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POINTS OF VIEW

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CONTENTS

S. Viswanathan	Widening Horizons of Significance in Character Utterances in Shakespeare	3
S.K. Sharma R.K. Verma	Antifeminism in Bernard Shaw's <i>Arms and the Man</i>	14
Santosh Kumar Singh	W. Somerset Maugham's View of Sex	24
Pramathesh Bhattacharya	Nissim Ezekiel's Attitude towards God and Religion	32
Kuhu Sharma Chanana	Lesbian Fabulation in Suniti Namjoshi's Poetry: A Tool to Familiarize or to Escape?	42
Vallari Gaur	Maneuvering Gender Roles through Media in Lurence's <i>Fire-Dwellers</i>	64
Manju	"The Pageant of Life Going Blithely and Fleet / To the Feast of Eternity": Sarojini Naidu's Vision of Life	70
Deepika Srivastava	<i>Shalimar the Clown</i> : A Many-sided Allegorical Narrative	80
Sonali Das	Writing the Partition: Exploring the Humane Aspect of Bapsi Sidhwa's <i>Cracking India</i>	86
Rashmi Gaur	Edifice of Sexuality in the Short Stories of Manto	92

Anupama Chowdhury	Violence without Borders: Critiquing Tehmina Durani's <i>My Feudal Lord</i> and <i>Blasphemy</i>	98
K.K. Sharma	The Aesthetic and Ethic of Homosexuality: Some Observations	104
Wafa Hamid	Gender in the Ghazal	126
Ajay Kumar Shukla	Yesterday's Victim, Today's Victimiser: Dalit Consciousness in Vijay Tendulkar's <i>Kanyadaan</i>	132
BOOK REVIEWS		
R.S. Sharma	O.P. Mathur, <i>The Spectrum of Literature: Experiments in Exploration</i>	138
Shubha Dwivedi	Susheel Kumar Sharma, <i>The Door Is Half Open</i>	140
O.P. Mathur	Basavaraj Naikar, <i>The Rani of Kittur</i>	142
Contributors		144

WIDENING HORIZONS OF SIGNIFICANCE IN CHARACTER UTTERANCES IN SHAKESPEARE

S. Viswanathan

Hamlet: Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel.

Polonius: By the mass, and it's like a camel indeed.

Hamlet: Methinks it's like a weasel.

Polonius: It is backed like a weasel.

Hamlet: Or like a whale.

Polonius: Very like a whale. (*Hamlet*, 3.2. 400-406)

Hamlet in this among other exchanges with Polonius is playing a deliberate teasing game more than half in mockery and part in an attempt to show himself as touched in the mind, all the while enjoying the game. Polonius all too readily sees in quick succession a camel, a weasel and a whale in the same cloud. His quick assent to Hamlet's quick-change impressions of the cloud is meant partly to humour Hamlet and partly to avoid giving offence by contradicting him. Hamlet knows that 'they fool (him) to the top of (his) bent'. The point of the game is Hamlet's exposure of Polonius for what he is, a yes-man, especially to Claudius, and his subservience and servility, despite his being chancellor to the King. These constitute the immediate dramatic context of the passage. Indeed, we could imagine Burbage as Hamlet on the Shakespearian stage pointing his sword, which would soon run through Polonius, towards a real or imaginary cloud in the sky to which a good part of the spectator area was open rather than perhaps towards the 'heavens' that were painted on the top cover of the main acting area.

From another angle it bespeaks Hamlet's attempt to find relief through such games from his charged mind, soon after the confirmation of his uncle's heinous villainy through the play of the Mouse-trap. It also bears testimony to the vividness of Hamlet's imagination, his poetic imagination. It is the French pilot-poet who sees in the stars, as he flies his aircraft up in the air, a laughing mien. An anecdote has it that Ben Jonson once lay awake all through one night watching a battle between two sets of soldiers on his big toes.

Furthermore, what Hamlet sees in the cloud is a three-in-one phenomenon, in quick kaleidoscopic morphing, somewhat like a per-

spective picture the kind already known in Shakespeare's time. More, it is like the phenomenological model of a two-in-one picture of a silhouetted rabbit and the Maltese cross. This latter example has been instanced by Norman Rabkin as a model of 'complementarity', the characteristic feature which he isolated as a mark of Shakespeare's plays, which makes them yield two divergent, sometimes opposite interpretations. The point is that if you see the rabbit you miss the cross at the moment, and *vice versa*. You see either a camel, or a weasel or a whale in the same unchanging cloud at a moment. The passage thus widens its circles of meaning or suggestion as far as phenomenology.

Cloudscape is the metaphoric basis for a speech by Antony at the tragic nadir of his life and career in *Antony and Cleopatra* (4.12.2-10)

Antony: Sometimes we see a cloud that is dragonish;
A vapour sometimes like a bear or lion,
A tower'd citadel, a pendant rock,
A forked mountain, or blue promontory
And mock our eyes with air; thou hast seen these signs;
They are black vesper's pageants.
That which is a horse, even with a thought
The rack dislimns and makes it indistinct
As water is water.

Antony is speaking soon after his ignominious defeat at the hands of Octavius in sea battle due to the sudden flight of Cleopatra and her fleet fighting on Antony's side from the battle in fright. The changing shapes of the clouds and their quick disappearance serve Antony as a synecdoche for the utter change and the vanished glory of his unconquerable warrior-heroism. He is overcome with a sense of the same dissolution and disintegration in himself as witnessed in the clouds. It feels like a loss of identity and personality to him. The sense of fluidity and delinquiscence which Wilson Knight felt to be a governing suggestion or sensation in the play is well captured in the cloud metaphor which encapsulates a concentration of the suggestion, as it were. The sense of an ending, that of

Unwarm Eros; the long day's task is done
And we must sleep. (4.12. 35-36)

is captured in the dissolution of the clouds, 'black vesper's pageants.' It is Antony's painful realization of the ultimate transience

of all power and glory. Especially ll. 5-7 in the description of the clouds, '... a blue promontory / with trees upon its top nodding unto the world / And mocking our eyes with air' bring home the sense of the emptiness and fleetingness of it all. It is 'an insubstantial pageant' vanishing into air, thin air, to adapt the phrase from *The Tempest*. It may also be noted that such sudden baroque appearances and disappearances of pageants became a fashion of several masques presented at court during the period of writing of *Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Tempest*.

To turn to a speech in *All's Well that Ends Well*

Lafeu: They say miracles are past and we have our philosophical persons to make modern and familiar, things supernatural and causeless. Hence is it that we make trifles of terrors ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge, when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear. (2.3. 1-8)

Lafeu is commenting on the miraculous cure effected by Helena of the King's disease which had been given up by the greatest physicians as incurable and mortal. Helena voluntarily undertakes to cure it on the basis of the notes left behind by her dead father who was a physician of repute. In her persuasion of the King to permit her to treat him she evinces her faith in divine grace and succour in her endeavour. She is driven by this faith in heavenly powers. Lafeu surprised by joy at the successful outcome expounds the need for humble wonderment at such an extraordinary event. In the process he takes a dig at our 'philosophy', the term then used to denote the new trend of a proto-scientism and rationalism in the emerging helio-centric world-view and scientific discoveries like the power of the magnet and the circulation of blood in the human body. Lafeu would have people to read extraordinary events like Helena's miracle cure as manifestation of heavenly power. Such signs are wonders, awesome phenomena not to be made light of, but be submitted to as 'an unknown fear'. Lafeu's sentiment echoes what Hamlet tells Horatio immediately, after his meeting with his father's Ghost, 'There are more things in earth and heaven than is dreamt of in your philosophy'. Lafeu's speech has reference to the ideological development at the period. It points to the ever continuing tension between the magical world-view and the scientific world-view.

Indeed, we could trace such a tension lurking in several places in *All's Well*. Helena herself who appears to be a representative of heavenly grace says earlier

Our remedies off in ourselves do lie,
Which we ascribe to heaven; the fatal sky
Gives us free scope; only doth backward pull
Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull. (I.I. 235-238)

Yet it is Helena who earlier on in the same scene made a fervent defence of virginity invoking its mystique and power. The tension finds a parallel in the contemporary antimony between faith and good works between the 'old' and the 'new' religions. It is indeed a miraculous fortuitousness that works in favour of Helena throughout the play. At the same time, it is her strong resolve to pursue her end of winning Bertram over that impels her. She hitches her wagon to the star and lands her prize (or, 'prize') . A parallel socio-political antinomy that builds up is the question of merit vs. birth. The king in the speech he makes to Bertram to persuade the unwilling youth to agree to take Helena to wife for the reason that she was not born to nobility, uses the argument from merit and desert as overriding birth and class and asserts that the king also has to earn his title through his functioning and not through anything like 'diving right' a potent plea against blind adherence to 'degree'.

We shall consider an *Othello* example of the kind of passages we are looking at.

Emilia: O! who hath done this deed?
Desdemona: Nobody I myself; farewell!
Commend me to my kind lord, O! farewell
Othello: Why, how should she be murder'd?
Emilia: Alas, who knows?
Othello: You heard her say it was not I.
Emilia: She said so; I must needs report the truth
Othello: She is like a liar gone to burning hell.
'Twas I that kill'd her. (*Othello*, 5.2. 121-128)

We shall focus on Othello's assertion that Desdemona gave up her life with a lying utterance on her lips which lie in particular would consign her to hell. The utterance comes fraught with deep, moving and painful irony, charged with tragic force in its immediate as well as total dramatic context. In terms of the drama, Desdemona's noble

lie and her compliment to her 'kind lord' crown the beauty of the person and her life. The criticism that Desdemona lacked a saving intelligence and yielded to fecklessness gets silenced in the face of such self-effacement and self-abnegation as Desdemona's in the very last moment of her life. It is Othello who prevaricates for a moment or two, 'it was not I'. The next moment he pronounces eschatological doom on Desdemona. At a primary level Othello makes the assertion in the spirit of the typical revenger in the revenge tradition who would choose a moment to kill his victim so that he is sure to go to hell. For Othello, victim to Iago's villainy, it is revenge killing as well as honour killing as punishment of what he is deluded into taking as her infidelity. One recalls Hamlet's sparing of Claudius caught at prayer so that he may be killed at a moment when he cannot escape damnation.

