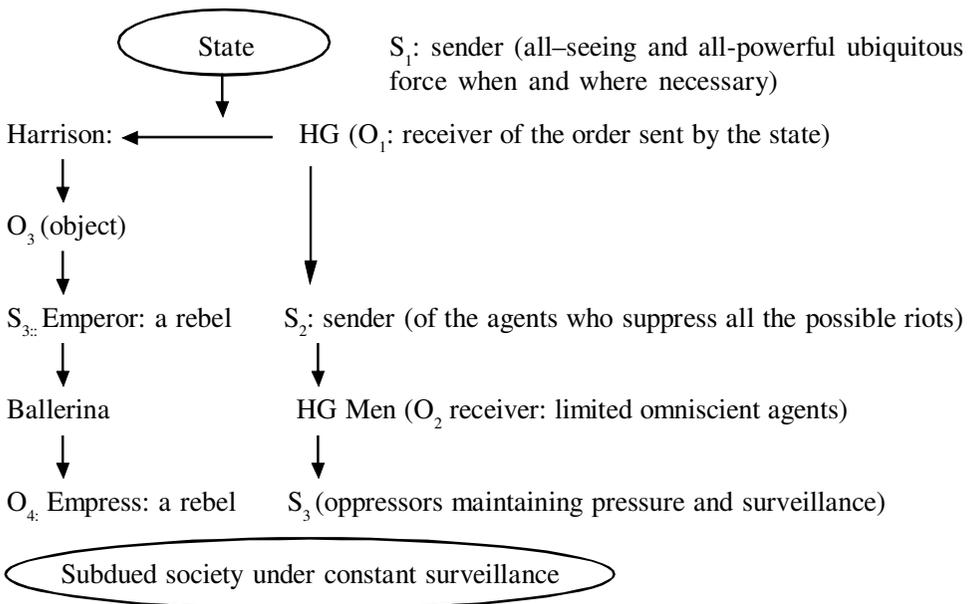


Figure 1. Semiotic Analysis of the Action Plot of the Story

The surface meaning is not enough to reach what lies behind the story, for the very fact that the reader is required to move from the said to the unsaid by interpreting what the author says on the symbolic plane. This higher order signification process, semiosis, “the active making of signs in social (inter)actions,” helps the reader to probe deeper into what lies behind the story so as to find out more on what made the author decide to write such a text (Kress 54-55).

## Value

Deprived of any opportunity to make a choice in his life, the protagonist, Harrison Bergeron, accomplishes a great shift in a monolithic society made up of people with perfect average intelligence and bearing almost identical features not to cause any competition that can lead to incessant social strife ruining the governing system based on the concept of sheer equality. In the existing governing system, the privileged few and the leaders of the party enjoy all the benefits of being in power unless otherwise a new order is decisively imposed. Their beauty, intelligence, physical strength, wealth and artistic talents would only make them different and irreplaceable regardless of race, colour, ethnic origin, political view, social class, religious belief, which do not all together require any unfair competition.

The reader might have felt disconcerted for being deluded by any other ending, if it were inserted with malicious intent to put the reader on the wrong tract. The characters, in accordance with their assigned roles, act out the tragedy of their lives in a cruel and uncaring world, because they are all caught up in a situation, an incessant chaos, over which they have no control. It is the human mind, represented by state as the absolute power that causes chaos and incessant strife to control whatever happens for the benefit of economic and political interests of the governing system. The whole system is based on one-way mandatory communication in their community created in line with their own principal values which foreground similarities and reject differences. In the process of time, the entire world turns into a global colony composed of monolithic wholes, too slow to change and too reluctant to admit that man, as the most individually distinctive being in the universe, does not ever recognize conspicuous unique identity of each individual. This universal truth means that no body can be superior to the other in terms of so-called freedom bestowed upon each member of the society controlled under constant surveillance. Total ignorance of the individual difference prevents him from recognizing the individual identity of everybody and appreciating the significance of creation. Concealed behind their religious beliefs are their hegemonic powers they relish to the fullest extent by exercising their absolute authority over the inferior, although they are all as equal before law as the ruling party or the members of the political power in a democratic society.

*Purblind Doomsters* are not the natural laws in force on high that create human destiny in a world ruled by chance, crass casualty, but rather those that exercise their tyranny over the governed lot for their own grim satisfaction. Due to lack of belief in any sort of design, even a malevolent design would be a consolation to some extent; the whole universe is believed to be indifferent to man's existence on earth. However, it is not nature that is indifferent to man, but rather it is man that is indifferent to nature and even to his existence no matter how decisively he claims that he seeks happiness and peace in the world. In Freudian philosophy, as is often put in Latin, *homo homini lupus* is the oft-repeated precept observed in all avenues of life (Freud 69).

## Critique

The story is an intellectual homily preached to warn the upcoming generations of the inevitable man's suppression exercised by man over man perhaps because men in their unending struggles will turn the whole world into a political arena, a colosseum so to speak, to impose their authority hidden behind lucrative designs, disguised every which way to coax, convince and manipulate human mind conditioned to work for the benefit of the governing elite. The governing elite, though they derive their just powers from the consent of the governed in a pseudo-democratic society, assume to have possessed God-like power that can exercise absolute authority over the governed without securing their fundamental rights and allowing any opportunity to challenge their authority and alter their governing system for the benefit of the governed. Mind, in its pompous victory over heart, never sees the dangers lurching in front in the process of moving from the medieval God-centred society representing dark ages of human history on earth to the modern, rationally designed, man-centred society promising absolute freedom of mankind in their penal colony.

Modern man, regardless of race, ethnic origin, beliefs, colour or sex is subject to hierarchical observation or *Panopticon* developed technologically as the base of 'a whole type of society' since it works as a laboratory to gather information about people. A new order can be based on a new system of punishment designed in accordance with the new technology so that it should, as Foucault puts it, "not be more humane but punish better by inserting power deeply into the social body" (Ritzer 467). Punishment is the inescapable result of discipline which is surely the outrageous display of the power governing the society or the globe, and the panoptic "Surveillance is another instrument or mechanism of power to which Victorian society is subjected" (Joodaki and Ghasemi 133). In fact all societies today and in the Middle Ages were subjected to disciplinary power maintained through all means of surveillance "which monitors and controls the way we behave, talk, hear, or see the world" (Joodaki and Ghasemi 133). Eye as the visionary power figure can see all that happens in the outside, the external world, which has its own reflective impact upon the inner world depicting the transformation of human body into designed, disciplined and interiorised monolithic societies.

The problem is that modern structural thought turns all the living creatures into objects, slaves of the demigods or deified tyrants, because beautiful human mind appears decisively indifferent to man's own existence on earth by reducing emotional needs of man to fictional pseudo-facts of modern living and ignoring the private identity of each individual for their economic interests. Through traditional study of literature the whole world can become a common school of thought, enabling the reader to resist the wickedness, devouring aggression and non-stop tyranny triggered by prejudice and incessantly increased by pride and vanity.

Semiotic analysis of the story helps foreground the deeper understanding of life experience lying behind the moral of the story by providing deeper understanding of human conscience, emotions, beliefs, weaknesses as well as strengths and almost limitless human potential for good and evil. The significance of all the concepts derived

from the deeper layers of meaning forms the backbone of the whole study and the fundamental principles of today's widely discussed philosophical issues as follows: (1) *Equality* as the central concept of the story, is carefully placed at the core of the study so that all the other related concepts can be figured out accordingly, among which are (2) *inequality* created out of equality-based administrative and social regulations in a totalitarian society, (3) *significance* of similarity-based modern monolithic society too reluctant to change for the benefit of all the governed, (4) prevailing influence of *injustice* in a pseudo democratic society, (5) *violations* of human rights endowed but never experienced properly as people may take unfair advantage of their way above normal talents even at the expense of others' unavoidable misery, (6) *limited use of freedom* by chips of mental handicaps placed in their heads, and finally (7) *love* free from carnal pleasures is longed for but never cherished in human heart, because it is carefully stripped of all human feelings and emotions for being suppressed, controlled and subdued by intriguingly delusory human mind, which is absolutely responsible for the establishment of an uncaring, cruel and extremely wicked modern society dangerously limiting freedom when and where necessary.

