SHELLEY'S SPENSERIAN HERITAGE AND OTHER ESSAYS

K.K. SHARMA

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The present book, consisting of nine research papers, deals with a variety of themes and authors in relation to different literary forms in English. The first article aims at demonstrating Edmund Spenser's influence on Shelley and "the anxiety of influence" of the latter. The next four are an attempt to examine compactly and quite comprehensively the impact of the illustrious Russian fictional genius, Leo Tolstoy, on such distinguished British fictionists as Henry James, Virginia Woolf, Somerset Maugham and Joyce Cary. Then there are two critical pieces on Joyce Cary's masterly use of two modern technical devices of 'the interior monologue' and 'the flash-back' in his three masterpieces. The last two essays of the volume are devoted to Indian English fiction: one discusses succinctly the treatment of the theme of partition in major Indian English novels, while the concluding one focuses on R.K. Narayan's *The Dark Room* as the first authentic articulation of feminist consciousness in Indian English fiction. Obviously, the book treats a wide range of subject matter critically, and therefore it is hoped that it will catch the attention of a large reading public in India and abroad, and will be interesting and stimulating to the academics as well.

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TO

VASU CHANANA
(MY DEAREST GRANDSON)

WHO HAUNTS ME LIKE A PASSION

"PRACHI KE ARUNA MUKURA MAI
SUNDARA PRATIBIMBA TUMHARA
USA ALASA USA MAI DAIKHAU
APANI AKHAU KA TARA."

IN THE ROSY EAST'S MIRROR
THY LOVELY FORM I ESPY
IN THE DROWSY DAWN I SEE
THE APPLE OF MY EYE.

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Preface

The present book consists of nine research papers, written from time to time for different journals and books of international standard. Apparently, it deals with a variety of themes and authors in relation to different literary forms in English. The first article aims at demonstrating Edmund Spenser's influence on Shelley and "the anxiety of inluence" of the latter. The next four are an attempt to examine compactly and quite comprehensively the impact of the illustrious Russian fictional genius, Leo Tolstoy, on such distinguished British fictionists as Henry James, Virginia Woolf, Somerset Maugham and Joyce Cary. Then there are two critical pieces on Joyce Cary's mastely use of two modern technical devices of 'the interior monologue' and 'the flashback' in his masterpieces like *The Horse's Mouth* and *To be a Pilgrim* and *The Moonlight* respectively. The last two essays of the volume are devoted to Indian English fiction: one discusses succinctly the treatment of the theme of partition in major Indian English novels, while the other — the concluding one — focuses on R.K. Narayan's *The Dark Room* as the first authentic articulation of feminist consciousness in Indian English fiction. Obviously, the book treats a wide range of subject matter critically, and therefore it is hoped that it will catch the attention of a large reading public in India and abroad, and will be interesting and stimulating to the academics as well.

June 2009 K.K. Sharma

1

SHELLEY'S SPENSERIAN HERITAGE: "THE ANXIETY OF INFLUENCE"

Harold Bloom's short book entitled *The Anxiety of Influence,* published about thirty-four years ago in 1973, at once attracted the critical attention all over the world, and little wonder even M.H. Abrams discussed it in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (239-41) . But somehow it could not maintain its acclamation and authenticity for long, and now it is generally taken to be a work of passing interest and reference. The reasons, to my mind, are: there is a lot of hair-splitting in it; then it is heavily dependent upon psychology and abounds in psychological coinages which render it eclectic and cumbersome; and lastly it suffers from overstretching of inferences that makes the matter tedious. However, this interesting, influential study cannot be summarily rejected, for some of Bloom's assertions hold true in many cases, and Shelley's Spenserian heritage is an instance of it. Bloom's remarks at the very beginning of his treatise are pertinent to the subject under discussion:

> This short book offers a theory of poetry by way of a description of poetic influence, or the story of intra-poetic relationships....
>
> Poetic history, in this book's argument, is held to be indistinguishable from poetic influence, since strong poets make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves.
>
> My concern is only with strong poets, major figures with the persistence to wrestle with their strong precursors, even to the death. (*The Anxiety of Influence* 5)

I feel that in his literary relationship with, or let me call it indebtedness to, Spenser, Shelley — a 'strong' and major nineteenth century English poet —, as his expository writings, biographical studies and poetical works evince, is not free from the anxiety engendered in him by the influence of his illustrious predecessor; he seems to

make a deliberate effort to show it to the minimum and conceal it as much as he can. In other words, what I intend to bring out in the present paper is that Shelley, despite Spenser's impact on him as much as on any other major poet of his times (including Keats), hides it, advertently and inadvertently, as much as he can.

Edmund Spenser, one of the most distinguished literary luminaries of the Elizabethan age, is doubtless the first truly great English poet, endowed with unique poetic genius. In fact, he may be called the first comprehensive and, in a way, complete British poet in that he has excelled in almost all the varieties of poetic form — Lyric, Sonnet, Ode, Hymn, Epic, Allegory, Satire, Eclogue, Elegy, Fable, Epithalamion, Prothalamion, Masque, etc. — and also because he is sensuous, moral, intellectual and spiritual, all in one. In him we find a harmonious fusion of the old and the new — the Greek, Roman, French, Medieval and Renaissance elements —, the national and the international, and the temporal and the universal. Besides, being the master of language he contributed immensely to the proper growth of the English language and experimented successfully with varied forms of versification, evincing a lot of originality by inventing the nine-line poetic metre known after his name as the Spenserian stanza. Thus, it is not surprising that he has been acknowledged as 'the poets' poet' — the epithet first used for him by Charles Lamb. That is to say, he is a very outstanding poet, a master poet who has inspired many great poets. No wonder, then, if it is assumed and affirmed that Shelley as poet owes a lot to Spenser, but he has not admitted adequately, to the best of my knowledge, his indebtedness to Spenser, while almost all the notable English poets, from the inimitable Shakespeare down to the nineteenth century, have overtly recorded their acknowledgement to him. Thus, my aim in undertaking the present study is to argue that Spenser has influenced Shelley much more than what the 'Singing God' (to quote A.C. Swinburne's words) has himself admitted and what the critics have so far pointed out.

Before demonstrating the manifold impact of Spenser on Shelley's writings, I put forward the following arguments to accentuate the fact that Shelley, though immensely inspired and influenced by the great Elizabethan, has rather consciously tried to conceal much of his indebtedness to him. In the first place, it may be noted that there are records (in the letters particularly) of Shelley's having read almost all the significant works in English as well as in Greek, Latin, German, French and Spanish, for he was a voracious reader and an intellectual glutton, who, as he wrote in a letter to Thomas Jefferson Hogg, could "devote 6 hours in the day to study without difficulty" (*The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, Vol.I 432) and who would "furnish our largest room as a *Library*" (301). But, curiously enough, there does not exist sufficient, clear evidence of his close perusal of Spenser's works which were extremely popular in his age. The following extract from J.A. Symonds's book on him amply spotlights his insatiable thirst for knowledge and unparalleled habit of reading books even as student:

> In the acquisition of knowledge he was then as ever unrelaxing. "No student ever read more assiduously. He was to be found, book in hand, all hours; reading in season and out of season; at table, in bed, and especially during a walk; not only in the quiet country, and in retired paths; not only at Oxford, in the public walks, and High Street, but in the most crowded thoroughfares of London. Nor was he less absorbed by the volume that was open before him, in Cheapside, in Cranbourne Alley, or in Bond Street, than in a lonely lane, or a secluded library. Sometimes a vulgar fellow would attempt to insult or annoy the eccentric student in passing. Shelley always avoided the malignant interruption by stepping aside with his vast and quiet agility." And again:— "I never beheld eyes that devoured the pages more voraciously than his; I am convinced that two-thirds of the period of day and night were often employed in reading. It is no exaggeration to affirm that out of the twenty-four hours, he frequently read sixteen. At Oxford, his diligence in this respect was exemplary, but it greatly increased afterwards, and I sometimes thought that he carried it to a pernicious excess: I am sure, at least, that I was unable to keep pace with him." (*Shelley* 28)

When Shelley's dead body was found near Via Reggio on 18 July

1822, it had in the jacket the volume of Sophocles in one pocket and a volume of Keats's poems in the other. Such was his passion for reading books. But neither Edward Dowden's monumental biographical work, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley,* nor the writings of Shelley himself point to his perusal of Spenser's poetry thoroughly, though he certainly refers to Spenser and his writings in a few of his letters just casually without making any worth citing comment (*The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, Vol.I 341, 342 and 556; and Vol.II 71,120, 125, 273 and 485) . And this leads us to suspect that he knowingly hides his intimacy with, and indebtedness to, his influential predecessor's writings.

Secondly, as has already been cursorily remarked that almost all great poets since the publication of *The Faerie Queene* in 1590 have bestowed upon Spenser encomium, but Shelley does not do so, and naturally it upsets a careful reader/ scholar of Shelley. Spenser's contemporaries openly accepted the overwhelming charm and greatness of his poetical works. Writers like Drayton and Lodge paid glowing tributes to the master and proclaimed him "learned, revered and excellent." Even Nashe, who would not easily appreciate any literary artist, called him 'heavenly Spenser'. He was held in high esteem even by the peerless Shakespeare who, while declaring him the true representative of poetry, wrote the following lines in praise of him in "The Passionate Pilgrim":

> Spenser to me, whose deep conceit is such
> As, passing all conceit, needs no defence.
> Thou lov'st to hear the sweet melodious sound
> That Phoebus' lute, the queen of music, makes;
> And I in deep delight am chiefly drown'd
> Whenas himself to singing he betakes.
>
> (*Complete Works of Shakespeare* 1340)

True, the Elizabethan poets regarded Spenser as their leader whose hearse, to quote William Camden, was carried to Westminster Abbey by them and "mournfull Verses and Poems thrown into his Tombe" ("The Death of Spenser," *Edmund Spenser's Poetry* 661) . The words, "The Prince of Poets in His Time," were very appropriately chosen for his epitaph. For centuries his fame did not diminish at all. In the

succeeding century, Cowley confessed that he became a poet by reading him. Then, Milton, whom Dryden considered as "the poetical son of Spenser," wrote: " Our sage and serious poet Spenser, whom I dare be known to think a better *teacher* than Scotus or Aquinas" (Milton, '*Aeropagitica*' *and 'Of Education'* 18) . Dryden remarked that Virgil in Latin and Spenser in English were his masters. Alexander Pope, the greatest poet of 'the age of prose and reason', observed that *The Faerie Queene* delighted him all through his life right from the age of twelve onwards. The transitional poets equally felt the charm of Spenser's poetry, and thus he was the favourite poet of Thomas Gray who, it is said, would invariably read his poetry before composing anything poetical. The poets of the Romantic period were thrilled by the unabated magic of Spenser's creative writings. The leader of these poets, William Wordsworth, was bewitched by the sweetness, purity and nobleness of Spenser the poet as is evident from the fllowing extract from his great poem "The Prelude"::

> .... And that gentle Bard,
> Chosen by the Muses for their Page of State —
> Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven
> With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace,
> I called him Brother, Englishman, and Friend!
>
> (*Selected Poetry* 216-17)

While S.T. Coleridge was enamoured of Spenser's "maidenly purity of feeling" and "the indescribable sweetness and fluent projection of his verse" ("Spenser's Art," *Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism* 34 and 36) , Sir Walter Scott desired to read him for ever. Keats felt that every fibre of his being was touched and influenced by Spenser, and hence he paid a glowing tribute to him in one of his early poems entitled "Ode to Apollo":

> A silver trumpet Spenser blows,
> And, as its martial notes to silence flee,
> From a virgin chorus flows
> A hymn in praise of spotless Chastity.
> 'Tis still! Wild warblings from the Aeolian lyre
> Enchantment softly breathe, and tremblingly expire.
>
> (*The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Keats* 10)

Apparently, it can not be gainsaid that Spenser has been the most puissant influence on English poetry upto the Victorian age. And as it is a fact, it is impossible to believe that Shelley had not read him closely and that his art and ideas were not shaped by Spenser, despite the truth that the former has not admitted all this adequately in clear terms.

Notwithstanding his conscious and unconscious efforts to conceal his indebtedness to Spenser, even a brief analysis of Shelley's writings is enough to prove the latter's impact on him. Finished in 1813, *Queen Mab,* called a philosophical poem by the poet himself, is his first important, ambitious work which shows signs of the impact of Spenser on him, although it was mainly written under the influence of French philosophers and Godwin and its poetic form was borrowed from Robert Southey's *Thalaba.* No doubt, it gives spontaneous and effective expression to some of the leading ideas of the poet — viz. his rejection of orthodox Christianity, contempt of kings and tyrants, unflinching trust in religious tolerance and full faith in the perfectibility of man —, a close perusal of the poem brings to light his fascination for Spenser and his allegorical epic, *The Faerie Queene.* The simple plot of the poem portrays Lanthe lying asleep and his disembodied soul being taken to superterrestrial spheres by Queen Mab, the queen of the fairies. Though in ideas and ideals, the poem is typically Shelleyian, the fairy queen Mab of the poem instantly recalls to our mind the fairy queen of Spenser's *magnum opus.*

Alastor; or The Spirit of Solitude, composed at the age of twenty-three during a summer spent in Windsor Forest along with Mary Godwin and published in 1816, is generally considered Shelley's first masterpiece, which unmistakably reveals Spenserian touches. No doubt, the title of this long poem is a Greek word meaning "the avenging genius" and it is written in admirable blank verse and is Wordsworthian in the poet's untiring search for Nature's essence, but Shelley's fondness for Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is obvious in that the poem presents a solitary poet-wanderer in search of truth, very much like Spenser's Red Cross Knight. Furthermore, the protagonist of the poem experiences in Cashmire a wonderful vision of

a beautiful veiled maiden, who resembles Spenser's Una in *The Faerie Queene,* and is the incarnation of knowledge, truth and virtue in addition to ideal beauty. Of the vision of this veiled maid, Shelley writes:

> .... He dreamed a veiled maid
> Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
> Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
> Heard in the calm of thought; its music long,
> Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
> His inmost sense suspended in its web
> Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues.
> Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme ....
> (*The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* 18)

These lines of Shelley at once bring to our mind Spenser's graphic portrayal of Una — an embodiment of great virtues like truth, purity, beauty and innocence —, a part of which is cited below to demonstrate that the nineteenth century poet's mind had indelible impressions of Spenser's poetry:

> A lovely Ladie rode him faire beside,
> ....
> ....
> Under a vele, that wimpled was full low;
> And over all a blacke stole she did throw,
> As one that inly mournd, so was she sad,
> ....
> And by her in a line a milk white lambe she lad.
>
> So pure and innocent, as that same lambe,
> She was in life and every vertuous lore....
> ("The Faerie Queene, Book I," *Edmund Spenser's Poetry* 7)

The next year, i.e. 1817, which was very difficult and painful to him because of the suicide committed by his wife Harriet, Shelley brought out *The Revolt of Islam,* the greatest of the three memorable poems he composed that year. Though ideologically it is a sequel to *Queen Mab* and bears no resemblance to Spenser's works thematically because it deals with the ideal of freedom, regarless of the failure of the French Revolution which disappointed and dis-

illusioned most of the poets of his generation, it explicitly reveals the impact of Spenser on the young poet. Shelley's Preface to *The Revolt of Islam,* his second significant poem, the first being *Alastor,* has several direct and indirect references to Spenser. The statement that the poem is a story of human passion in its universal form with "moving and romantic adventures" with a view to making the reader see "the beauty of true virtue" (*The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* 32) reminds us of Spenser's intentions in *The Faerie Queene.* Then, after a few paragraphs, while speaking of influences on a writer, he makes a mention of Spenser. And thereafter he admits that he owes a lot to Spenser in that he has found the Spenserian stanza as the most suitable form to express and embody his poetical ideas. He writes:

> I have adopted the stanza of Spenser (a measure inexpressibly beautiful) , not because I consider it a finer model of poetical harmony than the blank verse of Shakespeare and Milton, but because in the latter there is no shelter for mediocrity; you must either succeed or fail. This perhaps an aspiring spirit should desire. But I was enticed also by the brilliancy and magnificence of sound which a mind that has been nourished upon musical thoughts can produce by a just and harmonious arrangement of the pauses of this measure. Yet there will be found some instances where I have completely failed in this attempt; and one, which I here request the reader to consider as an erratum, where there is left, most inadvertently, an alexandrine in the middle of a stanza. (35)

When one reads *The Revolt of Islam,* one easily discerns the impact of Spenser on Shelley in the very first stanza of the Dedication of the poem to Mary. The third line of the extract, cited below, is of special importance in this context as it poetically and obliquely refers to the characters of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene:*

> So now my summer task is ended, Mary,
> And I return to thee, mine own heart's home;
> As to his Queen some Victor Knight of Faery....(37)

True, Shelley seems to have been obsessed with Spenser and his *The Faerie Queene* as far as the contents, form, imagery and ver-

sification of *The Revolt of Islam* are concerned, though, of course, it does not mean that he is a mere imitator of Spenser or of any other poet because he displays a lot of originality in this poem.

Of the poetic dramas written by Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound* is his masterpiece which evinces Spenser's influence on the author in several ways. Like Spenser's *The Faerie Queene,* it is a brilliant 'poetic pageant'. Also, it shows Shelley's unflinching faith, like Spenser's, in cardinal human virtues such as Gentleness, Goodness, Wisdom, Endurance and Love. Again, like the characters in *The Faerie Queene,* most of the characters in this poetic play are invested with varied allegorical interpretations and significance. For instance, it is usually believed that Prometheus stands for Humanity, Jupiter for the Principle of Evil, Demogorgon for the Primal Power of the world, and Asia for Nature and Its manifestations, particularly Love and Beauty. Then, Hercules represents Strength, Panthea Faith, Thetis false ideals, Ione Hope, Furies the causes of suffering in the world, and Spirits, who comfort Prometheus, Goodness. In this context, the following extract from Mrs. Shelley's Note on the play is worth quoting:

> He (Shelley) followed certain classical authorities in figuring Saturn as the good principle, Jupiter the usurping evil one, and Prometheus as the regenerator, who, unable to bring mankind back to primitive innocence, used knowledge as a weapon to defeat evil, by leading mankind, beyond the state wherein they are sinless through ignorance, to that in which they are virtuous through wisdom....
>
> .... Prometheus defies the power of his enemy, and endures centuries of torture; till the hour arrives when Jove, blind to the real event, but darkly guessing that some great good to himself will flow, espouses Thetis. At the moment, the Primal Power of the world drives him from his usurped throne, and Strength, in the person of Hercules, liberates Humanity, typified in Prometheus, from the tortures generated by evil done or suffered. Asia, one of the Oceanides, is the wife of Prometheus — she was, according to other mythological interpretations, the same as Venus and Nature. When the

> benefactor of mankind is liberated, Nature resumes the beauty of her prime, and is united to her husband, the emblem of the human race, in perfect and happy union.... Maternal Earth, the mighty parent, is superseded by the Spirit of the Earth, the guide of our planet through the realms of sky; while his fair and weaker companion and attendant, the Spirit of the Moon, receives bliss from the annihilation of Evil in the superior sphere. (271-72)

Shelley's long critical essay titled *A Defence of Poetry* also contains some observations which go to prove that he was influenced by Spenser without any doubt. For instance, while speaking of the poets who are endowed with poetical faculty, though great yet less intense, he mentions Spenser along with Euripides, Lucan and Tasso. He points out that these poets "have frequently affected a moral aim, and the effect of their poetry is diminished in exact proportion to the degree in which they compel us to advert to this purpose" ("A Defence of Poetry," *English Critical Texts* 234). He refers to Spenser a number of times in this critical piece.

In his theory of poetry as propounded in the prefaces he has written for most of his longer poems, in his letters in which he comments on literature and, most of all, in the brilliant but unfortunately unfinished work, *A Defence of Poetry,* several of Shelley's significant cogitations on poetry seem to be an echo of Spenser's ideas on the subject expressed particularly in long poems like *The Ruins of Time* and *The Tears of the Muses*. Shelley defines poetry as "'the expression of the imagination'" (225). A poet comprehends the true, the beautiful and the good, and he invariably "participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one" (228). Obviously, a poem, according to Shelley, is "the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth" (231); it embodies wisdom mingled with pleasure; and it unveils the hidden beauty of the world and reveals the image of the divinity in man whose very existence is love inalienable from moral good. Naturally, poetry, in Shelley's view, is "the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds" (251), and it immortalizes "all that is best and most beautiful in the world" (252). Inevitably, poetry is immortal and poets are prophets

and "the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (255). These observations of Shelley, embodying his lofty concept of poetry, are exquisitely summed up in the extract from Spenser's poem, *The Ruins of Time*:

> 'For deeds do die, however nobly done,
> And thoughts of men do as themselves decay:
> But wise words taught in numbers for to run,
> Recorded by the Muses, live for aye;
> Ne may with storming showers be wash'd away,
> Ne bitter-breathing winds with harmful blast,
> Nor age, nor envy, shall them ever wast.
> ....
> ....
> Then whose will with virtuous deeds assay
> To mount to heaven, on Pegasus must ride,
> And with sweet poets' verse be glorified.
> (*The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser*, Vol.V 16-7)

The above discussion sufficiently establishes the truth that Shelley all through his poetic career wrote under the influence of Spenser, though he did not properly concede it and concealed it deliberately as much as he could, and hence I stop illustrating further from his works lest this article should suffer from tedious repetition and overdilation of facts. However, in the end, it is to be reiterated that Shelley learnt a lot from Spenser: he wrote allegorical poems like Spenser; he bequethed us a remarkable pastoral poem after the manner of Spenser's pastorals; he composed a memorable pastoral elegy entitled *Adonais* like Spenser's *Astrophel*; he wrote hymns in the style of Spenser's *Fowre Hymnes*; he was as sensuous as Spenser; he accorded poetry a very high place like Spenser; his Platonism bore a close resemblance to that of Spenser; and he used the Spenserian stanza in his three masterpieces of varied nature — *The Revolt of Islam, Adonais*, and "Stanzas Written in Dejection Near Naples" —, while no other poet, not even Keats who unequivocally proclaimed Spenser as his master, used this stanza as frequently as Shelley did. Evidently, Shelley was affected by the anxiety of Spenser's influence on him.

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2

"LARGE LOOSE BAGGY MONSTERS": HENRY JAMES'S RADICAL CRITIQUE OF LEO TOLSTOY'S FICTION

A born American and a naturalized English man, Henry James is one of the rare literary phenomena in whom we perceive a happy coalescence of critic and creator — Philip Sidney, Ben Jonson, John Dryden, Samuel Johnson, William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot —, and who have given a new turn and direction to the genre to which they have contributed creative and critical writings. Thus, besides producing a fairly good number of fictional masterpieces between 1880 and 1914, Henry James has given us a solid body of criticism embodying his literary opinions steeped in the vision of a great theorist of fiction. A voracious reader, a prolific writer, and perhaps the most outstanding scholar of fiction, he read almost all the notable fictionists of Europe and America, and expressed his definite views on them. Obviously, a great contemporary like Tolstoy could not escape his attention (Geoffrey Keynes, *Henry James in Cambridge* 14) , though he was deeply fascinated by the great French fiction masters and was most enamoured of Turgenev of all Russian writers. In his stupendous corpus of expository writings — critical essays, fairly long prefaces to his creative writings, portraits, reviews, letters, conversations, etc. — , we find Henry James referring to Tolstoy many times, directly and indirectly, thus offering us a radical critique of his fictional genius, best expressed in *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina.* Since James was a fictionist first and foremost with his fixed concept of the art of the novel, he could not be truly impartial and detached in his assessment of Tolstoy's fictional art and his masterpieces. As a matter of fact, in his cogitations on Tolstoy and his works, he is usually governed and guided by his theory of fiction, propounded mostly under the impact of the French novelists like Flaubert, Balzac,

Stendhal and others. Thus, it is not surprising if his critical statements about the great Russian writer are often seriously flawed.

The youthful, fastidious and truly cosmopolitan James, with an exceptional sense of proportion and form, refused to take Tolstoy seriously in his initial contact with his works. Though *The Cossacks* appeared in New York first in 1878 and before that in 1862 the translation of his early autobiographical work reached the English-speaking public, he was first introduced to the English people in 1880s when Henry James had leapt into eminence with the publication of *The Portrait of a Lady* in 1881. It was in 1886 that the first English version of *War and Peace*, translated from the French language, was available to the people of England. Henry James, who had settled down in London by that time, perhaps would have got the opportunity of perusing Tolstoy's *magnum opus* at the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century, though we do not have any definite evidence as when he first lay his hand on *War and Peace.* As he was a very serious reader, writer and critic of fiction, he must have taken immense pains to read this epical novel as closely as possible. It was in 1897 that James, for the first time, passed his judgment on Tolstoy when he wrote a brilliant short critical essay entitled "Turgenev and Tolstoy." Though this article is primarily concerned with Turgenev whom Henry James unequivocally admired throughout his life, it contains some very interesting and incisive observations on Tolstoy and his two great novels, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.

James, while admiring Turgenev, admits the greatness of Tolstoy because his favourite Russian, Turgenev, who was Tolstoy's senior by ten years, had pleaded, towards the end of his life, to the latter to resume his literary activities which he had abandoned for quite some time:

> "I am on my death-bed; there is no possibility of my recovery. I write you expressly to tell you how happy I have been to be your contemporary, and to utter my last, my urgent prayer. Come back; my friend, to your literary labours. That gift came to you from the source from which all comes to us. Ah, how happy I should be could I think you would listen to my entreaty! My friend, great writer of our Russian land, respond to it, obey it!" (Henry James, *The House of Fiction* 170)

James's observant eye could see it clearly that Tolstoy was gaining fame gradually and steadily, and that after the death of Turgenev he could ascend great heights on account of the growing popularity of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* throughout the world. He accepted him as a great writer, and felt that he was mainly for "home consumption," though his masterpiece, *War and Peace*, was more popular in Europe and America than Turgenev's *A House of Gentlefolk, On the Eve* or *Smoke.* James had unreserved praise for Turgenev and called him "the novelists' novelist" (170) because of his extraordinary influence on contemporary fictionists, but he could accord only restricted, rather partial, praise to Tolstoy's novels because he could discern in them only a presentation of the vastness of life with lamentable indifference to the method of delineation. To quote his own words:

> The perusal of Tolstoy — a wonderful mass of life — is an immense event, a kind of splendid accident, for each of us: his name represents nevertheless no such eternal spell of method, no such quiet irresistibility of presentation, as shines, close to us and lighting our possible steps, in that of his precursor (Turgenev) . Tolstoy is a reflector as vast as a natural lake; a monster harnessed to his great subject — all human life! — as an elephant might be harnessed, for purposes of traction, not to a carriage, but to a coach-house. His own case is prodigious, but his example for others dire: disciples not elephantine he can only mislead and betray.(170-71)

As is evident from the extract, quoted above, James, despite his strong dislike and rejection of Tolstoy-like fictional genius, cannot afford to ignore his astonishing power of re-creating almost the entire human life. Perhaps, Tolstoy is the only novelist whose subject matter is the whole mass of life, and this seems to be the primary reason of Virginia Woolf's or E.M. Forster's unrestrained admiration for his works. Indeed, his novels are an amazing attempt at projecting, and reflecting on, life in all its vastness. If he cannot have disciples and imitators, it is because he is too great to be

followed in this regard, and James is correct when he affirms that he cannot be a safe model for others and to follow him is to run an excessive artistic risk. Tolstoy evinces a rare skill in portraying the innermost as well as the outer life — the skill which is the hallmark of Turgenev's genius that James eulogized throughout his life. While Turgenev wondered at this side of Tolstoy's genius and pleaded with him not to stop writing fiction when the latter decided to do so, James could not appreciate this unique feature of Tolstoy's mind and art which fascinated Turgenev, "the novelists' novelist" in James's considered opinion, and could only care for the delineation of "a fine conscience," to quote Joseph Conrad's words ("Henry James: An Appreciation," *Notes on Life and Letters* 19) . In fact, James miserably failed to comprehend the greatness of Tolstoy simply because the latter was not as much consciously concerned with technique as James was, though he was no less a laboured artist than James as is evident from the fact that he revised and rewrote *War and Peace* several times to give his presentation of the mass of life as much meaningful and artistic a shape as he could.

In his article on Emile Zola, written in 1903, Henry James, again, refers to Tolstoy and his *War and Peace.* He admires the French naturalist's *La Debacle*, and to show its greatness he places it beside the eminent Russian's masterpiece. While he admits that Zola's novel is not as universal as Tolstoy's, though the former work is better shaped and more compact than the latter. Apropos of this, James observes:

> As for *La Debacle*, finally, it takes its place with Tolstoy's very much more universal but very much less composed and condensed epic as an incomparably human picture of war. ("Emile Zola, 1903," *The House of Fiction* 248)

Thus, by implication, James points to Tolstoy's epical and universal genius. He does not find any other author but Tolstoy and his book to demonstrate the essential greatness of Zola's *La Debacle* which he considers remarkable and hence puts it beside *War and Peace*.

While admitting Tolstoy's greatness, James, a votary of form, method and technique, warns a practitioner of the art of fiction not

to separate method or manner from matter of which the Russian litterateur is a supreme example, for in him there is all stress on matter — the mass of life — and little attention to form and technique. His epical, inimitable genius could paint a wonderful picture of society and could produce in *War and Peace* a novel with matchless length and breadth. James's article titled "The New Novel," written in 1914 just a year before his death, offers a piece of advice to the younger generation of English fictionists, influenced by Tolstoy, that they may learn the art of presenting artistically life in all its vastness and the social milieu, but they should not follow his example of the estrangement of subject matter from method:

> We should have only to remount the current with a certain energy to come straight up against Tolstoy as the great illustrative masterhand on all this ground of the disconnection of method from the matter — which encounter, however, would take us much too far, so that we must for the present but hang off from it with the remark that of all great painters of the social picture it was given that epic genius most to serve admirably as a rash adventurer and a 'caution', and execrably, pestilentially, as a model. In this strange union of relations he stands alone: from no other great projector of the human image and the human idea is so much truth to be extracted under an equal leakage of its value. All the proportions in him are so much the largest that the drop of attention to our nearer cases might by its violence leave little of that principle alive; which fact need not disguise from us, none the less, that as Mr. H.G. Wells and Mr. Arnold Bennett, to return to them briefly again, derive, by multiplied if diluted transmissions, from the great Russian..., so, observing the distances, we may profitably dedetect an unexhausted influence in our minor, our still considerably less rounded vessels. (Henry James, *Selected Literary Criticism* 368)

Besides the unbridgeable gulf between matter and manner, between subject and technique, which, according to James, makes the monumental fictional works of Tolstoy faulty and bad models to be followed by others, what the American-cum-British fictionist-critic

laments most in the Russian artist is the lack of a controlling idea or the centre of interest or the central theme and the sense of the whole. James holds that notwithstanding the extraordinary length and breadth of the vision of life, the picture of the world, painted in *War and Peace*, the book wholly disappoints a discerning reader in search of the commanding idea or the effect of wholeness in a great work of art. Patently, James seems to fail miserably in perceiving the thematic grandeur and the artistic excellence of the greatest novel of the world — *War and Peace* (E.M. Forster, Somerset Maugham and several others consider it so) — when he asserts that anyone can mark the conspicuous presence of the central idea and the structural wholeness in such little known works as Hugh Walpole's *Duchess of Wrexe* and Compton Mackenzie's *Sinister Street* (368) .