In several of his stances and utterances towards the very close of the play, Othello is led to advert to thoughts of religious and state loyalty particularly as witness the present reference to 'burning hell' and his invoking of his Christianity ('circumcis'd dog') as well as of the 'base Judaeon' (the Folio reading) who threw a pearl (traditional metaphor for Christ Cf. the medieval poem *Pearl*) away / Richer than all his tribe'. No wonder several critics have discussed the after-destiny of Othello; some have pronounced the damnation of Othello. The question is that of the viability or justice of speculation about the eschatological fate of characters in drama except in cases like *Doctor Faustus*. The middle and late twentieth century which ridiculed the nineteenth-century reconstructions of the girlhood of Shakespeare's heroines or questions such as 'How many children had Lady Macbeth?' has not hesitated to pronounce on the post-dramatic fate of characters. Shakespeare may invoke reference to hell or heaven; but it is in many cases a part of his use of the common currency of thought, idea and expression of his time. The self-collectedness and composure and awareness Othello achieves in the last moments lends him a tragic strength. The tears he sheds suggest genuine repentance. He cannot be said to be merely 'cheering himself up' or extenuating himself. His killing himself is not without a suggestion of reparation, a kind of sacrifice of himself after a

vindication at the altar of love as the stage picture of dying Othello lying fallen over the dead body of Desdemona at the end indicates. All along, he had been 'one who loved not wisely, but too well'. Perhaps, nice theological distinctions, and 'thinking too precisely' on such points or doctrinaire stances would not have much relevance for the rich human interest of the drama.

We may go on to two sets of utterances in *King Lear*. The first is an aside spoken by Edgar (4.6.145)

I would not take this from report, *it is*
And my heart breaks at it. (Italics mine)

It occurs in the course of the crucial long scene 4.6 which starts with Gloucester's imaginary leap from Dover Cliff and his 'miraculous' escape, both stage-managed by Edgar with his ventriloquist and role-playing skills. Edgar continues to be the guardian and escort of his blinded, banished father, under several guises. Edgar's utterance comes up at the climax of the encounter of blind Gloucester and mad Lear. Lear seems fitfully to recognize something of Gloucester from, of all things, his gouged out eyes and his wandering mind at the next moment takes it to be blind Cupid and in the same breath he thrusts a challenge to an imaginary antagonist, which he has penned before Gloucester's eyes and forces him to read it. And Gloucester responds with

Were all the letters suns, I could not see.

Edgar watching all this is moved to make this remark. The bare and dire reality which Shakespeare chooses to expose and implicitly to probe and explore in the play strikes the spectator or reader with its starkness. It is such a response that Edgar participant-cum-observer makes at the sight, a response that underscores its pathos. It may be incredible, but *it is*. It is there, making its stark impact. Edgar reacts 'feelingly' (to use the expression which Gloucester uses a few lines later in the scene) . It is heart-breaking. In the larger sense, one will have to admit that the play, especially in its latter half, is Shakespeare's 'full look at the worst', and lets us see it as it is, ineluctably there. One may contemplate the role of God or the gods in the happenings, the theodicy or otherwise of heaven's ways with man, and questions which characters, like Lear are led to ask ('What

makes these hard hearts?') . Ultimately, we will have to simply concur in the recognition that *it is*, whatever may be the reach of our interrogativeness or spontaneous sense of outrage at the sight of suffering. Perhaps it is with a certain humility that we come to, or train ourselves to take in the starkness of it all. Finally, the answer we are left with for the why-and-how-come of it does not seem much different from the answer which God signaled in thunder to Job, '*mystery is*'. For all our questioning which we will have to do anyway in a sense, we must admit that it is and accept it.

To attend to an utterance of Gloucester which is in fact the very last words he speaks in the play. After this, we only hear of his death of heart-break which Edgar reports in the closing moments of the play, "And that's true too" (5.3. 11) . Gloucester responds thus to Edgar's exhortation to him after watching Gloucester's reaction to the news he breaks to him of King Lear's defeat in the war and of father and daughter being taken prisoner. Edgar wants to go immediately as he has important things to do now and so takes leave of Gloucester. The old man forgets the lesson of his attempted suicide and his being saved, and overwhelmed by despair mutters out.

No further, a man may rot even here (5.2.7)

Edgar pulls him up:

What in ill thoughts again? Men must endure
Their going hence even as their coming hither.
Ripeness is all (5.2.8-10)

At this, Gloucester tries to collect himself acknowledging the truth of Edgar's words, "And that's true too." The qualifier 'too' brings its implications. Such a point of view as Edgar has its truth, but it is not perhaps the entire truth. It is almost a suggestion that in such situations as the ones building up in *King Lear*, no single point of view would do justice by itself to our understanding of what happens. Multiple perspectives may have to be invoked. As the inclusive mind of Shakespeare appears to do we must be mindful of the other sides to a question when we adopt one side.

Edgar's crucial assertion 'Ripeness is all' with the idea of riping and rotting picked up, as it were, from Gloucester's use of 'rot' (1.7) . The counsel that Edgar offers has levels of profundity and application. As a cure for Gloucester's despair, the formula does not sug-

gest that he should forget all about the inevitability of the end of life. The 'ill-thought' is to court death in despair. At the same time, death has to be faced and willy-nilly, undergone. The utterance of Lear, earlier in the play, 'we all come crying hither,' cannot be forgotten when we read Edgar's '... even as their coming higher'. The inescapability of both the 'crying' and the 'enduring' perhaps points to something like the whole truth. The exchange between father and son coming as it does at a late point in the play after all the dire experience and knowledge, pain and suffering witnessed carries radiating suggestions. The sequel leading to the end of the play brings some more sorrow still to the fore. No wonder that Johnson said that he could not bear to read the ending of the play except when he edited the play.

The common connotations of 'ripeness' as the ripe fruit falling to the ground and of time or occasion being ripe for action or occurrence are clearly there in Edgar's use of the word. Yet the concept behind the word suggests paradoxical truths. The fool, as reported by Jaques, may have meditated in *As You Like It* (2.7. 26-28) .

From hour to hour, we ripe and ripe
And from hour to hour rot and rot;
And thereby hangs a tale.

It reminds us that two processes are essentially the same; the moment of full ripeness is also the moment of the start of the rotting. Edgar's counsel amounts to saying that the moment of ripeness has to be awaited to come about as a natural process without recourse to the interventionist or the artificial, that is to say, without courting the end with a death-wish or self-homicide.

'Ripeness is all' reminds one of Hamlet's 'the readiness is all'

Hamlet: Not a whit, we defy, augury; there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. It's be now, it is not to come; if be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come; the readiness is all since no man has aught of what he leaves what is 't to leave betimes. Let be. *Hamlet* (5.2. 232-238)

When Horatio shares with him his premonition that Hamlet will lose the wager with Laertes, Hamlet brushes it aside, answering that he is well practiced in fencing, but adds 'But thou would not know how ill all is there about my heart'. When Horatio urges him to take the

warning, and obey his heart, Hamlet overrules Horatio, saying he would not obey such 'womanish fear'. He goes on to maintain that he would defy such pagan augury and, in Christian, perhaps Protestant puritan fashion, asserts his faith in the divine special providence for the individual apart from God's general providence. The upshot of Hamlet's quibbling discover with variations on 'now' and 'come' may be understood as saying that the moment of the end, 'the fall of a sparrow', may be now or later. What matters is the readiness to face it. Since one cannot take with oneself any possessions, dying earlier than later does not make a difference. One should accept as it chances.

'Young' Hamlet's situation is different from old Gloucester's. By this time Hamlet had come to believe that the time for him to act and accomplish his revenge is right now ('the interim is mine') . So far he has been proceeding 'by and by' (to use his own phrase, 3.2. 409 it is revealing that after using the phrase to Polonius, he adds 'By and by is easily said' 3.2.410) . By the moment in question, towards the close, he has given up the 'by and by' procedure, and is ready and eager to act, to act 'now', Edgar's 'ripeness' includes the concept of 'readiness', but also suggests that Gloucester in his circumstances should let the end come 'hereafter' without hastening it, letting himself ripen and ripen further.

Behind both the words and concepts, 'readiness' and 'ripeness', there is the medieval and Renaissance tradition of viewing the whole of life as a preparation for death. The ubiquitous pictorial illustrations of the 'dance of death' were then grim reminders that one may be taken by surprise by death irrespective of time, place and person. In Hamlet's case there is another factor at work, a preoccupation of his with death in many parts of the play.

Now, for another instance from *Antony and Cleopatra* (2.7. 107-108)

Antony: Be a child o' the time:

Caesar: Possess it, I'll make answer.

In the course of the drinking entertainment held by Pompey on board his galley for the three triumvirates, there is a free flow of wine. The also-ran triumvirate Lepidus drinks more than he can take and is soon laid low by the strong effect. Antony joins in, though with control,

and drinks to the health of Octavius Caesar and invites him to join in the spirit of revelry of the occasion. Caesar has been scrupulously avoiding drink. The answer he makes to Antony's request is characteristic of Octavius' temperament, attitude and personality. Shrewd calculator of what is good for him to grow in stature and power, he cultivates self-control and a certain coldness more or less as a political strategy. It is in contrast to Antony's giving himself up to abandon in revelry and luxury. Octavius says he would rise above, and master, the pulls and pressures of time, and thus come to possess it. In a larger view, he speaks for one side of the questions which arise about an individual's relationship and interaction with society, culture, circumstances and the structures of systems, the *zeitgeist*, in short. So much so that the particular incidental exchange between Antony and Octavius appears to expand its import in larger and larger circles. For example, an initial question that arises about literary works is how far we should consider particular authors to be a child of their time and age or as rising above it and make the age their own by epoch-making creativity. In actuality, there are authors who could be regarded as more or less determined by the period which governs them. There are authors who are not entirely *of* the age they are *in*. There are gradations in all this. Perhaps, no writer, however great, can be said to entirely 'dwell apart' from his age. Shakespeare is 'for all time', but he is also, 'the soul of his age, the applause of his stage'.

There are several other approaches different from the way we have considered expanding meaning. Some passages have been interpreted as being prophetic or anticipatory of much later historical, political or social development. Or, at least, they can be read as relevant to latter or new situations. To take, for instance these from *Julius Caesar* (3.1. 111-113)

Cassius: How many ages hence
Shall this our lofty scene be act'd o'er
In states unborn and accents yet unknown.