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## **Weapons of Mass Destruction in West Asia and its Massive Influence in Iran: An Analysis**

*–Rasmita Sahoo\**

### **Abstract**

The term Weapons of Mass Destruction has two indications. In its broader, literal sense, it is used to refer to weapons whose destructive power far surpasses that of guns or conventional explosives. Regardless, the term is more as often as possible used as a piece of a littler sense, to imply especially to nuclear, regular, and blend weapons. Since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, which conveyed issues to light of America's feebleness, the United States has tremendously expanded its attempts to stop the spread of nuclear, natural, and substance weapons. By July 2014 record, the West endeavoured to constrain Iran to recognize a state of control of 4,000 tomahawks. At this point Iranian arbitrators were grievously requesting 8,000 tomahawks, which would deny mechanical upgrade.

**Keywords:** Negotiators, WMD, energy organization, nuclear, destruction, terrorist attack.

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### **Introduction**

Weapons of mass destruction are the result of chemical substances, nuclear power and biological micro organisms, including the capacity of affect and killing big quantities of people in few minutes or hours. The term Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) by and large applies to atomic, organic and compound weapons, ballistic missiles. It is a key subject of level headed discussion and exchange inside vital and security intuition amid and after the end of Cold War. “The principal utilization of the expression Weapon of Mass Destruction” on record was by Cosmo Gordon Lang, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1937 in reference to the aeronautical barrage of Guernica in Spain. The expansion and ownership of WMD is perceived as of common concern overall on the grounds that they represent a genuine risk to the mankind. Once perceived as apparatuses of discouragement accessible to state on-screen characters, these weapons are currently dreaded as the weapons of decision for non-state performers. In the

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previous decades, the apparent danger from WMD has turned into a critical issue in the outside approach and national security motivation of numerous West Asian states. The intrusion of Iraq in March 2003 tested the fundamental idea of sway and even recognized the apparent expansion of WMDs as a legitimate ground for toppling an administration. At the point when the claimed WMDs in Iraq were not found, numerous investigators began rating the WMD risk as an “exaggerated danger”. West Asia stays at the focal point of a dynamic civil argument on the WMDs. It is important that weapons of mass obliteration have in the past been presented and utilized as a part of the district. Substance weapons assumed an unequivocal part in the Iraqi assaults on the Iranian troops from 1984 until the war’s end in 1989. The most infamous instance of the utilization of Chemical Weapons by Saddam Hussein was the Kurdish town of Halabja in March 1988, which brought about the murdering of around 5,000 individuals instantly. Although situated at the heart of West Asia, Iran land position is profoundly powerless against outer weights. Unprotected by common limits, Iran is a principle common player with huge military assets and capacities to wage monitored and digressed wars. Iran in like manner has a dug in military and key written work that shows an anticipated Iranian energy for present day technique, systems, and development. Conveyed works of some of its foundations suggest that Iran has its realists who look past patriotism and religious logic and can do impartially assessing the costs, points of interest, and threats in a given methodology. Iran’s weapons change tasks reflect a practically identical appreciation of both present day standard war engaging and the miracle in military issues (RMA), and also the extent of advances being made in the systems and development for veered off battling. Iran has continually struggled hard to set up its common pre-refinement paying little mind to having persevered through the US-constrained consents and 8 year-long-war with Iraq since the time that the convention of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was ousted by Shi’ite Islamist religious government. By building its nuclear, compound, common weapons and rockets, Iran tries to update its hard-control potential keeping in mind the end goal to ensure correspondence with its neighbours, especially Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, the Caspian Sea, the Gulf States and Israel. Iran honestly used blend weapons in the midst of the Iran-Iraq war and at present has sweeping supplies of weaponized chemicals. As demonstrated by US sources, Iran made its first engineered administrators in 1984, and starting now and into the foreseeable future. Iran’s natural weapons task was also incited by war with Iraq. U.S. Department of Defence gauges that the investigation on toxic substances and living creatures drove by Iran has made natural battling administrators, for instance, mycotoxins, ricin, and the smallpox contamination. Beside common authoritative issues and overall inspirations, Iranian approach makers have also to go under the family unit weights to amplify its WMD programmes. Iran is known not for searching for fissile material and nuclear advancement and is involved with expansive nuclear cooperation with Russia, including improvement of a power reactor at Bushehr. It is over-vigorous to pick up and create nuclear materials stealthily. Impervious to the outside force entrance in the area and the US-sponsored Israeli dominion, Iran views WMDs as prevention abilities. In addition, these weapons likewise serve as intends to upgrade their eminence and territorial weight. Since they can’t

deflect US in routine weaponry, they wish to bridle the point of interest offered by the WMDs of being extraordinary levellers.

### **WMD in West Asia**

As a 'regional security complex' (Buzan and Waever 2003), West Asia is portrayed by interlinking clashes spread over the locale, which represents its ceaseless precariousness and high level of political roughness. The zone is additionally a mind blowing theatre of force battle where country states are consistently reevaluating logical announcements of force in the falls of endless circumstances. In light of unending battle for force, they are continually supporting security association with each other inside of the district and outside the region as well. Despite the fact that military force stays vital, it in no way, shape or form, essentially, changing to guarantee the security of country states. For instance, the usage of substance weapons in the 1960s normal war in Yemen set the perspective for compound weapons use in the region and gave a jolt to other engineered weapons program in the region. The examination of Iraqi engineered weapons used in the Iran-Iraq war shows the advantageous position of Iraq in light of their all the more capable and current substance weapons capacities (Russell, 2005). Customary realists like Hans Morgenthau, George Kennan, and Henry Kissinger saw the world through the gem of power administrative issues. As showed by this perspective, the augmentation of WMD in West Asia is an impression of power legislative issues instead of the explanation behind fights for power endemic. The getting of WMD, particularly nuclear weapon, and their movement systems in numerous events, however will raise the weight in regional security circumstances, in which states venture for more power in WMD causing diverse states to experience more unmistakable lack of quality. These weights ought to be lessened to keep the potential results of military conflict in which WMD is unleashed (Herz, 1951).

The USA's framework towards WMD lays on the standard avoidance theory due to different troubles. Interests may be lopsided to the point that a 'free thinker state' – a state, usually headed by a tyrant or ruled by fundamentalists in western acknowledgment, that does not make normal checks concerning use of nuclear weapons – may risk national survival for reasons, for instance, honour or religious obligation. However, Saddam Hussein's peril in 1991 to use WMD against the coalition qualities fail to rise not in light of aversion, yet rather in all probability in light of the fact that the United States did not clearly "cripple Hussein's hang on power with an attack.

### **Iran's WMD Programme**

According to the President Hassan Rouhani, Iran's military leaders to let diplomacy prevail in dealing with potential foreign threats, in a clear reference to efforts to end the nuclear dispute and decades of hostile relations with the west. On March 2014 he announced that, the Islamic Republic has chosen not to create atomic weapons out of guideline, not just on the grounds that it is requested that do as such by arrangements.

Iran, formally the Islamic Republic of Iran, is not known to have weapons of mass devastation (WMD) and has checked game plans precluding the proprietorship

from claiming weapons of mass pulverization including the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Iran has direct learning of WMD effects—more than 100,000 Iranian troops and normal subjects were losses of blend weapons in the midst of the 1980s Iran–Iraq War. On ideological grounds, an open and straight out religious profession against the change, creation, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons has been issued by the Supreme Leader of Iran Ayatollah Ali Khamenei nearby diverse ministers, be that as it may it is embraced by some reasonably minor clergymen. Iran has communicated its uranium progression undertaking is just for calm purposes. The IAEA has avowed the non-distraction of broadcasted nuclear material in Iran however has in like manner said it “needs trust without possible military estimations to Iran’s nuclear framework. The IAEA has pointed out that Iran is not completing the necessities of United Nations Security Council Resolutions and needs to organize to clear up remarkable issues and meet essential to give early diagram information on its nuclear workplaces.