In many of his thousands of letters, Henry James refers to, or comments directly or oblongly on, Leo Tolstoy. It is essential to analyse some of them here. In the letter written to his widely known brother William James on 1 October 1887, he condemns one of Howells's critical pieces, which appeared in the magazine, *Harper*, because of his poor critical faculty as shown in his statement on the delineation of life in the novel illustrating from Tolstoy. Since James as fictionist was too much interested in form and comparatively a little in life, he could not bear Howells's observations in this connection with special reference to Tolstoy. He was so much disgusted with, and annoyed by, Howells's critical piece on fiction with instances from the celebrated Russian novelist that he wanted him to stop writing critical essays and devote himself only to fiction writing. He wrote:

> He (Howells) seems to me as little as possible of a critic and exposes himself so that I wish he would "quit," and content himself with writing the novel as he thinks it should be and not talking about it: he does the one so much better than the other. He talks from too small a point of view and his examples (barring the bore he makes of Tolstoi) are smaller still. There is, it seems to me, far too much talk around and about the novel in proportion to what is done. Any *genre* is good which has life — which of course is perfectly consistent with the fact that there are some that find it mighty hard to have it and others that one very much prefers to some. But I am sprawling into quires and reams. (*Henry James Letters*, Vol.III 204)

A fairly long letter, written by James to Mrs. Humphry Ward on 26 July 1899, also merits some consideration here. It sets forth his belief that a writer usually cannot afford to delineate a subject or a person without presenting himself behind it. He admits that he is "always behind with everything," but it should not be taken as an expression of "an opinion" of his, and this is true of even the most illustrious fictionists of the world like Tolstoy, Dickens, Balzac, Thackeray and others. But a great writer has to be very cautious and particular about the choice of subject and the limits of his presentation. He illustrates the point from some of his well-known novels published upto the year 1899 when this letter was written (*Henry James Letters*, Vol.IV 110) . Furthermore, this letter is important because in it James points out that Tolstoy and Balzac, perhaps the two greatest fictionists of the world, often make a mistake in resorting to disorderly and indiscriminate shifting of standpoint or centre in their books. Inevitably, they present a confused heap of material without lending it proper order and clear meaning due to want of commanding centre or constant standpoint. Small wonder they fail to achieve as much as they should or could. James avers:

> The promiscuous shiftings of standpoint and centre of Tolstoi and Balzac for instance (which come, to my eye, from their being not so much big dramatists as big *painters* — as Loti is a painter) , are the inevitable result of the *quantity of presenting* their genius launches them in. With the complexity they pile up they *can* get no clearness without trying again and again for new centres. And they don't *always* get it. However, I don't mean to say they don't get enough. (112)

In 1901 James, who had by then established himself as a writer and critic with the publication of several of his fictional masterpieces (*The Portrait of a Lady* , *The Princess of Casamassima, The Tragic Muse, The Spoils of Poynton, The Awkward Age* and *The Sacred Fount*) and twelve of the fifteen critical pieces collected in *The*

House of Fiction, was rightly approached by the famous critic and editor, Edmund Gosse, to write three thousand words about Leo Tolstoy whom James called "our friend." But the novelist-critic declined the offer by saying that he had read only two or three of his "great novels" and that he had no time to peruse his "later incarnations a list of ten or twelve volumes." This is followed by a remark, which obliquely evinces his disinterest in, and concealed aversion to, the Russian novelist's works. It is painfully surprising that James, the indefatigable reader of fiction, writes to Edmund Gosse: "... I haven't at present *time* to read all or any of his stuff..." (189). This clearly exhibits his dislike of Tolstoy's fiction which does not illustrate his fixed notions of the art of the novel, and this also accentuates his lack of objectivity (to which he attaches utmost importance) with regard to Tolstoy. Unfortunately, James makes several negative observations about Tolstoy, even though he, as he admits, has not read whole of him.

In a significant letter written to Hugh Walpole in 1912, just four years before his death in 1916, James articulated his staunch belief that form is all-important in a work of art, and hence Tolstoy and Dostoevsky are to be accused of the degradation of art because of their complete, blatant disregard for form. He states that the older he grows the more "do picking and composing" become sacred to him, and that only duffers can say that "strenuous selection and comparison are not the very essence of art, and that Form is [not] substance to that degree that there is absolutely no substance without it" (619). Stressing the all-importance of form in a creative work, he asserts that it is this alone which "holds and preserves" the subject matter and protects it from "the welter of helpless verbiage that we swim in as in a sea of tasteless tepid pudding," which is nothing but the degradation of art of which an artist should be ashamed. He debunks Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, despite their great minds and souls, for creating this kind of rather base writing as they neglect the architectural side of art, and cram a work indiscriminately with all kinds of material without caring to impart it a meaningful shape. The core of the letter/ his argument is cited below:

> Tolstoi and D. (Dostoevsky) are fluid pudding, though not tasteless, because the amount of their own minds and souls in solution in the broth gives in savour and flavour, thanks to the strong, rank quality of their genius and their experience. But there are all sorts of things to be said of them, and in particular that we see how great a vice is their lack of composition, their defiance of economy and architecture, directly they are emulated and imitated, *then*, as subjects of emulation, models, they quite give themselves away. There is nothing so deplorable as a work of art with a *leak* in its interest; and there is no such leak of interest as through commonness of form. Its opposite, the *found* (because the sought-for} form is the absolute citadel and tabernacle of interest. (619)

Yet in another letter written to Hugh Walpole the very next year on 21 August 1913, James talks about Tolstoy in almost the same vein. He avers that even a close reading of *War and Peace* has not brought about any change in his opinion about Tolstoy's fiction; its abominable formlessness and looseness cannot and should not place it above/ beyond downright condemnation. Undoubtedly, he has a wonderful grasp of life, but the presentation of the vast life in utter shapelessness is nothing but a colossal, ugly and vicious waste which can be appreciated only by fools, and not by a connoisseur of art. James concludes the letter with these strong, derogatory observations:

> He doesn't do to read over, and that exactly is the answer to those who idiotically proclaim the impunity of such formless shape, such flopping looseness and such a denial of composition, selection and style. He has a mighty fund of life, but the *waste* and the ugliness and vice of waste, the vice of a not finer *doing*, are sickening. For me he but makes "composition" throne, by contrast, in effulgent lustre. (681)

What I feel is that James does not see eye to eye with Tolstoy; they are poles opposite of each other. The reason is quite apparent after the above discussion: technique involving total presentation and form, based upon careful and tireless selection and rejection of the material, is all-important to James, while all this has never been of much/ major concern to Tolstoy. Whereas James attaches too

much significance to technique and presentation, Tolstoy seems to give only a little consideration to them. This is the reason why James's *The Ambassadors* is perhaps the only book among his later novels in which technique and life are truly blended. When we peruse a novel like *War and Peace*, we find it as long as life itself, and go on reading it as we go on living. Tolstoy's novels are, as George Saintsbury remarks, "'pieces of life'... but in a strangely unlicked and unfinished condition. One constantly finds touches, not of talent so much as of genius" ("Turgenev, Dostoievsky, and Tolstoy," *Russian Literature and Modern English Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays* 27) . Thus, James, despite his bias against Tolstoy, appears to be fair in lamenting Tolstoy's lack of architectural competence and craftsmanship for which he almost adores Tolstoy's fellow Russian writer Turgenev. Apparently, he, who considers the novel essentially a work of art, holds that Tolstoy cannot be a model for other writers, as Turgenev, whom he calls the "novelists' novelist," is. James's wrongful rejection of the "large loose baggy monsters" ("The Tragic Muse," *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces* 84) like Tolstoy's *War and Peace* can be understood in the light of his firm view about the true nature of life and art, lucidly explained in the following extract from "Preface" to *The Spoils of Poynton*:

> Life being all inclusion and confusion, and art being all discrimination and selection, the latter, in search of the hard latent *value* with which alone it is concerned, sniffs round the mass as instinctively and unerringly as a dog suspicious of some buried bone. The difference here, however, is that, while the dog desires his bone but to destroy it, the artist finds in *his* tiny nugget, washed free of awkward accretions and hammered into a sacred hardness, the very stuff for a clear affirmation, the happiest chance for the indestructible. (120)

In a word, James regards Tolstoy as "the great illutrative masterhand on all this ground of the disconnection of method from matter" ("The New Novel, 1914," *Selected Literary Criticism* 368) . Nevertheless, it may also be said in this context that though James has not written as much about Tolstoy as he has written about Turgenev, his critical observations on him are valuable to understand the essence of his writings because of the quality of James's mind and the insightful seriousness with which he deals with the subject.

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3

VIRGINIA WOOLF ON LEO TOLSTOY

In fiction criticism, it is common parlance that Tolstoy is one of the greatest novelists of the world of all times and that his *magnum opus, War and Peace* is the greatest novel of the world. But this almost universally accepted literary judgment on Tolstoy's creative fictional genius was arrived at not as naturally and smoothly as it appears to be, particularly in England. The early British response to him was not favourable and encouraging. George Meredith and Thomas Hardy perhaps never mentioned him in their expository writings. Henry James, his contemporary, who swayed the British and America fictional scene for about three decades from 1881 onwards, both as a theorist and a practitioner of art of fiction, denigrated *War and Peace,* together with *The Newcomes* and *Les Trois Mousquetaires,* as "large loose baggy monsters" ("Preface to The Tragic Muse," *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces* 84) , and, along with his disciple Joseph Conrad, refused to take him seriously (Donald Davie, "Introduction," *Russian Literature and Modern English* 2) , while both of them adored Turgenev. The most influential literary critic of the later nineteenth and the earlier twentieth century, George Saintsbury, admitted only Turgenev as an outstanding Russian novelist, ignoring Tolstoy's genius completely. No wonder when *War and Peace* first appeared in English in three volumes in 1886, being translated from the French, it was reviewed adversely in the *Guardian* on February 16, 1886: "...the whole is told with a sort of persistent weariness, an air of sarcastic unbelief in men and manners and causes, which seems to reflect the Nihilism of the author in every portion of his work." Again, Maurice Thompson dismissed derisively Tolstoy the man as well as the novelist as early as July 23, 1887 in the *Literary World* of Boston:

> Tolstoy is a rich man who prefers to live in brutal vulgarity, a man who pretends to hate riches, but clings to all his cash;

> a heartless theorist, who pretends to believe that no evil should be forcibly resisted; who makes a pretence of shoe-making in order to attract attention to himself; who dresses like a clown for the same purpose, and who writes novels as dirty and obscene as the worst parts of Walt Whitman's 'Leaves of Grass'....

However, notwithstanding this early neglect and rejection of Tolstoy, in England and America, D.H. Lawrence expressed boldly his views on Tolstoy in his letters and critical writings which became publicly known only after 1925. His first opinion about the strengths and weaknesses of the Russian novelists, including Tolstoy, is contained in his letter written to Catherine Carswell on December 2, 1916 which was first published in 1932 in *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence* edited by Aldous Huxley. In this letter, he remarked: "They have meant an enormous amount to me; Turgenev, Tolstoi, Dostoievsky — mattered almost more than anything, and I thought them the greatest of all time. And now, with something of a shock, I realise a certain crudity and thick, uncivilised, insensitive stupidity about them, I realise how much finer and purer and more ultimate our own stuff is" (*The Letters of D.H. Lawrence* 383-84) . But in 1948 E.M. Forster came out vigorously with the assertion that Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is indubitably the greatest novel of the world: "Most people agree that Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is the greatest novel that Western civilization has produced" ("Our Second Greatest Novel," *Two Cheers for Democracy* 226) . And then within a span of few years only, Somerset Maugham, in the similar vein, pronounced his following widely known verdict after which Tolstoy's great novelistic genius could not be questioned:

> I think Balzac is the greatest novelist the world has ever known, but I think Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is the greatest novel. No doubt with such a wide sweep, dealing with so momentous a period of history and with such a vast array of characters, was even written before, nor, I surmise, will ever be written again. It has been justly called an epic. I can think of no other work of fiction that could with truth be so described. Strakhov, a friend of Tolstoy's and an able critic, put his opinion into a

> few energetic sentences: "A complete picture of human life. A complete picture of the Russia of that day. A complete picture of what may be called the history and struggle of peoples. A complete picture of everything in which people find their happiness and greatness, their grief and humiliation. That is *War and Peace.* (*The World's Ten Greatest Novels* 25)

The emergence and acquisience of Tolstoy as one of the foremost fictionists and the writer of the greatest novel of the world in the fourth and fifth decades of the present century cannot be attributed to the perceptive critical faculty which E.M. Forster or Somerset Maugham was endowed with. The fact is that it was Virginia Woolf, a singularly original novelist-critic of the current century, who for the first time could measure and reveal the astonishing depth and breadth of great Russian novelists, including Tolstoy. E.M. Forster, Somerset Maugham and many other later British novelists and critics only reiterated, elaborated and explained what she had pronounced repeatedly on Tolstoy in her essays, reviews, sketches, letters, diary etc. Her cogitations on Tolstoy's fictional art are scattered in the volumes of her expository writings, such as *The Common Reader* (Series I and II) , *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays, The Moment and Other Essays, The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays, Granite and Rainbow, A Room of One's Own, Contemporary Writers, Moments of Being, Books and Portraits, A Writer's Diary, The Letters of Virginia Woolf* (4 Vols.) , etc. She not only wrote about his writings, but also published and translated his works into English. In the letter written to Lady Robert Cecil in June 1920, she informed that the Hogarth Press was bringing out Tolstoy's *The Table Talk* (*The Questions of Things Happenings: The Letters of Virginia Woolf,* Vol. II 432) . Again, she collaborated with S.S. Koteiansky on two books, *Tolstoi's Love Letters* and *Talk with Tolstoi* by A.B. Goldenveizer which were published by the Hogarth Press in 1923 (573) . Then, her letter to Vanessa Bell, written on Christmas Day, 1970, reveals her keen interest in Tolstoy's book, *What I Believe* (*The Flight of the Mind: The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, Vol.I 442) .

The present paper is an attempt at assimilating, interpreting and evaluating the numerous remarks she has made about Leo

Tolstoy as a fictionist in her writings with a view to evincing the fact that she has contributed most to enable him to get his rightful place in the realm of fiction. And this she daringly did much against the wave of neglect and adverse criticism of Tolstoy initiated by her seniors and established masters like Hardy, Meredith, Henry James and Joseph Conard.

Let us, then, examine some of the most significant observations of Virginia Woolf on Tolstoy. We begin with her elaborate, forceful remarks about him made around the year 1920 in two of her critical pieces, "Modern Fiction" and "The Russian Point of View," contained in her most famous collection of essays, The *Common Reader,* Series I, the first one of which is her best-known piece of fiction-criticism. The concluding paragraph of the essay begins with the statement that even the most elementary discussion of modern fiction cannot be complete without a reference to the Russian influence on it, and "if the Russians are mentioned," she continues to assert, "one runs the risk of feeling that to write of any fiction save theirs is waste of time" (*The Common Reader*, First Series 193) . One obvious reason of this greatness of the Russian novel and its sweeping impact on modern world fiction, can be seen, according to her, in the fact that nowhere else can we have a profound understanding of the human soul comparable with it, and that, too, not with the mind, but with the heart soaked in fathomless love for fellow human beings.[1] She dubs her popular British contemporary novelists like Galsworthy, Arnold Bennet and H.G. Wells materialists, and eulogizes James Joyce and the Russian novelists by calling them spiritualists who care for the inner being of man, and not for the mere external details of life. She discovers in Tolstoy and other Russian fictionists not only a concern for the inner file, but also an unmistakable saintliness which consists in their immeasurable sympathy and love for the suffering human beings. To quote her own words:

> In every great Russian writer we seem to discern the features of a saint, sympathy for the sufferings of others, love towards them, endeavour to reach some goal worthy of the most exacting demands of the spirit constitute saintliness. It is the

> saint in them which confounds us with a feeling of our own irreligious triviality, and turns so many of our famous novels to tinsel and trickery. ("Modern Fiction," *The Common Reader*, First Series 194)

This saintliness of the Russian novelist has another side; it makes his conclusions about life, though 'comprehensive and compassionate,' deeply sad[2] and somewhat inconclusive. It is this indeterminateness of the Russian mind that fails him to offer definite answers to the variegated questions about life which are "left to sound on after the story is over in hopeless interrogation that fills us with a deep, and finally it may be with a resentful, despair" ("Modern Fiction" 194) . Virginia Woolf, being a very reflective and introspective writer, considers this indeterminate human world presented by Tolstoy and others as true and unquestionable, for life, in its essence, is so, and this only patently shows that 'they see further than we do and without our gross impediments of vision" (194) .

The article, "The Russian Point of View," is completely devoted to the Russian fiction writers, their greatness and their influences on the modern mind. After discussing the Russian writers, in general, the problems of reading them through English translations which may not present them in their entirety and true self, their essential saintliness and matters related to it, the soul that is the very core of the Russian fiction which requires a lot of concentration and efforts on the part of the English reader to comprehend it because he is alien to the soul, Virginia Woolf devotes about ten pages of the essay to the analysis and appraisal of the fictional genius of three major Russian fictionists — Tchekov, Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy. In the last three pages of this piece of criticism, she exclusively focuses on Tolstoy. She begins with the assertion that he is the greatest of all novelists by virtue of being the author of *War and Peace.* He, in her opinion, is the writer who does not create the impression of a foreigner on an English mind and in whose view of life it is hard to detect some oddity — the two glaring drawbacks which disturb the reader of Dostoevsky, despite his outstanding creative faculty.

Virginia Woolf enumerates some of the striking merits of Tolstoy.

First of all, she stresses the wonderful element of familiarity in his writings. She finds him just like every English man, and for that matter just like every common reader, habitual of looking at every thing from the external to the internal, from the exterior to the interior. Apropos of this, she avers: "From his first words we can be sure of one thing at any rate — here is a man who sees what we see, who proceeds, too, as we are accustomed to proceed, not from the inside outwards, but from the outside inwards ("The Russian Point of View," *The Common Reader*, First Series 229) . Then, the note of universality is very well-marked in his fiction in that the world portrayed by him is very close to the life we have all around us. He would show the postman knocking at the gates around 8 a.m. and people retiring to bed between 10 p.m. and 11p.m. Another remarkable thing about him is that while reading fiction the reader finds the author highly educated with every kind of experience, and not simply a savage or a child of nature. Again, he at once creates the impression on the reader's mind that he is endowed with sharp and well-trained senses and intellect. All this enables him to paint life in all its minutest details. In fact, nothing seems to escape him, and we all the time feel as if we were looking at life from a mountain-top with a powerful telescope on our eyes, thus seeing clearly everything animate or inanimate, internal or external. He is simply God-like omniscient and omnipresent. Speaking of his amazing power of minute observation and accurate delineation, Virginia Woolf says:

> Nothing glances off him unrecoded. Nobody, therefore, can so convey the excitement of sport, the beauty of horses, and all the fierce desirability of the world to the senses of a strong young man. Every twig, every feather sticks to his magnet. He notices the blue or red of a child's frock; the way a horse shifts its tail; the sound of a cough; the action of a man trying to put his hands into pockets that have been sewn up. And what his infallible eye reports of a cough or a trick of the hands his infallible brain refers to something hidden in the character, so that we know his people, not only by the way they love and their views on politics and the immortality of the soul, but also by the way they sneeze and choke. Even in a translation

> we feel that we have a set on a mountain-top and a telescope put into our hands. Everything is astonishingly clear and absolutely sharp. (229-30)

What is highly commendable about Tolstoy's art is that alongwith the most commonplace details of life, the reader is made to see and feel the very intensity of life, the innermost depth of it, which inevitably fills him with the powerful feeling of pleasure and fear. Virginia Woolf illustrates it from Tolstoy's famous story, “Family Happiness.” She refers to a short passage, quoted below, to affirm that Tolstoy makes us feel joy and fear very much like Masha in this story whose feelings are recorded by the author thus:

> Suddenly a strange thing happened to me: first I ceased to see what was around me; then his face seemed to vanish till only the eyes were left, shining over against mine; next the eyes seemed to be in my own head, and then all became confused — I could see nothing and was forced to shut my eyes, in order to break loose from the feeling of pleasure and fear which his gaze was producing in me.... (230)

Virginia Woolf further refers to two descriptions, contained in this very story, to spotlight this patent feature of Tolstoy's work — viz. the intense feeling of pleasure and fear and man's attempt to escape this feeling by shutting his eyes to a scene or description embodying it. The two scenes are: the young girl strolling with her lover in a garden at night; and the newly married couple moving swiftly and gleefully in their drawing-room. Virginia Woolf points out that coming across descriptions such as these which are quite frequent in Tolstoy's fictional work, the reader closes the book and shuts the eyes to experience the intense feeling of happiness better and to escape the feeling of fear. Though the feeling of joy is uppermost in Tolstoy's writings, yet the sense of fear is invariably there. The reason may be that the reader feels that the happiness as portrayed by Tolstoy is too acute to last long, and that ultimately life is to offer man disaster too. This inalienable mingling of fear with pleasure in Tolstoy may also be due to man's awareness of the transience of intense happiness leading him to confront with the baffling question, very much like Pozdnyshev in the *Kreutzer Sonata*: “But why live?” “What is the meaning of life?” “What is man's aim of life?” Apropos of this, Virginia Woolf writes:

> There is always at the centre of all the brilliant and flashing petals of the flower this scorpion, “Why live?” There is always at the centre of the book some Olenin or Pierre, or Levin who gathers into himself all experience, turns the world round between his fingers, and never ceases to ask, even as he enjoys it, what is the meaning of it, and what should be our aims. It is not the priest who shatters our desires most effectively: it is the man who has known them, and loved them himself. When he derides them, the world indeed turns to dust and ashes beneath our feet. Thus fear mingles with our pleasure.... (231)

The blending of intense pleasure and frightening fear in Tolstoy's fiction prompts Virginia Woolf to hold that of the great Russian writers, he “most enthralls us and most repels” (231). In this connection, it may be observed that many scholars of fiction may not agree with her. It is true that Tolstoy often throws us into rapture by making us experience the profound feeling of happiness, by making us delve deep into life, by bringing us into close contact with the whole of life — the familiar external life and the puzzling internal — and by presenting before us a world dominated by life, the vast mass of life. But to say that he repels us because he makes us aware of the constant presence of fear in life and of the transience of happiness is not fair. In fact, we read him with a feeling of pleasure and a sense of wonder, and wish to read him again and again so as to feel the very warmth of life, the wholeness of it. His fiction is certainly delightful, but not repulsive, though at times tedious, dull and morally ponderous it may be. After remarking that he most repels us, Virginia Woolf perhaps soon realises her prejudice against, and unfairness to, him. This is the reason why she concludes the essay with the apt observation that “the mind takes its bias from the place of its birth, and no doubt, when it strikes upon a literature so alien as the Russian, flies off at a tangent far from the truth” (231).

Virginia Woolf considers character-creation as the most important function of the creative power of a fiction writer, and it is the

portrayal of characters whose every nerve is alive that makes a novel truly great, for she believes that the novel-form is evolved primarily to create living characters to depict life truthfully with all its exterior and interior, and not to "preach doctrines, sing songs, or celebrate the glories of the British Empire" ("Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays* 97) . She repeatedly admires Tolstoy for creating living characters with flesh and bones, with mind and heart and soul. In her article, "Notes on an Elizabethan Play," she compares Annabella, the heroine of the play entitled *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, with Anna Karenina of Tolstoy with a view to revealing the difference between the two characters, thus highlighting Tolstoy's commendable art of delineating characters bubbling over with life in all its depth, range and intricacy. The central figure of Ford's drama is not adequately portrayed and is always shown at the height of her passion without depicting the natural growth and process of her passion: on the other hand, Anna Karenina, one of Tolstoy's memorable female characters, is painted naturally with astonishing lifelikeness. Comparing the two, Virginia Woolf states:

> Nobody describes her. She is always at the height of her passion, never at its approach. Compare her with Anna Karenina. The Russian woman is flesh and blood, nerves and temperament, has heart, brain, body and mind where the English girl is flat and crude as a face painted on a playing card; she is without depth, without range, without intricacy. (*The Common Reader*, First Series 78)

Virginia Woolf also compares Tolstoy with Scott in order to accentuate the fact that while the former is one of the most wonderful observers and painters of the subtleties and intricacies of human heart, the latter is not ("Sir Walter Scott," *The Moment and Other Essays* 58) .

Again, in the article on Thomas Hardy written soon after his death in 1928, she exposes his weakness in drawing living characters, and points out that he fails to enable us to "know them as we know Pierre or Natasha" (*The Common Reader*, Second Series 253) of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, from inside and outside and all around.

While the great Russian fully reveals to us the complication, involvement and turmoil of his people's inner life and their relations with one another, Hardy fails to do so. Tolstoy portrays his characters in their entirety, and thus we know Anna Karenina wholly; the inside of her mind, her charm, her despair and her passion. He is simply wonderful in shedding light on the human heart, mind and soul. He "would pierce through the flesh; would reveal the soul — the soul alone, wandering out into the Waterloo Road, asking of life some tremendous question which would sound on and on in our ears after the book was finished" ("Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" 97) . In every one of his novels, there are characters who seem to the reader so real that they have the compelling power to make us think through them not only about the world of the particular novel in which they figure, but also about all kinds of things — love, religion, war, peace, family life, the balls in country towns, the eternity of the soul, the natural scenes and sights, etc. *War and Peace* is the greatest novel of the world because there is hardly any aspect of human experience which is not presented to us through the life-like characters that crowd it (98) .

The novelist may create large figures who may be extremely impressive in themselves, and yet they may not be very true to life and convincing, if they are not the result of the author's intense sensitivity and do not fit in with one another. Tolstoy, according to Virginia Woolf, is the greatest of novelists because he is capable of creating living characters in relation to one another by dint of his remarkable sensitivity. She reveals Tolstoy's greatness by making a close comparison between his art of creating characters with that of Dickens whom the former had acknowledged as his master. Drawing the comparison between these two great novelists' art of character-delineation in order to highlight the matchlessness of Tolstoy in this regard, Virginia Woolf affirms:

> Though the heart of Dickens burned with indignation for public wrongs, he lacked sensitiveness privately, so that his attempts at intimacy failed. His great figures are on too large a scale to fit nicely into each other. They do not interlock, They need company to show them off and action to bring out their humours.

> They are often out of touch with each other. In Tolstoy, in the scenes between Princess Marya and her father, the old Prince, the pressure of character upon character is never relaxed. The tension is perpetual, every nerve in the character is alive. It may be for this reason that Tolstoy is the greatest of novelists. In Dickens the characters are impressive in themselves but not in their personal relations. Often, indeed, when they talk to each other they are vapid in the extreme or sentimental beyond belief. One thinks of them as independent, existing forever, unchanged, like monoliths looking up into the sky. So it is that we begin to want something smaller, more intense, more intricate. ("Phases of Fiction," *Granite and Raibow* 113-14)

The characters of Tolstoy in all his major novels, including *War and Peace*, fill the reader not with disappointment and sense of superficiality and triviality, but with the "inexhaustible richness of human sensibility" ("Notes on an Elizabethan Play," *The Common Reader*, First Series 80) .This is the reason why innumerable deaths of men and women in other books, according to Virginia Woolf, "move us less than the suffering of one of Tolstoi's flies" (83) . Tolstoy's characters bring us into close contact with passionate intensity, sublimity, pleasure and curiosity. Another special feature of his art of characterisation is the immense variety and complexity of his characters; there is almost 'God's plenty' in his fictional world. Virginia Woolf reveals the weakness of the simple, repetitious, and hence nearly lifeless characters of Charlotte Bronte by comparing them with the many-faceted, vivacious and hence absolutely living people that inhabit Tolstoy's or Jane Austen's world. About this, she affirms:

> The drawbacks of being Jane Eyre are not far to seek. Always to be a governess and always to be in love is a serious limitation in a world which is full, after all, of people who are neither one nor the other. The characters of a Jane Austen or of a Tolstoy have a million facets compared with these. They live and are complex by means of their effect upon many different people who serve to mirror them in the round. They move hither and thither whether their creators watch them or not, and the world in which they live seems to us an independent world which we can visit, now that they have created it, by ourselves. ("Jane Eyer," *The Common Reader*, First Series 198)

Variegated experiences, acquired through travels, adventures, social intercourse, etc. surely go a long way in sharpening and enriching the novelistic powers of a writer. In fact, wide and profound experience is absolutely indispensable for the novelist to create a work of fiction, for it is experience that enables a writer to comprehend and re-create life in all its intensity and authenticity. This, in Virginia Woolf's opinion, accounts largely for the greatness of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, which is simply astonishing in the re-creation of the vastness of life with utmost truthfulness, 'a certain looking-glass likeness to life.' The novel is saturated with the true experiences of life and society that its author could have as a soldier and as a rich youngman observing society closely from various angles. The book is simply amazing so far as the artistic accumulation of immeasurable wealth of the experiences of many lives and many minds is concerned ("Phases of Fiction," *Granite and Rainbow* 136) . As a matter of fact, the best of Conard's and Tolstoy's fiction would have been reduced to naught, if the former had not been a sailor and the latter had not been a soldier and a wealthy man, seeing and experiencing war and society closely. To quote Virginia Woolf's own words:

> The best part of Conard's novels, for instance, would be destroyed if it had been impossible for him to be sailor. Take away all that Tolstoi knew of war as a soldier, of life and society as a young man whose education admitted him to all sorts of experience, and *War and Peace* would be incredibly impoverihed. ("Women and Fiction," *Granite and Rainbow* 79)

She feels that a novelist like Charlotte Bronte or Emile Bronte would have bequeathed to posterity much better books than what they have done, "if experience and intercourse and travel had been granted her" (*A Room of One's Own* 67) . She avers that but for the type of life with all kinds of experiences, moral of immoral, that Tolstoy lived, he would not have been able to write a masterpiece such as

War and Peace:

> … there was a young man living freely with this gypsy or with that great lady; going to the wars; picking up unhindered and uncensored all that varied experiences of human life which served him so splendidly later when he came to write his books. Had Tolstoi lived at the Priory in seclusion with a married lady 'cut off from what is called the world,' however edifying the moral lesson, he could scarcely, I thought, have written *War and Peace*. (68)

The portrayal of the abundance of life in all its baffling variety may make a novel truly outstanding by investing it with "a certain looking-glass likeness to life," but this very strength may threaten its very structure and meaning because the presentation of too much of life makes it a work of infinite complexity with so many varied viewpoints, judgments, emotions, thoughts, etc. What saves this kind of book from complete collapse is the novelist's integrity, and it is this that strikes us most in Tolstoy, thus enabling him to present in his masterpiece a vast view of life, as vast as the universe itself, in a form as artistically satisfying as humanly possible. What Virginia Woolf means by integrity in this context is the novelist's conviction that what he communicates to the reader through his work is the truth, with the result the reader feels convinced of the people and events in the narrative despite his feeling that before reading the book he would have never thought of these people and events to be lifelike and convincing. Tolstoy, in Virginia Woolf's view, possesses the novelist's integrity in the highest degree, and it is the real strength of his magnum opus, *War and Peace.* Apropos of this, she observes:

> The whole structure, it is obvious, thinking back on any famous novel, is one of infinite complexity, because it is thus made up of so many different judgements, of so many different kinds of emotion. The wonder is that any book so composed holds together for more than a year or two, or can possibly mean to the English reader what it means for the Russian or the Chinese. But they do hold together occasionally very remarkably. And what holds them together in these rare instances of survival (I was thinking of *War and Peace*) is something that one calls integrity, though it has nothing to do with paying one's bills or behaving honourably in an emergency. (68-9)

Virginia Woolf also judges Tolstoy's creative mind by the touchstone of the concept of androgynous mind. Being a psychological writer to the backbone, she offers us a very interesting view of human mind, which is a very mysterious organ upon which we depend so completely and yet about which we know almost nothing very precisely. She explains and endorses Coleridge's concept of the androgynous mind, the highest type of creative mind. Every person has a brain which is governed by two powers, the male and the female. In the man's brain the male is more dominant than the female, and in the woman's mind the female predominates over the male. What Coleridge means by a great mind that is androgynous is that in a man the female part of his brain must have its impact, and the woman must have intercourse with the male in her. For it "is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create any more than a mind that is purely feminine..." (94). Inevitably, the androgynous mind is "resonant and porous," communicates emotions spontanceously without any hindrance, is undivided and incandescent, and hence essentially and naturally creative (94). Virginia Woolf holds that Galsworthy and Kipling lack suggestive power and appear crude and immature to a woman because they do not have a spark of the woman in them. According to her, Shakespeare, Keats, Sterne,, Cowper, Lamb and Coleridge possessed androgynous minds. Coming to Tolstoy, she affirms that he belongs to the class of writers like Milton, Ben Jonson and Wordsworth, who "had a dash too much of the male in them" (99). This is the reason why Tolstoy's later novel, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, is not a great work of art and does not possess universal appeal. No wonder even a modern British male novelist like Joyce Cary rejected the picture of life presented in it as unconvincing.[3] The obvious cause of this seems to be the fact that his wife Sonya became faithless to him and flirted with a composer at the age of 52, thus making him develop a harsh attitude towards woman in general. When he wrote *War and Peace,*

he had a very happy married me, living in complete harmony with his wife, evidenced by the fact that his wife copied his voluminous work seven times in her hand. This leads us to infer that while *War and Peace*, universally admitted as the greatest novel of the world till to-day, is the artistic creation of an androgynous mind, *The Kreutzer Sonata* is the product of a flawed artist overdominated by the male in him and overprejudiced against the woman of female principle. The discussion lead Virginia Woolf to infer: "Some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the art of creation can be accomplished. Some marriage of opposites has to be consummated" (99) .