The lines among other things, have been taken uncannily to predict the spread of English, if not Empire, and the consequent enactments of the play and the scene in nations then still in the womb of distant history, and/or in translation into the languages of the new nations,

or in English spoken in the local accents. This is one way of reading the passage, that is to 'look after', pointing towards the future. It could also be taken to 'look before', in the sense of, back into the past, it may be taken as a reference to the key position of Caesar's assassination in history, and the currency and wide dissemination of the Caesar myth in history, literature and drama. It can also be taken as a reference to the ongoing enactment on the Shakespearian stage in English which was at the time of the event in history was 'still unborn' in a sense though Caesar and the Romans came to Britain and set up garrisons and encampments. Anglo-Saxon had not-by then taken shape.

Yet another way would be to take it to mark a theatrical self-consciousness with which Shakespeare introduces it. It can be taken as reinforcing the traditional 'multiconsciousness' of the English dramatic tradition and anticipatory, in a fashion, of the self-conscious theatricality which came to characterise later plays in the Jacobean theatre.

Also, many interests, scholarly such as the historical and intellectual background, rhetoric, Renaissance mythography, aesthetic theories and works of art as parallel examples, and theology on the one hand, and on the other, new sociological and ideological developments of the recent part like feminism, leftism and questions of race, gender and class have enabled readings of the plays and passages, sometimes resulting in an appropriation of plays and passages to these special interests.

It is, ultimately, a question of the reader's 'horizon of interpretation', to use a phrase and concept brought into currency by the German hermeneutical critics such as Frederick Schumacher, Hans Gadamer and Martin Heidegger. The plays would seem to place themselves in almost endless, expanding 'horizons of interpretation'. However, the validity or value of an interpretation will depend upon the attention to the dramatic context and questions of who speaks, to what end and in what tone. The utterances, or the plays, for the matter, should not be plucked out of their contexts, and used as texts for lay or special-interest sermons. The desideratum is a basic sensitivity to drama and its modes of total theatrical communication.

ANTIFEMINISM IN BERNARD SHAW'S *ARMS AND THE MAN*

S.K. Sharma
R.K. Verma

I

A Feminist Dictionary defines antifeminism as “[t]he conviction that women are not entitled to the same moral and legal rights as men, or to the same social status and opportunities. ‘All antifeminist thinkers hold in common the thesis that there are innate and unalterable psychological differences between women and men, differences which make it in the interests of both sexes for women to play a subordinate, private role, destined for wife-and-motherhood. . . . [It involves] the idea that women ought to sacrifice the development of their own personalities for the sake of men and children’ (54) . According to Hope Phyllis Weissman an “antifeminist writing is not simply a satirical caricature of women but any presentation of a woman’s nature intended to conform her to male expectations of what she is or ought to be not her own.... Indeed the most insidious of antifeminist images are those which celebrate with a precision often subtle rather than apparent, the forms a woman’s goodness is to take” (94) . However, the term ‘antifeminism’ has its roots in ‘misogyny’ which is the earliest form of hatred of women and their subordination. This paper is an attempt to present Shaw’s *Arms and the Man* as an antifeminist play on the basis of above mentioned traits of misogyny and antifeminism.

II

In *Arms and the Man*, Bernard Shaw’s antifeminist attitude is imbued in the various binaries projected against liberation of female characters, for example, man/woman, home/world, outer/inner and public/private spheres that he projects in the play. He propagates that men work outside and women within the four-walls of the house. While male characters like Major Petkoff, Sergius, Bluntschli and Nicola take up work outside their houses, cities and countries, female characters like Catherine Petkoff, Raina and Louka do not even think of crossing the threshold of their houses. Shaw assigns

gendered roles to his characters. He associates men to the world of bravery, war, realism and women to the world of passivity, idealism and love towards men. In his world men order and women obey.

Shaw’s antifeminist attitude finds a projection in the portrayal of Raina’s character. He depicts that women are not able to think beyond their utmost faith in male supremacy; therefore, they submit themselves to men. At the very outset of the play, Raina and her mother, Catherine Petkoff, are shown waiting for Raina’s “future husband”, Sergius, whom Raina calls her hero. Raina believes in and has full faith in masculine power. Therefore, she decides to marry Sergius and views herself as a weaker sex. Her weakness envisions in her statement to her mother: “Oh, what faithless little creatures girls are! When I buckled on Sergius’s sword he looked so noble . . .” (3:127 emphasis added) . Further, Raina’s romantic attitude towards life makes her subordinate to men folk. She says to Sergius, “You have been out in the world, on the field of battle, able to prove yourself there worthy of any woman in the world; whilst I have had to sit at home inactive—dreaming—useless—doing nothing that could give me the right to call myself worthy of any man” (3:155 emphasis added) . In Raina’s statement, the binaries of realism/fantasy, strong/weak, male/female and outer/inner are manifest. By discriminating between genders, Shaw propagates that women’s work is not as important as men’s. Like a typical male chauvinist, he undermines women’s domestic labour. This view of Bernard Shaw is just an extension of Victorian ideal — husbands have to go out to earn while women are supposed to remain at home.

Shaw depicts women as liars. For example, Raina Petkoff hides Bluntschli in the balcony of her house, and she tells that there is no stranger in her house when she is enquired by the army officers. Similarly both Raina and her mother invent a fictitious story of the chocolate cream soldier. Further, her mother, Catherine Petkoff also supports Raina’s task of hiding Bluntschli and telling a lie to the army officers. Later on, in the play, Raina regrets her falsehood when she tries to deflect her falsehood to Bluntschli: “You were not surprised to hear me lie. To you it was something I probably did

every day-every hour! That is how men think of women" (3:163) . It is clear from the above speech that even if a woman tells a lie to save the life of a man, she is considered as a liar and her conduct is questioned by the male authority.

Shaw expresses his antifeminist notion by portraying that women are born for the entertainment of men. In his opinion, Raina wants to be cuddled. Her beauty and physical charms are the property of man's desires. Raina readily accepts her subservient position in marriage. She likes to be sold to the highest bidder because she is not offered any other choice. In Shaw's opinion women are men-chasers. He shows that Raina and Louka are vying for the attention of men. Both unmarried female characters, viz. Raina and Louka, are caught in the trap of marriage at the end of the play. Raina Petkoff succumbs to Bluntschli and Louka to Sergius. Thus, Raina and Louka are subjugated to men in marriage for their entire lives.

Shaw depicts that women are passive because they do not have courage to react against difficult situations except by being emotional and seeing the glory of the world. In his opinion, it is a man who acts. Shaw's antifeminism finds reflection in his portrayal of Raina Petkoff. She views herself as "only prosaic little coward". She does not have faith in her own strength. She worships man and believes in his superiority. She says to her mother, "Yes: I was only a prosaic little coward. Oh, to think that it is all true! that Sergius is just as splendid and noble as he looks! that the world is really a glorious world for women who can see its glory and men who can act its romance! What happiness! what unspeakable fulfilment!" (3:127-28) . Further, she is not only an object of love but also hatred for Sergius who wants to use her merely for the gratification of his sexual desire. He does not care a bit for the dignity of women. By developing illicit relations with the maidservant Louka he deceives Raina. He subdues both Raina and Louka. Thus, he takes advantage of these two women characters in the play.

Shaw portrays Sergius as "the apostle of the higher love" (3:156) . Sergius flirts with women and deceives them. He uses Raina and Louka to fulfil his physical and sexual needs. When Louka protests against the conduct of Raina, Sergius not only decries her but he

also calls her "devil". In his opinion Louka is "an abominable little clod of common clay, with the soul of a servant" (3:159) . In Charles Berst's opinions, Louka marries Sergius and transforms her status (35) . His description of Louka is simply unacceptable. A mere transfer of Louka from the one class to another does not make her an emancipated woman. Marxist feminists believe that women of the upper class are also treated as slaves by their male counterparts. Louka's higher social advancement is, therefore, a fraud with her liberty. Sexual and economic honesty between the relationship of Sergius and Louka is just a sham for their liberty. Again, their relationship is not based on the biological drive as Berst states. Further, Charles Berst correctly holds, "Sergius is subject to lust on the one hand, Raina to her maternal-womanly instinct on the other" (32) ; it reveals Shaw's antifeminism. Thus, Shaw reveals that women are destined to endure sexual exploitation at the hands of men. He reduces women's existence to satisfy men's lust and he views her not more than a mothering machine.

Sergius' relationship with Louka reveals his masculinity, and hence his attitude towards her is antifeminist. He dominates her. He forces her to be subservient to him. When Louka tries to revolt against him, he treats her with contempt. He tells her that she is subservient to him because she belongs to him: "Louka! [she stops near the door]. Remember: you belong to me" (3:182) . Sergius does not regard Louka as a separate entity. He warns her again when she says that it is an insult to her. He says to her, "Whether that is an insult I neither know nor care: take it as you please. . . . If I choose to love, I dare marry you, in spite of all Bulgaria. If these hands even touch you again, they shall touch my affianced bride" (3:182) . Sergius praises her if she obeys him. He condemns her if she protests against his opinions. His antifeminist outlook manifests in his speech when he says, "[again putting his arm round her] You are a provoking little witch, Louka. If you were in love with me, would you spy out of windows on me?" (3:157) . Thus, Madonna/Whore binary reflects in Sergius' attitude towards Louka. He views her not only as an inspiration of love but also as a witch.

Sergius' attitude towards Louka is also imbued with misogyny.

He treats her with contempt. He views her as “a provoking little witch” (3:157) , “devil” (3:158) and “an abominable little clod of common clay, with the soul of a servant” (3:159) . Similarly, he treats Raina with contempt. On the one hand, he wants to use her for the sake of his sexual needs, on the other, he considers her as a dangerous creature. He views her as a “viper” (3:186) and “a tiger cat” (3:187) . These phrases reveal Sergius’ antifeminist attitude towards Raina and Louka.

Shaw’s depiction of Raina Petkoff as an emotional girl is another example of misogyny. He reveals that Raina succumbs very easily to Sergius. She is very emotional to know Sergius’ bravery on the battlefield. She accepts him as “hero”, “king” and “lord” (3:155) . She reveals her utmost belief in him: “I trust you. I love you. You will never disappoint me Sergius” (156) . Further, Shaw propagates that women are irrational creatures. Consequently, sometimes they fight between themselves for men’s attention to them, particularly, when they are vying for men’s attention to fall in love with them. Such a conflict between Raina and Louka can be seen in the play:

LOUKA. My love was at stake. I am not ashamed.