In 2012, sixteen U.S. knowledge offices, including the CIA, reported that Iran was seeking after examination that could empower it to create atomic weapons, however it was not endeavouring to do as such. The senior officers of the real’s majority American insight offices expressed that there was no definitive confirmation that Iran has made any endeavour to deliver atomic weapons since 2003. In a 2007 National Intelligence Estimate, the United States Intelligence Community evaluated that Iran had finished all atomic weapons and weaponization work in 2003. U.S. Defence Secretary Leon Panetta expressed in January 2012 that Iran was seeking after atomic weapons ability, however, it was not endeavouring to deliver atomic weapons. In 2009, U.S. insight evaluated that Iranian aims were obscure. Some Europeans trust that Iran has continued its asserted atomic weapons configuration work. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said that he had seen no confirmation of any atomic weapons programme in Iran, while Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said that Iran was near having the capacity to create atomic weapons.

After the IAEA voted in an uncommon non-accord choice to discover Iran in resistance with its NPT Safeguards Agreement and to report that rebelliousness to the UN Security Council, the Council requested Iran to suspend its atomic advancement exercises and forced authorizations against Iran when it declined to do as such. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has contended that the authorizations are illicit. The IAEA has possessed the capacity to confirm the non-redirection of announced atomic material in Iran, yet not the non appearance of undeclared exercises. The Non-Aligned Movement has approached both sides to work through the IAEA for an answer.

In November 2009, the IAEA Board of Governors embraced a determination against Iran which encouraged Iran to apply the altered Code 3.1 to its Safeguard Agreement, asked Iran to execute and endorse the Additional Protocol, and communicated “genuine concern” that Iran had not participated on issues that required to be cleared up to reject the likelihood of military measurements to Iran’s atomic project.

Iran is assigned by the West a 'revisionist state' and some piece of the Bush-articulated 'vile forces that be' (Anoushiravan and Hinnebusch, however, Iranian danger recognitions in the locale are distinctive. While the previous is authoritatively in a condition of war with Israel, the primary risk to Iran preceding 1991 and the first Gulf War was Saddam Hussein's Iraq (Barzegar, 2008). The Iranians started adding to their rocket programme at the tallness of the Iran-Iraq war. At the point when Saddam Hussein started dispatching rockets at Iran, the Iranians had nothing to react with aside from a couple Scud-BS they had gotten from Libya, the main nation that upheld Iran. Since 1991, the United States has supplanted Iraq as the most obvious danger in Iran's discernment taking after a monstrous U.S. military activity against Iran helped by U.S. associates in the district, including the Gulf States and Israel (Cordesman, 2007). Despite the fact that started amid creating atomic, organic, and synthetic (NBC) weapons amid the mid 1980s, the pace of advancement essentially quickened in the mid 1990s altogether influencing the area's vital surroundings (Carus, 2000).

The Iranian technique is to debilitate the United States and its partners by undermining a war of wearing out that will right such a high cost, to the point that this option will get the opportunity to be forbidden to the United States. Considering this, Iranian boss have focussed their attempts not on the update of their liberal munitions stockpile of routine arms, yet rather on specific new weapon classes. Sagaciously they are placing assets into debilitation enhancers and force multipliers. Supplanting obsolete equipment is in every way distributed a lower need (Kleiber, 2007). Identities, particularly religion, patriotism, ethnicity, monetary matters, and geopolitics all are vital in illuminating Iran's targets and techniques in its relations with the outside world, like the arrangements of key security establishments and the goals of their pioneers. Iran's security procedure is made in light out of these parts. Iran's methodologies toward its neighbours are logically sensible. It is endeavouring to calm neighbourhood weight and end its isolation, despite the way that its game plans toward Israel and the United States are frequently a unique case to this methodology. The trepidation ambushes on the United States on 11 September 2001 appeared to the world in a burst that, if terrorists succeed in securing WMD, they may use them. The 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), while seeing the first deluge of five nuclear weapon states, succeeded in attracting an inconceivable number of pupils. It didn't, in any case, keep away from India, Israel and Pakistan from molding a second deluge of development. These three states did not sign NPT. India and Pakistan have a declared nuclear weapons program, while Israel keeps up a position of nuclear unclearness. Israel has never authoritatively confessed to having an atomic weapon. Be that as it may, in the meantime it has not denied not having so as well. It is for the most part claimed that Israel has an atomic weapons store, with allegations notwithstanding originating from the worldwide atomic guard dog IAEA (El Baradei, 2004). In the third influx of multiplication, it was damaged by Iraq, Libya and North Korea. As of late, Iran and North Korea have been at the focal point of non-multiplication open deliberation and it is contended that if these two nations don't dependably disavow atomic weapons, weight could assemble for a fourth influx of expansion of atomic weapons. The IAEA shields framework, made to confirm

that no atomic material is redirected from tranquil uses, demonstrated lacking to find the Iraqi and Libyan infringement of the NPT. Iran fizzled for a long time in its obligation to pronounce imperative atomic projects. Notwithstanding Iran's monstrous double dealing and foreswearing battle, the IAEA has revealed a lot of data showing various real infringements of Iran's bargain commitments under its NPT Safeguards Agreement. On the off chance that Iran proceeds in its unwillingness to conform to the NPT, the Council can then take up this issue as a risk to global peace and security (Bolton, 2005; Joyner, 2011). The expertise to make atomic, natural and concoction weapons and weapons-usable material – enhanced uranium or plutonium, altered infections and forerunner chemicals – is accessible to an extending gathering of States and non-state performing artists. Quick changes in the life sciences impact the data's accessibility and skill needed to make poisons and hereditarily adjusted infections and different pathogens. The presence of an unlawful private worldwide business sector where WMD mastery, innovation, material and outlines for weapons could be obtained is an exceptional danger during a period of dynamic overall terrorism. The development expected in the utilization of carbon sans dioxide atomic influence will prompt the generation, transportation and utilization of more atomic fuel, expanding the danger that improved uranium and plutonium may be redirected to weapons. Radioactive substances or atomic waste not under full control may be gained by terrorists and be utilized as a part of filthy bombs – gadgets that scatter radioactive material to defile target regions or to incite dread.

Concoction weapons offer with atomic and natural weapons the ability to cause mass losses even in a solitary assault. It is not clear that natural, compound and atomic weapons have a place in one applied classification. They vary in their specialized components, in the straightforwardness with them can be gained and created, and in their ability to bring about mass devastation. Regarding them as one classification of weaponry can twist examination and produce imperfect institutional reactions. Taking a gander at the dependable and especially traumatic clashes in Africa and Asia (Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone), it is clear that the genuine weapons of mass obliteration are little arms and landmines. Light arms are the weapons of decision in today's trademark clashes on the grounds that they are reasonable, to a great degree easy to use, effortlessly covered and snuck crosswise over fringes, tough and sturdy, simple to disassemble and reassemble, very versatile and convenient, and to a great degree.