Virginia Woolf finds Tolstoy an illustrious writer in yet another way. Interested in explaining psychology, particularly her own psychology, she affirms that every day in human life is made of moments of 'being' and 'non-being.' By moments of 'being' she means the moments of revelation, deep realisation, illumination or radiance for which James Joyce uses the term 'epiphany.' These separate moments of 'being' are embedded in many more moments of 'non-being' — the moments of day-to-day life with commonplace experiences which hardly haunt the memory of a man and are seldom remembered even for a short while. Virginia Woolf asserts that the real novelist is able to delineate both kinds of being in his work, that is, both the moments of being and non-being. Tolstoy, according to her, is remarkably successful in picking and portraying the moments of both the kinds of being in his writings, and is very much close to Jane Austen, Dickens, Trollope and Thackeray in this respect. Notwithstanding her great admiration for James Joyce, she does not place him in this class of great writers, for he attaches utmost importance to the moments of being, without giving due significance to the moments of non-being. Tolstoy is a complete novelist because of his equal stress on, and artistically effective delineation of, both the facets of life — the moments of 'being' and those of 'non-being.'

Virginia Woolf eulogizes the Russian novelists like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky for imparting new dimensions to the novel, thus making it "larger, saner and much more profound than ours (English) " ("On

Rereading Meredith," *Granite and Rainbow* 49) . Inevitably, in the great novels of Tolstoy, one discerns "human life in all its width and depth, with every shade of feeling and subtlety of thought ... without the distortion of personal eccentricity or mannerism" (49) . His writings, like those of his distinguished compatriots, demonstrate his unflinching belief that life is too serious to be juggled with, and too significant to be manipulated. Small wonder he accumulates the bits of life of all kinds, interior or exterior, ugly or beautiful, with a view to understanding life as comprehensively as possible, and to penetrating deeper into the human soul with immense power of sustained insight and unswerving reverence for truth. This makes him strikingly different from, and superior to, most of the English novelists, including the greatest names of the period, such as Dickens, Meredith and Hardy.

Tolstoy is, in fact, "a whole world," as Maxim Gorky proclaims, and therefore it is not surprising that Virginia Woolf has to refer to *War and Peace* — a highly realistic work of art — to illustrate her concept of the poetic novel. She holds that the poetry of situation is the typical variety of poetry which suits the novel more naturally than the poetry of language because it employs mainly the material which comes to the novelist automatically. To explain her point, she cities, besides the scene in which Catherine pulls the feather from the pillow in Emile Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, the intensely poetic situation in which Natasha in *War and Peace* peeps through the window to gaze at the stars. What is special about it is that the poetry consists not in words, but in the intensely of the scene. The prose used in this scene is casual and quiet, and hence to quote it does not produce any poetic effect. It is the reading and re-reading and recalling of the entire scene running over chapters which fill the reader with the profound, unforgettable impression of beauty and intensity that approximates to this high kind of haunting poetry. Virginia Woolf observes:

> When Natasha in *War and Peace* look out of the window at the stars, Tolstoy produces a feeling of deep and intense poetry without any disruption or that disquieting sense of song being sung to people who listen. He does this because his

> poetic sense finds expression in the poetry of the situation or because his characters express it in their own words, which are often of the simplest. We have been living in them, so that, when Natasha leans on the window sill and thinks of her life to come, our feelings of the poetry of the moment do not lie in what she says so much as in our sense of her who is saying it. ("Phases of Fiction" 137)

Tolstoy is admired by Virginia Woolf for his competence to criticise society convincingly and persuasively. This he is able to do because of his profound understanding of mankind. She compares Hardy, the author of *Jude the Obscure*, who makes a case against society, with Tolstoy, and points out that the former is an instance of artistic incompetence and failure, while the latter is perfectly successful in his intentions. Explaining her viewpoint, she says:

> In *Jude the Obscure* argument is allowed to dominate impression, with the result that though the misery of the book is overwhelming it is not tragic. As calamity succeeds calamity we feel that the case against society is not being argued fairly or with profound understanding of the facts. Here is nothing of that width and force and knowledge of mankind which, when Tolstoy criticises society, makes his indictment formidable. Here we have revealed to us the petty cruelty of men, not the large injustice of the gods. ("The Novels of Thomas Hardy," *The Common Reader*, Second Series 255)

One more reason why Tolstoy is one of the foremost novelists of the world is that he is a highly deliberate, painstaking craftsman, and considers the novel a work of art. Virginia Woolf, in her review article on E.M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel,* holds that the English fiction writers do not take the novel seriously, and do not rate it as an accomplished work of art in the manner in which the French and the Russian novelists do. Much of the greatness of the novel, *War and Peace*, like many other masterpieces of this genre, can be attributed to the constant revisions and re-writing of the book with utmost care and insight; the stupendous novel was written and re-written seven times with a view to lending it thematic and artistic perfection to the extent to which it was possible for the artist ("The

Art of Fiction," *The Moment and Other Essays* 93) .

Virginia Woolf is not simply laudatory in her analysis of the Russian novelists, for she does not fail to mark their blemishes. Even when she extols their saintliness leading to a picture of life, inconclusive and sad, she rightly points out that something significant escapes them, and it is the natural joy in the comic side of life — the resplendent natural English sense of humour —, in the splendour of the earth, in the joys of the body and in the workings of the intellect which are so clearly visible in British fiction form Laurence Sterne down to Joyce Cary. These observations of Virginia Woolf apply to Tolstoy most, as she refers to him time and again and concludes the essay "The Russian Point of View" with fairly comprehensive remarks about him, and repeatedly proclaims him the greatest of Russian novelists.

Virginia Woolf does not fail to notice the irreparable damage caused to Tolstoy's creative genius by the disastrous later part of his married life with Sonya, by the "alliance of the intense belief of genius with the easy-going non-belief or compromise of ordinary humanity" ("Not One of Us," *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays* 107) . Tolstoy could save his talents from complete collapse and ruin by virtue of his sheer power of conviction which enabled him to evolve his unique, eccentric philosophy of life all alone or in a monastry, though the same power of conviction can be said to be responsible for the destruction of normal human happiness.

Virginia Woolf is aware of the structural defects that are bound to creep into the novels of a writer like Tolstoy who tries to present the world in all its vastness, in all its breadth and depth. His novels suffer from the cracks that dislocate them as the action in them stretches over vast space and time. For instance, this is true of even a novel like *Anna Karenina* in which the narrative stretches over a space and time much narrower than that of *War and Peace.* This is evident when the novelist in this book has to pass from Levin to Anna: he "jars his story and wrenches and arrests our sympathies" ("The Cinema," *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays* 171) . Another thing that makes Virginia Woolf unhappy with Tolstoy is his contempt for women, particularly visible in his later

fiction. She confesses that out of the sense of vanity, she feels depressed by women-haters like Tolstoy (*A Writer's Diary* 109) .

In short, Virginia Woolf points to and highlights the indebtedness of British novelists to Tolstoy ("On Re-reading Novels," *The Moment and Other Essays* 127) . She assigns him the highest place in the domain of fiction, and maintains that his novels, like those of the most leading fictionists, such as Dickens, Trollope, Henry James and the Brontes, are to be perpetually read and discussed ("Sir Walter Scott" 50) . Naturally, no English novelist, in her opinion, can be compared with Tolstoy without making the comparison itself ludicrous. This is evident from the fact that, despite her rating James Joyce very high and calling him a spiritualist, when she refers to Tolstoy while making some observations on James Joyce in her diary, she at once realises her mistake and records: "…but it is entirely absurd to compare him with Tolstoy" (*A Writer's Diary* 50) . Again, while jotting down her views on *Esther Waters* and *Tess,* she makes a remark which evinces Tolstoy's greatness even in the matter of narrative technique: "….Think how Tolstoi would have done it" (87) ! Re-reading him in 1940, she recalls her earlier readings and impressions, and passes the following, perhaps the last, final judgment on him in these words:

> I read Tolstoy at breakfast — Goldenweiser that I translated with Kot in 1923 and have almost forgotten. Always the same reality — like touching an exposed electric wire. Even so imperfectly conveyed — his rugged short cut mind — to me the most, not sympathetic, but inspiring, rousing; genius in the raw. Thus more disturbing, more "shocking" more of a thunderclap, even on art, even on literature, than any other writer. I remember that was my feeling about *War and Peace*, read in bed at Twickenham. Old Savage picked it up, "Splendid stuff!" and Jean tried to admire what was a revelation to me. Its directness, its reality. Yet he's against photographic realism.(329)

To conclude, from the foregoing discussion based on the systematic interpretation of the variegated observations of Virginia Woolf on Tolstoy, scattered all over her expository writings, two

clear-cut inferences can be drawn. First, she doe not offer us a comprehensive critique of Tolstoy; as a matter of fact, her discussion of Tolstoy is only a record of her impressions about him, formed and jotted down at different times and in different contexts. Secondly, what strikes her most in the Russian novelist is his preoccupations with life in all its entirety and essence posing baffling questions about its real meaning, his skill in creating a very large variety of living characters, his integrity to his subject and art, his commendable power of conceiving and portraying a very vast realistic picture of life exquisitely studded with intensely poetic scenes and situations, and his indefatigable craftsmanship.

Notes

1. Virginia Woolf accentuates the Russian novelist's preoccu pation with soul and brotherhood. For instance, in the essay, "The Niece of an Earl," she lays stress upon "the immensity of the soul and upon the brotherhood of man." (*The Common Reader*, Second Series [London: The Hogarth Press, 1965], p.216) .
2. Again, in another essay, "A Glance at Turgenev," she refers to the note of melancholy pervading the works of most of the Russian writers. (*Books and Portraits*, ed. Mary Lyon [London: The Hogarth Press, 1977], p.107) .
3. Apropos of this, Joyce Cary remarks: "...the Kreutzer Sonata ... seemed so ludicrously wrong-headed about the whole matter of sex. In that book, you remember, a murderer tells how he killed his wife, out of jealousy; and blames the education of women 'for the marriage market.' It is penetrated throughout with Tolstoy's obsession with sex which ruled his senses and filled him with loathing, which gave him (as Gorky tells us) so foul a tongue about women, and so acute a need, which he savagely resented, for their flesh." (Prefatory Essay to *The Moonlight* [Carfax Edition; London: Michael Joseph, 1959], p.9) .

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4

“A BORN WRITER”: SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S ESTIMATION OF LEO TOLSTOY THE FICTIONIST

Though enamoured of the illustrious French fictionists like Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert, Maupassant, the Goncourts and Anatole France, Somerset Maugham could not escape the all-pervasive impact of the celebrated Russian fiction writers like Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Chekhov, and referred to, and wrote about, them time and again in his expository writings thoughout his long, successful literary career. He felt an irresistible fascination for Russia and Russian language and literature, as he states in his non-fictional work, *The Summing Up*: “Russia was very much in the thoughts of people then and I had a mind to go there for a year, learn the language of which I already knew the rudiments and immerse myself in the emotion and mystery of that vast country. I thought that there perhaps I might find something that would give sustenance and enrichment to my spirit” (189-90) . In the same book, a little later he acknowledges the greatness of Russian fictionists and their importance for him as a writer: “But I could not miss the opportunity of spending certainly a considerable time in the country of Tolstoi, Dostoievski and Chekov; I had a notion that in the intervals of the work I was being sent to do I could get something for myself that would be of value...” (196) . Then, in his another significant non-fictional book, *A Writer's Notebook*, he stated, as early as 1917, that he, like most of his contemporaries, got deeply interested in Russia because of her fiction writers like Tolstoy, Turgenev and Dostoevsky whose works articulated an emotion that was strikingly different from any explored and communicated in the novels of other countries. Furthermore, he asserted that their novels completely overshadowed the works of such distinguished and popular British and French fictionists as Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, Balzac, Flaubert and Stendhal by exposing their basic weaknesses — viz. artificiality, delineation of mainly

the middle-class world, etc. To quote his own words:

> They made the greatest novels of Western Europe look artificial. Their novelty made me unfair to Thackeray, Dickens and Trollope, with their conventional morality; and even the great writers of France, Balzac, Stendhal and Flaubert, in comparison seemed formal and a liitle frigid. The life they portrayed, these English and French novelists, was familiar; and I, like others of my generation, was tired of it. They described a society that was policed. Its thoughts had been thought too often. Its emotions, even when extravagant, were extravagant within ordered limits. It was fiction fit for a mid dle-class civilization, well-fed, well-clothed, well-housed, and its readers were resolute to bear in mind that all they read was make-believe. (*A Writer's Notebook* 139)

Also, in this very book in 1941 Maugham proclaimed Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Balzac and Dickens to be “the four greatest novelists the world has ever known” (305) .

As Maugham was a very popular creative writer of his time with a number of best sellers — *Of Human Bondage, The Razor's Edge, Cake and Ale* and hundreds of short stories and several dramas — to his credit, so when he was in the United States in early 1950s, the Editor of *Redbook* asked him to prepare the list of the ten best novels in the world which he did and sometime later an American publisher approached him to write an introduction to each of the ten best novels chosen by him, and importantly he included in this list two masterpieces of Russian fiction — Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and F. Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov.* Obviously, this evidences his belief in the sterling, resplendent merits of the two eminent Russian fictional genuises, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. His perceptive observations on, and estimation of, perhaps the most outstanding novel till to-day — *War and Peace* — are contained in his varied expository writings, especially in the volume, *The World's Ten Greatest Novels*, which first appeared in 1954 under the title *Ten Novels and Their Authors*. Owing to paucity of space, in this paper I shall concentrate only on his statements about Tolstoy and his works.

Maugham affirms repeatedly that Tolstoy was "a born writer, and it was his instinct to put matters in the most effective, dramatic and interesting way he could" ("Leo Tolstoy and *War and Peace,*" *The World's Ten Greatest Novels* 45) . Thus, while speaking of the nature and essential elements of the novel, he refers to Tolstoy's *War and Peace.* He points out that the novel is a narrative of certain length, and can be as long as Tolstoy's *War and Peace* — a voluminous work, indeed — "in which a succession of events is related and a vast number of characters are displayed through a period of time, or as short as *Carmen* " (" Ten Novels and Their Authors — The Art of Fiction," *Selected Prefaces and Introductions of W. Somerset Maugham* 17-8) .

One of the fanatical admirers of Marcel Proust, whose monumental work, *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu,* Maugham regards as the greatest novel produced in the twentieth century, and he attributes its greatness to the novelist's power to create original, variegated and lifelike characters, and in this respect he is equal to Dickens, Balzac and Tolstoy (7) . Thus, Tolstoy, according to Maugham, is the touchstone to define the novel and to evaluate the worth of the works of even the greatest writers of the world. Obliquely, here he accentuates the Russian's innate capability of portraying a world inhabited by living and realistic people which is one of the most important criteria of a lasting work of literature. Also, he underlines "*the scope and the broad humanity of Tolstoy*" (*A Writer's Notebook* 162) .

Maugham enumerates some of the essential qualities of a good novel. One of these is that it must explore and communicate a theme of wide interest by which he means that a great novel deals with a subject which has immense appeal not only to a clique of persons but to general men and women of all countries and times. He affirms: "... the theme should be of enduring interest: the novelist is rash who elects to write on subjects whose interest is merely topical. When they cease to be so, his novel will be as unreadable as last week's newspaper" (*Selected Prefaces and Introductions of W. Somerset Maugham* 15) . The author should concentrate on topics of great concern to most of the human beings — viz. life's meaning

and value, soul's immortality, God's existence, war, etc. And the subject he focuses on must be an integral part of the story he narrates and of the persons he portrays — their actions emanating from it and it developing them. Maugham has great admiration for Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* and Tolstoy's *War and Peace* because they are concerned with matters/ topics of everlasting universal appeal, such as the meaning and significance of life, war, peace, etc. His unreserved praise for Tolstoy's masterpiece is justified, for ever since the inception of life in the universe, nothing has been as perennial and haunting as war and the efforts and desire to seek peace. Patently, *War and Peace*, despite its treatment of the temporal and historic event of Napoleonic wars and the graphic portrayal of the social and political milieu of that period in all details, will never lose its interest for mankind because of its preoccupation with the basic, eternal theme of war and peace.

Maugham comprehends correctly the different attitudes of the fictionists of varied Western nationalities like the French, the English, the Russian and others. Though himself a British, he could appreciate the classical sense and the orderly minds of the French that produced well-shaped works with themes properly developed and other things well-organized. At the same time he could perceive the value and validity of English and Russian novels lacking in precision and good form. Thus, his unbiased, right understanding of art enables him to see and pinpoint greatness in a shapeless, large narrative like *War and Peace,* for the life we know, in the words of Maugham, is like this "with its arbitrariness and inconsequence" ("The Complete Short Stories, Volume I," *Selected Prefaces and Introductions of W. Somerset Maugham* 60) . It certainly goes to his credit that despite affinity with the French masters and prepossesssions in the arts "on the side of law and order" (60) , he, unlike another master fictionist of this kind, Henry James whose notorious denunciation of *War and Peace* as a "large, loose baggy monster" is well-known, highlights the immense worth of the works of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and others. He is fully aware that the unmistakable dramatic value and tightness of effect have their own disadvantages, for "life does not dovetail into its various parts with

such neatness" (60). Little wonder a great artist usually does not meticulously arrange life to suit his purposes, and does not distort facts to his advantage and to his plan because this inevitably makes his picture of life artificial and unconvincing. Tolstoy is outstanding because in his major works he paints a picture of life, of human nature and sets it before us, without bothering whether we acquiece it or not.

Maugham, though not enthusiastic about new experiments with themes and technique of fiction, admits with admiration the Russians' contribution to the widening of the scope of the novel. They could make the novel an artistic exposition of the economic, political and social ideas and problems of their age. Thus, they "brought something new to fiction, but by the circumstances of their civilization they were inclined to subordinate art to social questions" ("*Traveller's Library* — 'General Introduction," *Selected Prefaces and Introductions of W. Somerset Maugham* 82). Maugham holds that notwithstanding his concern for his milieu, a novelist can create great fiction only when he focuses on a subject pertaining to "the common vicissitudes of humanity, birth and death, love and hatred, youth and old age," for these, indeed, are the subjects of great fiction (83). Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Chekhov are distinguished fictionists because their works concentrate on the subjects of permanent and timeless value, the common aspects of humanity.

As most of the fictionists write both novels and short stories, Maugham, himself an outstanding fictionist, gives due consideration to the contribution made by the Russian fictionists, including Tolstoy and Chekhov, to the growth and new dimensions of the short story. In his opinion, the Russians gave a new vigour and life to the short story which had become tediously mechanical and unattractive to the reader in the second half of the nineteenth century, despite the popular and great stories written by Maupassant in France, Rudyard Kippling in England and Bret Harte in America. The three celebrated Russians — viz. Tolstoy, Chekhov and Turgenev — imparted new life to an exhausted form; they "to a large extent transformed the composition and the appreciation of short stories" ("*Teller of Tales* — 'Introduction'," *Selected Prefaces and Introductions of W. Somerset Maugham* 98). The Russians wrote stories of quite another type and undoubtedly "made of the short story something new and vital" (97). Commenting on Tolstoy's achievement as short story writer, Maugham asserts:

> ... the inventor of the Russian story as we know it was Tolstoy. In *The Death of Ivan Ilych,* ... there is a great deal more than the germ of all the Russian stories that have been written since. It comprehends all the merits and all the defects of the Russian story. (97-8)

Maugham attaches a lot of importance to fiction dealing with the culture of the world — fiction which every well-bred man would like to read —, but he laments that there is not much of this kind of fiction, which makes a man spiritually richer. The books by two Russian novelists that Maugham puts in this category include Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. The illustrious Russians give the reader "that thrill, that rapture, that fruitful energy which great art can produce" (103-04). According to Maugham, Tolstoy is, indeed, simply marvellous because he, like Balzac, impresses the reader with "the power and fullness of his personality" (104). What is striking about his fiction, along with the writings of some of his distinguished contemporaries, is that he shows how "the conditions of existence have affected their attitude towards the elemental things of life and love and death which are the essential materials not only of poetry but of fiction" (117). Maugham holds that variety may not be a merit in a poet, but "it surely is in a writer of fiction" ("*A Choice of Kipling's Prose* — 'Introduction'," *Selected Prefaces and Introductions of W. Somerset Maugham* 126), and this we find unequivocally in Tolstoy the fictionist. Like a good writer of fiction, he has the peculiarity, more pronounced in him than in any other man, and has not only one self, but "several, often discordant aspects of his personality" (126).

Tolstoy wrote the greatest novel of the world at the age of thirty six, "an age at which an author's creative gift," in Maugham's view, "is generally at its height" ("Leo Tolstoy and *War and Peace,*" *The World's Ten Greatest Novels* 25), and the apparent subject of it was Napoleonic wars, the climax of which was Napoleon's invasion of

Russia and the burning of Moscow resulting in the retreat and destruction of his armies. He initially intended to present in *War and Peace* a family saga, a story of a family of the gentry, and the historical events related to Napoleonic wars were to form only a background. But during the course of writing it, he changed his stance and made its canvas larger and deeper by imparting more and more importance to "the titanic struggle between the opposing powers" and by investing it with "a philosophy of history" based on his extensive reading (26). His philosophy of history sets forth his belief that the common view that history is shaped and directed by great men is erroneous; instead, it is affected by "an obscure force" that runs through the people and leads them unknowingly to triumph or failure. Thus to Tolstoy, to quote the words of Maugham:

> Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon were no more than figureheads, symbols as it were, who were carried on by a momentum they could neither resist nor control. It was not by his strategy nor his big battalions that Napoleon won his battles, for his orders were not obeyed, either because the situation had changed or they were not delivered in time, but because the enemy was seized with a conviction that the battle was lost and so abandoned the field. For Tolstoy the hero of the invasion of Russia was the Commander-in-Chief, Kutuzov, because he did nothing, avoided battle and merely waited for the French armies to destroy themselves. (28)

This unique view of history undoubtedly evinces the author's insightful grasp of reality and lends the temporal and spatial events — the Napoleonic wars — a universal touch and a rare depth. But due to his quest and portrayal of historical facts, he mars, to a great extent, the artistic value of the book, and that is why Maugham opines that Tolstoy's writing so many chapters about the factual retreat of Napoleon from Moscow just to illustrate his idea of history "may be good history, but it is not good fiction" (28) because it is an expanded digression that hampers the emotional continuity of the narrative and damages its thematic and formal unity. Undoubtedly, these long digressive chapters towards the end of this bulky book are uninteresting and fatiguing, and spoil the aesthetic side of

it, but Tolstoy amply makes up for it in the epilogue which is a piece of brilliant invention. Most of the novelists before him would tell the reader what happened to the principal characters after the story was over, but they would do so "perfunctorily, in a page or two, and the reader was left with the impression that it was a sop the author had somewhat contemptuously thrown him" (29). It was Tolstoy who first made his epilogue really significant and functional. Thus, in the epilogue we are taken after seven years to the world of main characters. We are told how Nicholas Rostov has married a rich lady and has children, Pierre and Natasha visit them, Natasha is married and has two children, etc. Further, we are informed that their all high hopes have evaporated and they lead a commonplace, dull and complacent life in their middle age after bearing a lot of suffering and hazards. The apparently happy ending is intensely tragic in that the great transformation which has taken place in their lives is highly moving, but it looks convincing and true to life, thus making the ending artistically brilliant and fascinating. A small part of Maugham's analysis of it is worth citing here:

> Natasha who was so sweet, so unpredictable, so delightful, is now a fussy housewife. Nicholas Rostov, once so gallant and high spirited, is now a self-opinionated country squire; and Pierre is fatter than ever, good-natured still, but no wiser than he was before. The happy ending is deeply tragic. Tolstoy did not write thus, I think, in bitterness, but because he knew that this is what it would all come to; and he had to tell the truth. (29)

Notwithstanding his kinship with the French fictionists, Maugham opines that the looseness of form that we clearly perceive in *War and Peace* does not detract from its merit because it enables the writer to resort to digression in order to write about any topic of his choice (though not directly related to the basic theme) which is usually entertaining to the reader and is relevant to the author's age. Apropos of this, Maugham writes:

> The author is human, and he has his fads and fancies; the looseness of the form, especially as the novel is written in England and Russia, gives him the opportunity to dilate on

> any subject dear to his heart, and seldom has the strength of mind or the critical sense to realize that, however interesting it may be to him, unless it is necessary to the working out of his novel it has no place in it. It is besides almost inevitable that the novelist should be susceptible to the fashions of his day, since after all he has an unusual affectibility, and so he is often led to write what, as the fashion passes, loses its attractiveness. ("The Ten Best Novels of the World," *The World's Ten Greatest Novels* 18)

Maugham attributes the greatness of *War and Peace*, to a large degree, to Tolstoy's masterly skill in character-creation. His wonderful fecundity is evident from the fact that this book is crowded with as many as five hundred characters who are "sharply individualized and clearly presented" (26) without the least tinge of repetition and tediousness, and this is certainly a rare achievement. Furthermore, what is remarkable about his art of character-portrayal is that unlike most of the novelists like Dickens, Fielding and Thackeray who have written massive novels, he has not concentrated only on two or three persons or on a single group but almost on all the important members of four aristocratic families — viz. the Rostoys, the Bolkonskis, the Kuragins and the Bezukhovs. And it is, indeed, very difficult for a writer to handle a situation when he has to deal with a fairly good number of characters, belonging to different groups or types, in consonance with the requirement of the theme he intends to explore and communicate because he has to make his shifting from one group to another plausible to the reader, who, while reading about one set of persons for the time being, gets inquisitive to know what is going on with others about whom he has not been told anything for some time. This is certainly a difficult test for the writer, but Tolstoy gets through it most impressively. Highlighting this aspect of his genius, Maugham avers: "On the whole Tolstoy has managed to do this so skilfully that you seem to be following a single thread of narration" (26) .

No doubt, Tolstoy based his characters, like most of the writers of fiction, on the real people he chanced to know in his life, but his men and women are much more than their originals, and not the mere photographs/ replica of their models. In fact, "by the time his imagination had worked upon them they had become creatures of his own invention" (26) . This is true of all the notable characters in *War and Peace.* Thus, the thriftless Count has his germs in Tolstoy's grandfather, Nicholas Rostov in his father, and Princess Mary in his mother. The two main male characters in the novel, Pierre Bezukhov and Prince Andrew, are the projections of the author himself, and Maugham believes that he did so in order to comprehend his real self in its totality. To quote his own words: "... it is perhaps not fantastic to suggest that, conscious of his own divided personality, in thus creating two contrasted individuals on the one model of himself he sought to clarify and understand his own character" (26) . Pierre and Prince Andrew are poles apart from each other, but are alike in that they, like Tolstoy, are obsessed with the mysteries of life and death but miserably fail in their quest. Their dissimilarities are well-marked. Prince Andrew is romantic, proud of his class and position, and noble-minded, but suffers from weaknesses like haughtiness, dictatorial attitudes, irrationality and intolerance. Obviously, he is a mixture of virtues and vices and hence very engaging and true to life. Strikingly different from him in appeal, Pierre is gentle, sweet-natured, generous, modest and self-sacrificing, but, in Maugham's view, "so weak, so irresolute, so easily hoodwinked, so gullible that you cannot help feeling impatient with him. His desire to do good, and be good, is touching, but was it necessary to make him such a fool" (27) ? Clearly, Maugham is of the opinion that Tolstoy does not succeed fully in his delineation, though many scholars, including me, may differ from him because a great writer as Tolstoy is, he portrays different types of persons having different kinds of appeal for different readers. But Maugham is correct in his judgment that Tolstoy writes "some very, very dull chapters" (27) to depict how Pierre becomes a Freemason to look for an answer to the tormenting riddles pertaining to life and death.