RAINA. [contemptuously] Your love! Your curiosity, you mean.

LOUKA. [facing her retorting her contempt with interest] My love, stronger than anything you can feel, even for your chocolate cream soldier. (3:188)

The image of women who revolted against male domination for their freedom was emerging as New Women in the 1890s. ‘A New Woman’ is one who has freedom to make a decision about her marriage, economic independence, education, professional career and voting rights. Bernard Shaw as a socialist too participated in the intellectual debates about women’s issues in several of his plays. In *Arms and the Man*, Shaw depicts Raina as a New Woman as is clear from the independent decision she takes to give slyly a shelter to an unknown man in her bedroom against the norms of the Victorian society. But, she cannot be considered a New Woman because this action of hers is not a revolt against male domination.

Shaw’s presentation of Louka as a smoking maid-servant in the Petkoff family manifests his antifeminist approach towards women. In the stage direction, Shaw caricatures Louka when he

describes her, “She impatiently throws away the end of her cigaret, and stamps on it” (3:146) . On this basis, she is likely to be confused and treated as a New Woman. *A Feminist Dictionary* criticizes women’s smoking. According to it, smoking is “an activity dangerous to health and to femininity” (425) . One of the critics of Shaw, Margery Morgan considers Louka as “the predatory woman” (52) . Morgan’s statement about the dramatist’s ideology of womanhood uncovers Louka as a dangerous woman. Shaw’s depiction of Louka is, therefore, antifeminist in nature.

Antifeminist Shavian mothers are projected against the freedom of their daughters. Shaw’s antifeminist attitude towards mother-daughter relationship shows that he does not want emancipation of women. In *Arms and the Man*, Catherine Petkoff does not protest against the patriarchal structure of the society. She inspires Raina to succumb herself to a man to secure her life. She says to Raina, “And you! you kept Sergius waiting a year before you would be betrothed to him. Oh, if you have a drop of Bulgarian blood in your veins, you will worship him when he comes back” (3:126-27) . Further, she is presented as a typical bourgeois woman who believes in her domestic roles. She is very careful about the arrangements in her household. She says to Raina, “[businesslike, her housekeeping instincts aroused] I must see that everything is made safe downstairs” (3:128) . In spite of this, Catherine’s emotional attraction towards men shows her utmost belief in masculinity. She praises Sergius’ masculine behaviour and his bravery at the battlefield. Her belief in Sergius’ power and glory emerges when Raina says to her, “I sometimes wish you could marry him instead of me. You would just suit him. You would pet him, and spoil him, and mother him to perfection” (3:161) . Catherine submits herself to her husband, Major Petkoff. She renders her wifely duties to him very honestly. She mends his coat. She obeys every command of her husband. She is never tired of teaching domestic duties of life to her daughter. She finds happiness in getting her daughter married to some man rather than making her independent. She does all that a male dominated society expects her to do.

Shaw’s antifeminist outlook is revealed in his treatment of Louka

as a sexual object. For example, Nicola's relationship with Louka reveals that she is made merely for amorous desires of man. Nicola's attitude towards her represents the antifeminist notion of womanhood. He reduces women's existence to that of sex objects. He denigrates Louka by dominating her. He wants to rule over her by making her his wife. He sees his happiness in Louka's physical and sexual charm. It is obvious from his speech when he says to Louka, "Who was it made you give up wearing a couple of pounds of false black hair on your head and reddening your lips and cheeks like any other Bulgarian girl! I did. Who taught you to trim your nails, and keep your hands clean, and be dainty about yourself, like a fine Russian lady? Me: do you hear that? me! (3:178) . The above statement reveals that Shaw depicts Nicola as a male chauvinist and gives him full control over Louka. Thus, it is clear that Shaw believed in the subordination of women by loading them with cosmetics, furs and jewels.

Nicola dislikes Louka's mannerism. He wants her to be obedient. He tells her that if she wants to marry him, she will have to improve her manners. He says to her, "If you quarrel with the family, I never can marry you. It's the same as if you quarrelled with me!" (3: 145) . Further, Nicola treats Louka as his subordinate simply because he is her superior in the household. It also shows that Shaw made a distinction between superior and inferior as every male chauvinist does. He relegated Louka to an inferior status. Thus, Shaw's antifeminist vision defends women's submissiveness to men.

Shaw propagates that women are always in need of protection. He shows that it is a man who protects woman. Man protects her from the dangers because she is a weaker sex. In *Arms and the Man*, Nicola projects this belief of Shaw. He insists on protecting Louka by making her as his wife. He entices Louka with his twenty-five levas. He tells his master, Major Petkoff, that he wants to protect Louka by marrying her. He says to him, "We give it out so, sir. But it was only to give Louka protection" (3:191) . Nicola's speech reveals that he is inclined to make Louka subservient by making her economically dependent on him in the hope that she would take care of his household and he will look after his shop in Sofia.

Similarly, Louka suffers from the same inequality. She is a maid-servant, therefore, she does not like to marry Nicola who is equal in her rank. She thinks that he will not be able to fulfil her economic needs, and therefore she wants to marry Sergius who is much above her social and economic status and belongs to the noble family like Major Pekoff's. Melanie Francis is one of the scholars of Bernard Shaw who discusses Louka's status in the play. For example, she states: "*Arms and the Man* embodies a classic socialist manoeuvre: the established rules of conventional society have been turned upside down. Louka marries above and Raina below her station" (113) . But Melanie does not take into account the post-marriage slavery of Raina and Louka. She thinks that freedom from class barriers will make Raina and Louka independent beings but it remains unchanged in the bourgeois society, and so her arguments do not reflect equality between sexes.

The class transformation of Louka is not a solution of her slavery to a man. There is no doubt that Louka is given a choice to move from her lower strata to the upper class society by marrying Sergius but her subjugation to a male will remain as is the case with Catherine Petkoff. Catherine Petkoff belongs to the higher class society but she still remains subordinate to her husband. Catherine is economically dependent on Major Petkoff. Even she is not given permission to cross the threshold of her house and hang her washings where visitors can watch them. On the contrary, the playwright's ideology of women's freedom through equality among the classes is shattered in the context of bourgeois society where patriarchy plays a pivotal role in the family even after abolition of the gap among the classes. It is, therefore, obvious that if Catherine Petkoff's status remains subservient to her husband, she will never get equal status with Sergius. Shaw's attitude towards abolition of gap among the classes remains rigid even in the beginning of the twentieth century as it was in the 1890s. In his letter to C C Fagg on 15 December 1910 Shaw wrote, "What we have to fight for, therefore, is not equality of income between individuals, for this is and always has been the rule. What we have to break down is inequality between classes, for this, too, exists and always has existed in highly civilized societies"

(*Bernard Shaw: Collected Letters 2:956*) . By participating in the intellectual debates related to women's issues of the time, Shaw, like a socialist, criticised capitalism. He advocated equality among the classes but he did not consider women a class while pondering over economic liberation. Therefore, his opinions about women's economic freedom reflect his antifeminism. Then, in the play, Major Petkoff is rude in his behaviour towards women characters. He hates his wife's habit of bathing every day. He does not like Catherine's manners of hanging her clothes to dry where visitors can see them. Petkoff expects Catherine to remain herself within the four walls of the house. He is a typical bourgeois who controls women and keeps vigilant eyes on them.

The above discussion of the play *Arms and the Man* reveals that women characters are confined within the threshold through the socio-cultural practices like domestication of women, marriage, economic dependence of women on men, and discrimination between strong/weak and realism/romance binaries fabricated by men. Besides, bourgeois ideology of woman's subordination plays a pivotal role where male characters dominate the female characters. On the contrary, the contemporary feminists of Shaw like Mona Caird, Emma Goldman and Winnifred Harper Cooley were criticising the socio-cultural practices which were projected against the freedom of women. These feminist scholars were actively participating in the intellectual debates on women's issues while Bernard Shaw's views about women's equal footing with men do not portray equality between the sexes. In his presentation of women, Shaw relegates women to secondary status to men, thus projecting his belief in the Victorian ideology of manhood and womanhood, i. e. "Man for the field and woman for the hearth". Shaw's ideology of womanhood is projected against the freedom of the entire womankind, and hence he is antifeminist.

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W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S VIEW OF SEX

Santosh Kumar Singh

A patent feature of realism in modern literature is the new attitude towards sex which is reflected in the candid portrayal of both its normalities and abnormalities, simplexes and complexes. It presents the animal in man unreservedly, and rejects the Victorian complex on the question of nakedness and the Victorian notion of morality and respectability. A celebrated modern English litterateur, Somerset Maugham in his writings gives vent to / demonstrates the modernist idea of sex which is conditioned by his scientific training. He believes that sex is a biological fact and it is one of the basic instincts in man like self-preservation. Inevitably, sex is a natural, fundamental and dynamic force working automatically in living beings. Thus, through Mrs. Tabret, an important character in his play titled *The Sacred Flame*, Maugham says: "The sexual instinct is as normal as hunger and as pressing as the desire to sleep" (*The Collected Plays*, Vol III 194) . Again, in *The Razor's Edge*, the fictionist affirms: "Desire is the natural consequence of the sexual instinct and it isn't of any more importance than any other function of the human animal" (186) .

Maugham points to the clear-cut distinction between pure sexual desire and love. In *The Razor's Edge*, he states: "Desire isn't passion" (185) . Then, in *The Moon and Sixpence*, he differentiates the one from the other by stating that lust is "normal and healthy, love is a disease" (200) . In the same novel he expresses his view that love is an absorbing puissant passion embedded in the sexual instinct, but it "is an emotion in which tenderness is an essential part ...; there is in love a sense of nakedness, a desire to protect, an eagerness to do good and to give pleasure" (156) . While pure sexual craving is the brutal assertion of the ego, love is the negation of it. In fact, the scientist in Maugham evinces the biologist's attitude towards sex. In *The Summing Up*, he maintains:

However people may resent the fact and however angrily deny it, there can surely be no doubt that love depends on certain secretions of the sexual glands. In the immense majority these do not continue indefinitely to be excited by the same object , and with advancing years they atrophy. (301)

He further points out that a person, because of powerful and irresistible sexual instincts, seldom loves only once in life: " It is but seldom that a man loves once and for all; it may only show that his sexual instincts are not very strong" (*A Writer's Note-book* 18) .