## **Worldwide Responses**

It has been a prevailing view that Iran in the 1990s went about as maverick states in the West Asia, debilitating to annoy the district's solidness. It is, on the other hand, contended by a few investigators that these two nations have truth be told acted in a sane manner, seeking after the point of containing Western impact. Iran's remote arrangement is demonstrated to be routine ones, of realist tact with their compatibility of a parity of force and ranges of prominence. Their organization together with one another is additionally firmly analysed and observed to be guarded in nature. Countries

around the globe are unverifiable and on edge about Iran's expectations in the West Asia and the more extensive worldwide enclosure. Its present president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has made no mystery of his restriction to Western culture, especially Israel, and his yearning to get atomic weapons. On the other hand, as Cordesman and Kleiber point out, Ahmadinejad does not so much represent the Iranian administrative administration, which works in a billow of mystery furthermore straightforwardly control Iran's military. Given the vague way of Iran's worldwide destinations, this new study concentrates on the unmistakable parts of Iran's military powers and takes a target take a gander at the practical dangers that Iran stances to the district and the world. The creators efficiently survey every part of Iranian military powers from their customary armed forces to their topsy-turvy danger through intermediary wars in the area. Much consideration in national security verbal confrontations is paid to Iran's aims without first comprehension the degree of its abilities. Lacking such a basic seeing, quite a bit of this hypothesis has a tendency to be squandered and unessential to what could really happen in the case of a conflict. Cordesman and Kleiber's study gives, in careful subtle element, a premise for comprehension the reasonable danger that Iran stances toward the Northern Gulf. In the mid-1980, Iran turned out to be closer by normal dangers from the United States in the area. After the Islamic upheaval, Iran was detached and mortally debilitated by the Iraqi attack. It was accepted to have been supported by the Superpowers.

## Conclusion

In a nutshell we can say that, the 'regional security complex' in West Asia, as fought by Buzan and Waever (2003), makes it precarious area with genuine repercussions for neighbourhood and in addition overall security. The condition's intricacies can be gauged from the way that dispute takes up an extent of estimations – unfriendly to radical, religious, ethnic, and secessionist. In such circumstances, weapons of mass pounding expect unmistakable parts. In the more offset districts of the world, WMDs are seen as consistently unusable weapons which have inconceivable quality as preventions, however in West Asia the estimation of such weapons is not just their debilitation potential but instead moreover their convenience. Iran serves as logical examinations that explore WMDs and their neighbourhood consequences. Further, the extension of WMD in West Asia is continuing on wellspring of sensitivity toward the West for the most part in light of the late upsurge of overall Jihadi terrorism and in bigger part, responsibility for weapons by the implied 'dissident states' out to aggravate existing conditions in the region.

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## Book Reviews

**Jagadish Gan-Choudhuri. *Folk-tales of Tripura*. Tripura: Tribal Research & Cultural Institute, Government of Tripura, 2015, Price Rs. 253. ISBN: 978-81-927167-4-9.**

*Reviewed by*  
**Bhaskar Roy Barman\***

The book under review, written by Dr. Jagadish Gan-Choudhuri author of a good many high-quality books written in English and Bengali and editor of no mean number of anthologies, English and Bengali, is an important and significant contribution to the research into the folklore of Tripura, nay, of North-east India. Several years of research into the folklore of Tripura and that of Northeast India, reference the contents of the book, has culminated in the preparation and publication of this mammoth book, as the author's preface tells us. This book is inundated with a flow of folktale out of the folklore of Tripura and other north-eastern regions. All the folktales, one hundred and thirty-two in number that have peopled this book reminisce of the bygone or rather, halcyon 'days & smiles... These folk-tales, varied in contents & theme, have a rural flavour.' (p. xi) In compiling a selection of the folktales the author has laid a particular emphasis on the folktales of Tripura and the Bengali folktales. The Bengali folktales that the Bengali refugees from Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan brought across to Tripura and the tribal folktales have intermingled in a common folklore. Dr Gan-Choudhuri has not, as befits a true scholar, trodden the wonted path of compiling only tribal folktales; he has incorporated the popular Bengali folktales that have mingled in the folklore of Tripura, consequent upon the mass exodus of the Bengali refugees into Tripura.

What is likely to tantalize the reader, when he/she is reading through the book is the title of the book itself. He is likely to find himself wondering as to the appropriateness of the title to the contents of the book. The averment with which the preface to the book begins ('In Folk-tales of Tripura one hundred [and] thirty-two folktales of north-eastern India have been incorporated') does not bear out the appropriateness of the title. The initial confusion the reader is initially exposed to could have been avoided if the title had been written as 'Folktales of North-East India'. Every researcher into the folklore of Tripura knows that by 'folktales of Tripura' are meant the tribal folktales of Tripura. But in this book the Manipuri folktales and the Bengali folktales are juxtaposed with the tribal folktales. It is the nature of every folktale to travel, riding on the shoulders of men, from one country to another country and from one state to another state, but it does not get rootless and lose its intrinsic characteristics, though it mingles in the folklore of the country or the state to which it has travelled.

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The purpose that has governed the author's compilation of the select folktales of Tripura is to acquaint the readers loving outside Tripura with the richness and diversity of the folktales of Tripura in the hope that they will find in the tales incorporated 'a deep sympathy with the flora & fauna of Tripura; with the hills and [the] rivers of Tripura; with the rites and rituals of Tripura' and 'an element of heritage of Tripura'. These tales, as the author avers, demonstrate the spirit of the age and the supernatural view of the world,

Now a few words about the foreword to the book. The forward is written by 'Sailohnuna', Director, Tribal Research & Cultural Institute, Government of Tripura, Agartala. In the foreword he heaps praise on the author, but does not write anything worthwhile to prepare the reader for what he/she is going to read. The reader shall rest satisfied with knowing that the author is a great scholar and the contains such and such things that habitually embellish the books of such kind

It deserves to be mentioned in this context that we have heard since our childhood that folktales are meant for children only to read and enjoy. This idea has birthed a lack of interest in the folktales when children have reached their majority, But in the folktales is enshrined a realistic history of how ancestors used to live their familial and social life. This history enshrined in the folktales is not revealed to children; it is revealed to them when they have grown up. Nowadays a considerable emphasis is laid throughout the world on the study of folktales to unveil the social history of the ancient races. Dr. Gan Choudhari has attempted to unveil the social history of the ancient people of Tripura in the folktales of Tripura.

This book features twenty seven Tripuri, one Jamatiya, three Reang, one Noatiya, seven Lusai and sixty-eight Bengali folktales. The book deals, in addition to these folktales, with five myths and legends of Tripura. Nowhere in the narration of the folktales does the author exhibit his erudition, rather he has chosen to use simple but lucid language so much so that all the folktales have become pleasant reading, equally to the young and the old..

In the Tripuri folktales chapter the author has dwelt upon some common terms which we come across in the folktales of Tripura, besides narrating other folktales as stories there are Larima (kindhearted goddess), pilgrimage of the soul, the sky and so on.

Appropos of the five myths and legends of Tripura referred to above the author says that there were several 'ancient settlements in Tripura' which had their local myths and legends which have got embalmed in the royal chronicle of Tripura. Tripura can pride itself on being an ancient source of mythology. Many of the myths and legends, not chronicled, were lost in an abyss of oblivion. The five myths and legends that have survived the onslaught of time are: 1) Sato's right leg falling in Tripura, 2) The Killing of Tripurasur (the name of a demon), 3) A God's Tragic Visit to Tripura, 4) Treasure in a Pond and 5) The Spot where one Horace was Shot Dead by a Prince.

What distinguishes the book from other books dealing with the folklore of Tripura is the appendices. As appendices the author deals with motif and motif-index, the

quality of life, the ethnography of Tripura, folktale as a genre, the rational interpretation of myth and a glossary of terms. This book is embroidered with index.

In his brief note on motif and motif-index the author confesses to his failure to collect Prof. Stith Thompson's complete list of motif-index. He admits that he had to rest content with alluding to Dr. Verrier Edwin's Tribal Myths of Orissa which, Dr. Gan-Choudhari says, 'contains an incomplete list of mythological motifs.' (p. 479)

As says the author, this folktale book is divided into two groups, one group related to the 'culture of the greater Tripuri communities' and the other to the culture of the Bengali people who are co-living with the tribal people in Tripura. The tribal people call a folktale kerengkathama whereas the Bengali people call it Rupakatha or Galpa.

The folktales of the Tripuri communities contrast with the Bengali folktales in this that the Tripuri folktales tell of animals, plants, family life, love and romance, jealousy, cruelty, wickedness, foolishness, unusual heroism, magic, chain of events, and formula, whereas the traditional four-fold caste structure that characterizes the Bengali society has moulded the Bengali folktales. Almost all Bengali folktales begin with a 'There was a poor Brahmin'.