Maugham feels that Natasha, who is Count Rostov's younger daughter and who is loved by both Pierre and Prince Andrew, is the most delightful, arresting figure invented by Tolstoy and she surely contributes much to the excellence of the book. This is the novel-

ist's unique artistic triumph, for, as Maugham asserts, "Nothing is so difficult as to portray a young girl who is at once charming and interesting" (27). Maugham rightly points out that usually the young girls in fiction are colourless like Amelia in *Vanity Fair*, priggish like Fanny in *Mansfield Park*, very clever like Constantiae Durham in *The Egoist,* little geese like Dora in *David Copperfield*, stupid flirts and unbelievably innocent. They are awkward subjects for the writer to deal with because at that tender age the personality of a person does not develop fully, and hence the writer can only portray the charm and beauty of their youth. But Tolstoy does much more than this in the case of youthful Natasha and therein lies his command of the art of character delineation; he paints her wholly natural, "sweet, sensitive and sympathetic, wilful, childish, already womanly idealistic, quick-tempered, warm-hearted, headstrong, capricious and in everything enchanting" (27). Thus, though the great Russian has created many lifelike women in his writings, yet "never another who wins the affection of the reader as does Natasha" (27).

However, notwithstanding Tolstoy's marvellous art of characterisation, elaborated above, his magnum opus does suffer, according to Maugham, from the author's lack of interest in his characters due to the failure in his vigour and enthusiasm towards the close of the book. This is evident in Tolstoy's indulgence in describing, in detail, Pierre's adventure into Freemasonary which makes the narrative tedious and almost unreadable. But then Maugham offers a plausible reason of it which is difficult to set aside; he asserts that it is but natural in the case of a work which is very voluminous and was completed in more than six years after seven revisions: "In so long a book as *War and Peace*, and one that took so long to write, it is inevitable that the author's verve should sometimes fail him" (27-8).

In addition to powerful imagination and keen observation, what makes Tolstoy's books so fascinating is his ability to put himself in the shoes of the characters of his invention. Inspite of his strong, idiosyncratic personality, he indubitably possesses the rare Shakespearean, Protean quality; the extrovert in him most of the time overshadows the introvert. Natasha, Pierre, Prince Andrew, Nicholas

Rostov, Anna Karenina and others bear witness to it. He can clearly be seen rejoicing in their joys, and suffering with them in their sorrows, and thus becoming one with them. Also, Tolstoy is simply outstanding because of his amazing inventiveness transcending imitation, for, Maugham believes, "Great writers create; writers of smaller gifts copy" (*A Writer's Notebook* 147).

True, much of Tolstoy's greatness as a creative writer, like many others, rests on the fact that he artistically records in his works the sublimation of his repressed instincts and daydreams. This undoubtedly leads him to indulge in the adoration of man of action. In the eminent Russian's creative writings, particularly in ihs monumental work, *War and Peace*, this patent feature of the great genius is amply evident in the delineation of major characters and their thoughts and actions. Pierre, Natasha, Prince Andrew and others exemplify it. Tolstoy's repressed, unfulfilled sex desires, spiritual quests, renunciation of the world, etc. find an eloquent articulation in his unique book. Apropos of this generalisation about great artists, Maugham observes:

> Every creative writer's work is, to some extent at least, a sublimation of instincts, desires, daydreams, call them what you like, which for one cause or another he has repressed, and by giving them literary expression he is freed of the compulsion to give them the further release of action. But it is not a complete satisfaction. He is left with a feeling of inadequacy. That is the ground of the man of letters, glorification of the man of action and the unwilling, envious admiration with which he regards him. ("Leo Tolstoy and *War and Peace*," *The World's Ten Greatest Novels* 45)

Besides, Tolstoy's works have "the intimacy, the broad human touch and the animal serenity which the greatest writers alone can give" (*The Summing Up* 77).

Somerset Maugham makes a perceptive observation about *Anna Karenina*, which was written in 1870s, years after *War and Peace* had gained popularity, and which is considered by many greater than a work of art because it is, in Matthew Arnold's opinion, "a piece of life. A piece of life it is" (*Essays in Criticism*, Second

Series 152) . Maugham first read it while he was just a boy and so he remembered it only vaguely when he got interested in it and re-read it as a practising fictionist interested in the art of fiction. On his perusal of it from a professional point of view around the year 1917, he found it "powerful and strange, but a little hard and dry" (*A Writer's Notebook* 143) . While Matthew Arnold, much before him, was deeply impressed by its realistic presentation of life and usually it has been lauded wholeheartedly by most of the people for its insightful thematic treatment and formal excellence, Maugham holds a different view; he finds it powerful and uniquely original in its delineation of life, but "hard and dry" and hence, by implication, much inferior to *War and Peace*, *Crime and Punishment* by Dostoevsky and the notable books by Turgenev.

Perhaps Maugham has never been as precise, pointed and incisive in his critical comments as in those related to Tolstoy's last full-length novel, *The Resurrection*, completed in 1889. Maugham begins his criticism of it on a negative note; he avers that this book owes its reputation to its author's established fame, for the moral intention eclipses the artistic side, reducing it to a moral tract. About this, he makes an entry in his Notebook in 1917: "The moral purpose has obscured the art, and it is a tract rather than a novel. The scenes in prison, the account of the convicts' journey to Siberia, give the unfortunate impression of having been mugged up for the occasion..." (160) . But then Maugham states that as Tolstoy was endowed with extraordinary gifts of an artist, so even this weak book due to its moral propaganda is conspicuous for some rare artistic virtues: it is studded with realistic and poetic effects of nature, "the scents of the country night, the heat of midday and the mystery of dawn" (160) . In addition, the novel is remarkable for its art of characterisation, and Achludof is Tolstoy's wonderful creation whose sensuality, mysticism, sentimentality, ineffectualness, timidity, obstinacy and muddleheadedness make him "a type in which most Russians can recognise themselves" (160) . But what is especially remarkable about this novel from the technical point of view, in Maugham's opinion which is sound and incontestable, is the wonderful portrayal of minor characters, several of whom are painted

lifelike with distinct individuality in just a few lines on a single page and in this regard Tolstoy surpasses even Shakespeare, the peerless master of the art of characterisation. Maugham accentuates this astonishing artistic strength of Tolstoy as displayed in *The Resurrection* thus:

> ... the most remarkable thing about the book is the immense gallery of subordinate characters, some of whom appear but on a single page, who are drawn, often in three or four lines, with a distinctness and individuality which any writer must find amazing. Most of the small characters in Shakespeare's plays are not characterised at all: they are merely names with a certain number of lines to say, and actors, who have often an accurate instinct in this matter, will tell you how great an effort it requires to put individuality into such puppets; but Tolstoi gives each man his own life and character. An ingenious commentator might devise the past and suggest the future of the most summarily sketched. (160)

In fact, Tolstoy's creative fertility is prodigious, his subject matter is the whole life of his time and the contemporary civilisation, his knowledge of men and women is vast and realistic, he knows the aristocracy thoroughly and immaculately, he is able to paint the wicked realistically, his observation is precise and pointed, and his invention is stupendous as exhibited by the extraordinarily large number of characters marked by individual traits showing the 'God's plenty' in his fictional world. However, Maugham does not fail to mark that Tolstoy, like Dostoevsky, writes "Russian very indifferently" and ill (*The World's Ten Greatest Novels* 66) . Though a distinguished writer should write "well than badly" (67) , but much more important than this are some other qualities which are the hallmark of a genius like that of Tolstoy or Balzac and these qualities are "vigor and vitality, imagination, creative force, observation, knowledge of human nature, with an interest in it and sympathy with it, fertility and intelligence..." (67) . These merits also make up for the two factors because of which no novel is said to be perfect — "the natural inadequacy of the form" and "the deficiencies of the human being who writes it" (117) . Besides the qualities, mentioned above,

what makes the writer to produce a great work of art is the creative instinct combined with personality — the author's idiosyncracy which, in Maugham's view, "enables him to see in a manner peculiar to himself. It may be a pleasant or an unpleasant personality. That does not matter.... The only thing that matters is that he should see with his own eyes, and that his eyes should show him a world peculiar to himself" (233-34). In a word, an outstanding novelist invariably portrays an idiosyncratic interpretation of life, of world, and for this much education is not needed — Tolstoy and Flaubert were not highly educated and yet both were popular and eminent writers. Since Tolstoy's works embody his personal, idiosyncratic and peculiar view of life very effectively and artistically, he is such a great writer.

In the opening chapter of his famous book, *The World's Ten Greatest Novels*, Maugham affirms that no one should look for perfection in a novel because even the best cannot be free from some blemishes, but a novel that occupies a place among the world's greatest of all times should possess certain qualities which he enumerates as follows:

> It should have a widely interesting theme, by which I mean a theme interesting not only to a clique, whether of critics, professors, highbrows, truck drivers or dish washers, but so broadly human that it is interesting to men and women of all sorts.... The story should be coherent and persuasive; it should have a beginning, a middle and an end, and the end should be the natural consequence of the beginning. The episodes should have probability and should not only develop the theme, but grow out of the story. The creatures of the novelist's invention should be observed with individuality, and their actions should proceed from their characters; the reader must never be allowed to say: So and so would never behave like that; on the contrary he should be obliged to say: That's exactly how I should have expected So and so to behave. I think it is all the better if the characters are in themselves interesting. (15-6)

Besides highlighting the four essential qualities of a great novel as explained lucidly in the above extract, on the next page of the same book Maugham elucidates four more requisites of an outstanding

fictional work in these words:

> The dialogue should neither be desultory nor should it be an occasion for the author to air his opinions; it should serve to characterize the speakers and to advance the story. The narrative passages should be vivid, to the point and no longer than is necessary to make the motives of the persons concerned and the situations in which they are placed clear and convincing. The writing should be simple enough for anyone of ordinary education to read it with ease, and the manner should fit the matter as a well-cut shoe fits a shapely foot. Finally a novel should be entertaining. I have put this last, but it is the essential quality, without which no other quality is of any use. No one in his senses reads a novel for instruction or edification. If he wants instruction or edification he is a fool if he does not go to the books written to instruct and edify. (17)

Then in the "Postscript" on the last page of this very book from which the above two extracts have been cited, Maugham holds that an extraordinay work of art ought to be simply absorbing and more than a temporary, fleeting refreshment by contributing to the soul's self-attainment — its permanent realisation of at least some basic eternal values. Apropos of this, he writes:

> "Human beings require something which absorbs them for a time, something out of the routine which they can stare at. Great art is more than a transient refreshment. It is something which adds to the soul's self-attainment. It justifies itself both by its immediate enjoyment, and also by its discipline of the inmost being. Its discipline is not distinct from enjoyment, but by reason of it. It transforms the soul into the permanent realization of values extending beyond its former self." (240).

The reason why Somerset Maugham considers Tolstoy a very great novelist and his *War and Peace* the best novel of the world so far is that he finds almost all the above-mentioned essential qualities of a great novel in this book which is amply clear from the foregoing discussion of Tolstoy's mind and art and his major works. He particularly underlines its vast thematic appeal, the epical pres-

entation of life encompassing the whole human world characterised by perennial struggles, aspiratios, ambitions, quests of all kinds, joys and sorrows and what not. Pinpointing the sterling merits of this greatest fictional work till now, Maugham passes his final, irrefutable verdict on it rationally and conclusively thus:

> I think Balzac is the greatest novelist the world has ever known, but I think Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is the greatest novel. No novel with such a wide sweep, dealing with so momentous a period of history and with such a vast array of characters, was ever written before, nor, I surmise, will ever be written again. It has been justly called an epic. I can think of no other work of fiction that could with truth be so described. Strakhov, a friend of Tolstoy's and an able critic, put his opinion into a few energetic sentences: "A complete picture of human life. A complete picture of the Russia of that day. A complete picture of what may be called the history and struggle of peoples. A complete picture of everything in which people find their happiness and greatness, their grief and humiliation. That is *War and Peace*." (25)

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5

JOYCE CARY'S CRITICAL RESPONSE TO LEO TOLSTOY'S ART AND IDEAS

This paper is intended to examine thoroughly Joyce Cary's response/ reaction to Tolstoy's fictional art and ideas, for the celebrated twentieth-century British novelist himself admits that the great Russians — Tolstoy and Dostoevsky — are his masters along with Hardy, James and Conrad (Cary, Prefatory Essay to *Aissa Saved* 10) and he also refers to Tolstoy and *Anna Karenina* in two different contexts during the conversation with *Paris Review* interviewers ("An Interview with Joyce Cary," *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews* 52) . Cary made his debut as a fictionist in 1930s with the publication of *Aissa Saved* in 1932 and gained recognition as an outstanding fictional writer in 1940s when his novel *The Horse's Mouth* was published in England as well as in America and was filmed in America. In 1950s he emerged into eminence not only as a fictionist but also as an art-theorist when in 1952 he was requested to deliver three lectures at Oxford in Hilary Term on "The Novel as Truth" and in 1956 to give the six Clark lectures which appeared in 1958 under the title *Art and Reality.* Small wonder Andrew Wright proclaimed him a giant among the twentieth-century novelists (Wright, *Joyce Cary: A Preface to His Novels* 13) , and Walter Allen eulogized him by accentuating his Protean quality, his Shakespearean objectivity (Allen, *Joyce Cary* 9) . What I stress is that though as a fictionist he may not be as great as Henry James, Joseph Conrad, E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence and several others belonging to the twentieth century, he is unmistakably unique among the novelists in the English language in that he not only made perceptive and incisive critical statements about Tolstoy the writer but also reacted sharply to his idea of love and marriage with special reference to women as presented in *The Kreutzer Sonata* by writing the remarkable novel *The Moonlight* (Cary, Prefatory Essay

to *The Moonlight* 9) . Before and after Cary, many renowned British novelists — Henry James, Joseph Conrad, E.M. Forster, Somerset Maugham, Virginia Woolf, and D.H. Lawrence — , who were contemporaries and successors of the illustrious Russian fictionist, expressed their cogitations on his fiction, but none of them could produce a creative work in response or reaction to his creative writing. However, the present essay is devoted exclusively to Cary's critical appraisal of Tolstoy's art and ideas, and will not treat, for want of space, his novel *The Moonlight* written in reaction to Tolstoy's concept of man-woman relationship and the conditioning of woman by the society in this regard as embodied artistically in *The Kreutzer Sonata.*

Joyce Cary makes numerous observations on Tolstoy's art and ideas in his prefatory essays prefixed to the Carfax Edition of his novels, in his conversations and interviews, in some of his essays contributed to variegated magazines, and, above all, in the Clark lectures published in book form entitled *Art and Reality.* As a matter of fact, he, time and again, illustrates his ideas about art and the novel from Tolstoy. I shall here collect, cohere and critically examine them in order to arrive at his asessment of Tolstoy as artist and thinker.

In his close perusal of Tolstoy's writings, Cary discerns that the Russian, like every great artist, begins with his intuitional discovery of something new about the world. Intuition, a sudden "subconscious recognition of the real" (Cary, *Art and Reality* 14) , imparts to the artist the direct knowledge/ feeling of the world as it is, and this is a kind of joyful discovery to him. But he does not comprehend this fully and so he approaches his intuitional discovery and reflects on it in order to grasp it, and here he experiences great difficulty because of the gap between intuition and expression. Apropos of this problem confronted by Tolstoy, like any genuine artist, Cary writes:

> Tolstoy tells us in his diary how he sat for a long time trying to express his feeling; but he could not find the right words. What is interesting to us is that Tolstoy's feeling — the intuition — remained to be examined, to be compared with the various expressions which were rejected in turn because they failed to be accurate. (26)

Indeed, every writer, like Tolstoy, is invariably siezed with a directly intuited impression of feeling or idea, some record of the subconscious, and bafflingly marks the problematic passage from intuition to reflection, from the knowledge of the real to the expression of it in a suitable form; he has to translate artistically one state of existence into another, the purely sensuous impression into a truly critical and reflective form. Cary affirms that every writer, like Tolstoy, has to look for words to express his intuitive feeling and his reaction to it, and succeeds in it only after a lot of continuous efforts. Thus "Tolstoy tells us that he found the task so exasperating that he wanted to get up and walk away. There is no short cut across this gap" (27) . To a sincere artist like Tolstoy, his intuition comes to him from a world of permanent, objective forms, and it moves him in a certain way because he is endowed with a special sensibility and what Tolstoy, as his diary hints at, "was looking for was not his own idea of things, but the exact impression they had made on him" (30) . And we clearly mark that Tolstoy was "impatiently trying to find out exactly what his feeling, his intuition, was" (85) . A great artist as he was, he was worried not only about the gap between intuition and concept, but also between concept — the initial raw statement — and its working out in a narrative with a suitable form.

Cary, by implication, points to the greatness of Tolstoy as an artist when he explains, illustrating from his books like *Anna Karenina* and *The Kreutzer Sonata*, that the Russian master, like Henry James, has always an intuition (which Henry James calls 'germ') , a definite theme to explore and communicate artistically in his novel. Cary, thus, asserts that Tolstoy got the intuition for Anna's tragedy (her committing suicide on the railway track) upon which the novel is centred, not from the suicide committed by his friend's mistress on the railway line which profoundly afflicted him, as most of the people believe, but from the Turkish embroidery on his dressing-gown which he was wearing on one fine morning. While noticing the delicacy and precision of the embroidery on the gown by some unknown woman, he suddenly realised that the mind or world of woman is vastly dif-

ferent from that of man and this formed the real basis of *Anna Karenina.* It dawned upon Tolstoy that Providence had assigned different natures and responsibilities to women and men. And as such "Woman's function was social, to be sister, wife, mother, nurse, the centre of family life, the builder and keeper of its sacred values" (107). In Tolstoy's view, Providence has endowed man with the power of love and response to love which is the only essential clue to good life, and hence a society, which is not based on love, is unnatural and evil. In fact, as Cary states, "Tolstoy's religious training enforced his intense intuition of family love; it explained the value of love in the world, it gave his religious idea very deep roots in a personal experience of the real, finally it gave him his theme, that is to say, the theme had its tap-root in a first profound experience" (105). Little wonder he considers the artificial life of society, which is poles opposite of the country/ village life, as basically corrupt. Anna suffers terribly and meets her doom or tragic end because she goes against Nature's law for womanhood by leaving her husband and child for a lover, and this naturally is bound to destroy not only the happiness of her family — her husband and child — but also of her lover and ultimately her own once for all. Cary is correct when he affirms that Tolstoy is completely different from Hardy in that while for the latter blind Fate was the ruling master of human tragedy, "for Tolstoy it was the nature of things, the laws of being. Anna represented womanhood. She broke God's law for womanhood, and was therefore not only the source of evil to others but was herself terribly punished" (108).

Cary discusses Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* to demonstrate further how the Russian writer is usually haunted by his theme so much so that it becomes an overt message verging on pure propaganda, and yet the deft artist in him exposes it in an artistic form which makes it forceful and arresting. In this novel he emphasizes that women are brought up and trained for marriage by teaching them from childhood "to exploit their sex that marriage itself is merely a sexual conspiracy or a sexual battle and that from these causes arise all the evils of society" (109). Cary opines that though the entire novel is simply a propaganda and is unconvincing, yet he

makes it effective and moving by putting it into the mouth of the central figure, the wife-murderer in the narrative, and makes us realise that the narrator's act of murdering his wife becomes an obsession with him and is certainly true to his nature and life. We feel that all this is nonsense and is only an excuse of a highly stupid, jealous person for killing his wife, and yet this is true as it is in accordance with the nature of the protagonist and the situation in which the characters are placed. No wonder Cary passes his final judgment as follows:

> The book gives us a fine picture of that everlasting type, the neurotic, frustrated or merely selfish and stupid person, who puts upon society the reproach of his own failure. So at the very time we are saying 'What nonsense', we are also saying, 'How true to the man — how true to the situation'.
>
> *The Kreutzer Sonata* is completely successful as a work of art because, although it preaches, the message it is meant to give has been entirely assimilated into its form. The whole thing is an experience with the feeling appropriate to that form. (109-10)

True, a writer must neither make his theme light nor subordinate it to any other issue even if his theme has nothing to do with a general or great truth of life; his theme is his personal truth and if he relegates it to a subordinate position, he falsifies "the truth of his feeling" (115) and is sure to lose the power of expressing it. Thus in a novel with a signigicant meaning and form, the theme is dominant and the novelist invents his whole story to develop, underline and convey it. But as the novels of Tolstoy demonstrate, Cary says, "the more comprehensive a novel in scope, in width of scene, the more it loses in power and significance" (115) because its focus on the meaning, the theme, is diversified and distorted. This is the reason why, according to Cary, "*Anna Karenina* has much more power than *War and Peace*, and *The Kreutzer Sonata* has more than *Anna Karenina*" (115). The fact is that the truth embodied in a novel is in consonance with the power of its communication; the truth, the meaning, presented in the novel, is a felt one soaked in values, a personal one as the whole truth cannot be known and

hence cannot be communicated.

Cary points out that Tolstoy, like all true philosophers and artists, attempts to explain the meaning and nature of art to suit his picture of things and in doing so, as he himself tells us, took fifteen years before he could write his well thought out treatise, *What Is Art? And Essays on Art.* A "means of intercourse between man and man" (Tolstoy, *What Is Art? And Essays on Art* 12) and thus bringing them closer, art, according to Tolstoy, must have a moral purpose otherwise it is bad art. Obviously, his concept of art rejects completely the aesthetic theory of art for art's sake which is primarily/exclusively concerned with aesthetic pleasure, without having a definite meaning. Bracketing Tolstoy with Ruskin and supporting him wholeheartedly in this regard, Cary asserts:

> ... Tolstoy and Ruskin declared that art is bad unless it has a moral porpose. And this has force too, because it disparages the theory of art for art's sake. It gives us the truth that it is only the most trivial arts that even pretend to serve a purely aesthetic end. Even hats are meant to attract attention. All great art has a meaning beyond itself. (*Art and Reality* 18)

Inevitably, Cary opines that every real artist, like Tolstoy, Dickens, Hardy, James or Conrad, deals with morals. By "morals" he means conduct of man leading to happiness or misery, that is, what people do and the reason and result of their action. Little wonder he makes the sweeping, forceful statement: "The greatest writers of the world are just those who take the greatest interest in morals: it is because of that they are so exciting to read. Think of Dickens, Tolstoy, Hardy, and Conrad" (Cary, "A Novelist and His Public" 36). Emphasizing the point further, Cary states that arts may differ in their moral effects, but none of them can exclude morality, and of all arts, the written arts, except the purely factual, take a moral problem as their meaning. The written arts deal with human action, and hence what men think and do are as important for a writer as what they are. The writer is concerned with action and events, and he mainly creates a world of action. Consequently, he has to deal with motive, with morality. He invents his plots and characters to give us knowledge of a world in which men are deeply concerned

with morals. He offers his meaning to the reader for his final judgment. Every author, whether Tolstoy, Aeschylus or Dickens, does this.

True, the writer creates for us a whole meaning which is essentially moral. His meaning, though particular to himself, expresses a moral truth of wide appeal. In order to accentuate the validity of this truth, Cary refers to Jane Austen, Leo Tolstoy and Marcel Proust. He holds that much of Jane Austen's greatness is due to her command of a clear moral idea (*Art and Reality* 53), and that a great novelist like Tolstoy not only presents morality in the novel, *The Kreutzer Sonata,* but also uses the book as the vehicle of message or propaganda, which he makes highly moving by devising a suitable form for it (109-10). Tolstoy's writings lead Cary to infer that all artists invariably preach:

> We are told that novelists must not preach. This is nonsense. All serious artists preach — they are perfectly convinced of the truth as they see it, and they write to communicate that truth. (109)

Indeed, Cary's emphasis on the importance of morality in fiction is the result of his discernment of great writers' (as different as Tolstoy, D.H. Lawrence, Dante or the author of *Everyman*) obsession with their themes embedded in morals — the sense of right and wrong — and message (158).

No doubt morality is indispensable for a good artistic creation, but the artist should not preach openly. That is why, Cary avers that since Tolstoy in *The Ressurrection* fails to conceal his intention of instructing the reader, the book engenders strong dislike. However, it does not mean that the artist should not convey a message and that he should only tell a story leaving the message to preachers; as a matter of fact, art has a message and "can and must be used for any kind of communication, including instruction" (Cary, "The Way a Novel Gets Written" 6). Cary, thus, endeavours to demonstrate that Tolstoy's novel fails not because of its message, but because it is a bad art — viz. it fails to give a message couched in experience. Good art should contain an implied statement of belief. That is, it should certainly preach, but should do so implicitly as it "is not the place for propaganda; it must state a case, but it must

not give verdict" (Cary, "My First Novel" 638) . The reader of a novel does not relish sermons or judgments, and does not read it for information or instruction. Therefore, the artist, unlike Tolstoy, should accomplish the task of conveying moral ideas by cajoling and bribing the pleasure-seeking reader and by giving the moral ideas the form of felt-experience.

Cary refers to Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and *Resurrection* and Dostoesvsky's *Brothers Karmazov* in order to explain the novelist's problem of stating the case comprehensively or presenting an argument in detail, for in doing so he only makes an intellectual appeal and breaks the emotional continuity of the narrative/ the reader — viz. the unhampered emotional experience of the reader — which is disastrous for his art as it is very annoying to the reader. This is applicable even to great characters like Tolstoy's Peter in *War and Peace,* and Cary lucidly puts his viewpoint as follows:

> This is even if one invents 'raisonneurs,' characters like Peter in *War and Peace,* to discuss philosophy; for a character able to discuss fine points (which is what you need to get any value out of him) however real in himself, and firmly placed in the action of the book, if he states the case, will at once come out of it and appear like a lecturer on the platform. For the reader perceives at once that that is what he is for, and is rightly offended. And the more carefully one hides such a purpose, the more offensive it is. Ingenuity, in fact, is always diastrous, if it is meant to deceive. (Cary, Prefatory Essay to *Castle Corner* 5-6)

However, Cary admits that great writers like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky put forward social philosophy through their creations and do so effectively. In this regard, he considers Tolstoy's *Resurrection* and Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* commendable in that they present a case, and not the case, and argue and portray everything from one particular point of view. Apropos of this Cary affirms:

> But these great books do not state the case, they weave a spell, they leave out all those qualifications, those relativities which, in the real world, affect conduct and opinion. They state not the case, but a case; they see everything from one angle; they are 'true' only for their own characters in that situation, carefully chosen and limited to drive home one moral slogan, and excluding all these complex issues which in real life would make it possible to say 'but Aloysha's solution is wish-fulfilment.'(6)

Cary considers the delineation of social philosophy in the manner of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky very difficult and artistically hazardous for an artist, and therefore he abandons his original plan of showing the revolutions of history and philosophy during the period 1880-1935 in a vast work in three or four volumes, and writes only one novel *Castle Corner* in which he creates characters and leaves them to act without indulging in social philosophy.

Cary perceives the distinction between moral and aesthetic judgments in Tolstoy, particularly in his much debated novel, *The Kruetzer Sonata.* He finds it aesthetically brilliant, but morally all wrong. As a matter of fact, it is almost impossible to split the personality of a man into moral and aesthetic segments, for the moral judgment in a man is a secondary intuition which becomes part of the 'intuitive character'. The whole man reacts to his physical surroundings as well as to the world of coherent value created by art. According to Cary, the aesthetic and the moral sensibilities are inalienable; the moral judgment is an invariable ingredient of every aesthetic judgment of art. While discussing Tolstoy's novel, *The Kruetzer Sonata*, he points out that the material has been handled with dignity and distinction. Inspite of so much violence, it has moral attributes and a moral taste inasmuch as it has no exaggerations and no falsities. When one compares this novel with another tale of violence, *No Orchids for Miss Brandish*, one clearly sees the difference that is not purely aesthetic but also moral. This makes Cary to state:

> One cannot, in fact, split up the personality of a man — the sensible character of his being — into the aesthetic and the moral.
>
> It is the whole man, the total sensibility that intuits the world. That world is a world of ordered meaning, of coherent value as given by art. (*Art and Reality* 136)

Cary feels that it is by creating a world of action that the writer presents his moral meaning to us, and Tolstoy does not do so. The reason is that we "do not discover the meaning of this world as a concept, but as a form of moral experience" (152) . Hence the vital quality of a writer's art lies in giving the experience, not the concept, and Tolstoy fails in this respect in *The Kreutzer Sonata.*

Cary extols Tolstoy for imparting formal excellence to his novels by exploring and communicating his theme. Importantly, he is obsessed with his theme, which is naturally assertive in his book and everything else is subservient to it. Cary repeatedly maintains, and rightly does so, that Tolstoy could succeed in writing a masterpiece of formal perfection like *Anna Karenina* because he was haunted by his theme. Undoubtedly it is a great novel since every detail belongs to the formal unity of the author's meaning. In about ten chapters, he has organized a race meeting to bring all the characters into play. But all these chapters, though tedious in details, move the story forward to illustrate the theme.