Maugham holds that sexual desire is roused by some external stimuli. No doubt it is beauty that mainly excites it, but it is also engendered by other factors such as the smell of the body, voice, complexion, etc. No wonder the peculiar smell of the robust body of Tom is the cause of Julia Lambert's attraction towards him in *Theatre*. Similarly, the musty smell of the beard of the Spaniard is the reason of her surrender to his advances. In the same work Philip is bewitched by the 'faint green' complexion of Mildred. Then, in *Cakes and Ale*, Rosie is sexually very attractive to people because of her golden complexion. Again, the deep and husky voice of Alix makes Sir Hubert Witherspoon fall madly in love with her. The brutality and roughness of the male have an irresistible sex appeal for female characters in Maugham's works. Thus, Strickland and Rowley in *The Moon and Sixpence* and *Up at the Ville* respectively are very attractive to women, and Blanche in the first of these two works hates her husband named Dirk Stroeve who is an embodiment of goodness, and prefers to live with the brutish Strickland. Sexual desire, according to Maugham, is also influenced by time. Usually, it is stronger at night than in day time. Little wonder Miss Wilkinson is sexually more attractive to Philip at night than in the day in *Of Human Bondage*, and George experiences the almost unbearable pangs of sexual urge for Daisy at night but does not feel so in the day in the story "East of Suez".

Maugham's idea of sex is contrary to Christian ethics which is based on asceticism, praising mortification of the flesh and dispraising indulgence in pleasures. According to Christianity, sexual relation between man and woman is something base, adultery is a mortal sin, and married life is inferior to virginity. But Maugham does not accord much importance to sex morality. In *Great Novelists and Their Novels*, he states: "When people speak of virtue it is generally sex they have in mind, but chastity is only a small part of virtue and, perhaps, not the chief one" (69) . He recommends indulgence in the

pleasures of senses for the health of both the body and the mind. In his opinion sex is a source of pleasure, and hence it should be enjoyed like any other pleasure. It is overtly exemplified by Rosie, the heroine of his fictional masterpiece, *Cakes and Ale*: she is an adulteress and yet the novelist maintains uniformly a positive and sympathetic attitude towards her. Ashenden, who is certainly the projection of Maugham's own self in the novel, defends against the condemnation of Alroy Kear and the second Mrs. Driffield; he holds that her promiscuity is just an aspect of her basic nature of getting and giving pleasure. Naturally, he regards her as a good and generous lady whose sexual irregularity does not at all affect adversely her essential goodness. To quote his own words:

She was naturally affectionate. When she liked any one it was quite natural for her to go to bed with him. She never thought twice about it. It was not vice; it wasn't lasciviousness; it was her nature. She gave herself as naturally as the sun gives heat or the flowers their perfume. It was a pleasure to her and she liked to give pleasure to others. It had no effect on her character; she remained sincere, unspoiled, and artless. (*Cakes and Ale* 259-60)

Maugham opines that sexual irregularity alone does not make a person bad. In *The Razor's Edge* it is stated that a bad person is not one who is sexually immoral and drunkard; a really bad person is one "who lies and cheats and is unkind" (227) . Also, he believes that only sexual morality or chastity does not make life noble. His short story entitled "The Judgment Seat" is very pertinent in this connection. In this story John and Ruth observe sex morality at the cost of a lot of suffering. A married man, John falls deeply in love with young Ruth who reciprocates his love with equal passion. But they do not yield to their sexual desire because of their strong moral sense, and continually struggle against their urge for sexual pleasure throughout their lives. The result is that the kind-hearted, beautiful maiden Ruth becomes a hard-hearted, narrow-minded religious woman who is cruel because of her sense of duty; and John develops hatred for his wife with whom he lives out of a sense of duty only. When they appear before the judgment seat of God after their death and hope to get the eternal life owing to their observance of virtue, He passes the severest punishment on them by annihilating them in anger because they neglected the splendid opportunities of

life because of their stupid notions about sex.

Maugham thinks that sex morality should be violated if peace can be achieved in this way. This is the underlying idea of the short story "Virtue" in which the middle-aged married woman named Margery falls desperately in love with a young District Officer in the Malayas called Morton who happens to come to England during a short leave. She tells her husband, Charlie, clearly about it, and this results in her husband's death and the ruin of her family life. Through the character 'I' in the story how Maugham expresses his view that Margery ought to have had a quiet affair with Morton, instead of apprising her husband of her love affair, for by so doing she would have made herself, her husband and Morton happy. To quote his words: "Virtue be hanged. A virtue that only causes havoc and unhappiness is worth nothing. You can call it virtue if you like. I call it cowardice" ("Virtue," *The Complete Short Stories*, Vol.II 631) .

Maugham's later novels demonstrate his belief that sexual desire should not interfere with one's activities or work. This idea is the natural corollary of the intellectual reaction against the all absorbing passion of Mrs. Craddock and Philip Carey. As Philip's love and sexuality are apparently a hindrance in his pursuit of medical study, so in the subsequent novels Maugham endeavours to show how to master one's sexual urge in order to devote oneself completely to one's work.

The idea that sexuality should not be all absorbing finds clear and candid expression in Maugham's later novels like *The Moon and Sixpence*, *Christmas Holiday*, *The Razor's Edge*, *Then and Now*, etc. Thus, both Strickland in *The Moon and Sixpence* and Simon in *Christmas Holiday* are occasionally disturbed in their work by their sexual urge and indulgence. However, both of them decide and try to control their sexuality so as to dedicate themselves uninterruptedly to their life's work. The case of Larry in *The Razor's Edge* is different in that sexual indulgence to him is a pleasure rather than an irresistible need or a compulsion. Obviously, he, unlike Strickland and Simon, does not find or feel the sexual urge and indulgence as an obstacle in the way of his pursuit of his aim in life; he enjoys sexual pleasure as and when he chances to get to it, but does not

feel an uncontrollable craving for it. *Then and Now* further illustrates Maugham's belief that sex should not interfere with one's work. In this novel Machiavelli falls under the spell of a beautiful young woman of Imola. But his desire for her is not allowed to hinder his diplomatic duty in any way. One night he goes to her to fulfil his sexual desire, but just then he is called by Caesar Borgia for important diplomatic work. And he discusses the matter with the Duke's Secretary, peruses the important documents and does work for hours together instead of flying to the arms of his beloved who has been waiting for him for hours. nevertheless, Maugham does not undermine the intensity of sexual passion which is evident in the scene in which Machiavelli knocks repeatedly at the door of his sweetheart in the bitter cold night and is indignant when his knocks go unanswered. But soon he comes back to his lodging quietly because, as Maugham writes, "prudence restrained him" (*Then and Now* 136) .So, what Maugham suggests by these two scenes is that though sexual passion is strong, yet man's wisdom lies in keeping it under control rather than making a fool of himself. In this very novel , Machiavelli is later on offered the governorship of Imola and this would have enabled him to gratify his sexual passion for his beloved, but he declines the offer because his primary duty is to serve his native place Florence, and not his sexuality.

The foregoing discussion of Maugham's views on sex naturally gives rise to the question as how the idea that sexual desire ought to be kept within control is compatible with the belief that sexual passion cannot be subdued and is to be satisfied. While Mrs. Craddock, Philip carey and Walter Fane are possessed with overwhelming sexual passion, it is not so with Strickland, Simon, Larry and Machiavelli. Thus, through the characters of his later novels Maugham says that sexual passion can and should be kept within control, though much depends on a person's own nature in this regard. Certainly there are persons who cannot attend seriously to their work, for sex is an obsession with them, but, on the other hand, there are people who resent the sexual itch which distracts their mind from their work and duty occasionally. The writer is on the side of those who attach more importance to the attainment of their aim

that to the gratification of sex. Sexual pleasure is an integral part of man's life, but it should not be permitted to exceed the proper limit and obstruct the objective of his life. Small wonder Ashenden in *The Moon and Sixpence* affirms that the people, who are abessed with passion for woman, are often unworthy and poor (217) .Apropos of this, Maugham writes in his significant nonfictional work: "I have known men who gave up their whole lives to this (sexual pleasure) ; they are grown old now, but I have noticed not without surprise, that they look upon them as well spent" (48) .

Maugham thinks that sexual fulfilment is the basis of marriage more than economic convenience, and therefore his fictional characters marry mostly because of this reason. Little wonder Mrs. Craddock, Philip Carey and Walter Fane enter into wedlock owing to their irresistible passion for a particular person, though, of course, Isabel is an exception to it and marries Gray Maturin, instead of Larry, whom she loves deeply. Obviously, in Maugham's world the tie that binds man and woman in matrimony is sexual, and not sacred. The following words of Kitty in *The Painted Veil* can be cited here in support of this assertion: "I'm not going to bring a child into the world, and love her, and bring her up, just so that some man may want to sleep with her so much that he is willing to provide her with board and lodging for the rest of her life" (285) . Indeed, in a relationship in which woman is provided with all possible necessities and comforts of life simply because she satisfies man's sex desire there is scarcely anything spiritual or moral.

In Maugham's opinion, sexual infidelity often disturbs rudely the man-woman relationship. Usually it is the wife's sexual disloyalty which mars the happiness and peace of domestic life, while the husband's sexual faithlessness does not create a very serious problem. Thus, in *The Painted Veil*, Kitty's sexual faithlessness causes the death of her husband and the break-up of her domestic life, but Townsend's infidelity does not affect his home life adversely because his wife takes it lightly as a part of his nature. All this is further evident from the following remarks made by 'Mr. Maugham' to Isabel in the novel, *The Razor's Edge*:

If you insist I'll admit that what is sauce for gander is sauce for the goose. The only thing to be said against it is that with a man a passing connection of that sort has no emotional significance, while with a woman it has. (185)

Woman's sexual freedom and disloyalty are quite a patent feature of Maugham's writings, fictional and dramatic. Perhaps this is due to the freedom which women have acquired and are acquiring in the modern age and the resultant drastic change in their attitude towards chastity. In the present times woman believes that she, like man, has the right of freedom in sexual relationship. Naturally, Maugham supports woman's sexual freedom in several of his works, especially *The Constant Wife*, but often economic independence, according to him, is the basis of it. True, the modern economic emancipation of woman, plays a great role in imparting her sexual freedom. Another very important thing that Maugham stresses in this context is the fact that love does not last beyond a short period; such is the basic nature of it. In fact, it is not possible for two persons to be always in love with each other, and so they can, and do, fall in love with other persons. Apparently, when a man or woman falls in love outside marriage, he or she does so because of overpowering passion or irresistible sexual urge. Maugham's two stories, "The Back of Beyond" and "The Colonel's Lady", are invaluable in this context. The author suggests a solution to the dangerous situation of extramarital relationship, and this is that both man and woman should observe tolerance and forgiveness. In the first of these two stories, George Moon explains to Tom Saary, who is deceived by his wife and her lover, that such is human nature and the only way to cope with the situation is to cultivate the virtue of tolerance and kindness (*Ah King* 267) .