Further down the note the author touches upon the term 'motif', originally a French term. 'Motif has,' he says, 'various shades of meaning, such as motive, a theme, a factor, an element, an emotion, an intention, an indication of behaviour of a person.' (p. 481). It acts upon a person to behave in a particular way and appears as a theme in a literary composition.

Now the author sets out to deal with the quality of life revealed in the folktales of Tripura. In his brief discussion on the quality of life the author strives to the historical background to the modernization of the tribal folktales, subjected to foreign influences.

The author has not omitted to write about the ethnography of Tripura which will help the reader in understanding of the motif of the folktales of Tripura. The scope of this review does not allow of even a brief description of it in this review lest it might jar on the patience of the reader.

The author's note on folktale deserves to expatiate upon in a few words. He says, to begin with, that the 'habit of telling stories and listening to these stories is a sort of craze, eternal and universal.' (p. 501) Recorded long ago were some of the folktales. The author, emotions as examples of the folktales recorded the Pancha-tantra, the Hitopadesa, the Vetala Pancha-Vimsati, the Katha-saritsagar, and the Jataka.

The author in his note on folktales endeavours to interpret in simple language 'myths', 'legends', 'folktales', 'allegories', 'proverbs', 'ballads', 'folksongs', 'anonymous authorship' and so on.

I do not, as a reviewer, subscribe to his interpretation of 'anonymous authorship'. In his note on anonymous authorship he says, 'It is very difficult to ascertain the authorship of folktales. In some remote past and in some remote place, an intelligent person might have started a nucleus of a story; subsequently matters gathered around

the central mass.” (P. 503). This hypothesis goes against the nature of a folktale. No one wrote or imagined folktales. They originated from the ancient soil. Illiterate grandmothers used to tell these tales to their grandchildren; they themselves had listened to their illiterate grandmothers tell them the tales. They have passed through the generation down to the modern age.



**K. Srilata. *Writing Octopus: A Collection of Poems*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2013, pp. 74, Price Rs. 195. ISBN 978-81-7273-785-6.**

**Reviewed by  
Jaydeep Sarangi\***

For K. Srilata, poetry is a chiselled marble of language. *Writing Octopus: A Collection of Poems* is startlingly original. Her poems have the strength and variety to surprise readers with rich experiences — revelation, insight and further understanding of elemental truth and beauty as John Keats said:

Beauty is truth, truth beauty, - that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.  
(“Ode on a Grecian Urn” Lines 49-50)

One of the most definable characteristics of Srilata’s poetry is economy of language. A quality poem is a colourful rose that paints feelings that it holds something more to unfurl:

I found it at last  
In a grave of misplaced things (“Trace”, p. 73)

There are some voices that emphasise the agency that speakers of English in post-colonial societies use the language in their identity formation and to create their own discursive space. Writing is inside out in words. Srilata’s poems uncover beauty of the lived moments of our life. A simultaneous feeling of happiness and ecstasy in the variety of subjects and style is what the collection stands for. Poems in *Writing Octopus* appeal to our best senses, and we unwittingly follow a call from within. We soon become part of the poetic flight, and together we move on—the poet and the reader. There is the pleasure in the recognition of a shared moment followed by a revealed anxiety of experiencing beauty in objects and thoughts. Srilata’s poems can be read seriously and reveal deeper meanings of life’s routine acts:

Adoption agency file.  
Her first photograph. The only one in the file.  
(“Not in the Picture”, p. 39)

Creativity is a red rose of every human heart. There is lyrical celebration in the recognition of a fulfilling moment after reading a poem:

It’s a bit like herding birds.  
Just when you think  
you have done it,  
it flutters away from your grip. (“Writing”, p. 74)

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Srilata's poetic-self gasps in 'chamber of maiden thoughts' to search for her emotional root proclaiming it as sap of art is her poetic engagement. A language 'dew-fresh and clear' is the source of vitality for the poetess to voyage within: The *Foreword* by Keki N. Daruwalla is like an entry key to unfold a mysterious casket of delight. In Srilata the element of *Shakti* lies in her use of imagery and that is in an attractive way:

I am a word with some muscle,  
a lean and mean word,  
a leopard on the prowl. ("Leopard-Prowl", p. 46)

Veritable images in different poems in this collection are woven one into another with rare radiance and effortlessness. Poems dazzle with sparkling cadence. There is a unified sensibility that stitches the poems in a perfect harmony:

A bright blue bird  
from a distant tree  
flies into my house. ("Bright Blue Bird", p.21)

There is an indomitable gusto that turns the key to a casket of sublime thoughts and ideas. Poetry for *Carl Sandburg* is an echo, asking a shadow to dance. Poems in this timely collection record the moments recollected through the doors of eternity:

A very old door,  
In need of repair,  
Swings hinge-less. ("Faces", p.70)

Srilata, a responsible soul-maker, does not find it difficult to articulate her poetic commitment into a corpus that beautifully invites her readers' interest. No matter what we touch and we wish to know about, we simply end up in the enigma of heightened awareness that her words and idioms forge.



**Jaydeep Sarangi. *The Wall and Other Poems*. Allahabad: Cyberwit.net., 2015. PB. Price Rs. 200. ISBN: 978-81-8253-5638.**

***Reviewed by*  
Patricia Prime\***

For an English reader, *The Wall and other Poems*, by Jaydeep Sarangi, raises the issue of how to read much Indian poetry. Sarangi's poems have an ease of access and are fresh but consist largely of philosophical anecdotes. The problem for the English reader is the question: What is poetic about it? Yet one can still distinguish that Sarangi is one of the better Indian poets.

The poems offer a first-person account of the poet's general spirituality. For example, the first poem in the collection, "Friendship beyond Borders", says:

Walls stand up and shake hands,  
Crossing borders of the mind  
And then, two hands extending a friendship.  
Dawn seeds from the meetings  
and round tables Resolutions pile up.  
Frescoes on the walls.  
Prosaic congress to decide on its fate.

Which adds a richness of dimension to all those walls which we build, not only around ourselves, but to protect our countries from invaders. Often, the reader is taken into the experience of the poet with immediacy, as in "Sailing through Ichamati":

We are a very old wall,  
Useless at times. Sometimes forgotten.  
People don't want us anymore  
In need of no repair, we struggle.  
History books record tears on our bricks  
Long languishing hours, deep sighs Smoked  
around us.  
Policies and principles ruled our lives When the  
country was young.  
We, only we, have forgotten the language of surprise!

Sometimes, rapture is based in the world of nature he is experiencing, as at the conclusion of "Aphrodite Near the Banks of Dulung":

Oja-Pali rests solely on its myth.  
Her beauty never misleads men to many roads and lanes  
Every household on the banks of small rivers and  
Water bodies see her in a sari. Talking to local tribes.

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She is never jealous of Aphrodite Her  
 skin is not white like her.  
 She has no muse in English Only a few  
 know her. Talk about her.  
 Offer puja to her on auspicious days.  
 She visits simple huts near the forest  
 On the banks of Dulung  
 When frogs are out in the rain. The place is muddy.  
 Snakes rule a slippery world.  
 (Note: Oja-Pali is a musical folk theatre)

When he recalls an earthquake or tsunami in “Bio Data of a Poet,” it is immediate and vital, bringing to mind the devastation in Nepal and elsewhere: yet the poet can still find something in the midst of terror and hopelessness to write about:

An earthquake or Tsunami,  
 A poet is always at the desk.  
 Words and music flood the world, Walks through the mud.  
 He holds the world in one hand.  
 Shakes it  
 Rubs it  
 Crushes it He takes the skin out with  
 both hands.