As stated in the preceding paragraph, *Anna Karenina* possessses a highly commendable form because even the ten successive chapters, devoted to the delineation of a race meeting, contribute to the development of theme and reveal the essential changes in the characters — the new dimensions between Alexei and Anna, between Anna and Vronsky, and Anna's telling her husband that she hates him in a fit of agitation due to Vronsky's fall during the race, etc. Tolstoy's diary discloses his fear that the race, delineated in ten chapters, would be an anti-climax lest it should provide some dramatic climax to shed new light upon the central theme. Hence in Cary's view, Tolstoy, like a master artist, "builds up the dramatic climax of the race as an allegory of Vronsky's relations with Anna and a premonition of her fate when she too is physically unable to serve his will" (161) . What is notable in this context is that he does not make the allegorical presentation too obvious and for this he gives us with marvellous skill the details of the dramatic situation realistically — the entire racing background, the mare, the trainer, etc. — in order to persuade us cajolingly to accept the intrusion of a conceptual idea without seeing its untruthfulness, which can be realised by us only subconsciously, as a result of our sympathy for the poor mare, in the form of "a vague but strong sense of the tragic relations between the wilful impatient egotism of the man and the patient feminine devotion of his victim (162) . And then unfortunately our critical mind makes us uneasy and we see clearly with discomfort that the Russian celebrity, no doubt, succeeds in achieving the desired emotional effect, but certainly it is "an effect not congruent with the situation of the moment, involving characters we have accepted as actual in an actual world. We are checked by a false note" (162) . Cary further points out that even before it the scene disturbs us because we learn a lot about the mare's beauty, high breeding and Vronsky's love for her, and Tolstoy portrays her as such a sensitive creature that we wonder why she does not speak. The same mare is seen lying at his feet and looking to him with speaking eyes. This part of the scene assumes allegorical implication and this, in Cary's opinion with which I agree, destroys the truthfulness of the scene. As a result, the characters become mere concepts created to illustrate a theme, and the theme is reduced to a mere precept out of a copybook because

> Allegory is an immense temptation to the writer, especially the great, the obsessed writer.... Allegory gives a clear, a definite meaning; not to the soul, but to the conceptual judgment, and in a form of dry precepts whose falsity is at once detected by the soul.... Allegory is false because it lays down categorical imperatives for conduct in a world of particular and unique events. It treats the world as a mechanism whereas it is a world of free souls. (162-63)

Cary rightly holds that although allegory is a definite mode of giving a clear and exact meaning or message and hence a great temptation to the writers, it, when too explicit, also mars a good work of art and so a great artist should make the best use of the narrow space between allegory and the dramatic scene. Cary explains how Tolstoy in the above scene of *Anna Karenina* fails as an artist because of too explicit allegorical implication, while D.H. Lawrence, certainly not as great as the celebrated Russian, is

wonderful in the creation of a similar type of dramatic scene in *St Mawr.* In this fictional work, St Mawr the stallion, who stands for uncorrupted male energy and is instinctive and above conceptual whims, is true to life. The scene in which it throws and almost kills Rico Carrington is quite close to allegory, since Rico stands for the cultural intellectualism which Lawrence despises as a decadence, as something conceptual, and hence antagonistic to 'the intuitive real'. Apparently, he conveys his point artistically and is very impressive inspite of his narrow theme. The reader accepts the vital truth, communicated through the scene, despite the fact that St Mawr and Rico Carrington are intended to represent generalities as wide as presented in *Everyman.* Indeed, the Lawrentian scene does not disturb us by any suspicion of allegory, for St Mawr and Rico Carrington, notwithstanding their representative characters, remain what they really are. What, according to Cary, is remarkable about Lawrence, in contrast to Tolstoy, is that the great British novelist "has got his effect with almost the precision of allegory, but without falling into that trap" (159) . In *Anna Karenina*, the mare collapses in the race due to Vronsky's awkward movement, and it breaks her neck. Unable to get up, her master kicks her in anger and she struggles to comply with his command. At this the reader feels perturbed by Tolstoy's overt manipulation of explicit allegorical meaning, and questions, as Cary rightly points out, "'Is this Vronsky and the mare or an allegory of Vronsky and Anna, of Tolstoy's society male and his unhappy female? Is it a puppet show, with Tolstoy pulling the strings'" (159-60) ? And Cary wishes, as we too, that the Russian master should not have resorted to an artistically dangerous technique in this scene and should have been on a safer ground like D.H. Lawrence. It is true that Vronsky is a typical soldier, but he is much more individual and less typical than Lawrence's Carrington. What makes the Russian soldier quite a free individual character is the fact that Tolstoy deftly puts him among about half-a-dozen other typical soldiers who have been sharply differentiated from one another by the great artist in Tolstoy. Vronsky's English mare is very much like Lawrence's St Mawr — a simple, thorough bred without any typicality about it . And yet Tolstoy, universally

acknowledged as a greater fictional genius than Lawrence, fails in the artistic creation of the dramatic scene and causes in the reader immense uneasiness, while Lawrence achieves a rare success in the creation of similar scene even though it is saturated with symbolic significance. Cary explains the reason why the scene in *Anna Karenina* has a ruinous effect on the actual experience of the reader and why it becomes apparently allegorical, while the scene in Lawrence's *St Mawr* escapes free from such artistic and emotional failure. To quote Cary's own words: "For one thing, we see at once a parallel between the mare's relation with Vronsky, and Anna's, both at his mercy. And there is no such parallel suggested in St Mawr" (160) . And allegory is not a great artistic device as it gives an explicit, definite meaning to the conceptual judgment, and not to the soul, "in a form of dry precept whose falsity is at once detected by the soul" (163) . Allegory is not true to life, for it imposes categorical imperatives on human conduct in a world marked by uniqueness and particularity beyond generalizations; it treats human world as a mechanism, while in reality it is lived by free souls.

Thus Cary demonstrates how Tolstoy's failure in creating his key scene convincingly mars *Anna Karenina*, whereas Lawrence's *St Mawr*, though very close to allegory, is an artistic triumph. Vronsky becomes unconvincing in his rage which startles us because in that great scene he is untrue to his otherwise generally disciplined character, while the mare is true to her character as a good disciplined horse. But what is specially wrong with Tolstoy's portrayal of the mare is that "she is suddenly made to represent the feminine principle as Tolstoy conceived it" (167) . Tolstoy deserves all praise for creating a real mare, absolutely true to life, but we are shocked when all of a sudden she is shown as the representative of the feminine character in general and we, as sensitive and sensible reader, refuse to accept her in such a new unconvincing role as a part of the artificial high society which corrupts Anna in Tolstoy's view. Cary feels that the Russian novelist's lending an unexpectedly different meaning to the mare and the whole scene is unmistakably a false note and he uses the expression 'false note' knowingly because "the effect is analogous to that of the false note in

music which interrupts suddenly the recreation of the structure of our subconscious and causes our critical judgment to start up and say 'What's happened — what's wrong'" (167) ? The falseness of the new meaning, suddenly given to the mare, becomes all the more conspicuous when we clearly see that Anna, who stands for womanhood and who as a brilliant writer's character in the narrative is part of the meaning, is a real woman in the fictionist's sense and we readily accept her as such. We know full well that women can do a lot of unusual things in the world and yet can be essentially women — i.e., good mothers, good wives, etc. While delineating Anna, Tolstoy does not evince any interest in larger issues; he simply presents to us "a woman who is woman to us as well as to him, at once a living individual and a typical woman" (167) . So what is wrong about Tolstoy's portrayal of the mare representing the feminine principle in relation to Anna is that a meaning has been imposed on an alien context and thus everything becomes overtly manipulated and puppet-like, whereas Lawrence's handling of St Mawr and his theme creates just the opposite artistic effect — a truly functional one. To quote Cary's words:

> And what's wrong in this case is simply that the meaning of a note, or phrase, the mare, has been forced into a context that doesn't belong to it. So she loses even her own character as a mare — she becomes like a performing animal, a puppet, manipulated by Tolstoy. St Mawr is not a puppet because his meaning in the tale is not only one with his nature, but with his function in the tale.
>
> For we must remember always a tale is not life, it is art and subject to the limitations of art, in this case, to the logic of the subconscious, allotting by association a meaning to each character, to each development, in a construction that is fundamentally As If. (167-68)

In conclusion, I feel inclined to state, on the basis of above discussion, that in his critique of Tolstoy the artist Joyce Cary is concerned with only germ or intuition, theme, form, morality and allegory. Clearly, his evaluation of the great Russian's creative genius, though doubtless invaluable, lacks comprehensiveness and air of

finality.

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6

THE INTERIOR MONOLOGUE IN JOYCE CARY'S *THE HORSE'S MOUTH*

"The technique of the 'interior monologue,'" according to Dorothy Van Ghent, "is a modification of the subjective point of view. It is not a departure from traditional convention, for even Fielding used this point of view when he wanted to show 'from the inside' how a character's mind worked; but it is an employment of the subjective point of view throughout the entire novel — instead of sporadically, as in the older English novel — and it follows more devious and various paths of consciousness than traditional novelists were concerned with" (*The English Novel: Form and Function* 267) . Though the term 'internal monologue' is very close to 'stream of consciousness' and was used at first interchangeably with it, it is erroneous to regard the two as identical in meaning. The internal monologue does not convey the idea of flux, the disordered and fluid state of thought, which the stream of consciousness suggests. It denotes the device by which thought associations are rendered in a considerably logical progression. The object of this technique is to enable the reader to enter the inner life of a character straightaway, and to know his thoughts, as they arise in his mind. In Leon Edel's opinion: "The term 'internal monologue' becomes merely a useful designation for certain works of fiction of sustained subjectivity written from a single point of view, in which the writer himself narrows down the stream of consciousness and places us largely at the 'centre' of the character's thoughts — the centre where thought often uses words rather than images" (*The Psychological Novel* 58) . However, this technique has the appearance of being associational, illogical and free of authorial control. Robert Humphery holds that the internal monologue may take either of the two different forms: direct or indirect. In its direct form, it does not admit of the existence of the author, so that the reader lands directly into the mind of the character. In

the indirect form, it permits the author to take the reader inside the mind of the character, and to give his own comments also. The closing part of Joyce's *Ulysses* dealing with Molly Bloom is the finest specimen of the direct interior monologue, while the novels of Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf employ the indirect internal monologue (Robert Humphrey, *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel* 25) . James Joyce declared that the French novelist, Edouard Dujardin, was the first to employ the technique of the interior monologue, while Dujardin held that Paul Bourget was the first to use it.

In the first-person narratives, especially in the two trilogies, Cary endeavours to efface himself[1] and take the reader directly to the mental experiences of the principal character. Andrew Wright thinks that in the novels included in Cary's two trilogies, there are six kinds of interior monologue (Andrew Wright, *Joyce Cary: A Preface to His Novels* 109) . But it is only in *The Horse's Mouth* that one is directly inside the mind of Jimson, who is possessed with an ever increasing passion for painting and an acute sense of the world's injustice. In this novel, Cary has presented the stream of consciousness of Gulley Jimson through the device of the interior monologue.

In *The Horse's Mouth*, Cary paints the creative imagination of old painter, Gulley Jimson, who is obsessed with picture and picturesqueness. However, he does not show him painting a large number of good pictures. All the four pictures — the Fall, the New Fall, the Raising of Lazarus and the Creation — that Jimson is shown drawing remain incomplete, and are not much appreciated by anyone except Nosy and himself. This is due to the fact that Cary is mainly concerned with Jimson's life. Since he paints in this novel the inner life of man, he adopts the technique of the interior monologue.

The device of the internal monologue fully reveals Jimson's preoccupation with painting. He gives up his job of a permanent clerk and ruins his family for the sake of art. When Nosy and Captain Jones talk about the deafness of Captain Jone's daughter, he sees all the deaf, blind, cross-eyed, limp-legged, bulge-headed, bald and crooked girls in the world sitting on a white mountain and shedding

tears; and soon he thinks of painting them. When he takes coffee with Postie, some coffee falls on the blue cloth and he begins to give it an interesting shape. His mind is crowded with numerous ideas about the form of Adam, Eve and the Serpent in his picture called 'Fall.' When he looks at the scene of a cold morning, he is much impressed by it. He goes out for a walk. There is frost on the grass and the moon is high up in the sky. Soon he has a wish to paint the scene, and a stream of thoughts flows in his mind revealing his obsession with painting:

> Sun coming up along a cloud bank like clinkers. All sparks. Couldn't do it in paint. Limits of the art. Limits of everything. Limits of my fingers which are all swole up at the joints. No fingers, no swell, no swell, no art. Old Renoir painting his red girls with the brushes strapped to his wrists. Best things he ever did. Monuments. (*The Horse's Mouth* 26)

Jimson often thinks about the artistic perfection of Coker's arm and Sara's entire body. This enables him to detect what he has been missing in the Eve of the 'Fall.' When he looks at Coker's forearm, his mind begins to overflow with ideas:

> And I thought, that's the forearm I want for Eve, with Sara's body. Sara as she was about thirty years ago. Sara's forearms were always too soft. Cook's arms. Mottled brown. Greedy and sentimental arms. Lustful wrists crested like stallions, with Venus rings. But Eve was a worker. The woman was for hard graft. Adam the gardener, the poet, the hunter. All wires like a stringed instrument. Nervous fibre. Eve smooth and thick as a column, strong as a tree. Brown as earth. Or red like Devon ground. Red would be better. Iron ground. Iron for the magnetic of love. English Eve. (110)

Jimson and Coker go to Hickson's house. In the middle of the big drawing room, Jimson sees his old portrait of Sara in the bath. He is lost in thought and we are in direct contact with his inner ideas, which show his development as a painter from 'lyrical to epical':

> No, I thought, it's a masterpiece in its own kind. But it's not the kind I like. It's the real stuff. But in a small way. Lyrical. Impressionist. And say what you like, the epic is bigger than the lyric. Goes deeper and further. Any of my wall pictures is bigger stuff than that. (120-21)

A little later, while Hickson and Coker talk about Jimson and his pictures, Jimson thinks about the beautiful arms of Coker and Sara and the latter's having a vision of an artist. He also thinks about art and life.

Jimson's inner thoughts, portrayed through the technique of the interior monologue, reveal his sense of form and pattern. Coker forcibly keeps him confined to bed for some time on account of a severe cough. However, he escape into the open air one day, and his thoughts at the moment bring to light his views on big and small pictures, pattern and form. He sees a clear bright sky, and ideas pertaining to his plan of painting a picture entitled 'Creation,' cross his mind. Here his thoughts do not fully conform to the rules of syntax and grammar:

> And as soon as I stretched my legs Cokey began to stretch her shadow out of the basket; until she grew into the air ten foot high and the shape of life itself, living. That's what I want, I said, the woman-tree, with something of Lolie about the roots. As round as a gasometer or Churchill's hat. Yes Churchill's hat shall be a blue whale. Suckling its calf. A whale with a woman's face, floating in the green sea. And the black ring in the middle shaped like a map of Australia shall just fit the old'un who dreams it all for the first time. He shall be a grey-bearded old man, just like the nursery pictures; like something out of Blake but thicker, soldier, and fitted more closely. He must fit the shape like a nut in the shell. But not too big. And the hollow rim of black, the cave of the eternal rock, should have a broken edge on which the she-whale rests while she nurses her calf. (300-01)

Jimson's stream of ideas reveals that he is a conscientious artist. In the last chapter of the novel, he is shown working very hard on the picture, 'Creation.' While working on it, he thinks and silently talks to himself. Sometimes he says to himself that in the picture he will have to keep that girl in her place, and the only way to do this is to make the place bigger than the girl. A little later, he talks

to himself about giraffes and the baby that are parts of his portrait. He is so much preoccupied with his picture that he repeatedly discusses the picture with himself even when people flock around him and talk to him.

Jimson's creative imagination is picturesque. He sees shapes, figures and forms in the various scenes and sights of nature. In Chapter XXXVI, he goes for a stroll in the evening and is struck by the beauty of clouds and the river. This gives rise to a spell of internal monologue during which he muses on how to use a part of the scene in his picture titled 'Creation':

> I could use that, I thought — that blunt round shape like a copper St. Paul's with a squeeze in the middle — like a teat with a long end. A bit flattened sideways — sweet as a baby's breath. Yes, it will come in just by the rock — the old un's cave. Yes, yes, just what I wanted. But not a cloud. Don't want solid cloud. How then. A dead branch. A rhino's horn. A gorilla's finger. Stump of a leg. (304-05)

Chapter XLIII further displays Cary's use of the internal monologue for the purpose of expressing the various aspects of Jimson's personality. Jimson imagines himself talking to Sara. And this conversation between him and Sara discloses his great love for painting, which, together with his free nature, has ruined his whole life.

As Jimson's consciousness in an amalgam of the past, present and future, he is often shown absorbed in the past. His scattered recollections of old people and incidents help us to probe his entire personality and his unique vision of life. Since the past has an inseparable affinity with his present and future life, his consciousness is so much coloured by his awareness of it that he repeatedly thinks about it. Let us illustrate this point.

In Chapter XII, Jimson goes out for a walk to forget his grief. He thanks God for a high sky on Greenbank. He looks at the sky. Soon the small red clouds, which look like Sara's old powder puffs full of her favourite powder, lead him to think about the old days when he used to powder her after her bath. Here we find one of the finest instances of the interior monologue. His mind is arrested by

the 'powder-puff clouds,' which are getting harder and rounder. The sky, which is turning green as a starboard light, fills him with an urge to sing and hit the lamp-posts. This reminds him of the incident of his hitting Sara on the face:

> Poor old Sall's face the first time I hit her. She couldn't believe it. Dear little Gulley to punch a lady on the neb. A flap on the tap. And when she'd done so much for him. Given up everything for him. What unkindness. What ingratitude. All those tactful arrangements and nice comfortable little formulas just thrown away.(57-8)

Gulley continues to think of the incidents and other things pertaining to the days he spent with Sara. After a little while, he talks to Walter who admires the evening. Soon he feels very much old and tired. Here Cary shows Jimson thinking about his father's life — his painting girls in the garden, his rise and fall, his unbearable miseries, and his wife's devotion to him and his art. His remembrance of his mother's leading her life in a grand and dignified manner brings to his mind thoughts concerning form and solid construction.

In Chapter XIII, Jimson reflects how he was a clerk in his youth and had a good wife and children. It was by chance that he dropped ink on an envelope and got interested in art. He soon lost his job for negligence of duty, and also his wife and children. He became an artist and earned a reputation in no time. But afterwards the new world developed an abhorrence for his painting. Towards the end of the Chapter, he thinks about his experiments with different 'isms' in painting.

> I painted some cubists myself and thought I'd got my maiden under padlock at last. No more chase, no more trouble. The formula of a new classical art. And, of course, a lot of other people thought so too.... Cubiston. On the gravel. All services. Modern democracy. Organized comforts. The Socialist state. Bureaucratic liberalism. Scientific management. A new security. But I didn't live there long myself. I got indigestion. I got a nice girl in my eye, or perhaps she got after me. After 1930, even Hickson stopped buying me. And to-night it seems that I can't paint at all. I've lost sight of the maiden altogether.

> I wander weeping far away, until some other take me in. The police. It's quite time. I'm getting too old for this rackety life. (74-5)

Jimson's mind is frequently absorbed in the past in relation to various incidents or conversations. He thinks about all the major incidents of life of his brother-in-law and sister, Ranken and Jenny. The story of Ranken and Jenny helps the reader to understand Jimson's character. It explains his belief in imagination and in the injustice of the world.

A characteristic feature of the device of the internal monologue as employed in *The Horse's Mouth* is the crossing of action and contemplation. Jimson, like Stephen and Bloom, is shown in the normal human state of intercepted consciousness. What we mean by the crossing of action and contemplation and intercepted consciousness is that the eye, memory interrupts experience and friends and other persons disturb and interrupt the private drift of ideas and feelings. Jimson is shown absorbed in perceptions and disconnected thoughts at the time he, along with other characters, is participating in various activities. Sometimes the action in which he is engaged interrupts his ideas, and sometimes the reverse happens, and his thoughts hamper his action. Thus, throughout the novel, there is an intersection and interruption of action and contemplation. This device is employed to present effectively the working of the creative imagination in an eccentric painter, and also to make the whole presentation appear true to life. The following examples will illustrate this point.

In Chapter IX, Jimson and Coker reach the door of Sara's house. Jimson is haunted by the memory of Sara, and Cary employs the device of the interior monologue to record the flood of thoughts in his mind:

> Sara all over, I thought, you can see she's adopted that door knob ... loves it like herself. Rub the little darling up and give it a chance to look its best. Sara for cleaning and washing. Loved slapping things about. Getting off her steam. See Sara in her bath washing herself. Like a cat. Almost hear her purr. I didn't know whether to draw her or to bite her. And I did give her one with the back brush which made her jump. Oh, Gulley, what was that for? Just to let you know there's somebody else in the world. Good sketch I did of her — with the same back brush. Right arm in the air. (32-3)

Just when Gulley is immersed in deep thoughts, action begins. Coker jerks him, the door opens and Sara greets him. Consequently, his absorption in a stream of thought is interrupted. Coker talks to Sara about Hickson's illegal possession of Jimson's pictures, and seeks her help in getting them back for him. A little later, while Sara and Jimson talk with delight about their past and present, mental perception begins: Jimson is "seeing Sara in her bath with the brush. And drying her feet, leaning down all back and arms with her hair falling over her knees, and a bluish light on the shiny flats round the spine — sky reflection — a sweet bit of brushwork" (36-7). The scene ends with Jimson's stealing Sara's silver frame off the mantelpiece and leaving her home in the company of Coker.

In the next chapter, Coker and Jimson are returning from Sara's house. Coker is talking about Sara, but Jimson talks little because his mind is crammed with ideas. He thinks of Sara as an object of laughter and as an expert in cleaning floors. Though Coker interrupts his thoughts, he goes on thinking how man walks amid fires of lusts and is yet not consumed, and how everything that lives is holy. When Coker again talks about Sara, he starts thinking about her. He is pulled back from his world of thoughts by Coker's remarks about him. But soon he is absorbed in thoughts about Adam an Eve. Then, on seeing a group of old women in black cloaks, innumerable disconnected impressions crowd in on his mind:

> Works of passion and imagination. Somebody's dream girls. Somebody's dream pots, jugs, fish. Somebody's love supper. Somebody's old girl chasing up a tit-bit for the old china. The world of imagination is the world of eternity. Old Sara looking at a door knob. Looking at my old ruins. The spiritual life. (45)

In Chapter XI, we find Jimson looking at his picture in the morning. He thinks that Adam's new shape is fine, but the figure of Eve is unsatisfactory. He decides to work not on her, but on the foreground of the picture. At this point, we enter Jimson's mind and

see his concern for the pattern in which he desires to mould the material of his artistic composition. Here Nosy interrupts him. He becomes angry because the figure of the fish in his picture catches his fancy. He is again preoccupied with the fish, but Nosy's presence and talks once again obstruct the stream of his thoughts. He advises Nosy not to think of treading the ruinous path of art. Soon he dismisses him, and begins to think about the fish again. Next morning he finds the picture so good that he promises whisky to himself. Just then Mr. Plant and two other preachers drop in. They continuously talk, but Jimson is mostly talking to himself in silence. The more Plantie tries to explain the beauty of his picture to them, the worse he feels. He imagines himself to be a happy worm, whose happiness is ruined by a herd of bullocks that come trampling along the grass.

Another instance of the crossing of action and stream of thoughts occurs in Chapter XVII. While Coker and Hickson talk about Jimson and his pictures, Jimson is busy looking at and thinking about Sara's portrait hanging in the room. All of a sudden, he sees a visitor's book. He takes a few blank pages out of it and begins to sketch figures. When he is engrossed in the act of drawing Eve under the willows and the everlasting maiden, Oothoon, his mind is preoccupied with numerous thoughts:

> Yes, I thought, there's Billy again. Handing me the truth.... That's what he was saying all his life. A tear is an intellectual thing. And a joy. It's wisdom in vision. It's the prophetic eye in the loins. The passion of intelligence. Yes, by Gee and Jay, I thought. The everlasting creation of delight. The joy that is always new and fresh because it is created. The revelation ever renewed, in every fall. (125)

While drawing Bromion's face, Jimson thinks that the soul of innocence can never be destroyed so long as it lives in the free spirit, and that the virgin Oothoon cannot understand the jealously of Theotormon who is an embodiment of chastity. Then he gets anxious to return home to see how his picture, the 'Fall,' looks in the light of his new ideas. He steals Hickson's things from the drawing room and gets six months's imprisonment.

This is how Cary has used the interior monologue in *The House's Mouth*. He knows that it "is an infection to which anyone is liable.... It represents an enlargement of technical procedures which is too precious to be altogether abandoned" (J.W. Beach, *The Twentieth Century Novel* 517) . But he seems to believe that it is only a useful technique for exploring human motives and revealing similarity or contrast between thought and action. He does not approve of it as the basis of a book, and uses it as a tool to explore his theme and paint the inner life of man.

Notes

1. Professor Wayne Booth in his book, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) , has, however, expressed the view that in every novel there is present an implied author, the novelist's "second self." The omniscient author cannot be eliminated even from a novel written in indirect narrative style. The novelist may have silenced the omniscient voice; still we are left with the question:"Why has he selected this mode of indirection rather than that? Why has he chosen this for emphasis, arranged things in this se quence?" A novelist selects and rejects things, and in doing so, he presents, directly or indirectly, a view of the world which, however disguised, is ultimately his alone. Booth presents a comprehensive account of the problems resulting from the dramatic preoccupation of many novelists coming after Henry James. He brilliantly discusses the limitations of an "unreliable narrator," and the moral ambiguity that results from the effacement of the author.

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7

THE CINEMATIC DEVICE OF THE FLASHBACK IN JOYCE CARY'S *TO BE A PILGRIM* AND *THE MOONLIGHT*

It is now a commonplace of art criticism that literature and film are the two important art forms of the post-War period and that there exists a very close relationship between them. Patently, as Morris Beja affirms, "there is great value in looking at the two genres together; such a pairing enables us to get a sense of all that they share, to be sure, but also of all the traits that they do not, so that one may grasp as well what is unique about each form" (*Film and Literature: An Introduction* XIII) . In fact, literature and film are interdependent upon each other. No doubt, initially it was literature that had an edge over cinema and inevitably the latter was dependent upon the former, but the fast, unprecedented progress in cinematic art since World War II unmistakably influenced every major literary genre. Thus the poets, playwrights and fictionists have employed the varied, invaluable cinematic devices in their writings. This is true of even such major original geniuses of the twentieth century as T.S. Eliot and James Joyce. It is a well-known fact that T.S. Eliot in *The Waste Land* and James Joyce in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Youngman* and *Ulysses* employ the cinematic devices of "montage," "condensation," "shots," "cut," "collage," "dissolve," "flashback," "fade-in," "fade-out," etc. The present article is an attempt at demonstrating how Joyce Cary makes the functional, artistic use of the cinematic technique of flashback in two of his masterpieces, *To be a Pilgrim* and *The Moonlight.*

Though primarily a cinematic device, the flashback is now employed in the modern novel as well. It enables the writer to delineate incidents occurring prior to the opening scene of a book. The use of this technique upsets the chronological order of events. The story does not move uniformity forward in time, but travels

back in the past at one or more stages and reappears in the present. Recollections, narrations, dream-sequences and reveries are the various devices used by a writer to depict the past incidents. As J. W. Beach points out: "There seem to be two main reasons for the manner of narration which departs widely from the chronological order of events. One ... is a question of the reader's interest — of storytelling strategy. It is too cumbersome, too dull, to try to get in at the beginning all you know about your character. The thing is first 'to get him in with a strong impression'; and then, to give him the development which he deserves, you 'work backwards and forwards over his past.' The other reason is a question of naturalness, life-likeness, and getting away from the formality associated with an author" (*The Twentieth Century Novel* 360) .

Cary uses the flashback technique in two of his novels, *To be a Pilgrim* and *The Moonlight*. Its principal form is the main character's recollections, though at times the past reappears in a character's narration or reverie also. Wilcher in *To be a Pilgrim* and Ella in *The Moonlight* repeatedly remember the past events. It is through this device that the principal episodes, prior to the opening scenes of the two stories, are presented. It is essential for the author to present them, since they form integral parts of the stories.

The flashback in *To be a Pilgrim* and *The Moonlight* is the only technical device whereby Cary can convey his meaning artistically and effectively. Wilcher in *To be a Pilgrim* and Ella in *The Moonlight* must be presented through the flashback because "their life is the life they have lived rather than the life they are living" (Barbara Hardy, "Form in Joyce Cary's Novel," *Essays in Criticism* 183) . These two novels depict the clash between past and present, and hence past and present are shown intersecting and interrupting each other throughout the two narratives. While discussing his use of the flashback technique with the *Paris Review* interviewers, Cary remarked:

> The flashback in my novels in not just a trick. In, for exam ple, *The Moonlight*, I used it in order to make my theme pos sible. It was essential to compare two generations. You can't do that without a flashback contrast; the chronological run-through by itself is no good. (*Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews* 54)

To be a Pilgrim is throughout interspersed with flashbacks. The time-ribbon in this novel is again and again upset. It opens with an unfortunate incident in Wilcher's life, viz. his separation from his housekeeper, Sara, whom he wants to marry. Since his relatives are opposed to his marriage with her, they get her imprisoned for theft. Wilcher falls seriously ill and is put in the care of his niece Ann, a qualified doctor, who cleverly takes him to Tolbrook to keep him away from Sara. Robert, his nephew, comes back from South Africa to prevent him from marrying Sara. After that the story moves forward and backward in time. While moving in the present, it primarily deals with Robert, Ann, Wilcher and Sara, but it often travels back in the past to unfold the stories of Lucy, Edward, Bill, Amy, Wilcher and others. A large number of the past incidents are presented through the flashback technique so that we may understand the present situations and the events about to occur. The flashback is employed mainly in the form of Wilcher's reminiscences of the past, which form an integral part of his present life. These recollections of old people and incidents throw light on the present, and thus help us to understand it.

The use of the flashback device in this novel is indispensable. The circumstances of Wilcher's life, as shown at the very outset of the novel, compel him to seek relief in the memory of the past. In the first place, he is an old bachelor of seventy-one suffering from a heart disease. He has not been able to realise his dreams and visions. Since he feels that he will not live long, he wishes to spend the remaining few months of his life in the company of those whom he knew and loved:

> I am an old man, and I have not much longer at Tolbrook. This is April, and before next April I shall have left for ever. I want to use every moment of these last months at home with those I love, with Lucy and Amy, Bill and Edward. (*To be a Pilgrim* 114)

Wilcher feels isolated because as an old man he finds himself incomprehensible to the young. "An old man's loneliness," he says, "is nobody's fault. He is like an old-fashioned hat which seems absurd and incomprehensible to the young, who never admired and wore

such a hat" (120). Naturally, in order to forget his painful loneliness, he frequently recalls the old days when people understood him. Secondly, he is a man of contemplative nature absorbed in dreams and visions. He has a sensitive nature and an impressionable mind. Old things, such as trees, are so dear to him that he does not wish to part with them. He is orthodox and conservative. He loves the past, and hates those who are indifferent to it. Thirdly, he is living in a very old house at Tolbrook. Hence beds, rooms, tables, chairs and other things of the house quite often remind him of persons and episodes belonging to the past. Fourthly, he is living in the company of Ann and Robert, who constantly remind him of Edward, the father of Ann, and Lucy, the mother of Robert. Edward, his elder brother, and Lucy, his elder sister, were the two persons he loved and understood; they were his models for many years. Lastly, he is extremely disgusted with the young generation and the changes taking place all over the world. On the very first page of the novel, he criticises modern people: "People boast of their liberties nowadays, but it seems to me that we have multiplied only our rulers" (9). No wonder, then, if the new generation and the new world often remind him of the old generation of an entirely different kind.

The revelation of the past through the flashback is, thus, a natural enough device. Besides, it serves an import purpose. It enables Cary to present before us the entire personality of Wilcher, and thus illustrate his theme of man's urge for creating his unique world. Without a thorough knowledge of Lucy, Edward, Bill, Amy and others, we cannot comprehend Wilcher; they reveal him to us sometimes by contrast, sometimes by comparison.

The person who haunts Wilcher's memory most is Lucy. She is an integral part of his world. He has always desired to have that sort of energy, faith and courage which she possessed. She is indispensable for understanding his nature, because it was she who inspired him with a dream of the life of a pilgrim. He owes his religious fervour to her. She is unforgettable for him in yet another way. She did not let him feel the oppressive weight of loneliness. It was only after her death that he knew what loneliness actually was.

Wilcher's mind is also crowded with memories of his elder brother, Edward. Though endowed with religious instinct, he is very lustful. The lasciviousness in his nature is the result of Edward's influence on him. It was his impact that made him a dandy at the university. Edward persuaded him to have sexual relation with the little maid of the family. He took him to his mistresses — Mrs. Tirrit and Julie. Edward, Julie and Tirrit encouraged him to enjoy life. Since he was fascinated by them in his youth, he often remembers them in his old age.

Wilcher constantly recollects Bill and Amy, who also form an essential part of his world. They were free souls and, like children, were incessantly busy with creating new worlds. He experienced a strange pleasure in Bill and Amy's company. Amy's indifference to material possessions was a matter of great admiration for him, since he failed to overcome his craving for earthly possessions.