In conclusion, it may be stated that Somerset Maugham view of sex is marked by modernity and is unmistakably shaped by his scientific training, knowledge of the psychology of sex (having read Havelock Ellis's *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* published in 1898) , the movement for the emancipation of women, the naturalistic literature depicting sexuality like that of Emile Zola and Oscar Wilde, etc. But interestingly Maugham's idea of sex is typically his own, and thus it is strikingly different from the views of D.H. Lawrence

and Aldous Huxley, his two illustrious contemporaries, who were deeply concerned with sex and the questions related to it in their works. While D.H. Lawrence considers sex as the source of the "divine otherness", the beauty and fullness of life, Aldous Huxley is an ascetic who admits reluctantly the dynamic power of sex which he depicts as vulgar and beastly. Obviously, Maugham neither idealises sex like D.H. Lawrence nor vulgarises it like Aldous Huxley; as a matter of fact, he regards sex as a natural working of the body and an irresistible passion.

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NISSIM EZEKIEL'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS GOD AND RELIGION

Pramathesh Bhattacharya

The esoteric doctrine of the God has ever caught the imagination of Indian thinkers and poets who have been deeply concerned with man and mankind. No wonder the sages of the *Upanishads*, Kabir, Dadu, Nanak, Tulsidas, Surdas, Meera, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and many others have persistently thought and written about Him. Though Ezekiel does not belong strictly to this category of philosopher-poets, yet his delineation of the Eternal and matters related to Him merits serious consideration. But he is not a theologian; his sensibility is essentially aesthetic. Religion and philosophy are merged into the poetry, but he is not essentially a religious poet. On a superficial look, he seems to be a poet of the world who shuns religion. But a serious study of this poetry reveals that he only discards the old orthodox ways of worshipping, and not faith in God; "he wanted neither religious renunciation nor super human powers" (Chetan Kamani, *Nissim Ezekiel*23) .

In his poetry Nissim Ezekiel presents the vision of the modern man and his beliefs. Many of his poems have a religious leaning though he is not primarily a religious poet as has already been stated above. He is a philosopher with his own philosophy about God and religion. He often rejects the religious prevailing practices, but he has deep faith in the Divine Purpose. In his search of truth about God, he realises:

All that fuss about faith,
all those decisions to praise
God, the repeated appeals,
denunciations, laments and hopes,
the division of men into virtuous and wicked!

How boring and pathetic, but
also how elemental, how spiritual
the language, how fiery and human
in the folly of its feelings! ("Latter-Day Psalms," *Collected Poems* 260)

This concluding part of "Latter-Day Psalms" is, as he himself states, "a comment on the previous 9 as well as on the 150 Old Testament

psalms" (Malvika Khanna, "An Indian Poet in Rotterdam" 13) .

True, Ezekiel believes in the existence of God and considers Him as real as man:

But this, I am sure, can never be:
That I should shut the door on gods

Who may exist or men who do.... ("In Emptiness," *Collected Poems* 11)

Although Ezekiel does not follow the common practice of prayer, but he certainly worships Him in his own peculiar style. In his "Latter-Day Psalms", he overtly expresses his view thus:

I worship the God who regards
the prayer of the destitute,
who hears the groanings of the
prisoner, and of those who are
appointed to death. ("Latter-Day Psalms," *Collected Poems* 259)

The poet finds God in His creations. He feels His existence in everything that is created by Him. Others may find a 'worm'¹⁶ ("The Worm," *Collected Poems* 10) repulsive, but he looks at it as a symbol of unflinching strength that God imparts to every creature. Naturally, he enjoys the

Worm, moth, serpent, toad,
Gleaming in the sun
Or slimy in mud.... ("Insectiore," *Collected Poems* 102)

Patently, Ezekiel demonstrates his belief in the importance of every creature, howsoever repulsive it may be. For him a worm, a moth, a serpent or a toad is as important as any other lovable creature. He loves the unyielding aspect of a stone "Which plays no facile game of outward show" ("The Stone," *Collected Poems* 40) . Various people interpret holiness in their own different manner, but to Ezekiel "Holiness reveals itself in everything" ("Transmutation," *Collected Poems* 56) . Like Rousseau, Ezekiel feels that there can be no happiness without freedom. Freedom is absolutely necessary for the material and spiritual progress of human beings. Inevitably, he is in favour of complete freedom. To him, a free man is in unison with God, and thus can realise the ultimate quietude and tranquility:

And look, the liberation! The poise of being one with God, the precious quietude of blood, the aftermath of bold acceptance. ("Declaration," *Collected Poems* 34)

Ezekiel does not approve of superstitions. He grieves the

pathetic condition of the illiterate Indian villagers who have to lose their lives because of superstitions. He cites the example of the mother in "Night of the Scorpion" who is thrown to the claws of death because of these blind beliefs. The superstitious villagers think that the poison of the scorpion is purifying the flesh of the mother (130) . Even today these people do not resort to medication for treatment but go for burning and incantation in the name of religion, and all this only enhances the suffering of the victim. Obviously, Ezekiel believes in religion based on rationality. He has no faith in religion for the sake of religion. He demonstrates this through the help of father in "Night of the Scorpion", who, despite the villagers' beliefs, applies medicines. He also criticises some other superstitions like the consideration of the cawing of the crow as a "cry of doom" ("The Crows," *Collected Poems* 41) and the crossing of the path by a cat as an anticipation of evil.

Notwithstanding the recurrence of words like 'God' and 'Soul' in his poetry, Ezekiel is certainly not a religious poet; he is simply a seeker of divinity. Sometimes he appears to believe in the Jewish God and the Judiac presence is strong in the tone of lament in many of his poems, especially in "Latter-Day Psalms". Ezekiel's God is much more common, a metropolitan Bombay God, an urban contemporary without hang-ups about origin. Ezekiel rejects the blind faith in God and religion. However, he requests God to bless mankind with true wisdom and insight, and to rescue His men:

The vices I've always had
I still have.

The virtues I've never had
I still do not have.

From this Human Way of Life
Who can rescue Man
If not his Maker?

Do thy duty, Lord. ("The Egoist's Prayers," *Collected Poems* 212)

The metropolitan God has been imaged not only a 'maker' but also a 'rescuer'. Man has no control over himself and his ambience; he oscillates between the vicious and the virtuous circles as decreed by God and as such God has been portrayed as saviour in his writings. The 'Maker' image presents God as a scientist working

with the atoms of man or a potter moulding clay into a beautiful pot. The poet accepts that human mind is full of follies and vices which only the Almighty can improve. Only the 'Maker' knows where the fault lies and only He can rectify them. Ezekiel goes one step ahead of Kabir and Browning who present man as a pot and God as a potter. To Ezekiel, God is not only a potter but a pot-rectifier. Sometimes he feels that a man, who has been freed from his vices, can be equated with God:

Who is this man aspiring

To the Good, which may be God? ("Something to Pursue," *Collected Poems* 16)

Also, Ezekiel portrays God as good. To him if a man is flawless, nothing can stop him from becoming one with God. God accepts only the good. This good is used in the moral sense, i.e. the virtues of a man and the enlightenment of the soul. What Ezekiel actually demands from God is 'Quietude' and knowledge ("Prayer I," *Collected Poems* 34) .

Undoubtedly, Ezekiel's approach to divinity is complex, deep and meditative. Man is usually unaware of the existence of God. He feels proud of his material progress. The Chinese wall is the symbol of man's physical wellbeing and his power to divide the world. However, Ezekiel's God seems to be weak in the face of human advancement and skepticism:

The world is now become a Chinese wall

And safely rots the impulse on the plain

Of printed word and spoken word. Even God

If He should one day move across the sky

Plainly to be seen, would cause no stirring

In his blood. ("On Meeting a Pedant," *Collected Poems* 9)

Ezekiel believes that to understand the mystery of the Eternal truly one needs a warm heart and real understanding. A cold heart can not solve this mystery:

Let not your religion,

mystic doctrines

or mundane experiences,

knowledge, ignorance

and strong convictions

co-exist with a cold heart. ("Blessings," *Collected Poems* 282)

Ezekiel holds that the best way to find solace is not to follow

any saint, but to meditate and search for himself. Through meditation man can forget the plight of the world. As Chetan Karnani observes, Ezekiel believes "in the supernatural concepts and transcendentalism. The inner music of soul seems to give him the greatest solace" (*Nissim Ezekiel* 54) . The poet uses typical terminology to express his viewpoint:

Know your *mantra*, meditate,
release your *kundalini*,
get your *shakti* awakening
and float with the spirit
to your destination. ("Healers," *Collected Poems* 232)

Destination for Ezekiel is not death as is usually considered by most of the thinkers. But to him 'destination' is the image of that phase when man is able to find his own self and enlightened. Only then he can understand the Eternal and feel one with Him.

Ezekiel is of the opinion that sin is prevalent in the world, and man is nothing but an epitome of sin. The prevalence of sin in man is presented with the help of sea image where a penitent does not want to increase his sins that are imaged as waves in the sea. His body is the sea of sins. The sea holds the muffled tumult of sins:

I will be penitent,
My heart, and crave
No more the impulse
Of a wave.

But I am still a sea
And hold within
The muffled tumult
Of a sin. ("Penitence," *Collected Poems* 71)

Ezekiel describes man as a sinner. The sins cover him layer by layer. He gets rid of all these sins. He is redeemed of the sins with the help of God:

I've stripped off a hundred veils
and still these are more
That cover your Creation. ("Theological," *Collected Poems* 156)

When even the sinners, who were saints earlier, come to the fold of religion, the merciful God helps them and they get salvation:

The saint, we are told,
once lived a life of sin

nothing spectacular, of course,
just the usual things.
We smile, we are not surprised.