It is of the nature of such Indian poetry that it works first as narrative, devoid of metaphor that lifts the poem above mere anecdote. Consider one of the most linguistically striking poems, “Insomniac,” for example:

Did you borrow my sleep for months?  
 My lonely nights  
 Walk between the stars  
 I listen to light footsteps, thin drizzle. I read *The  
 Labyrinth of Solitude*  
 My mind walks through a lonely  
 road.  
 Nights grow deep.  
 Did you borrow my sleep for months?  
 I swing. Log on to face book.  
 Post comments here and there.  
 Locked in notifications.  
 I wait for the night to be over again.  
 Unknown birds  
 Chant the day’s break.  
 Some mysterious jogis chant  
 To embrace powerful moments  
 And inhale unpolluted air. I witness all little details

The voice of the speaker, here and throughout these poems, declares itself confidently and meaningfully. The reader is left to sift through the music and imagery. There is the implied suggestion that he has come through to something more grounded yet spiritual than a flight of fancy.

Sarangi presents himself as easy-going, yet given to reflection. His manner is free-flow verse that follows the current of the intelligent, educated, experiencing mind. Typically, poems are called “Sailing through Ichamati,” “A Doorway near Vistula,” “Green Garden”, “Insomniac” or My Dilemma”, poems about a place, an activity, a scene or an idea. The title is frequently a clue, sometimes a crucial one to experience the poem coherently. And even poems without one of those words in the title are reflective – “Green Garden,” for example, sounds as if it would be by an English poet, but the poem is not like an English poem:

This green garden of colours and sounds, has been  
 Our teacher and the head of the family of  
 Shadows and sicknesses. River Vistula gently murmurs nearby.  
 Long cherished hopes, heavy hearts Wet in rain.  
 Some castles for knightly banquets Kiss our senses.  
 Blood run wild. It has some native plants, taste buds leak Reminded of  
 honey bees have their days with Herbs and  
 flowers.

For here, we have “the head of the family of / Shadows and sicknesses” – “the river Vistula” and the native plants. We are inveighed into a day-dream.

Passages of enchanting language tumble through the poems, as in “Lakshmanrekha”:

Her vessel has water from native links  
 Red soil and dry leaves of Sal and Mahuya.  
 A male shadow follows her Like a dominant caste.  
 There are limits around her neck  
 So many nails to cross  
 So many walls to dig holes  
 Before borders extended up to child caring and child rearing.  
 Wearing matching sari with blouse  
 She writes for  
 A sense of community autonomy,  
 A history, agency of the world To gain a  
 spacein the sphere.  
 Love’s fires are lit—  
 “Women can make and women can break.”

Indeed, there is no resolve, until we reach the final line, “Women can make and women can break.” We are then reminded of the title and the fragmentary nature of the poem.

One of the most reflective poems is “Growing up Bengali in Kolkata,” which begins:

Nobody asks me  
 How to pronounce Bangla sounds. I open my mouth full.

Nobody writes a paper. No conference held.  
 No tip extended.  
 People say, it has expressions. My  
 Tamil friends say, It sounds sweet.  
 My chest inhales pride As I grab a  
 baked fish.  
 Separate its bones. I do it as I mastered the art.  
 Naturalised it as a fish eater!  
 I wash dishes of smelling the fish. My daughter  
 asks for more pieces of Hilsa She can't have rice  
 without fishes.

The resulting poetic is its unique artefact. Another poem, "Poet Versus his Idiom" begins with the lovely line: "My idiom is like a peacock's feathered tail" and ends with the poet's observations that he "needs poetry cleaner to take guards afresh."

My idiom is like peacock's feathered tail  
 Of rhyme, rhythm and metre. Thoughts  
 Stream from the milk maid's can, Grandmother's  
 kitchen, tribal's dancing Chhou with colourful  
 masks. Each small act has a total life  
 In the sacred place, beside a forest  
 Where goats, fowls and pigeons are sacrificed  
 For the prayers. My pen scripts  
 How we happily rival each other for survival. I write.  
 My semicolons envelope my dreams.  
 I drink the heat of the Sun. Never wrote a love poem.  
 My wife calls my poems a mere flirt. She presents me Files of letters I  
 received when my tree was young.  
 I need poetry cleaner to take guards afresh.

Here the poem begins by observing the beauty of a poem, its rhymes and rhythms, and compares it to the grandmother's dancing and the joy of the simple life. It then continues to the poet's wife, who calls his poems 'a mere flirt'. But Sarangi is in full possession of his voice and he has a command of an elegant and passionate style. Many of the poems are laid out on the page to create a montage of the way in which a poet's thoughts arise and how he melds them, with rhyme, metre and assonance to create his poems.

Each poem, each artefact, is self-contained, and the book does not attempt to provide a progressive arc. They are strange, sensuous, and bewitching. Throughout Sarangi brings a raconteur's impulse, with wide-ranging humanistic voracity, tempered by careful reflections by line and details. And here is the strength of this book, that what is unique to the poet can also stand for a wider poetic experience. Look, we're all different, the poet seems to say; and, look: we're holding hands.



**Pashupati Jha. *Awaiting Eden Again*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2015, pp.92. HB. Price. Rs. 195 / US \$. 10. ISBN: 978-93-5207-047-3.**

*Reviewed by*  
**Vijay Kumar Roy\***

Pashupati Jha is one of the famous names among the leading Indian English poets. He is the author of “three widely read and reviewed” collections of poems: *Cross and Creation* (2003), *Mother and Other Poems* (2005), and *All in One* (2011). *Awaiting Eden Again* (2015) is his fourth collection of poems having sixty four poems on various themes. Being a true poet of earth, he gives a natural flow to his thought where moral, social and economic issues find their true expressions besides other issues. Like Sri Aurobindo, Prof. Jha believes that “poetry has mantra-like power” and its function is “to stir our feelings profoundly and transform our stony heart into human sensibility.” (Preface) He also suggests that if this belief is followed in its true sense then “cruelty and violence would be automatically minimised”. (Preface)

“Eden” is believed to be a “beautiful garden where Adam and Eve, the first humans, lived” and it was “a place of happiness and innocence”. The book, *Awaiting Eden Again* has also the elements of happiness and innocence but to continue enjoying the happiness, there is a condition that good values should not be compromised at any cost. This kind of compromise results in evils, and it also opens the doors for all other evils. Poetry has an enchanting power and its sadhana can help one to avert growing evils in society and their multiplicity.

The book begins with the poem, entitled “Poetry” in which Prof. Jha writes about the function of poetry. For him, poetry “is not a luxury” and “not an opiate to fanciful dreams/of fragrant flowers, mermaids and fairies” but it has a kind of “assimilated force” that is able “to burst open the third eye.” The “third eye” is the “inner eye” which can make one’s perception capable of seeing things on deeper and higher level what the “ordinary” eyes fail to do. This eye can

.... create a budding blaze-  
the rising sun with all heat and glow-  
to enlighten the engulfed depth  
of darkness, transforming  
fossilized stones to ooze  
water-crystal pure, cool  
and quenching. (“Poetry”, 17-23)

The poet expresses his unhappiness about the foul means used these days by those who believe that money can bring everything for them. He writes that one who gets birth with “a silver spoon in his mouth”, he makes it “gold”. Such person lives full luxurious life, having “imported cars”, good bank balance, and being always surrounded by sycophants, away from the harsh reality of life. The fact is that when such person dies

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none is there to mourn his death-  
 from the dust he came  
 to the dust he returneth. (“A Page of History” 16-18)

Opposite of the above, there is a person who has

... a kind and pure heart  
 sincerity of aim and action  
 whatever he does, goes to all  
 with no return expected  
 or asked for. His words  
 ring true, as if uttered  
 directly from the divinity. (“A Page of History” 20-26)

This kind of person does not care for his own loss and gain and lives his life for others. He comes from the dust but returns to the eternity and his physical death is mourned by millions. The poet says that such person “becomes a page of history.” There are many poems in the book having such noble thoughts that really touch the heart of the reader and the poet succeeds in his aim.