Sara, whom Wilcher remembers again and again, exerted a profound influence on him. She gave him faith and happiness, and impressed him by her sincerity. He regarded her as a woman of principles. He thought: "Sara had renewed to me that joy which is the life of faith" (36). He believed that nobody in the world, except Sara, understood others, and she had that capacity because she had charity in her soul. She revealed to him the fact that men are only travellers in this world.

Wilcher's recollections of Lucy, Bill, Edward, Amy and Julie throw light on his character. He remembers them because caution and possession, which have always worried him, never disturbed their peace. He has ever wished for the life of a wanderer — a free soul, having no roots in the world. Since he found Lucy, Bill and his father embodying his dream of life, he is unable to forget them. When under the impact of the stimulus, given to him by his memory of Bill and Lucy, he escapes from Tolbrook to meet Sara, he reflects:

> "After all ... I am a Wilcher — I am like Bill and Lucy; like my father who spent half his life in camps and lodgings. It is in my blood, which is all English. The Latin, the Celt strike root; they want only to make a home somewhere; and if they must wander they take with them always a dream or legend of home. But the English soul is a wanderer, a seeker. You find it in

every corner of the world...."(300)

Gladys, John and Lottie, whose lives are portrayed through the flashback technique, also serve an important purpose in the novel. They are the connecting links between the two worlds — the world of Wilcher and the world of Ann and Robert. Gladys, John and Lottie discarded religion and morality for a world of pleasure-seekers, where disloyalty and despair prevailed.

Besides revealing Wilcher's character artistically, the flashback serves another purpose. It enables the novelist to make the past criticise the present directly as well as obliquely. Sometimes Wilcher, one of the last relics of the old generation, comes in direct conflict with Ann and Robert who represent the present generation. But quite often his recollections of the past and his comments on it offer a brilliant indirect criticism of the new world, inhabited by Ann, Robert and others. The following instances will serve to illustrate this point.

Wilcher discusses Robert with Ann. All of a sudden, discovering in her a resemblance with her father, Edward, he sees Edward before his mental eyes. He has Ann before his physical eyes and Edward before his mental eyes. When he compares and contrasts them, he is shocked to discover how different Ann is from her father. But he cannot help her because he believes that nobody can impart happiness to one who rejects all faith. He says:

> But all these girls nowadays, after their first twenties, have that look. Sad and responsible.
>
> When I see Ann, daughter of that gay, that brilliant Edward, going about as if her life were finished, I want to stick pins in her. But what can I do? No one could plant happiness in a soul that rejects all faith. (13)

Thus, Wilcher criticises the younger generation, lacking faith and religion.

Let us take another example. Wilcher is shocked by Ann's abusive remarks on his father's habit of beating Lucy and other children for their faults. He thinks that it is futile to talk to children like Ann and Robert because they have only information, and little education. They do not mind going to bed with each other, but are shocked to hear that a bad child should be punished. He affirms that

he and Lucy, whom Ann pities for their hard upbringing, had greater happiness in their childhood than Robert and Ann had. He is convinced that the new generation cannot understand the virtue of law and discipline, which alone are the source of peace amid the turmoils of the world. At this point, he recalls some of the incidents of his childhood, which show that Lucy and other children were very happy, though they were often beaten by their father. The following ideas about the children's world of his time, which pass through his mind, offer a criticism of the concept of the children's world, held by Ann and her generation:

> But none of us was encouraged to self-pity, the disease of the egotist. Religion was not our comforter. How could we be comforted by hell fire; and individual responsibility for sin? We lived in the law, that ark of freedom. A ship well founded, well braced to carry us over the most frightful rocks, and quicksands. And on those nursery decks we knew where we were, we were as careless and lively as all sailors under dicipline. (46)

The novel constantly portrays the conflict between the present and the past, the new and the old. The present generation, characterized by aimlessness, despair, want of faith, coldness, lack of vitality and warmth, is criticized by the old generation which, as revealed through the flashback, had purpose, faith, religion, hope, warmth and energy.

In short, the use of the flashback in *To be a Pilgrim* enables Cary to present his theme of the creative freedom of the imagination effectively. The novel demonstrates that men create their own worlds and are, therefore, perpetually in conflict with one another. Thus Wilcher creates a peculiar world of his own. Lucy and others of her generation lived in a world different from that of their father's. Lucy, Edward, Wilcher, Sara, Julie, Bill and Amy existed in their own worlds and hence quarrelled with one another. The world of Lottie and others was different from those of their predecessors, and was incomprehensible to Wilcher; and Ann and Robert move in an entirely new world, which incessantly puzzles Wilcher. Cary presents all this effectively by showing the progress of generations not consequently, but contemporaneously through the flashback technique. His use of

this device contributes a good deal to the condensed form in which the vast material of the book is cast. If he had narrated events chronologically, the whole presentation would have lost much of its effectiveness and vividness.

The Moonlight differs from *To be a Pilgrim* not only in subject-matter, background and point of view, but also in the use of the flashback. In *The Moonlight*, a better balance is maintained between the backward and the forward movements of the narrative. That is to say, in this novel, the story does not travel back into the past as often as it does in *To be a Pilgrim*. Consequently, the use of the flashback in this novel is not as frequent as in *To be a Pilgrim.* This, perhaps, is due to the fact that Cary gives Ella the company of an elder sister, who keeps her away from that loneliness in which Wilcher is shown living in *To be a Pilgrim.* A lonely old man is mostly absorbed in thoughts of the past.

The novel opens with the scene in which Ella is extremely happy to see Amanda in the arms of Harry Dawbarn. Perhaps the only aim of Ella's life is to see Amanda, her illegitimate daughter, married to Harry. Her efforts in this regard result in her vehement clash with her eldest sister, Rose, who holds that Harry, an ordinary farmer of moderate education and doubtful character, is not a suitable match for the highly intellectual Amanda. This quarrel between Rose and Ella is due to their different approaches to love, sex and marriage. Naturally, it is essential for the novelist to describe, in detail, their past life so as to make clear to the reader their different attitudes towards sex. To achieve this end, he resorts to the flashback device.

The omniscient narrator takes us back to the first fierce quarrel between Rose and Ella during their childhood. Ella at the age of five set Rose's bed on fire simply because Rose prevented her from going to a water party. The scene is necessary, for it shows that Rose and Ella have essentially different natures — the former is responsible, sober, reasonable and firm; while the latter is reckless, passionate, violent and pleasure-loving.

The flashback continues even after this scene of violent quarrel and brings before us the scene of Rose's amorous relation with

Groom. This scene is an important part of the novel because it acquaints us with Rose's views on love and marriage. The flashback shows how she sacrifices love for filial duty and family welfare. The purely sexual and romantic aspect of a woman's life does not matter much to her. Her sense of responsibility towards her family is associated with her belief in strict morality. She does not approve of her father's loose sex-life, and objects to his bringing Mrs. Carron to the Villa.

The flashback continues further and introduces to us Rose's younger sister, Bessie. In Chapter VI, there occurs a change in the use of the flashback technique. Hitherto it is the omniscient author who transports us to the old times, but now we are taken back to the past by Ella's recollection. This change makes the technique more convincing in the sense that seventy-four year old Ella, having nothing to do with the present except to see Amanda married to Harry, is bound to remember the good old days. Besides, she is contemplative, emotional and sensitive. Hence in her imagination, she lives in the past, which had given her numerous unique experiences. The person and events of the present remind her of the bygone days. After her quarrel with Rose, followed by our travel back in time to witness the scene of quarrel between the two sisters in their childhood and that of Rose's love-affair with Groom, Ella is shown on page thirty-three rushing into the Butler's pantry. On page forty-four, we are told how in the pantry she not only remembers Rose's old instruction that the first water out of a metal tap should never be used, but also suddenly recalls the youth of Bessie and her marriage with Groom.

The use of the flashback here is necessary, since Bessie's concept of sex, love and marriage is to be brought to light in order to present the different views on sex of the three women of the same generation — Rose, Bessie and Ella. It is made clear to us that Bassie was a flirt with a craving for physical pleasures. Thus, Bassie, as portrayed through the flashback, presents a contrast to Rose in regard to sex, love and marriage. Ella's sympathy and support for Bessie shows that she and Rose have different views on love and marriage.

After acquainting the reader with Bessie's views on sex, Cary has to evince Ella's attitude towards love and marriage. For this, again, he resorts to the flashback technique, and takes the reader back to the scenes of Ella's love-making with Geoffrey Tew. In Chapter IX, Rose talks to Ella about the proposed change in her will. She tells her that though she wishes to see Amanda happily married to Professor Moss, she will never force the marriage on her. This at once reminds Ella of Rose's interference in her love-affair with Geoffrey Tew and Bessie's love-affair with Groom. The scene is of great importance, as it expresses Ella's views on love and marriage. The reader learns how in her early youth her aim was to fall in love, marry and have children.

A remarkable feature of the flashback technique as used in *The Moonlight* and *To be a Pilgrim* is that remembrance of the past occurs simultaneously with action in the present. For instance, in the following passage of *The Moonlight,* Ella, while climbing up the stairs, thinks of the old unforgettable scene of her falling in love with Geoffrey Tew:

> But now, as with her agile but rheumatic legs, she climbed the stairs up which, fifty years ago, she had danced, she thought, "Yes, I did love him, even then — I loved his voice, his eyes, his hair, the way he twirled his glass, even his long nose..., and that was why, the next time I was going to meet him, I changed my frock three times.... And as soon as I came in, Geoffrey took me by both hands and said, 'How lucky this is — it is just what I hoped for, that you would be the first. I wanted to thank you for backing me up so splendidly last night.'
>
> "How did I back him up?" Ella asked herself in wonder, as she had asked herself a thousand times since, "I didn't say a word — I didn't dare. I was such a coward. But it seemed that he felt my sympathy...."
>
> "Oh," thought Ella, entering the box attic and sitting down on an old trunk, "how can I forget how I felt then. And he saw it, he felt it, too. He turned pale and said in quite a faltering voice, 'I have been longing to see you again'...."
>
> "How quick he was, how sensitive," Ella reflected. "Yes, he seemed so assured and confident, he horrified me by the way he spoke to Rose — just laughing at her. Yes, he was really rather impertinent to Rose. But that was because he was so sensitive — he was that kind of young man, like —." The image of Robin Sant appeared in her imagination, but she at once rejected it.(74)

The use of the flashback technique in Chapter XII is purposeful. It gives us a peep into the sexual ideas of Ella, Bessie and Rose. Ella is alarmed by Amanda's intimacy with Robin, and therefore overhears their talks on one pretext or the other. Robin's remark that there is a great difference between the silly ones who are cheated and the wise persons who see through a plot leads her to think about herself and her relations with Geoffrey Tew. She thinks how she fell in love with Geoffrey, and is reminded of the other incidents of that period of her life. The next chapter records a number of other incidents related to Ella's love-affair.

A little later, Ella finds Amanda and Robin talking joyfully. She thinks that Amanda does not feel anything, and is therefore not at all upset by Harry's departure. This brings back to her mind her misery caused by her separation from Geoffrey. Here the device of the flashback enables the novelist to show the past making an implicit criticism of the present. Amanda, standing for the present generation, does not feel Harry's separation, while Ella, representing the old generation, was broken-hearted by her separation from Geoffrey.

In the last but one paragraph of Chapter XIV, Ella is, again, transported to the past as a result of her looking at an old picture. She remembers Bessie's relations with Ernest. She also recollects that Bessie hated Rose when the latter remarked that she was not a true wife. A little later, she recalls the scene when she was playing piano for Ernest. Then Bessie came in, and asked Ernest if he had fallen in love with Ella. Towards the end of Chapter XVII and in Chapter XVIII, Ella is engrossed in the memory of her love for Ernest Cranage. The use of the flashback here is significant in that it presents a contrast between the past and the present generations. Ella's love-affair with Earnest and her craving for a husband and children are juxtaposed with Amanda's and Kathy's coldness towards Harry

and Robin respectively.

Chapter XX shows how the past, revealed through the memory of Ella, indirectly criticizes the present. Ella is exceedingly perturbed by her mistake in telling Amanda her real parentage. This leads her to recall how Rose advised her never to disclose Amanda her real parentage. She also recollects the whole episode of her love for Ernest Cranage resulting in the birth of baby. These incidents of her past life implicitly criticize Amanda and Kathy's views of husband, children and sex-life. While the present generation, represented by Amanda, Kathy and others, is cold, intellectual and passive in these matters, Ella and Ernest of the old generation are vigorous, emotional and active.

When Amanda asks Ella if she ever had an income of her own and led an independent life, Ella recalls how on getting the legacy after her father's death she went all alone to London to see Amanda much against Rose's wish. The flashback shows Ella's deep love for her natural daughter, Amanda. Though she had exhausted her funds, she was still determined not to go to the Villa. A large part of the past as revealed here offers an oblique criticism of the present generation of Amanda, Kathy, Iris and Dorothy, who do not consider babies interesting in any way.

In Chapter XXXII, Cary, with the help of the flashback, depicts conflicts both among the women of the old generation and between the women of old and new generations. Iris, Dorothy and Bertie come to the Villa on the occasion of its sale. The omniscient author shifts us back to the time when about the question of the education of Muriel, Dorothy and Amanda, there arose a quarrel between Rose on one side and Bessie and Iris on the other. Iris insisted on sending the children to Beltham, while Rose expressed her deep hatred for the school.

Some of Ella's recollections of the past at the time of the sale of the Villa are essential in that they throw light on Bessie's concept of motherhood, and display the conflict among several women on this point. The bitter quarrel of Dorothy and Iris regarding the possession of some of the goods of the Villa reminds Ella how Rose always said that Bessie spoilt Dorothy. While searching for Rose's

blotter, Ella goes to Amanda's room. When she talks to Amanda about Harry, marriage and children, she is shocked by her notions, especially by her remark that she will not be a fit wife and may not find babies interesting at all. Ella attributes all this nonsense to her education and her school, Beltham, but Amanda admires her education and her school. This takes Ella back to the past. She remembers how Bessie used to say that her children must be ready for the world. She, then, recalls the scene of Bessie's last illness, which unfolds her deep love for her children and her awareness of spoiling them. Bessie's idea of motherhood is contrary to that of Amanda, who thinks that she might feel bored with babies and would be a bad mother.

Chapter XXXVII offers another instance of Cary's artistic use of the flashback technique. Ella thinks of Amanda's pregnancy and remembers Bessie. She compares the two women, representing two ages, in regard to their concepts of responsibility towards children. Bessie stressed that a woman must necessarily be a successful mother and ought to make her children decent, cultured and happy. She criticized herself for being unfit to be a wife and mother on account of her selfish and pleasure-loving nature. The scene also informs us of Rose's concept of love. Speaking of Groom, she remarked: “He understands love but not duty, and without duty love is only a sentiment” (301) . Ella also recalls Rose's sense of responsibility for Amanda and the children of Bessie.

In the last chapter of the novel, the flight between the past and the present reaches its climax. The past, as shown through the recollections of Ella, offers a direct criticism of the present. Just at the beginning of the chapter, Ella is shocked by the corrupt, careless and defiant looks of Amanda, who has committed guilt but has not the moral sense and power to accept it. Her mind goes back to old days, and she sees in Bessie and Rose an antithesis of Amanda.

In short, the flashback is necessary for *The Moonlight*. It enables the novelist to achieve his aim of writing this novel, viz. the dramatic presentation of different views on sex, held by the women of two or three generations, so as to depict the working of the woman's creative imagination in the sphere of sex-life. With the help of this device, Cary succeeds in placing side by side the women of old and

new generations, and in presenting simultaneously their conflicting attitudes towards sex. In the earlier part of the novel, he portrays various ideas of the old generation in a way which suggests an implicit criticism of the views on sex, held by the new generation. But as the story progresses, the indirect conflict between the women of old and new generations becomes frequently direct. Thus in the earlier part of the novel, Rose, Bessie and Ella — the representatives of the old generation — are shown in conflict with one another, and their views on sex, expressed through these conflicts, criticize implicitly the concept of sex, held by the new generation of Amanda, Kathy and others. Afterwards, the conflict between Iris and Rose — the two women belonging to two older generations — is depicted. And in the second half of the novel, the conflict between Rose, Bessie and Ella on the one hand and Amanda and Kathy on the other becomes more and more apparent. Rose, Bessie and Ella embody vigour, passion and imagination, where-as Amanda and Kathy are dull, cold and excessively intellectual. Similarly, the men of old generation like Mr. Venn, Groom, Geoffrey Tew and Ernest Cranage, whose lives are portrayed through the flashback, present a sharp contrast to the new generation represented by Robin and Harry, who regard love and marriage as only a matter of convenience and adjustment.

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8

THE PARTITION AND THE INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL

I

The partition of the Indian Subcontinent on the communal basis into the sovereign states of India and Pakistan on the eve of her freedom after a long period of slavery and indescribable hardships on August 15, 1947 caused one of the bloodiest upheavals in the history of human race. It rudely shocked the conscience of the civilized people all the world over, and made them shudder with anguish and dismay at man's wolfish cruelty to man in the name of religion. The sudden, rude shock of partition unnerved man, destroyed their human attributes, and transformed them into wild, savage beasts, who perpetrated extremely barbaric cruelties against their fellow human beings. They looted and burnt down shops and houses, killed small children, and made millions of people pauper and refugees. Villages were put to flames and their populations were wiped out, and millions of people were converted at the point of sword. Women became a special target of communal fury; they were abducted, raped and paraded naked in the streets, with shaven heads and breasts severed from their trunks. Many of them preferred an honourable death by committing suicide to a life of perpetual dishonour and shame. In fact, this event, which resulted in the barbarity of the most heinous kind and in the massacre of not fewer than two million people, was terribly tragic and heart-rending because it was deliberate, and not a natural calamity, like an earthquake or a flood, and hence was steeped in as much tragedy and drama as was embodied in the great Greek tragedies, all put together.

And yet, curiosity enough, this unfathomably tragic and mo-

mentous event has not stirred the creative imagination and urge of many Indian English writers; only a few novelists have treated it seriously and what is more surprising is that none of the foremost fictionists — R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya — has concentrated upon it in any one of his novels. R.K. Narayan does not touch it at all, and Raja Rao, who has written a beautiful novel, *Kanthapura,* on India's struggle for freedom under the leadership of Gandhiji seems to have not heard of the partition as is evident from his writings. Except in one short story, Anand, who belongs to the Punjab that endured the gruesome consequences of partition, does not treat it at all in any of his novels. And Bhattacharya, who has repeatedly dwelt upon the Bengal famine of 1943 and the Quit India Movement of 1942 in his first three novels — *So Many Hungers!, Music for Mohini* and *He Who Rides a Tiger* —, and has written a full novel, *Shadow from Ladakh*, on the Chinese aggression upon India in 1962, does not even refer to the partition in his fiction, despite the fact that he hails from Bengal which witnessed most of the fearful happenings inalienably associated with the partition. Bhattacharya is fully aware of this fact, and regards that a fairly good number of novelists have not felt a strong creative urge to re-create this event which is indubitably of immense historic value and is exceedingly rich in human passion. In this regard, the Western writers present a contrast to the Indians who seem to have been too dazed to treat recent history, in detail, in their works. To quote Bhattacharya's words:

> The tragedies of partition have been beyond anything that a writer could "invent." But where is the creative expression of all these happenings? It would be somewhat odd to say that the writers have been too dazed by recent history to make it their material. In contrast, the two World Wars are adequately reflected in the best literature of the West: the writers have lived through history undazed. ("Literature and Social Reality," *The aryan Path* 396)

The major older novelists' indifference to the partition is not wholly inexplicable; it can be plausibly explained to some extent. Mulk Raj Anand, though deeply soaked in Punjabi life, has been mostly away from the Punjab, and did not chance to see and feel the actualities of partition. Right from the nineteen twenties down to the time of partition, he, perhaps, did not at all have close contacts with North-West India. Thus, though many of his fictional writings are about Punjabi life, they usually portray only the Punjabi men and manners of the period he spent there. And this is doubtless his strength as it evinces his artistic integrity, his truthfulness to his experience. Moreover, he is a writer preoccupied with the intense desire to eradicate the ills and evils of Indian social life and to replace them by the element of modernity and progressiveness. As such, he has little interest in the political events and usually does not treat them in his creative writings. R.K. Narayan belongs to Mysore and lived in this region which is too far from Punjab or Bengal to enable him to see and construe the events preceding and succeeding the partition. Besides, he is a regional novelist, who portrays the man of Malgudi in a comic vein, highlighting at the same time the basic universal human values and the slowly changing social scene of South India. Primarily a pure artist, he touches upon India's freedom movement only in one novel, viz. *Waiting for the Mahatma.* Little wonder he has not focused his attention on the partition in any of his writings. So far as Raja Rao is concerned, he is essentially a philosopher-novelist, belonging, again, to the remote South. More than Mulk Raj Anand, he lived in Europe and America. Even his first novel, *Kanthapura,* is not as much about the Indian political scene in the nineteen twenties as about Gandhi and Gandhism. And after his first novel, he is completely given to philosophy, especially the ancient Indian philosophy. Inevitably, the partition does not come near the focus of his creative vision. Bhabani Bhattacharya's case is very peculiar and difficult to understand. He is a writer who staunchly believes in the artist's deep concern with social and political realities of his time, and his first five novels are thoroughly saturated with them. Nevertheless, he did not touch the theme of partition in his creative works, though he had pleaded for its treatment in Indian English creative literature in his expository wrings, and it was certainly a glaring flaw in his creative genius, a failure of his art.

II

However, the observations, made above, do not imply that the theme of partition has not been explored in Indian English fiction, for we have some brilliant novels written about it. It has been a compelling experience, resulting in an irresistible creative urge, for several Indian English fictionists, such as Khuswant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, Balchandra Rajan, Attia Hosain, Raj Gill and Chaman Nahal; they have dealt with the theme of partition as comprehensively as their counterparts in Hindi and Urdu, and are in no way inferior to Yashpal, the writer of *Jhuntha Sach,* Bhisham Sahni of *Tamas* and Masum Raza Rahi, the author of *Adha Gaon.* In this article of moderate length, I will concentrate only upon the six outstanding novels on this theme — Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan,* Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges,* Rajan's *The Dark Dancer,* Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column,* Raja Gill's *The Rope* and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi.*

All these novels depict, in detail, the horrible and heart-rending scenes of violence, brutality and hatred. The irony was that the two communities, the Hindus and Muslims, carried out their fight against the British people and could reach the target of achieving freedom almost without bloodshed; but when they were close to their long-cherished goal, they plunged into detestable inhuman activities against their own fellow countrymen and bathed in each other's blood, instead of in that of the foreign rulers. Perhaps that was the sudden eruption of the long-suppressed feelings of hatred, indignation and vengeance. Whatever the causes of this unbelievable, virulent violence, the circumstances leading to it and its naked manifestation surely stupefied the Hindus and Muslim who witnessed, or participated in, it; they were caught helplessly in this terrible fire without knowing about its beginning and end. In *The Dark Dancer*, Rajan pictures it thus:

> The Award was the match that lighted the long train of dynamite, snaking and ravaging across the chosen frontier. The violence broke out of honourable men, a lust in their eyes, a smear of satisfaction on the thirsting knives, the burning homes and its beacon and memorial.... And after the flaming sky and the broken bodies, after the wailing and the useless appeals, the stripped flesh and the soliciting knees, raped, mutilated and torn into the silence, the exodus came, column upon column, blindly marching upon the vacant future, million upon million of the dispossessed, in what seemed to be history's greatest tide of suffering....
>
> The pride of being Indian, of having helped to bring to its unprecedented climax a generation of struggle in which the sword had not been lifted, was submerged in an emotion in which shame was a component less compelling than helpless bewilderment at the fever and its virulence. It could not be escaped. It was in every line that one read and every face one looked at.
>
> Vengeance and agony in the ferocious, endless cycle. How long would it last, how deeply would it wound the newly born reality? How many must die, how many be dispossessed, how many scars be inflicted on the uninjured, before the pestilence devoured itself, leaving behind it the unwashed blood...? (158-59)

The writers of these novels on the partition have made an attempt, though a modest one, to diagnose the malady — that is, the partition and its indescribable consequences. Besides pointing to the wicked designs of English people, they have not spared the Hindu and Muslim political leaders and have scathingly criticized them. The first novel on this subject, *Train to Pakistan*, severely attacks Nehru's attitude towards the partition (*Train to Pakistan* 59). In *The Dark Dancer,* Rajan artistically analyses the varied factors leading to the partition and the subsequent tragedy, the gruesome dimensions of which even the English could not foresee as is evident in Cynthia's remark: " 'It's terrible'.... 'I knew it was coming. I've even tried to prepare myself emotionally. But until it happened, there was always the hope that it wouldn't, and now that it has happened, nothing I imagined is remotely like the shock of it' " (*The Dark Dancer* 159). The protagonist, Krishnan, disdainfully blames the British rulers for the partition and the resultant destruction. He

contemptuously says to Cynthia:

> "It's your fault".... "You made this awful thing grow. For a whole generation you British have stirred up the trouble. It's you that made the religious divisions take priority over our common political interests. Communal electorates, communal representation in the civil service. Communal this and communal that. Even the cricket matches were communally organized." (159-60)

But through Kamala, a significant female character in the novel, the novelist declares the people of the Indian Subcontinent equally responsible for their ruin. Rejecting Krishna's above conviction, she comes to the rescue of Cynthia and her race and points out the seeds of the tragedy in Indians themselves: "It isn't really in anything that your people did. You couldn't have brought it out if it wasn't in us. It's all in us, in the many, many years of occupation, submission to the Sate, obedience to the family, every inch of our lives completely calculated, every step down to the relief of the grave. And if we wanted to protest, there was only the pitiless discipline of non-violence. Then all of a sudden garden belongs to us, and we reach up into the blossoming tree to pluck the ashes" (74-5).

Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* shows Gandhi, the greatest opponent of the partition, the staunch champion of Hindu-Muslim unity and the true devotee of non-violence, responsible for the partition and violence in the wake of India's independence. Shafi, Debi and Basu — the three important male characters belonging to different communities and political parties — are at one on this point. Shafi's angry outburst against Gandhi, approved here and there by both Basu and Debi, is worth quoting:

> '.... A million shall die, I tell you — a million! For each man who should have died in the cause of freedom, Gandhi will sacrifice ten. That is what non-violence will do to this country.' (*A Bend in the Ganges* 19)

The novelist does not refer to other factors leading to the partition, and hence offers a very narrow view of this great event.

Sunlight on a Broken Column condemns the English for their policy of "divide and rule," and establishes that they instigated the

Hindus and Muslims against each other, thus plunging them into violence with a view to creating the impression that they were well-intentioned people living in India to maintain law and order and to prevent the Indian communities from killing each other. However, the novelist does not fail to realise the fact that Indians were equally responsible for the partition and the subsequent holocaust:

> 'You used to say the British encouraged Hindu-Muslim quarrels and drove them apart in order to divide and rule.' 'And now I wonder how far apart we will drive each other ourselves,' I said. (*Sunlight on a Broken Column* 255-56)

Raj Gill's *The Rape* vehemently criticizes the politicians of all kinds and communities time and again for the division of the nation and the miseries following it. Even Gandhi has not been spared, and the hero of the novel, Dalipjit, dreams of shooting him, and so later on the news of Gandhi's assassination greatly agitates him and he does not believe it:

> How could Gandhi be shot dead? He was not living. He had shot Gandhi long back, years ago. They could not shoot a dead Gandhi. It was nonsense. He chuckled to himself in his unchallenged superiority over the men around him who were gullible enough to believe in someone's claim who just craved the credit that he already held. He chuckled again and swam around gleefully in his ocean of warmth. (*The Rape* 288)

Azadi by Chaman Nahal scrutinizes the cause of partition and the tragedy accompanying it more comprehensively than any other novel. The novelist shows the masses as mere puppets in the hands of clever, selfish and power-hungry politicians. Men did not exercise their discretion during those fatal days, and their thoughts, view and feelings were thoroughly coloured by their political leaders. Thus a simple trader like Abdul Ghani, who has been living happily and in harmony with his Hindu neighbours, turns into a Muslim Leaguer under the impact of Jinnah and is obsessed with the idea of Pakistan and with impenetrable hatred for the Hindus:

> But the Muslim League had slowly made him aware of the threat to him in free Hindu India. It was not a question of his personal views; the League or Jinnah Sahib knew better. They

> said, view your Hindu neighbour with suspicion, and he did that. They said there should be a Pakistan, and he shouted for Pakistan. (*Azadi* 56)

Nahal unambiguously points to the mischief and conspiracy of the Muslim and Hindu politicians behind the political and social tragedies of partition. Arun, a major character in the novel, clearly states: "He knew the conspiracy of politicians behind the whole move. Jinnah and Liaqat Ali Khan were coming into an estate; as was Nehru. Why else would they rush into azadi at this pace — an azadi which would ruin the land and destroy its unity? For the creation of Pakistan solved *nothing*" (96). No wonder Niranjan Singh, a minor character in the book, feels a strong urge to "hack Nehru to pieces" (66). But as Nahal is able to see the political scene in a right perspective, he does not hesitate to cast his invectives against the British artistically through his characters. Lala Kanshi Ram, a middle-aged major character in the novel, weighs the tragic events rationally, and rightly asserts: " 'Then the English have let us down'....'It was their job, their *obligation,* to see that freedom came smoothly...' " (140-41). Again, he draws the inference, which is also the conclusion of the suffering masses, that the English have made this awful thing grow; for a whole generation they have stirred up trouble. He expresses it vociferously in the face of Bill Davidson: " '....While striking a deal with these 'leaders,' did you ever think of us? Did you for one moment consider what might befall us? Freedom to be sure, we welcome it. But why the violence? It is a denial of what the English stood for during two hundred years in this country! And it is the English who have the biggest hand in this butchery' " (147-48). Also, the novelist holds the Hindus and Muslims responsible for the scourge and he records the natives' "reaction of guilt" at the violence of partition. (160-61).

III

A striking common features of these novels under consideration is that they observe remarkable impartiality towards the communities — the Hindus and Muslims —, and thus attain an artistic

excellence. This is true of the novels written by the Hindu writers as well as of the one written by Attia Hosain. Perhaps these writers have unconsciously and instinctively imbibed the ancient spirit of objectivity, and are unbiased and fair towards both the communities by not siding with either. They find both the Hindus and Muslims equally guilty of the holocaust, and blame them unequivocally. Khuswant Singh, though a Sikh — a sect that suffered most at the hands of the Muslims —, justly portrays the reality of the situation by laying the blame of the horrible tragedy upon the two communities: "The fact is, both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured. Both raped" (*Train to Pakistan* 1). Rajan, who had seen the ghastly scene from a great distance, mostly through newspaper reports and his mental eye, expresses the same attitude:

> If the impartial report were ever written — the report for which the Commissioner didn't have the time or those concerned in reading it the interest — it would be said that much could be said on all sides and that the burden of responsibility was anonymous, with everyone standing in the common guilt. (*The Dark Dancer* 259)

Also, we come across in the novel Kamala's brief statement which is very significant in this context: "Perhaps she was thinking of those who had started the violence. Probably that was what she meant, she answered, *though no one could be entirely free from blame...*" (270, italics added).