.....
we too one day
may grow up like him. ("Guru," *Collected Poems* 191)

Man has been imaged as a beast of burden who carries the load of his sins throughout his life. When the Infinite wishes, he gets rid of his burden and is redeemed. Whatever we are, we are what God has made us:

He
made us animals
grunting and rutting.
He
made *maya*
with nothing behind it.

He
made Hitler and Stalin. ("An Atheist Speaks," *Collected Poems* 287)

Hitler and Stalin are the image of tyranny and despotism, while *maya* represents illusion. Thus, the poet surrenders to God whole-heartedly.

Sometimes Ezekiel reminds us of the teachings of Lord Buddha who advocates that desires are the cause of sorrow and covetousness adds to our miseries. If we want to get rid of our worldly problems and be united with the Eternal, we shall have to renounce the desires and covetousness:

This much is true: to pray is good,
To go the way of dispossession,
To be alone, without desire,
Composed and consciously disposed
Towards the love of things unseen,
In nakedness, simplicity,
Cancelled out in one concern. ("Prayer," *Collected Poems* 100-1)

Ezekiel is a mystic who has nothing to do with a dogma, denomination, priest craft or communal identity. He loves God Who is unconditionally kind to humanity. Speaking of salvation and God, he states:

Salvation belongeth unto the
Lord. It is not through
one or other Church.

Thy blessing is upon
all the people of the earth. ("Latter-Day Psalms," *Collected Poems* 254-55)

To him God is something unseen and unheard:

The inner music, undertone
The silence of a daily friend.... ("Prayer," *Collected Poems* 101)

Ezekiel also appears to be in tune with the *Upanishadic* principle according to which life comes from nascence and goes back to it:

To transcend is to go beyond,
Beyond is anywhere – All
Or nothingness. (100)

The seeker aspires for the communion with the Infinite. Beyond Him there is a vast ocean which he does not know:

.... I went walking alone.
Record it that I sat upon a rock,
Heard the sea moan,
Felt the inner block. ("Song of Desolation," *Collected Poems* 103)

The rock symbolizes the hard realities of life which man has to come across in his day-to-day life. The aspirations of the seeker have been presented as sea moans. Ezekiel presents hills as the abode of the Infinite. The man, who tries to see Him, has to pass through various hindrances:

The hills are always fall away.
He knows the broken roads, and moves
In circles tracked within his head.
Before he wakes and has his say.... ("Urban," *Collected Poems* 117)

The hindrances in the way of salvation have been depicted with the help of the image of broken roads through which the seeker passes. He knows these obstacles but he crosses them with the help of his own wisdom. Here Ezekiel seems to be under the influence of the Yoga theory of the Hindu scriptures.

Ezekiel is a 'vigilant observer' of the outer and the inner world. His objectivity towards himself has an *Upanishadic* quality. In his "Tribute to the Upanishads" he says:

For the present, this is enough,
that I am free
to be the Self in me,
which is not Somebody —
not, at any rate,

the mortal me,
but the Eye of the eye
that is trying to see. (*Collected Poems* 206)

Here Ezekiel refers to the *Kathopanishad* where the self is unaffected by the pain and weakness of the other self. Likewise, the soul is detached from, and unaffected by, the sufferings of people. The poet uses the image of the fruit in the earlier part of the poem which becomes the quest of the seeker.

Thunder has a special significance in the *Upanishads*. The value of it has also been highlighted by T.S. Eliot in "The Waste Land". The thunder lets man know the means by which he can seek salvation. But the modern man does not pay any heed to it and hence is facing the plurality of problems, as Ezekiel affirms:

We noticed nothing as we went.
A straggling crowd of little hope,
Ignoring what the thunder meant.... ("Enterprise," *Collected Poems* 118)

Thunder grants knowledge. The ignorance of the world has been presented with the image of the 'straggling crowd' which is happy in its own ignorance.

Mysterious are the ways of the Eternal. Ezekiel is well aware of this fact. He thinks that no man can guess His mystery. But we can only trust his kindness. Man can make wonders in the world. With his imaginative and scientific wisdom he has learnt how to fly in the air in his spacecrafts; and how to swim like fish in his ships, but it all happens when God wills. It is the faith of man that creates wonders:

sufficient reason surely
for faith in a process
that can perform such miracles
without assistance from you.
imagine what it would do
with a little assistance from you! ("Process," *Collected Poems* 164-65)

Unfortunately, Ezekiel feels that faith is diminishing. The person, who curses and swears God, gets the greatest applause. It has become the fashion of the world to criticise faith and be controversial. As a result, man has become rootless:

I went to Roman Catholic school,
A mugging Jew among the wolves.

They told me I had killed the Christ,
That year I won the scripture prize.
A Muslim sportsman boxed my ears. ("Background, Casually," *Collected Poems* 179)

Ezekiel believes that man has to struggle and undergo various troubles in the path of salvation. In fact, it is not easy to be close to the Eternal:

What terror wrestled
With what peace of soul
In what primeval jungle never shall be known.

... ..

Was it from drums and groans the darkness stole
To echo in the graveyard mouth? ("On an African Mask," *Collected Poems* 6)

Ezekiel presents the wilderness of the world with the help of a jungle image where soul searches for its existence. The search has again been expressed with the help of wrestling image. The personified image of the graveyard-mouth echoing groans stands for the sufferings of the world.

Nissim Ezekiel shows skepticism about the existence of God because of his leftist leanings. He feels that the Creator has created man but thereafter left him into a lurch to fend himself. Sometimes he images the Eternal as a tyrant whose feet people touch in salutations, but He does not take any notice. He is wholeheartedly against asceticism. Asceticism, to him, is a kind of escapism. Though Ezekiel is opposed to the mysticism of Sri Aurobindo, he recognizes the primal stuff of which poetry and mysticism are made. In him logic becomes the substitute of Aurobindo's vision. He does not believe that there should be any ideological presentation or religion in poetry.

Importantly, Ezekiel, who seemed to be an atheist in the beginning of his poetic career, saw the vision of Christ, Krishna and various prophets in his later life. Also, he began to realize that family is a replica created by God, but his Jewish sensibility still forced him to recognize the meaninglessness of individual destiny. Out of the queer blend of the Jewish and the Hindu faiths, Ezekiel is concerned with the idea of God who is essentially human. His concept of a human-friendly and kind God seems to be the product of Jewish

and Hindu philosophy. He approves of the psalms of the Bible because of the presence of human qualities in them. His poetry is an instrument that can bring in good and happiness to the humanity at large because

God grant me certainty
In kinship with the sky,
Air, earth, fire, sea –
And the fresh inward eye. ("Morning Prayer," *Collected Poems* 122)

Here Ezekiel seems to give an idea of the Hindu way of life where it is believed that God lives in each and every aspect of Nature, may it be sky, air, earth, fire or sea. Like great Indian philosophers, he believes that the Eternal lives in every particle of dust, and He also lives in man's inner self. To him, God is the creator who, like a mother, is easily elated at the simple requests of the child. Therefore, he adores God:

I worship the God who regards
the prayer of the destitute,
who hears the groanings of the
prisoner, and of those who are
appointed to death. ("Latter-Day Psalms," *Collected Poems* 259)

Ezekiel is a mystic who has nothing to do with a dogma, denomination, priest-craft or communal identity. He loves God and is unconditionally kind to humanity. He does not give any description of God:

Salvation belongeth unto the
Lord. It is not through
One or the other Church.
Thy blessing is upon
All the people of the earth.⁵⁷

In a word, Ezekiel's God lives within a person's self and he has to identify his self if he wishes to seek Him.

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LESBIAN FABULATION IN SUNITI NAMJOSHI'S POETRY: A TOOL TO FAMILIARIZE OR TO ESCAPE?

Kuhu Sharma Chanana

Poetry appears to be a more suitable genre as compared to prose for the articulation of transgressive desires because the oblique mode of expression and the fluidity of poetic narration provide a fertile ground for the blurring of the boundaries of sexualities and gender which consequently gives impetus to plural interpretations. This polyvalence of poetic expression erases the definite closures, and the deviant sexuality is all about negating fixities and celebrating pansexuality. Hence the fluidity and fantasy, inherent in poetic technique, are apt to negotiate the multiple valencies that can be attributed to the varied axes of sexual identity. No wonder the famous (not so openly lesbian) poet May Swenson in her essay, "The Experience of Poetry in a Scientific Age", highlights the dynamic and organic aspects of poetry and talks about the cartographic nature of poetry that helps in forming the map of that globe which is viewed by the 'naked eye' as a disk-like and one dimensional formation but with the help of poetic map surprisingly enlarges and reveals its amazing topography and traversing through this world our senses are transformed and undergo dilation. Inevitably poetry is a very apt genre for destabilizing the stringent heterosexist assumptions.

The recuperation of ancestral lesbian voices in Indian poetry can be traced back to the nineteenth century Urdu *rekhti* poetry by Rangin, Insha and Jan Sahib as has been systematically examined by Ruth in *Same-Sex Love in India, Love's Rite* and more recently in *Gender, Sex And The City*. Rangin's *Chaptnama* depicts explicit same-sex love between women where lovers decide the male-female gender of partners (butch/ femme) on the basis of breaking an *ilaichi* or a meat bone depending upon the even odd number of *ilaichi dana* found inside the *ilaichi* or the larger or smaller part of the bone. The lesbian partners were known as *dogana* or *janana*. Thus various exclusive rituals and linguistic patterns surrounding the lesbians are catalogued in Rangin's *Chaptnama* and they give an insight into the

world of lesbians in the nineteenth century through Urdu poetry and is counter-productive of the assumption that it is a western import and has no Indian roots. Thus *rekhti*, an offshoot of *gaza*, occupies a public sphere for the exploration of lesbian desire which in a way brings forth the homoerotic longings of women from the all-women private spaces of domestic households or the courtesans' homes to the public domain (A detailed description of it can be found in Ruth's *Gender, Sex And The City: Urdu Rekhti Poetry, 1780-1870*).