The poem, “Earth Mother” has elements of beauty. This is a symbolic poem where the mother earth symbolizes an old lady who was very beautiful in her youth; as India was known as a golden bird and a centre of attraction for other countries. That attraction developed jealousy in some tyrants who invaded her and took numerous lives. These days also there are many such overambitious people who are jealous of India’s glorious past, and the oldest civilization. They don’t like peace and prosperity of our mother land. The poet connects the physical beauty to the eternal beauty. Like a lady, India was a source of smile, happiness and inspiration for many people in her youth: “her world was the smiles of life around her” (17). The poet writes that “her old age is the source of all your youth.” (23) So instead of teasing her, they should “salute her/with reverence”. It is a fact that all countries have their own ways of living; and India is known for her varied cultural identity and for having the same respect for all cultures and traditions in the world. It is difficult for some to digest and therefore they see India with evil eyes. The poet suggests those envious people to respect her as she is

..... the only  
 goddess visible in this world, the source  
 and sustenance of eternal life on earth. (“Earth Mother” 28-30)

There is a love for his native place is the poem “From Where I Began”. The poet loves and likes his native place so much that he does not talk about any foreign land. He remembers his old “thatched room” where he took birth and he desires not to “go further to look for” his “luck” he “would end” there where he began.

Social fabric is very important to keep one united with family and friends. Without it people feel alienated. Its absence also gives birth to unhealthy situation in family and society. When the concept of nuclear family is very popular these days, and people have no time to meet and wish their friends and relatives, Prof. Jha propagates mutual

love and respect through his poetry. The poems, “Old Lies”, “New Year”, and “Made for Each Other” echo the voice of familial tie in the modern fast life.

The present situation of India is palpable. Rape, crime and misuse of power have become common happenings. These develop anger and anguish in people. The poet well illustrates his concern in the poem, “The Way of the World”. He writes that “A bird hunted down/can’t curse the hunter” (1-2) and “those who live by the sword/die by the sword.” (23-24)

Material pleasure has enslaved the minds of people and “unchecked ambition and arrogance” have spread everywhere.

Nothing seems safe now from the lust  
for gold and the lechery of flesh. (“Purging Fire” 12-13)

The above situation and so many other worse incidents are the result of the changing meaning of the words in the minds of men.

Honesty for the few means principle of life  
for majority others, it is simply a ploy,  
a game to cheat the innocent and the gullible;  
love to some is surrender and sacrifice  
for many others, it is satisfaction of the ego  
bloated further by each such conquest. (“Changing Meaning” 3-8)

The poet writes that this is the effect of *Kaliyug*, which is “no more a myth now.” So this is the time of “incarnation” of God Who can save the earth from these vices and “brutality”.

Presenting a vivid scene of accidental death of a person, the poet successfully tries to reveal the reality of life that one who comes on the earth, he is bound to die. Our boasting, show off, and all kinds of lust go in vain. Humanity is the real identity of a human being that should be developed and one should be always ready to help others and save the lives of others. This is the true devotion.

All are busy to achieve success in his life at any cost. The meaning of success has also changed. These days success is not attained only by hard labour and incessant honest efforts, it is often attained by “selling both body and soul”. (“Fake” 13)

Besides the above issues, social discrimination, inhuman practices, false beliefs, and ultimately a hope for a new world are the major themes of the poems in *Awaiting Eden Again*, all presented in a lucid language and sometimes with the clear imagery that the reader can understand them easily and grasp the essence of the poet’s cherished message. Thus the poems of this collection suit the demand of time that can be read, relished and used for research purposes.



# Poetry

## A Bridge of Peace

*“They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree,  
and none shall make them afraid.” (The Bible, Micah, 4)*

*“He who walks with peace – walk with him!” (The Koran, Sura 48)*

My Arab sister,  
Let us build a sturdy bridge  
Form your olive world to mine,  
From my orange world to yours,  
Above the boiling pain  
Of acid rain prejudice -  
And hold human hands high  
Full of free stars  
Of twinkling peace

I do not want to be your oppressor  
You do not want to be my oppressor,  
Or your jailer  
Or my jailer,  
We do not want to make each other afraid  
Under our vines  
And under our fig trees  
Blossoming on a silvered horizon  
Above the bruising and the bleeding  
Of Poison gases and scuds.

So, my Arab sister,  
Let us build a bridge of  
Jasmine understanding  
Where each shall sit with her baby  
Under her vine and under her fig tree -  
And none shall make them afraid  
**AND NONE SHALL MAKE THEM AFRAID.**

## Cosmic Woman

They tell us  
you were first born  
in warm ocean womb  
caressed by sun fingers -  
daughter perhaps  
of the stormy affair  
of two unruly atoms in love  
maddened by the solitude  
of eternal rounds  
in the steppes of times

And your children,  
lively descendants  
of their stellar nucleus mother  
dropped from the sky  
in depths of ocean belly,  
born of green and brown seaweed  
and the laughs and cries  
of a blue bacteria

Cosmic woman,  
when you chose earth  
as home for your vast roots  
at the beginning  
of the great human family,  
it was for life —  
not for death!

Cosmic woman,  
you, who were born of the nucleus,  
from deadly nuclear mushroom -  
save your chosen planet  
save your children!

## Peace is a Woman

How do you know  
peace is a woman?

I know, for  
I met her yesterday  
on my winding way  
to the world's fare.

She had such a sorrowful face  
just like a golden flower faded  
before her prime.

I asked her why  
she was so sad?

She told me her baby  
was killed in Auschwitz,  
her daughter in Hiroshima  
and her sons in Vietnam,  
Ireland, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine,  
Bosnia, Rwanda and Chechnya.

All the rest of her children, she said,  
are on the nuclear  
black-list of the dead ,  
all the rest, unless  
the whole world understands —  
that peace is a woman.

A thousand candles then lit  
in her starry eyes, and I saw -  
Peace is indeed a pregnant woman,  
Peace is a mother.

## Eve's Defence

You didn't have to accept  
That shiny juicy apple  
Did you Adam dear?

Please remove those  
Musty fig leaves  
From your memory and ears  
And remember Adam dear,  
You were created  
From mere earth,  
Whereas I was sculpted  
From a much finer substance  
Finer than ivory  
Finer than gold.

In the rush of your  
Heart's blood  
In the throbbing of your temples  
Remember Adam dear -  
I was created  
From pure human bone  
Your strong rib-bone  
Became me - Eve  
Mother of Life.

Always remember  
Dearest Adam  
Free, independent Eve  
Is - You.

## Palm Curve

Cuddled in the heart of your hand,  
soft hand, warm hand,  
I do not feel the meaningless drops  
of life drizzling,  
do not hear its jackal-thunder  
nor see its lynx-lightning  
in the dark.

And if the world should burst tonight  
in a giant mushroom flame,  
I would not notice -  
Snuggled in the nook  
of your gentle palm  
where I belong,  
it seems I may exist  
forever.

## I Want to Kill You War

I want to kill you war, forever,  
not like a phoenix, that always comes back  
I want to kill you war  
and I don't know how  
and I don't know why  
all the people of the world  
don't join hands  
to kill you war —  
you the greatest killer  
of them all!

The governors of the world  
Go on feeding your fat belly  
With fresh soldiers  
And nuclear arms,  
With blurring eyes  
They only know how to hang  
The murderers of the one or the two  
But not you,  
You, the greatest murderer of them all.

After the carnage the priest said  
“we are all responsible.”  
After the carnage the Sheikh said  
“we all remain brothers.”  
After the carnage the Rabbi said  
“we can stop it if we choose.”  
The priest and the sheikh and the Rabbi  
Raise up their hands and look up to the sky.  
  
The Women peace marchers  
Take hold of the slab of marble  
On which is inscribed “We want to live not die!” -  
And carry it away under the whizzing bullets  
Like a corpse - but still warm, still alive.