It is highly commendable on the part of Attia Hosain to have lashed out against her own community for the demand for partition resulting in harrowing scenes of violence. She condemns the Muslims' introduction of religious fanaticism into politics, and through Laila accentuates a great reality — viz. the Hindus' sincere endeavours to protect millions of millions, left helpless in India by the Muslim creators of Pakistan on the basis of racial hatred and separatist politics when they themselves had fled to Pakistan to grab power. Laila cries to her fellow Muslims:

> Do you know who saved all the others (Muslims) left in India who had no Sitas and Ranjits to save them? Where were all

their leaders? Safely across the border. The only people left to save them were those very Hindus against whom they had ranted. (*Sunlight on a Broken Column* 304)

Malgonkar's treatment of this fact about the event in *A Bend in the Ganges* is very subtle and indirect. He reveals the hostility, violence and disunity existing between the two major communities during the pre-partition days. The novelist artistically shows the initial rivalry for leadership between Debi and Shafi even in the period of their close intimacy, and through this rivalry he undoubtedly foreshadows the future enmity between the Hindus and Muslims, reaching its bitterest point in the days immediately before and after the partition, Obviously, without siding with either of the communities, the writer brings out the weaknesses of both the sides which at last result in immense disaster and miseries engulfing both.

The Rape and *Azadi* explicitly and impartially present the Hindus and Muslims indulged in similar kinds of heinous and nefarious acts, with the result undergoing identical humiliations, sufferings and hardships. In both the novels, the Hindus are shown suffering immeasurably at the hands of the Muslims in the newly created Pakistan; but when they cross the border and reach India, they find the Muslims passing through the similar storm and fire of tortures. *The Rape* records the Hindus' realization of this fact thus: “That which happened this side of the boundary was in no way less ghastly, inhuman, and disgusting than that which had happened across the border. Value of human life had fallen below that of the pariah dog” (*The Rape* 191). Both the communities are equally guilty and have committed identical sins. Naturally, Lala Kanshi Ram in *Azadi* states: “ ‘...whatever the Muslims did to us in Pakistan, we're doing it to them here!’ ” (*Azadi* 338). These two Hindu novelists have clearly shown their own community as much guilty as the other one, and this impartiality of theirs is, indeed, highly admirable.

Another common characteristic of these six novels is their idealistic and affirmative tone. The creative vision of all the six novelists is soaked in idealism and affirmation of life, and this makes their works truly Indian in spirit — Indian artistic attitude has usually been ideal and positive since time immemorial. Inevitably, they

abound in hope and create an elevating and ennobling effect on the reader. Even a dacoit, a dare-devil like Jugga in *Train to Pakistan* sacrifices his life to save his Muslim beloved. His last act in the last analysis fills us with a profound sense of the nobility of self-sacrifice, ideal love, the ultimate triumph of even physical love over all other considerations including the desire to live, abundant goodness residing in evil, continuity of life, hope and exultation. Despite all its crudeness, naturalistic scenes and descriptions, and nihilistic remarks made by Iqbal, the overall picture that emerges at the close of the novel is that of the assertion of joy, nobility and glory of life.

Rajan's novel offers a still nobler picture of life. Kamala readily gives away her life to save a Muslim woman. In fact, it seems that she perceives in one life the entire human existence, and hence considers nothing above it, not even her own life. The novel is saturated with idealism and hope. It impresses upon our mind that hope, beauty, truth and goodness will survive the crimes, cruelties and large-scale devastation brought about by the partition. This is evident in Krishnan's following comments on the foundling who is compared to the child Lord Krishna: “One day, perhaps, it would grow up into justice, into the playing of mischievous music to milkmaids, one day into the captivating of the truth” (*The Dark Dancer* 253). Also, the novelist highlights the virtue of non-violence, nobility of human nature, and higher form of courage — a courage which is the result of cool calculations and which, in reality, emanates from man's unflinching faith in essential goodness and from his conviction, to quote Kamala's words, “There always is a conscience...” (50). The novel concludes with Lord Krishna's extremely hopeful words to Arjun in the chariot in the battlefield of Kurukshetra, and finally closes with the highly optimistic remark about Krishnan: “He walked back slowly to the strength of his beginning” (308).

Again, there is a lot of idealism in *Sunlight on a Broken Column*. Laila throws light on the nobility of the Hindus when she states that despite the Muslims's hatred and enmity, they saved the lives of thousands of Muslims. Then, there are two Muslim idealists, Asad and Kemal. Asad has such an unswerving faith is non-violence as it does not at all shake for a moment even in the face of his broth-

er's death in the riots. And Kemal is out and out a nationalist and has always loved India from the innermost depths of his heart. Consequently, he does not leave her even after the partition, no matter he has to bear the suspicion and detestation of the Hindus. He is not tempted and fascinated by the "Muslim neo-paradise across the border" (*Sunlight on a Broken Column* 278) , and consequently regards the demand for the partition as absolutely immoral and baseless. He has unfathomable love for India throughout his life, and hence vociferously declares: "This is my country. I belong to it. I love it. That is all. One does not bargain" (287) .

Despite the vivid delineation of the gruesome crimes and collapse of all human values during the partition days, *The Rape* is not devoid of hope and idealism. Dalipjit is terribly shocked by his father's raping his beloved and by the terrible scenes of sufferings on both the sides of the borders, and he for quite some time is firmly determined to take revenge upon his father, the people of older generation and the Muslims. But after a short period only nobility controls his baser desires and intentions, and makes him abandon them for ever; he realizes the unreasonableness of killing the Muslims in India simply because many of them massacred his fellow Hindus in the newly created Pakistan. Not only this, towards the end of the novel, all his negative and nihilistic ideas about life, caused by the partition and its aftermath, particularly by the incidents of his father's molesting his beloved and his father's and other relatives' murder by the Muslims, vanish and we find him, after his recovery from prolonged ailment, acquiring peace, hope and warmth of life. This transformation of his from a nihilist and pessimist to an optimist makes the novel a sublime work of art. The following few lines are worth-quoting in this connection:

> He let himself relapse into his new-found peace free of noise, friction and contention. The warmth wrapped him in and about itself till he lost all sense of identification, specification, discrimination.... There was no him, in fact.... There were no limbs, no parts, no bowels, no breath, no heart beats....
>
> ....It was as if the ocean of infinite warmth was raked by a storm tossing him up and down and around till the final descent that gave back the peace and the warmth. (*The Rape* 287-88)

Azadi presents a still more positive and optimistic view. Lala Kanshi Ram has a wonderful belief in forgiveness. He holds that his fellow countrymen inflicted immense disaster upon the Muslims (though they also tortured the Hindus in all possible ways) and, therefore, according to him, his fellow Hindus should crave for the pardon of the other community in order to wash off their sins. He avers: " 'We have sinned as much. We need *their* forgiveness' " (*Azadi* 340) ! Apparently, Lala Kanshi Ram is a specimen of noble, ideal middle-aged Hindu. However, it is through Arun that a very optimistic view has been offered. After all the initial shocks, frustration, despair and nihilism, he at last finds himself reborn and a great realization dawns upon him. He feels that the tragedy of partition with all its holocaust will eliminate all the barriers of caste and class that alienate man from man and turn them enemies of one another:

> The appalling misery they were going through had to have some meaning. They had to emerge different, modified, reborn. Otherwise one might as well shut up about being a man....
>
> ....
>
> ....He (Arun) had found a new identity for himself, an identity which had partly been thrust on him by the surge of events, and which partly he had worked out for himself metaphysically. (232-33)

IV

The novels written about the partition are of two kinds. First, there are some which deal with India's struggle for independence and in the course of describing the events leading to it focus briefly on the division of the country. The important novels of this type are *A Bend in the Ganges, The Dark Dancer* and *Sunlight on a Broken Column.* The second category of the novels, consisting of *Train to Pakistan, The Rape* and *Azadi,* focuses mainly on the partition, that is, the events immediately before it, the holocaust caused by it and

its aftermath. Since the novels of the second group are exclusively devoted to this theme, in the last section of the article I will attempt to make, in brief, a general and overall evaluation of their treatment of this theme.

Train to Pakistan, published in 1956, describes the wide-spread massacre of the Hindus and Muslims by each other, and against this background graphically portrays the life in an obscure, sleepy, tiny frontier village, Mano Majra, particularly the incident of notorious criminal Juggut Singh's sacrificing himself to save the life of his Muslim beloved, Nooran. This little village has been a model of communal harmony for decades; but on the eve of partition it also is transformed into a cauldron of communal hatred and retaliation. Early in the novel, the writer depicts vividly the situation of the country in the wake of partition:

> The summer before, communal riots, precipitated by reports of the proposed division of the country into a Hindu India and a Muslim Pakistan, had broken out in Calcutta, and within a few months the death roll had mounted to several thousand.... From Calcutta, the riots spread north and east and west: to Noakhali in East Bengal, where Muslims massacred Hindus; to Bihar, where Hindus massacred Muslims.... Hundreds of thousands of Hindus and Sikhs who had lived for centuries on the Northwest Frontier abandoned their homes and fled toward the protection of the predominantly Sikh and Hindu communities in the east. They travelled on foot, in bullock carts, crammed into lorries, clinging to the sides and roofs of trains. Along the way — at fords, at crossroads, at railroad stations — they collided with panicky swarms of Muslims fleeing to safety in the west. The riots had become a rout. By the summer of 1947, when the creation of the new state of Pakistan was formally announced, ten million people — Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs — were in flight. By the time the monsoon broke, almost a million of them were dead, and all of northern India was in arms, in terror, or in hiding. The only remaining oases of peace were a scatter of little villages lost in the remote reaches of the frontier. One of these villages was Mano Marja. (*Train to Pakistan* 1-2)

In the beginning, the simple, peace-loving inhabitants of Mano Majra are not at all affected by what happens in the country; they are blissfully ignorant of the rampant killing spreading all over the north of the country. But then one night, the village money-lender is murdered and trains full of dead bodies and Sikh refugees begin to pass through the village. This causes a lot of flutter in the village, and the local Muslims plan to leave for the newly created country, Pakistan, at the earliest possible opportunity. Now when a train carrying the Muslims evacuees, including the local Muslims, is to go to Pakistan, some angry Hindus plan to kill the passengers. But the Sikh criminal, Juggut Singh, lays down his life for the sake of enabling the Muslims, particularly his mistress, Nooran, to reach Pakistan safe:

> The leader raised his rifle to his shoulder and fired. He hit his mark and one of the man's legs came off the rope and dangled in the air. The other was still twined round the rope. He slashed away in frantic haste. The engine was only a few yards off, throwing embers high up in the sky. Somebody fired another shot. The man's body slid off the rope, but he clung to it with his hands and chin. He pulled himself up, caught the rope under his left armpit, and again started hacking with his right hand. The rope had been cut in shreds. Only a thin rough strand remained. He went at it with the knife, and then with his teeth. The engine was almost on him. There was a volley of shots. The man shivered and collapsed. The rope snapped in the centre as he fell. The train went over him, and went on to Pakistan. (158)

Obviously, the novel presents a situation in its intensity, but the culmination of it is delineated theatrically and sensationally. The sudden change in Juggut Singh — a dare-devil with criminology as his heritage — towards the end of the novel, leading him to the last noble act of sacrifice, is surely unconvincing, for this incessant law-breaker is so bad as he does not spare even his ailing old mother. It is almost impossible to rationalize this ignoble protagonist's last noble act because it is not in conformity with his basic character

and personality. In short, this book is a sensational piece of journalistic writing in the garb of fiction and has documentary value; but it fails to become a genuine work of art with a worthwhile interpretation of life and truly living characters. Its only redeeming features are: the symbolic use of train suggesting the perennial flow of life under all circumstances, and the vivid naturalistic descriptions of scenes and sights.

The Rape graphically depicts the sudden, steep decline in all human values and negation of life at the time of partition. Dalipjit, the hero of the novel, finds the refugees different kind of people who have lost all values; they know only how to loot, fight, rape, kill and destroy. The partition is followed by the emergence of a heinous and detestable world on both the sides of the border between India and Pakistan. People are not normal human beings in any sense of the term. Dalipjit, who is completely stunned to find on his return home that his beloved is raped by his own father, is unable to comprehend the tragic world all around him, marked by a betrayal of a girl by her lover, of a country by her people and of a son by his father. It is Amro who explains him the situation plausibly and correctly:

> "They aren't the same people among whom we were born and brought up, to whom honour was more precious than all their lands and buildings, who drew blood to establish integrity of their character rather than to prove the cussedness of their victim or to humiliate their adversary.... Nobody in the whole village is what they ought to have been, respectable, upright, honourable working people. They are a betrayed lot. No doubt they won't hesitate to betray. It's a game now. The betrayed must betray anybody, everybody, their own kith and kin, parents, brothers and sisters. There's no ethic involved in it. The rules of the game permit outpacing, outbidding, outsmarting the other; the game that was started way back by the primitives."
> (*The Rape* 269)

For the refugees, everything, except devastation and violence, vanishes; they are completely oblivious of the fanaticism of Jinnah, the idealism of Nehru, the pragmatism of Patel, and the spiritualism

of Gandhi (128) . The novelist fully succeeds in presenting the dehumanized society of those terrible times. Dalipjit is mad with indignation and he feels an uncontrollable urge to kill some one. But as his father is killed in the riots and he kills Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, in his imagination, his rage cools down considerably. The novel ends on a note of tranquility and a genuine understanding between the two young hearts, Dalipjit and Leila, showing both of them out of "death daze":

> ".... Don't hate me for what I did not do. I know I should have died rather than showed you my face.... But I could not without meeting you once, without telling you. You would have had a guilty conscience perhaps you were the cause of my death. I did not want you to live down an unknown guilt.... Now I will die in peace with a clear conscience and the knowledge, that I did not betray you, your trust and your affection. I never craved your love. I knew it was for Jassi. But I was never in doubt of your trust and affection"....
>
> ....
>
> "Things could have happened during those days?"
>
> "Things might have happened, I don't know."
>
> "Dipu!" she cried in a sudden anguish and flung herself across him.
>
> ....
>
> "The world is sick, Leila."
>
> "You aren't the world," she said impetuously.
>
> "I mean," she fumbled to find the right word. "I mean you know what I mean, Dipu."
>
> Yes, I know it, Leila, he said to himself as he watched the enchanting confusion of a rueful smile on her lips and glistening tears in her eyes. (297-98)

Towards the close of the book also, the novelist, through the protagonist, offers us a positive interpretation of the all-pervasive human slaughter of the days of partition. He thinks that a man killed another just to live, though all this may look absurd. The Muslims in a bid to live, and not to die (296) .

In fact, the novel is a brilliant exploration of the theme of partition.

It not only narrates a touching tale of the times of partition, but also presents some unforgettable scenes and sights of the great historic events artistically. It communicates the novelists's vision of life, his unique interpretation of life through the depiction of the political and historic events. The novel is remarkably vivid in recording the scenes and happenings of those terrible days, and is very profound and positive in its delineation of the theme.

Written after *Train to Pakistan* and *The Rape, Azadi* is strikingly different from any novel on this theme. It treats the subject on an epic scale and in a classic style. The novel consists of three parts: "The Lull," "The Storm" and "The Aftermath" which represent respectively the beginning, the middle and the end of the great event. The harrowing events associated with the partition are presented mainly through the family of Lala Kanshi Ram, an established grain merchant in the city of Sialkot, and the friends and families connected with him. Nahal portrays effectively a little world of these people — their placid, easy and happy lives before the partition, their terrible misfortunes during the undeclared civil war and their completely changed lives after the storm is over. Obviously, the novelist fully succeeds in delineating the true dimensions of the events that accompanied the partition, showing their physical and psychological impacts on human life. The novel brings out not only the irreparable material losses, but also the loss of personality caused by this tragic event. The immediate after-effect of the gruesome historic event on man is described through the condition of Lala Kanshi Ram: "He felt himself standing before a tunnel, where he could not see the other end. How long was the tunnel? And it looked so unnecessary, so superfluous, to him — what they were going through" (*Azadi* 369) . Nahal is the only writer who has been able to evince the tremendous psychological impact of the event on the people — viz. the complete loss of contact and communication with one another throwing them into a state of complete isolation and alienation, and making each a prisoner of his own "single self." The last few paragraphs of the novel are highly significant in this regard. Lala Kanshi Ram, Prabha Rani and Arun — the three major characters belonging to one family —, all suffer immeasurably from this

malady. Lala Kanshi Ram feels that he has lost all contacts and communications with his wife and son and is unable to lay bare his heart to them, and the other two also feel the same:

> That was another ruin azadi had caused. He (Lala Kanshi Ram) had lost the ability to communicate with his family, He could't establish a contact either with his wife or with his son. The affection was there. The concern was there. Their respect for him was there, too. Yet the contact was broken. Something had driven them apart. No, he couldn't reach them. For a new moments he had succeeded in the train — with his wife. That wouldn't come again.
>
> In their beds, Arun and Prabha Rani too were awake. Their eyes were open and they were looking at the ceiling. Arun wanted to sit up and speak to his father, but he couldn't. He too felt a wall between them, a hostility of a kind, he didn't know for what. His father had been superb throughout, he had carried his pain nobly, and Arun loved him for that.... Yet he could not form a connection with him.
>
> Prapha Rani knew her husband was awake, but she did not feel like calling out to him. She was caught in the same snare. She had lost the ease that was between them, and had become confined to her own single self. (369-70)

Inevitably, the vivid depiction of the loss of contact and communication in people creates a depressing effect on the reader, marring much of the heartening and uplifting note of the closing section of the narrative. However, the last three paragraphs of the novel, describing Sunanda's sewing machine running at top speed, are highly suggestive and significant; they present symbolically the mechanized life without real feelings and contacts. But the sewing machine, with all its continuous, rhythmic movements, sounds and vibrations, also suggests the continuous, rhythmic flow of life. These last paragraphs of the book, indeed, have more layers of meaning than one:

> In the adjoining room, Sunanda's sewing machine was still running at top speed. Occasionally it stopped. Occasionally it made only a slight noise, as when the wheel had moved only

a circle or two. And then it went wheezing on at top speed, as though it would never stop.

Arun tried to imagine her. She must be biting the thread with her white teeth and with those sensuous, delicately curved lips. She must be running the wheel back and forth with her hand. Now the tender hand with its tapering fingers must be on the handle attached to the wheel, for she was running it real fast...

The machine went whirring on, its wheel turning fast and its little needle moving up and down, murmuring and sewing through the cloth. The doors of both the rooms shook with its vibration.(370)

Undoubtedly, Nahal's *Azadi* is by and large the best novel written on the theme of partition so far.

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9

THE MALE 'PURE ARTIST' AS FEMINIST: R.K. NARAYAN'S *THE DARK ROOM* AS THE FIRST AUTHENTIC ARTICULATION OF FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS IN INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION

I was somehow obsessed with a philosophy of Woman as opposed to Man, her constant oppressor. This must have been an early treatment of the "Women's Lib" movement. Man assigned her a secondary place and kept her there with such subtlety and cunning that she herself began to lose all notion of her independence, her individuality, stature, and strength. A wife in an orthodox milieu of Indian society was an ideal victim of such circumstances. My novel (*The Dark Room*) dealt with her, with this philosophy broadly in the background. (R.K. Narayan, *My Days* 119)

" .... What possession can a woman call her own except her body? Everything else that she has is her father's, her husband's or her son's...."
(R.K. Narayan, *The Dark Room* 84)

... there was some sense in the women's movement: let them by all means read English novels, play tennis, have their All-India Conference and go to the pictures occasionally; but that should not blind them to their primary duties of being wives and mothers; they mustn't attempt to ape the Western women, all of whom ... lived in a chaos of promiscuity and divorce. (*The Dark Room* 105)

Notwithstanding the differences of critical opinion on this book in India and abroad right from 1938 when it first appeared to the

present times — there exist numerous reviews of it in England and India and varied essays on it by eminent critics like K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, William Walsh, Somerset Maugham, A.N. Kaul, V.Y. Kantak, C.D. Narasimhaiah, Harish Raizada, M.K. Naik, P.S. Sundaram and others (Susan Ram and N. Ram, *R.K. Narayan the Early Years: 1906-1945* 203-211) —, *The Dark Room*, though one of R.K. Narayan's early novels of the 1930s, is one of the most socially radical literary works and deserves special attention as it has immense relevance to the present and the future as well because of its focus on certain perennial feminist issues like the rejection of patriarchal social structure, search for independent entity, quest for self-fulfilment and identity, etc., as is evident from the three extracts, cited above. What is specially notable is that as early as 1937-1938 R.K. Narayan could have a clear, balanced understanding of, and approach to, women's movement; by that time even Virginia Woolf's groundbreaking work *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and Gandhiji's views on women's place and power in society were not much in the air in India. Moreover, R.K. Narayan is not only a male writer but also a pure artist who, unlike his illustrious contemporary fictionists — viz. Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and Bhabani Bhattacharya —, is not given to purposiveness of art or any commitment, political, philosophical or social, and yet he thoroughly examines some of the fundamental feminist ideas and ideals in *The Dark Room* through the protagonist, Savitri, and two other women named Shanta Bai and Ponni.

The novel under discussion concentrates on the domestic life of a middle class family with special reference to husband-wife/ man-woman relationship, and presents a significant facet of the novelist's patent theme of love and marriage. While *The Bachelor of Arts*, which precedes it, ends with the initial stage of love in married life, it begins and ends with the absence of true love and peace in domestic world, resulting in increasing incompatibility between husband and wife which throws the entire family into fear, disorder, despair and disaster. This state of married life causes immense sufferings not only to the couple but also to the children. The complete collapse of genuine love and conjugal integrity is the result of

the temperamental nature of the couple and the tyrannically domineering attitude of the male head of the family, Ramani.

The book opens with the sudden, feigned illness of the boy Babu at school time, and the parents express divergent, strong opinions. While the mother wants that the boy should not go to school because of his ailment, the father Ramani sees the boy's mischief and is determined to send him to school. Short-tempered, impatient and dominating as he is by nature, he calls his wife and before she is able to answer he calls her twice again and bitterly remarks, “Are you deaf?” Inevitably, this is followed by an unpleasant scene, revealing explicitly the incompatibility and clash between husband and wife:

> “You are too ready with your medical certificate. Babu, get up! Don't miss your school on any account.”
>
> Babu turned on his mother a look of appeal. She said, “Lie down, Babu. You are not going to school today.”
>
> Ramani said, “Mind your own business, do you hear?”
>
> “The boy has fever.”
>
> “No he hasn't. Go and do any work you like in the kitchen, but leave the training of a grown-up boy to me. It is none of a woman's business.”
>
> “Can't you see how ill the boy is?”
>
> “all right, all right,” Ramani said contemptuously....”
>
> Babu dressed and slunk off to school
>
> (*TheDarkRoom*1)

Before this quarrel comes to a close, the reader finds Ramani losing his temper on account of the vegetables served to him with his morning meal. Earlier he was angry due to the son's not going to school and now he scolds his wife because of the wrong choice of vegetables for his meal. In disgust he feels that he does not know when he shall have a little decent food to eat. He chides his wife by saying that he works hard throughout the day for such a distateful food, that a lot of money is spent and yet good meal is not provided to him, and that if the cook cannot prepare the food properly she must do it herself because nothing can be more important for a wife than this. As a matter of fact, he is extremely eccentric and unim-

aginable as the novelist states:

> ...for Ramani was eccentric and lawless in his taste. “Why do you torment me with this cucumber for the dozeneth time? Do you think I live on it?” Or he would say, if there was the slightest delay. “Ah, ah! I suppose i'll have to apply to my office for leave and wait for this salted cucumber! A fine thing. Never knew people could be so niggardly with cucumber, the cheapest trash in the market. Why not have cut up a few more, instead of trying to feed the whole household on a quarter of it? Fine economy. Wish you'd show the same economy in other matters.”(2)

There is little communication between Ramani and his wife Savitri. The former is extremely short-tempered and domineering, while the latter is passively audacious and haughty, expressing her indignation and reaction by her silence, angry outbursts and sulking in the dark room. When she does not offer any explanation of his bitter criticism of this and that, he is infuriated by her silence and sarcastically observes that she intends to save her energy by being silent. On the contrary, if she offers an explanation, as happens only at times, “ she would be told, ‘Shut up. Words won't mend a piece of foul cooking’” (3) . This evidences that there exists complete disharmony and lack of understanding between the two. All this becomes explicit even after the meal when Ramani dresses himself to get ready to go to his office. Often she is told what her husband thinks of her for not taking care of her clothes and for not keeping an eye on the cook Ranga. Almost every item of dress infuriates Ramani and incites him to make biting comments on his wife. The grumbling, growling and noisy outbursts of Ramani are also symbolically presented by Narayan through the way his car behaves every morning when he takes it out of the garage to go to the office and Savitri stands at the door of the house to see him off: “For a moment Savitri lingered in the door-way to hear the protests and growls of the old Chevrolet as it was taken out of the garage. When the noise of the engine ceased , a calm fell on the house” (3) .

Sometimes, when Savitri is alone in the house, she reflects upon her relationship with her husband. She realises that she has made herself very weak and she herself is responsible for her miserable plight because she has been very timid in the early days of her married life. She feels that she should have been assertive and dominating in the initial stage of her life with Ramani. She is unhappy to mark the sharp contrast between her helplessness and her friend Gangu's power and position in the family:

> How impotent she was, she thought; she had not the slightest power to do anything at home, and that after fifteen years of married life. Babu did look very ill and she was powerless to keep him in bed; she felt she ought to have asserted herself a little more at the beginning of her married life and then all would have been well. There were girls nowadays who took charge of their husbands the moment they were married; there was her own friend Gangu who had absolutely tethered up her poor man.(4-5)

Owing to the disharmony and lack of understanding between Savitri and her husband, she does not find any interest in domestic life; as a matter of fact, it becomes a complete drudgery. Thus, she is bored with the management of the house, and especially with kitchen business. Though she has a full-time cook to work in kitchen, she feels deeply disgusted with the planning and supervision of the dishes to be prepared by the cook. Naturally, she ponders: “Was there nothing else for one to do than attend to this miserable business of the stomach from morning till night” (8) ? It is perhaps the collapse of the feminine values, and it is so particularly when Savitri is not a highly educated, intellectually enlightened and emancipated type of modern woman. She repeatedly feels disillusioned with family responsibilities, and considers her supevision of the preparation of food as “miserable business for the stomach,” even though she has three children — two daughters and one son — to look after and feed them properly at least four times a day.

Despite the lack of proper sympathy and tender feelings between husband and wife, Savitri is shrewd enough to comprehend the ways of her husband. Ramani announces his return home in the evening by the hoarse hooting of Chevrolet horn which symbolises his harsh temperament. It is just by hearing the car horn, the way it sounds, that she is able to know all about the mood of her hus-

band in advance. The novelist describes this peculiar communication between the couple (peculiar in that it does not generate any cheerfulness and does not at all relieve the tense environment which mostly pervades the house as long as Ramani is there) in the following words:

> Ramani as a rule sounded his horn at about a furlong from his gate, two long boots which were meant to tell the household, "Ranga, keep the shed door open when I reach there, if you value your life," while to Savitri it said, "It is your business to see that Ranga does his work properly. So take warning." Some days the hooting could be less emphatic, and Savitri's ears were sufficiently attuned to the nuances and she could tell a few minutes in advance what temper her husband was in. Today the hooting was of the milder kind. It might mean that he was bringing home a guest for dinner or that he was in a happy mood, possibly through a victorious evening at the card table in his club. In either case they could await his arrival without apprehension. If he was happy he treated everyone tolerantly, and even with a kind of aggressive kindness; if he had a guest, he attended on him with such persistence and concentration that he would not notice the feelings of his family.(9)

All these eccentric ways of Ramani are fully known to Savitri. Sometimes the cause of clash between the two is the husband's bringing guests without giving prior intimation because this would mean confusion and inadequate arrangement, and Ramani is incapable of tolerating any poor show in the dining room. Hence the tension and clash between the two after the dinner is over. Unfortunately, if she says that he should give notice beforehand about the arrival of a guest, he would become furious and the exchange of bitter words between the two would inevitably take place, revealing their strange relationship without harmony:

> ... "We are not so down-and-out yet as not to afford some extra food without having to issue warnings beforehand."
>
> "But if we should have a lot of food left over every day?" Savitri had asked once or twice.
>
> "Throw it into gutter."

> "Or we can give it to the beggars?" Savitri suggested.
>
> "Certainly, by all means. Make it a rule every day to give some food to the beggars. Remember, if I see any beggar turned away from our door, I shall be very wild." (10)

In a house such as this, the children are always great sufferers, and this is also true of Babu and his two younger sisters. Unless the father is in a pleasant mood and this happens once in a blue moon, the children have to keep to their books for some time and then crawl away to their beds. But if he is in good cheers, all of them flock around him and enjoy his loud talks and jokes. In such a mood, Ramani makes boisterous love to everyone, particularly to Savitri who finds it awkward when it is done even in the presence of the cook and children. Thus, even in cheerful moments, Ramani behaves strangely and oddly. He would say to her with queer tenderness: "'You have a lot to learn yet. You are still a child, perhaps a precocious child, but a child all the same'" (12) . Then mischievously he would make love to her and seeing at his two daughters he would look at her and say with a wink: "'I wonder which of them will grow up like you? In any case, if any of them become half so ... h'm, h'm! as you are. I rather like the way you have arranged the jasmine in your hair today'" (13) . He is imbalanced in his thoughts and actions; and, as the novelist time and again reveals, he is in a joyful mood only occasionally, otherwise he is usually in his fits of anger and gloom.

Narayan presents an interesting contrast to Savitri and Ramani in the former's friend Gangu and her husband. The latter couple lives in peace and harmony, though the wife is very dominant. Gangu — the wife of a school teacher and mother of four children — is soaked in humour and ambition; her greatest ambition has been to become a film star, or a professional musician, or, at least, an outstanding Congress leader. Awful in her dress and manners, she stares back at people and talks loudly. Her husband never interferes with her as she is very dominating by nature and rules over her husband and all those who come in her contact. Her husband has no courage even to talk to her about her awkward ways. A brief extract from the novel is sufficient to bring out the essence of this

couple's life which is strikingly different from that of Savitri and Ramani:

> She talked irresponsibly and enjoyed being unpopular in the elderly society of South Extension. She left home when she pleased and went where she liked, moved about without an escort, stared back at people and talked loudly. Her husband never interfered with her but let her go her own way, and believed himself to be a champion of women's freedom; he believed he was serving the women's cause by constantly talking about votes and divorce. (14-5)

Certainly, there is a wonderful understanding between husband and wife which is completely missing in the case of Savitri and Ramani, and this is, indeed, very exemplary, particularly so in that Gangu's husband is a school teacher and yet he is able to put up with his extremely queer wife.

The contrast between Savitri and Gangu is well-marked in Chapter Three of the novel where the former's fear and nervousness are fully shown the moment her daughter Kamala informs her at Janamma's that her father wants her to come home immediately. Whereas Gangu is assertive and strong in her attitudes and is not afraid of her spouse, Savitri is timorous before her husband. Ramani comes home a bit earlier to go to cinema with her and when he does not find her there, he is very angry and she is terribly frightened of him. The basic nature of their relationship is evident in the passage quoted below:

> Savitri's throat went dry at the sight of her husband. He was pacing the front veranda; he had changed his coat and was wearing a blue blazer. He looked fixedly at her as she came up from the gate and said, "You have made me wait for half an hour." He added, "A fellow comes home from the office, dog-tired, and he has only the doors and windows to receive him. Where has everybody gone? Anyone could walk in and walk out with all the things in the house." (18-9)

Ramani, whimsical and unreasonable as he is, snubs Savitri for sending the children to play. And then suddenly he asks her to get ready to go to cinema in no time. While saying this, he looks

at his watch and asks her in a threatening tone if she wants to accompany him or not. Soon their incompatibility comes up to the surface when she wishes to take the children with them and he violently opposes it and does not agree to take even the youngest with them. Savitri does her utmost to persude and convince him that at least Kamala should accompany them, but he does not buzz an inch. When the child appeals her mother to help her, he is infuriated and warns her not to whimper before her mother. Also, he rebukes Savitri for spoiling the child, and asks her authoritatively to come out otherwise he shall go alone. Unfortunately, when Savitri remarks that she will like to go to cinema some other day, he, feeling that her authority has been defied, bursts out: "'No. I want you to come now. Children some other day. I have not come all the way to be told 'Some other day.' I am not a vagabond to come in and go out without a purpose. Go and dress quickly. It is already six-fifteen. We can't fool about on the veranda all day'" (20) . The differences between the husband and wife are unbridgeable, and the "twain shall never meet." Their incompatibility and failure in reaching an accord and meaningful relationship become conspicuous every moment. Thus, when Kamala weeps, cries and stamps her feet with a view to compelling her parents to agree to take her and the mother is inclined to fulfil her wish, Ramani's anger and frustration know no bounds. He shouts at both of them, and condemns the entire female race, revealing his complete failure to understand, and come to terms with, his wife:

> Ramani said, "If I hear you squeal, I will thrash you, remember. Be a good girl." He shouted a moment later, "Savitri, I will count sixty. You must dress and come out before that." Instead of counting sixty he went on talking: "Women are exasperating. Only a fool would have anything to do with them. Hours and hours for dressing! Why can't they put on some decent clothes and look presentable at home instead of starting their make-up just when you are in a hurry to be off? Stacks of costly saris, all folded and kept inside, to be worn only when going out. Only silly-looking rags to gladden our sight at home. Our business stops with paying the bill. It is only the outsider who

has the privilege of seeing a pretty dress." (20)

He is highly tyrannical and impatient in his attitude towards women and children, and this also accounts for the perpetual clash and tension between him and his spouse.

Ramani's short temper is one of the principal causes of the quarrel between him and his wife, and it is this which is a great hurdle in the way of their attaining a meaningful relationship. On the occasion of the *navaratri* festival in September, the electric current in the house is disrupted by a little lapse on the part of Babu, and this throws Ramani into a fierce mood of anger. Besides, he is infuriated by the delay in the opening of the garage door owing to the absence of Ranga who is sent with Babu to the electric office by Savitri. He is in such a terrible temper as he, without caring for the sacred day, angrily asks if everybody in the house is dead. Quite naturally Savitri is shocked by this, and consequently there ensues a very ugly scene, throwing a floodlight on the incurably incompatible natures of the two:

> "What a thing to say on a day like this, and at this hour! I have seen very few who will swear and curse at auspicious times as you do."
>
> "Then why couldn't you have opened your precious mouth and said what the matter was?"
>
> "There is nothing the matter. You see that there is no current and that there are no lights, and that's all that's the matter."
>
> "Has anybody gone to the electric office?"
>
> "Babu has gone there."
>
> "Babu, Babu, a very big man to go.
>
> ...."Ranga! Here, Ranga!" he howled in the dark.
>
> "I told you Ranga had gone to the electric office with Babu," Savitri said.
>
> "Why should everybody go to the electric office? Is Babu to be protected like a girl?...." He raved, "Bring some light, somebody."
>
> Savitri sent the hurricane lantern along with Kamala.... "Here, that's not the place to put the lantern. Do I want illumination for my feet? Bad training, rotten training." (34-5)

Ramani's indignation does not end there. The moment he sees Babu returning from the electric office, he hurls down abuses on him and, addressing him as blackguard, asks him why he has tempered with the electric lights. The boy does not comprehend his father's burst of anger and abuses and simply explains him the situation. But the father, instead of being pacified, is infuriated all the more and begins to beat him. Unable to bear the unnecessary humiliation and punishment, the son bluntly asks his father not to beat him. This incites Ramani to give him a few more slaps. Savitri's patience and tolerance are completely exhausted, and she dashes forward to protect the boy. She takes him away, and, in utter madness of anger and helplessness, both of them burst out crying. Nobody dines with Ramani, and soon Savitri goes to the dark room, next to the store, throws herself on the floor, and refuses to take her food. All this clearly shows that Ramani and Savitri are at poles apart from each other, and since there is complete lack of understanding and genuine communication between the two, they lose temper and quarrel on anything and everything, howsoever petty and insignificant it may be. As a matter of fact, everything in the house annoys Ramani, and he is dissatisfied and disgusted with everyone. The two are alienated from each other, and as they are living in the impenetrable darkness of misunderstanding and incompatibility, so the dark room, symbolic of their dark and gloomy relationship, in which Savitri often seeks refuge, keeps the two away from each other physically, emotionally and mentally.

The frequent clashes between Savitri and Ramani cause a lot of torture, tension and hardship to everyone in the family. In fact, the children as well as the servants suffer immensely because of the consistent discord between them. No wonder Ranga and the cook lament their frequent conflicts, and the latter observes: "'When the master and the mistress quarrel it is we that suffer'" (38) . The two servants analyse the recent quarrel between their master and mistress, and arrive at the conclusion that the lady was at fault, for she should not have intervened so insolently when the father was dealing with the son and had just slapped him. They draw the infer-

ences that women are horrible in these matters, that they should know their true place in domestic life, and that they must give sufficient concession to their men to deal with the children.

The worst sufferers are the children when the parents quarrel. Obviously, Kamala, Sumati and Babu are in a miserable plight when Savitri throws herself in the dark room. They try their best to make their mother leave the dark room, but do not succeed and hence suffer terribly. Kamala hates to see her mother in this condition on the auspicious occasion of *navaratri.* Babu feels guilty, for he is the cause of the quarrel. He despises himself and decides never to cry again in his life, for it was his crying which led the mother to interfere with his father. In utter despair and suffering, he says to his mother: "'Why do you go on lying there? It was only a slight slap that he gave me after all. You make too much of it. I am going to school now'" (40) . But the children's efforts fail to bring the mother out of the dark room. However, Ramani, a very harsh and cruel husband, is not at all moved by her sulking. He tells the children that they must not bother about anything, and declares to his wife: "'Don't imagine that the festival can be spoiled by your sulking'" (41) . Savitri also takes a very firm stand and retaliates her husband by her haughtiness. She refuses to take food and continues to be in the dark room. This greatly worries and upsets the children, for "Mother's absence gave the house a still and gloomy appearance" (42) . They believe that if she can be made to answer some questions and get involved in conversation, she can be persuaded to leave the dark room. Naturally, they, one by one, go to her and put questions to her, but, to their dismay, she is relentless and determined not to come out of the dark room. At last they plan to bring the old lady Janamma, a friend of Savitri, to the house so that their mother may be pacified, and this plan succeeds well. The elderly woman impresses upon Savitri's mind the truth: "'....When the elders quarrel it is the children who really suffer'" (45) . Also, she advises her not to oppose her husband or argue with him, since every man has all kinds of worries and suffers a lot in his professional world. She cites her instance for never opposing and quarrelling with her husband. Furthermore, she underlines the basic nature of men: "' Men are

impetuous. One moment they will be all temper and the next all kindness. Men have to bear many worries and burdens, and you must overlook it if they are sometimes unreasonable'" (45) . The wise, elderly woman's words soothe Savitri, and she gradually begins to feel very foolish at the thought of her own resentment which now appears very insignificant. She suddenly condemns herself for her selfish gloom, and comes out of the dark room.

The incompatibility and disharmony between Ramani and Savitri may also be attributed, to a great extent, to the fact that Savitri adheres tenaciously to tradition and conservatism, while her husband has a highly romantic temperament and a strong predilection for unconventionality. Thus, she is devoted to the piety of moral outlook and the sanctity of married life. Solely dedicated to the traditional duties and family customs, she is devoid of the protestations of love or the art of dalliance. Unfortunately, she is most pathetically betrayed and is left to her sorry fate, though she is truly dutiful. She is shocked by the weaknesses of her husband and fights against them. But often her fight is passive, and she sulks and suffers in silence. The romantic, artistic husband feels weary with her, and does not like the untidy appearance of his unromantic wife. He feels dissatisfied with her and with this kind of woman psychology in general (20) .

Indeed, the marital discord is portrayed with great poignancy and veracity in *The Dark Room.* The book vividly presents the conflict between modernity and tradition. So long as Ramani behaves like a normal man, peace dwells in the family except occasional strifes occurring due to his fits of temper. There are moments of joy and relief when Ramani indulges in mischievousness. Savitri feels immensely happy and free when he is in sexy mood. But she sulks in the dark room when her sense of dignity is hurt by her husband's misdemeanour and ignoble words. She loses her poise and balance of mind when he savagely beats a child or does something immoral. But what really damages the peace of the family is the fact that Ramani is a fop, attaching much importance to external appearance. Also, he is very particular about refined outlook and perfect etiquette. Unluckily, he does not find these things in his wife and

hence the dissatisfaction and disharmony. At times he is proud of his wife's fair complexion and well-proportioned features, but such moments are rare because only now and then she is elegantly dressed up. While he is fastidious and wants everything to be done with perfection, she deters herself from affectation and genteel manners. As K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar avers, she does not possess "the capacity to be at once a goddess and a woman, the eternal feminine and the womanly woman" (K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Indian Writing in English* 371) .

However, the strife between Savitri and Ramani would have never reached a critical point, if there had not come unexpectedly in his life Shanta Bai — Narayan's first liberated woman who rejects the patriarchal social structure and goes her own way. Opposite of Savitri, she is young, pretty, vivacious, educated and has a finished appearance. His sense of perfect womanhood is fully gratified by the overt charms and qualities of this glamorous lady. Her candour and smartness impress him very much. Her curve and contour are replete with warmth. Ensnared by her beauty at the very first sight, he treats her with "unofficial humanity" (49) . Undoubtedly, he is infatuated by her bold, refined manners and her fascinating exhibition of physical and mental charms. Thus, even during the interview when he is snubbed by her, he does not mind it. He does his utmost to impress her and know as much about her as possible. True, "While, till now, all the interviewees had been at his mercy, he found himself, to his distress, at the mercy of this applicant. He liked her pluck. Very seldom, he told himself, did such fair lips utter words without affectation or timidness. He admired her manners very much"(50) .

Shanta Bai's moving narration of the events of her early tragic life further captivates his mind by intensifying his infatuation for her. She tells him how at the age of twelve only she was married to a cousin who was given to gamble and liquor, and so she left home at eighteen much against the wishes of her parents. Luckily, with the help of one of her aunts she resumed her studies and could pass her B.A., but could not get a suitable job even in three years, and hence she observes with bitterness that in spite of having fairly

good education, a woman, like any man, does not get rid of her struggle and it is absurd to say or believe that a woman's redemption is possible through educatioon: "'.... It is all nonsense to say that women's salvation lies in education. It doesn't improve their lot a bit; it leaves them as badly unemployed as the men'" (50) . Little wonder Ramani is determined to help her in every possible manner, and soon enables her to leave a hotel to the room in the passage of the Engladia Insurance Company office which becomes "a nuptial chamber" (52) to which every one in the office resents. Not only this, he provides her with a cot of his house and all this indicates his infatuation for her. When his wife strongly opposes his move of taking her favourite teakwood bench for the new female employee in his office, he, like a clever husband with bad intentions, cajoles her and makes romantic jestures and advances. In no time he is irresistibly attracted towards Shanta Bai because of her youthful beauty and befitting dress, and pines, "Why couldn't one's wife dress so attractively (54) ? and wonders, "What an impotent, boorish beggar that husband must be who couldn't hold this fair creature" (55) ! He is damn pleased to have such a beauty on the office staff, and derides the prevalent conventional thinking of keeping men and women separately: "It was all nonsense to keep men and women separate in water-tight compartments; women were as good as men and must be treated accordingly. He told Pereira, 'The head office has confirmed the lady's appointment'" (55) . However, persons in his office soon detect his amorous intentions and when they mark his adversely changed attitude towards them, one of them ejaculates: "'Does he take me for a woman-hunter like himself'"(57) ?

As Shanta Bai is a total contrast to the conventional Savitri who has completely failed to maintain even very ordinary kind of marital ties with her husband Ramani, she instantly captivates him by her unconventional thinking and living. Thus, one evening when he instinctively pays a visit to her place, she remarks: "'Oh, I love unconventional things'.... 'Otherwise I shouldn't be here, but nursing children and cooking for a husband. Come in, come in, see how I have made a home for myself'"(59) . A person, whether a man or a woman, generally likes and loves just the antithesis of his or her

spouse, and this is true of Ramani also. Therefore, he develops the habit of visiting Shanta Bai every late evening on his way home from the club; it is impossible for him to go home directly without meeting her. Though moody, dictatorial and freakish, she, by virtue of her education, possesses the capability of mastering her moods, and this greatly impresses him because Savitri lacks it completely. Drawing a comparison between his wife and his mistress, he states:

> More than the breakdown, the subsequent heroic effort to master it stirred him deeply. He had never seen such things before; his wife's moods were different. She knew only one thing, a crude sulking in the dark room. She never made an effort to conquer her moods; that was why, he felt, women must be educated; it made all the difference. He felt unhappy at thinking disparagingly of his wife. Poor girl, she did her best to keep him happy and the home running. He told himself that he was not criticising her but only implying that with a little education she might have been even better. (66-7)

Shanta Bai is more stubborn and dictatorial to Ramani than what he is to his wife Savitri. She orders him to see a picture with her, despite his unwillingness due to the rumour about their illicit relationship. He dances to the tune of her irrational demands and commands, but shows a vastly different behaviour towards his wife. Thus, once when he, after passing the whole night with his mistress, returns home at 5 a.m. and his wife anxiously asks him where he has been, he answers petulantly and insultingly, "'Do you want me to stand at the street door and shout my explanation'" (69) ? This arouses in Savitri well-founded suspicion about his fidelity and deepens the already existing chasm between them. Rumours and scandals regarding her husband's extramarital relationship with Shanta Bai reach her soon. For some time she does not believe the gossips and despises herself for listening to rubbish things about him. But when her friend Gangu informs her about his seeing a Tamil picture with a young woman, Savitri is shocked and thinks, "... so he had not been poring over accounts all night. Perhaps he had to go out and meet someone in the theatre" (74) . Now the cat is out of the bag, and it is crystal clear that he is having an extra-

marital relationship with Shanta Bai and the gossips about him are not unfounded. Her first reaction is that she is middle-aged, old-fashioned and plain, while the other woman is young and pretty. But soon she struggles to recover from the state of defeatism and depression, and scrutinizes her body minutely in the looking glass to soothe and assure herself that she is not as ugly or unpleasant as she has been believing.

With a rare insight into woman psychology, R.K. Narayan shows Savitri taking utmost care of herself by beautifying herself as much as she can before her husband returns home in the evening. She is in a queer state of mind, and undergoes the torments of the persistent inner conflict between hope and hopelessness:

> When the children went away for their study and sleep, Savitri sat up, her heart in a flutter: would he come back tonight? It would be impossible to bear it if he kept away again; the perfume and flowers to be wasted! She wrung her hands. She went to the mirror, stole another look at herself, and thought that if he saw her now he would certainly like her. Love her as boisterously as he had loved her in the first week of their marriage.(79)

She waits for him the whole night, and at last with rumpled hair and crushed flower on her head she falls asleep and sees her husband in the dream holding her in his arms. Next morning on Sunday when she does not find him in the house, she is all gloom and her mind reverts "to its obsession: he hasn't come, he hasn't come, he doesn't care for me now (before the mirror) , perhaps she is better than I am" (80) . Ramani returns home at about 9 p.m., and a clever man as he is, he, suffering from a sense of guilt, endeavours to cajole Savitri who is about to be hysterical. When he tries repeatedly to hold her hands lovingly, she pushes away his hands and violently shakes herself free, bursting out angrily against man's cruel, wayward behaviour towards woman who is hardly a living, feeling creature to him:

> "I'm a human being," she said, through her heavy breathing. "You men will never grant that. For you we are playthings when you feel like hugging, and slaves at other times. Don't think

> that you can fondle us when you like and kick us when you choose."(82)

However, Ramani's endearing tone, acquiescence and fondling Savitri pacify, please and satisfy her. But when she asks him to promise that he will not go near Shanta Bai again, he, a typical dominant male as he is, gets extremely irritated and asks her not to be "a silly fool" (82) . Infuriated by this, she declares in a threatening tone that he cannot have her and the harlot (Shanta Bai) at the same time. When he does not succumb to her genuine demand, she goes out of the room banging the door. The domineering and tyrannical male in him rises to the surface instantly:

> A terrific indignation welled up in him: so she was trying to nose-lead him with threats of leaving, like a damned servant! She could please herself, the ingrate. All the kindness and consideration he had wasted on her. When his bank balance was low he had somehow bought her that gold-laced sari and jumper because she desired it, and the diamond studs on her nose... the ingrate! (83)

Nevertheless, for a while fear shakes his whole being on discovering that she is determined to leave the house all alone in the darkness of night then and there. Therefore, he again tries to cool her down and make her stay inside the house. But when she hysterically cries that he is dirty and impure and even if she burns her skin she cannot cleanse herself of the impurity of his touch, he clenches his teeth, raises his hand and ejaculates, "'Woman, get away now'" (84) . She retaliates him by questioning if he thinks she is going to stay there. When he asks her to go away with all her things, the marital ties between them are completely ruptured and she, like a genuine feminist speaking on behalf of all women suffering from the chasm between them and their husbands, states the bleak, bitter reality of the marginalized woman's miserable lot in the tradition-tortured, male-dominated social structure:

> ".... What possession can a woman call her own except her body? Everything else that she has is her father's, her husband's or her son's. So take these too...." She removed her diamond earrings, the diamond studs on his nose, her necklace, good bangles and rings, and threw them at him. (84)

She is further shocked when she goes to her children to take them with her and her husband stops her from even touching and talking to them by asserting that they are his. The fathomless agony, anguish, amazement and desperation of a helpless, neglected and deserted wife are explicit in Savitri's following remarks:

> "Yes, you are right. They are yours, absolutely. You paid the midwife and the nurse. You pay for their clothes and teachers. You are right. *Didn't I say that a woman owns nothing?"* She broke down, staring at their fidgeting forms on the beds....
>
> ....
>
> The diamonds and the gold lay at his feet on the floor. He picked them up. "This ring and this necklace and this stud were not given by me. They are your father's."
>
> She shrunk from them. "Take them away. They are also a man's gift." (84-5, italics added)

Broken-hearted, depressed and distressed, she, throwing a look at her children and him, walks out of the house in the silent street around midnight all alone. Under the impact of the numbness of mind, she walks through the town in the darkness of night. Even the children do not matter to her as they are, in her view, "all a husband's" (86) . She is in a state of utter confusion and perplexity. For a moment she thinks of going to her husband's office to drag out Shanta Bai, while the very next moment she wonders at her courage of defying her husband and walking all alone outside the house in the night without fear. Her mind is a cauldron of thoughts related to the past and the present. Always possessed with fear till then, she is at last free from it and philosophizes about it realistically and logically thus:

> ".... One definite thing in life is Fear. Fear, from the cradle to the funeral pyre, and even beyond that, fear of torture in the other world. Afraid of a husband's displeasures, and of the discomforts that might be caused to him, morning to night and all night too. How many nights have i slept on the bed on one side, growing numb by the unchanged position, afraid lest any slight movement should disturb his sleep and cause him

> discomfort." Afraid of one's father, teachers and everybody in real life, afraid of one's husband, children and neighbours in later life — fear, fear, in one's heart till the funeral pyre was lit, and then fear of being sentenced by Yama to be held down in a cauldron of boiling oil....(86-7)

She travels back to her past — her sister, brother and parents. She feels an intense desire to see them, and then die. A perennial stream of ideas rushes to her mind. She recalls her joyful days and nights with her husband and the love letters that he wrote to her. For a while she thinks that her husband is not a bad man and he is bewitched by the charms of young Shanta Bai, and unluckily he could not see her charming looks a day before. It is three o' clock, and she thinks that when it is 6 a.m. "people would come and drag her back home or lock her up as being mad" (89). Inevitably, she finds it useless to sit on the river-step with a wandering mind. She realises that as she is not educated, she cannot earn her bread and has to live on her father's, husband's or son's income. Consequently, she wishes her daughters to acquire higher education for not depending on marriage for their salvation. And then she makes the following bitter, cynical but realistic statement about a married woman, whom she considers in no way better than a prostitute, for her very existence rests upon her economic dependence on her spouse:

> ".... What is the difference between a prostitute and a married woman? The prostitute changes her men, but a married woman doesn't, that's all; but both earn their food and shelter in the same manner...."
>
> ....
>
> No one who couldn't live by herself had a right to exist. (89-90)

In a mental state of "To be or not to be", Savitri rather fails in drowning herself into the river and accidentally the blacksmith cum burglar Mari somehow rescues her before she is in deep water by dragging her out of the river. Recovering from the stunning situation next morning, she realises her position and with that the old pain and bitterness revive in her. She tells her whole tragic tale to Mari's

wife Ponni who is very good and sympathetic to Savitri in distress, and grievously informs her that, despite her being slave to her husband for years, he does not want her because he is ensnared by some woman. Reacting sharply to it, Ponni expresses her view that women should always keep men under the rod and asserts: " ' ....I can't believe any husband is unmanageable in this universe ...' " (101-2).

Savitri's sudden, unexpected defiance surprisingly shocks Ramani as she has ever been obedient and docile, and the burst of fire inside her is a revelation to him. He has expected her just to sulk in the dark room for a few days and then to accept things as they are. He is stupefied by her boldness, for nobody could dare dictate to him or even advise him, including his father who, a few years before his death, counselled him to continue his studies but was bluntly told by Ramani: "'I know better what I must do'" (104). A self-made man, he has needed no advice from anyone, and least of all from his wife. Though not totally against the women's movement and their right to read and write, play games, attend conferences and see pictures, he is deadly opposed to their freedom after the Western style and the rejection of the traditional ideal of woman as primarily wife and mother — viz. patriarchy. His belief in the supremacy of husband over wife is explicit in the following extract:

> ... but that should not blind them to their primary duties of being wives and mothers; they mustn't attempt to ape the Western women, all of whom, according to Ramani's belief, lived in a chaos of promiscuity and divorce. He held that India owed its spiritual eminence to the fact that the people here realised that a woman's primary duty (also a divine privilege) was being a wife and a mother. And what woman retained the right of being called a wife who disobeyed her husband? Didn't all the ancient epics and Scriptures enjoin upon woman the strictest identification with her husband? He remembered all the heroines of the epics whose one dominant quality was a blind, stubborn following of their husbands, like the shadow following the substance.(105)

Small wonder Ramani could not bear his wife's threatening be-

haviour last night. He feels that she should not have treated him like a low-class fellow and that nobody has any right to object to his relationship with Shanta Bai, who, in contrast to Savitri, is a "splendid creature with her understanding heart and cultured outlook" (106) . Accordingly, he decides neither to worry about her nor to search her; she has gone on her own and hence should face the consequences. He is totally against the belief that the essence of woman's attitude towards man is that firmness is all-important for her in life, and that if she finds a man squeamish she should drive him away with a whip. He is sure that Savitri will return soon and will feel sorry when her lunacy passes away. He considers the present act as only a different version of the sulking in the dark room; she must now be sulking in the dark corner of some friend's house. In this situation the worst sufferers are the children, despite Ramani's best efforts to make them happy by concocting a story about their mother's absence from the house and by comforting them in every possible manner. He even takes them to see a Laurel and Hardy film which they enjoy so much that they forget the world and the absence of their mother for quite some time.

Savitri's anger persists unabated and she is determined to defy the patriarchal set-up by living her own life with economic independence. Naturally, when she, much against her wishes, is taken by Ponni and Mari to their house in the nearby Sukkur village and they insist her to eat food, she says to them plainly: "'I am resolved never to accept food or shelter which I have not earned'" (118) . She demands for a work to earn her livelihood, and this causes a problem for Mari who has no easy solution to it. As such he feels angry with his wife for helping Savitri in every possible manner. He sees the cause of his resentment and grief in his granting much freedom and power to his wife:

> He felt angry with his wife for her fussing. Why couldn't she leave the woman alone? If she didn't want food it was entirely her business. This was what came of allowing too much liberty to women; they ought to be kept under proper control and then all would be well. He felt irritated with himself at his own helplessness before his wife.... (120)

However, unable to cope with the indignation of his wife, he leaves home in search of a job for Savitri, and at last approaches the old priest of the village temple. When he narrates his present doleful tale to the old man, the latter scolds him expressing the age-old biased social attitude towards the marginalized female as if she were a thing, and not a human being: "'If she won't let you rest, thrash her; that is the way to keep woman sane. In these days you fellows are mugs, and let your women ride you about'" (125) . He further snubs him saying that no woman can be employed in the temple as she may create some mischief and bring a bad name to him. Moreover, the woman, who, having a husband, needs shelter and job, is certainly unworthy according to the social norms: "'There must be something wrong about her if she has no home and has to seek a livelihood outside; her husband must have driven her out. Why should a husband drive a wife out'" (125) ? But soon the old priest's hypocrisy comes out when, in the hope of getting his broken umbrellas repaired by Mari and on seeing the young stout Savitri for the menial work in the temple, he says to Ponni and Mari that he really wants someone to keep the temple tidy as he is getting old. Determined to earn her bread, Savitri is now a new woman in quest of her identity, self-respect, freedom from the clutches of husband, and economic independence. Consequently, she sees

> ... a new life opening before her.... She would dedicate her life to the service of god, numb her senses and memory, forget the world, and spend the rest of her years thus and die. *No husband, home or children.* Ah, children! She would harden herself not to yearn for them. She would pray for them at the shrine night and day, and god would protect them; they could grow, go their ways and tackle life as fate had ordained for each of them. What was this foolish yearning for children, this dragging attachment? One ought to do one's duty and then drift away. Did the birds and the animals worry about their young ones after they had learned to move? Why should she alone think of them night and day? (127, italics added)

The new, emancipated Savitri is replete with peace, satisfaction, happiness and a sense of triumph: "'This is my own rice, my

very own; and I am not obliged to anyone for this. This is nobody's charity to me.' She felt triumphant and a great peace descended on her..." (138) . But her spending night in the temple room all alone fills her with fear and depression, and she realises the tragedy and the miserable, cursed lot of the weaker 'second sex'. So, she cries out in agony and anguish: "'What despicable creations of god are we that we can't exist without a support. I am like a bamboo pole which cannot stand without a wall to support it...'" (141) . Soon she pines for the comfort, security and lack of loneliness of her home. Besides, she craves for the company of her children. Naturally, the sense of separation, futility and defeatism overpowers her completely and she sobs bitterly. She now realises that she is too weak to fight against the patriarchal social set-up and admits her defeat: "'.... This is defeat, I accept it. I am no good for this fight. I am a bamboo pole...'" (142) . Therefore, she decides to return home. Meanwhile, her absence of three days frighten and upset her husband as well as the children whom their father fails to console. At last Ramani leaves home to search her, but soon he is much perturbed because he does not know how to find out a lost wife. In utter confusion and distress, he curses Savitri for this agonising and humiliating situation, and ultimately decides to wait for one day more. To his great relief, he finds Savitri amidst the children when he returns home in the evening. The confusion, dejection and fear of Savitri soon evaporate when her husband behaves pleasantly, and the two cut jokes with each other. But her painful obsession with woman's subordination/ subjugation to the male in the family persists to the end of the narrative as evident in her confused hesitation and inability to invite Mari, who has been her saviour — a good Samaritan —, to her house when he is on his usual round as repairer of locks because of her firm, shocking belief that the house is not hers: "'Why should I call him here? What have I'" (157) ? Apparently, her reconciliation, despite her incompatibility — temperamental and intellectual — with her husband and her overt rejection of patriarchal social set-up/ structure, with her spouse is just a matter of utter compulsion without a slight tinge of freedom of choice.

The above analysis of the novel evinces that R.K. Narayan

artistically deals with woman's marginalization, which brings to surface the baneful influence of gender discrimination, which, together with woman's incapability to earn her livelihood due to lack of sufficient education, further widens the chasm between husband and wife. Inevitably, this makes her obsessively aware of the evil of patriarchy and she strives frantically to hit it hard so as to achieve emancipation, true identity and self-fulfilment. More than *The Guide* and *The Painter of Signs* with avowed feminists like Rosie and Daisy as protagonists respectively, this book is concerned with the basic women issues preoccupying the minds of the enlightened people the world over. Three women in the narrative — viz. Savitri, Shanta Bai and Ponni — are staunch feminists, and though Savitri is the central figure of it, the main focus of Narayan's feminist consciousness is on Shanta Bai who prefigures the novelist's two best-known emancipated women, Rosie and Daisy. Undoubtedly, *The Dark Room* is the first artistically convincing and elaborate statement of feminist consciousness in Indian English literature, and that, too, by a male fictionist who, in sharp contrast to his distinguished contemporaries like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattachaya and several others, believes in the dictum of 'Art for Art's sake'. However, what strikes me most is that the novel, like Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, is open-ended with remarkable artistic detachment, for the end does not hint or suggest, in any way, as whether or not Savitri, like Isabel Archer in James's book, will live with her husband in harmony for long without resorting to the passive or active defiance of patriarchy, and whether or not Ramani will end his extramarital relationship with Shanta Bai and his dictatorial attitude towards his spouse in order to create an atmosphere of mutual trust, understanding and peace. The novelist displays Shakespeare-like objectivity by not siding with either Savitri or Ramani; their diametrically opposite viewpoints and attitudes — Savitri's outright rejection/ condemnation of patriarchy and Ramani's downright denunciation of Indian woman's desire and attempt to copy her European counterpart, though he is all for women's movement regarding their education and enlightenment — have been presented with utmost impartiality.

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