– **Ada Aharoni\***

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\* *Born in Cairo, Egypt, and living in Haifa, Israel, Professor Aharoni is an international poet and novelist. She has published 29 books and is recipient of several prizes, including the British Council Poetry Prize, and the Temoignage Prize 2015 (Paris). Her Poetry Collection: RARE FLOWER, (Dignity Press, USA), was nominated for the Nobel Prize. She is President and Director of IFLAC: International Forum for the Literature and Culture of Peace.*

## You Will Remember Me

Once you had told me,  
You would forget me.  
Forget me,  
Forget me somehow,  
Do, if you can, forget me.

With every meeting  
I called you a flower.  
Whenever a flower you see,  
In garden or market,  
You will remember me.

Cars may be racing,  
Stars swiftly,  
Falling your friend beside you may be.  
In route from the meeting,  
You will remember me.

Your hair you'll be combing,  
Your fingers will tremble,  
Once I have combed them for thee,  
Your hair will remind you,  
You will remember me.

If in the evening  
You stroll down the pathway,  
Who for you waiting will be,  
Who'll see you homeward?  
You will remember me.

If at a funeral,  
All in black garments,  
Someone will ask: who was he?  
Then you will remember,  
You cannot but remember,  
Then you will remember me.

Once you had told me,  
You would forget me.  
Forget me,  
Forget me somehow,  
Do, if you can, forget me.

## The Two of Us

The bus takes you,  
My dreams take me,  
Dreams—will they come true?  
The seat is soft,  
As soft can be,  
And all about  
Straight streets you see;  
The road is smooth,  
The highway free  
But rough the pathway  
Facing me.

We both drive on:  
You are driving home  
And I  
Into my dream alone.

On foot proceeds  
The one of us,  
The other is riding  
In a bus.

Your destination—  
It is near,  
And everything  
For you is clear.

But I have very far to go,  
And what I'll find,  
I do not know  
Within an hour  
You'll be home,  
My thoughts mid death  
And woe will roam.

The driver is sitting at the wheel,  
And you are calm, you need not fear  
I'm driver passenger and all,  
I could swim across then tempestuous ocean  
One single poppy to pluck

I could cut down impassable woods with one motion  
To help my people down on their luck.

I could grope through the curling mists  
To ascend the highest peak  
Passing star after star, I could fly  
To the sun  
Through space austere and bleak.

## A Conversation

One night, with my watch still on,  
I got into bed,  
Listened to the watch:  
Tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock!  
Then to my heart:  
Thump,-thump, thump-thump  
The watch said to the heart,  
“Rest!  
Have a bit of sleep,  
You are tired!  
How long it is since you were wound up?  
You have a hollow sound sometimes.”  
The heart began beating  
Ever so fast,  
It said: “what do you mean,  
‘wound up’?  
I’ve been hurt,  
I’ve been angered,  
I’ve been broken,  
I’ve been hit,  
But never wound up.  
Whether I beat quietly,  
Loudly  
Or unsteadily,  
I’m a heart  
And I don’t need winding.  
If I could be wound up,  
They would call me like you—a watch,  
And then I would sit calmly

Wherever they put me—  
In pockets or on wrists,  
As it is, I just go on beating,  
Unwound,  
Untouched  
And I'm proud of it.

– **Vinay Kumar Dubey\***

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## Rain...! Rain...! Manipurian Rain...!

### I

Rain ! Rain ! Beautiful Rain !  
Flow through my evanescence vein  
Have come out with a humble claim.  
Give me a chance to be in your chain.

Rain ! Rain ! Merciful Rain !  
Don't be meager to this thirsty man.  
I pray thee to soak me with discernent nectar.  
Through which this valley you have often blest.

Under rain-impregnated clouds, I stood  
And walked, pining for your dulcet drops  
But you seem to be stubborn enough  
Not to pour your soul on this alien body.

I strived for and prayed earnestly  
Opening a quarter of my body like a  
Girl of Years Nine Shyly Spreading  
Her half covered begging Bowel.

But, while walking over, it seemed  
Here in this Manipurian Valley, "Clouds  
are meagerly merciful to aliens". As  
Still Rain refused to drench my corporality.

### II

Rain ! Rain ! Compassionate Rain !  
You came stealthily to ooze my trichotomy  
Hardly within Four and Twenty Hours  
Imbibing all her gracefulness and glory.

Reminding me of my erroneousness  
As if I have not properly prayed  
Proving all my notions wrong  
And conceptions prejudiced.

She came and humbled me down  
Of all my barriers reminded too.

As if Nature is suggesting to come out  
Of all the shackles, savagery and artificiality.

Rain ! Rain ! Merciful Rain !  
You made me realize that  
You are not made for drained  
You just want to have me trained.

As a deserving person, in the  
Manipurian Valley all at once  
While walking on road at a narrow lane  
My brain receives a Gifted Grain.

A piece of suggestion superbly sweet  
That I need to cross the barrier first  
And came out overcoming the hurdle  
Suddenly I realized the mistake gross.

On open road I bared my chest  
To give the Rain an open embrace.  
I found my over speedy heartbeats  
Was meeting the same of thine.

I found in that throbbing embrace  
A subtle ghost creeping into my body.  
Often said the one who was always  
Named as the 'High Priest of Nature'.

Yet I earged for the presence of  
A Keatsian Beauty by my side like  
A greedy man pining more for the  
Company of Wordsworthian Nature.

Rain ! Rain ! Merciful Rain !  
How selfish I must have been ?  
Once again I pushed forth  
Another quarter of my body

Like, a Girl of Years Nine shyly  
Spreading her Begging Bowl.  
Resuming your glory and gramercy, you replete  
This earthen vessel with compassionate splurge.

## III

My pulses went higher and higher  
Beyond the expected measures  
My happiness crossed all bounds  
But how regardless, selfish and

Greedy this creature has been,  
who is called Man; and ravaging  
your glory since time immemorial;  
even after bagging the tranquility  
Of blessings opulence and again

Roaming hither and thither in the valley  
Pining for “more and more” and feeling  
Unfortunate for not having sufficient  
Greedy gazing all the cloudy valley

To avail the Rain’s plenty time and  
Again “more and more”; ultimately  
More than another mortal fellowmen.  
Rain ! Rain ! The Charismatic Rain !

– **Sudhir Narayan Singh\***

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\* A Banaras Hindu University alumnus, Dr. Singh is a bilingual poet, editor, critic and short story writer. He started teaching English to visually challenged students and later on rendered services at various colleges and institutes of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Punjab as English faculty and ELT-Trainer. Presently he is working as an Assistant Professor, Department of English and Communication Skills, The Technological Institute of Textile and Sciences, Bhiwani, Haryana - 127021. Email: sudhirnarayansingh2009@gmail.com.

## Greatness

He is great  
For whom work is worship  
And religion is a way of living  
To keep him close to morality,  
Sanctity, equality and justice.

He is great  
For whom the world is one family  
Despite differences in languages,  
Cultures, nationalities, beliefs and ethnicity  
To live life as per one's wish.

He is great  
For whom there's no difference  
Between the rich and the poor,  
And a tiny and a big animal,  
And he believes in the same life in all.

He is great  
For whom God is one  
Who created the beautiful earth  
And man and woman for each other's need  
But man made all differences for their own destruction.

## Religion is an Alarm

Religion is an alarm  
that wakes one up from the slumber,  
to see the world through the light of brotherhood  
where none is stranger to you  
all are your own  
created by One  
to be loved, to be cared  
to be embraced whole heartedly  
to live together on His earth in all its glory  
and sing a paean on His grandeur.

– Vijay Kumar Roy\*

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\* Born at Darbhanga (Bihar), Dr. Roy is the author of *Realm of Beauty and Truth: A Collection of Poems* (2016), *Aesthetic of John Keats: An Indian Approach* (2010), *Premanjli (A Collection of Poems in Hindi)* (2009), and editor of *The Melodies of Immortality (An Anthology of Poetry)* (2012) and a dozen academic books. He teaches English at Northern Border University, Arar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He has also taught at SRM University, NCR Campus, Ghaziabad, UP and two other universities. Email: drvkroy78@yahoo.com.

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