However the visibility accorded through *rekhti* is marred by the lesbophobic anxiety and the male voyeuristic pleasure emanating from the lesbian double bonanza which leads to explicit depiction of sexual and romantic encounters between *doganas* (female lovers), and thus there is very little play of fantasy or myth making in *rekhti*. Similarly locating it primarily within courtesan household further erases the need to make it more suggestive and symbolic. But as Ruth argues, the distinction between courtesans and respectable women was blurred when the Nawabs of Lucknow married some courtesans and employed others at court. The re-sexualization of female desire without rioting through the procreative need is one of the marked features of *rekhti* and is quite radical in that sense. "Neither buds nor flowers interest me / Young lady, I'm interested only in your alley.../ Listen, neither cardamom nor betel pleases me/ I long for something you have chewed/ I have come here, Insha, just for a pleasure outing/ I have no interest in either fruit or the fruitful" (140). But despite some sort of domestication of homoerotic desire the tone is always lesbophobic. In fact in one of the poems, Rangin (as quoted by Ruth in *Love's Rite*) has gone to the extent of curing these homosexual women by ceaselessly forcing himself on these lesbian lovers till he feels that he has cured them of same-sex desire. In this fashion the engagement of the poet with the popular belief that lesbianism is a deviation that emerges out of the unbridled desire of over-sexed woman is revealed. Under the garb of endorsing such accepted notions, the *rekhti* poets are able to create a free traffic between straight and queer readers because of which they do not feel the need for the overtly symbolic representation of same-sex desire. Thus the need to create fables, revising myths or using

symbols to justify the lesbian longing, is countered not only by the lesbophobic preaching of male narrator (even if for poetic production he has assumed the role of poetess) but also by the depiction of explicit sexual intimacies to titillate male audience at public *mushairas*. Instead of poetic suggestiveness the familiarization is adopted by reinvesting the domestic and market places with deviant desire and also through exchange of food and jewellery. All these serve as normalizing techniques for the acceptance of transgressive desire by showcasing that same-sex relationships operate on the same normative sphere and hence somewhat as natural as heteronormativity. Thus the heteropatriarchal didacticism and lack of identity politics (for there is no 'coming out' stories involved due to the male narrator) , coupled with the erotic pleasure to stimulate male audience, at one level cease the need for symbolic expression of homoeroticism. Since the male writers writing about lesbian-love have different connotative meanings, their challenges and adaptation techniques are also different as demonstrated by citing the examples of *rekhti* poets. But the immediate question is: can the suggestiveness of lesbian poetry be seen as a tool to camouflage transgressive desire and to enable a straight reader to pioneer spaces beyond heteronormativity or is it only a way of adding a new dimension to exclusive 'queer aesthetics' (to quote Raj Rao's term) ? This paper attempts to answer this question by a close analysis of the works of India's first lesbian poet, Suniti Namjoshi, who has used poetry to come out of closet and hence her challenges and counter strategies are bound to be different from those of her precursors, specially *rekhti* male-poets writing about sexual minorities.

After a long period of oblivion due to the colonial rule and much later after Independence, the poetic articulation of lesbian desire once again finds its manifestation in the writings of the first Indian lesbian writer Suniti Namjoshi who had to leave Indian Administrative Services to find shelter in the West due to her homosexual leanings. As opposed to familiarization techniques through food, space and ornaments of *rekhti* poetry, Namjoshi employs the tools of myth, fantasy and technique of inversion to unmask the arbitrary and maneuverable constructs of the heteropatriarchal world.

She creates *Maya Diip*, a mythic island which is inhabited only by women and instead of reclaiming the space within heteronormative society like *rekhti* that shows lovers within heteropatriarchal homes (on roofs and in bedrooms) and cities (in terms of market-places where these lovers meet) , Namjoshi creates a completely isolated space to evince radical discontinuity of straight world. On the one hand it can be viewed as an escapist route; but, on the other, it is reflective of her practical understanding that the lesbian appropriation of heteropatriarchal space is only possible through the mutations at boundary and that the actual displacement of heterosexuality is still a distant dream. Her decision to leave country for foreign shores due to her deviant desire further contributes to this sort of understanding. Also the constant interplay between utopia and dystopia helps in both envisioning hyper-reality (that may extrapolate the ills of the so-called real world and thereby expose them) and presenting an altogether counter-alternative world to question the perceived notion of patriarchal reality. Namjoshi, time and again, talks about finding a secluded place where the reconfiguring of all women space can be negotiated. There is a recurring image of appropriation of space through 'queer only family' where there is a complete exclusion of man as in "Mainakah's Sister." In it the protagonist understands that being a female mountain is an impossible proposition and that is too with wings, and so she folds her wings and thinks of going to mars where she will produce only female mountains like her and can completely inhabit that place with women. To quote from the text: "one of these days I shall fly to Mars. Once there, out of fragments of myself I shall generate other mountains and then will swoop and soar and range over the landscape and rest where we like without bothering anyone. And we'll rival the rings of Saturn in our beauty and freedom. Earth, I do not think, is ready for us" (*Sycorax: New Fables and Poems* 66) .

Interestingly, despite pointing to the subjugation of women in heterosexual family — as in her *Jackass and the Lady*, she argues that "Lady , since I have behaved badly you can/ Whip me in public with my shirt off/ or my pants down. Undoubtedly I shall/ make a ludicrous figure. But were you aware?/Such barbarisms occur only

in your homes” (37) — her all-woman space is also not egalitarian in structure as women form different sort of hierarchy due to class division even among themselves. In *Maya Diip* where notwithstanding an all-women space the hierarchy is based on motherhood and they are divided as grade ‘A’ mothers(official mothers) , grade ‘B’ (biological mothers) and grade ‘C’ (care takers of children) mothers. This hegemonic structure of motherhood is directly proportional to the power operations at the island. Also, the ambivalent cruelty to men in terms of reducing them to a reproduction machines bears a close semblance with the state of women in heterosexual society, but the non-egalitarian structure of lesbian-island is also revealed when Asha the eldest daughter of the Matriarch opposes this cruelty and she is exiled from the kingdom. Thus at one level the myth of the lesbian utopia has been burst by her, but at the other the detailed and gory description of using pretty males for extracting semen and after that reducing boys to foam puts question marks on the catholicity of the temper of the author (*The Mothers of Maya Diip* 160- 61) . This is in continuation of her belief that it is not always men who perpetuate patriarchy but it is the patriarchal mindset that can be possessed by both man and woman, and this needs to be rejected. For instance, in “And Then What Happened” she challenges the idea of reducing a man to a money-churning machine. It is an ingenious overturning of the story of Cinderella. After marriage the Prince accuses Cinderella of marrying him for money to which she retorts back by saying that he has married her for beauty. The Prince replies, “But your looks will fade, whereas my money will last. Not a fair bargain.” ‘No,’ said Cinderella and simply walked out” (*Feminist Fables* 112) . Thus Suniti objects to the monolithic notion of placing man always as a victimizer and unveils the fact that both man and woman can be victims of patriarchal subjugation depending upon the situation at the given moment. It endorses her belief that lesbianism is also not an ultimate panacea for heterosexual oppression because a different mode of power-operations works even in homosocial spaces as is evident in *Maya Diip*.

Also *Maya Diip* raises two pertinent questions regarding lesbian motherhood and citizenship claim of lesbians through alterna-

tive family structure which are also the primary concerns in her “Snapshots of Caliban” and *Sycorax*. Caliban, the displaced native in both “Snapshots of Caliban” and *Sycorax* is a lesbian who has been turned into a racial and sexual minority by the colonizer (quite similar to Suniti’s own position) . And in *Sycorax*, Sycorax is not dead (unlike in *The Tempest*) but returns back to claim her right on the land, and as a mother of a lesbian unwittingly she forms an alternative family structure, though by inversion — because she is a mother of a lesbian and not a lesbian who is a mother— and therefore it requires a nuanced understanding of the issue. Sycorax returns to her lost native land and raises issues concerning motherhood and the consequent citizenship rights on the land. A critic such as Katrak H. Ketu in “Indian Nationalism, Gandhian ‘Satyagraha,’ and Representations of Female Sexuality,” talks about how the nationalist discourse projects the ideal Indian woman as a heterosexual monogamous mother as opposed to white woman, and consequently her right on a land as a legitimate citizen is primarily by virtue of producing future citizens, and in this way in the Indian context for women citizenship and motherhood are closely linked. No wonder the right to citizenship is always fraught with duty and hence brings about a certain sort of compromise. Apropos of this David Bell and Jon Binnie argue: “... the twinning of rights with responsibilities in the logic of citizenship is another way of expressing compromise — *we will grant you certain rights if (and only if) you match these by taking on certain responsibilities....* In our reading of sexual politics, rights claims articulated through appeals to citizenship carry the burden of compromise in particular way: this demands the circumscription of ‘acceptable’ modes of being a sexual citizen”(3) . Family being the smallest unit of society is the most conspicuous site for claiming citizenship rights, and the procreative sex of heterosexual family structure corroborates that, and in this fashion motherhood becomes a key to a woman’s right on nation. Thus the reversal of the paradigm — by rewriting the female body in such a manner that the alternative family structure becomes a possibility in terms of having a lesbian daughter in the form of Caliban — and the return of Sycorax to claim her native land lend a unique

distinction to Namjoshi's poetry and lay bare a complex web of signification. The originally dead Sycorax resurrects and comes back, and she has 'blue eyes' which has an ambivalent connection with pregnancy as Suniti states in her introduction to *Sycorax: New Fables And Poems*: "...as for Sycorax not only did I resurrect her, but I also gave her blue eyes, when all the scholars tell us that the epithet 'blue eyed' has very little to do with the colour of the eyes and much more to do with being pregnant" (xii) . Thus the juxtaposing of motherhood and lesbianism works as a primary signifier in the process of reclamation of the lost land by Sycorax and although it cuts across various other axes of differences as well but by and large becomes one of the most significant domains within which lesbian identity is constructed and evaluated.

Interestingly, in quite an intriguing fashion Sycorax contemplates: "Blue was always my colour, my blue eyes were my one claim to fame. But as I've walked through the world what I've seen around me is red and green. Even on this island, which is deserted, there is red and green. But it is muted. I can ignore it" (8) . She, with her unique family structure and consequently distinct worldview, challenges the heterosexual ordering of the world and comes back again to assert her right on the land as a mother who has given birth to a queer daughter and she seems to familiarize this so-called 'queer family pattern.' Sycorax inscribes her understanding as a female-colonial subject through her relationships with Caliban and the land occupied by Prospero. At the very outset the blue-eyed Sycorax proclaims: "...as I'm still here/ I'm able to say clearly that when Prospero / said he took over an uninhabited island/save for Caliban and the enslaved/ Ariel, he lied./ I LIVED ON THAT ISLAND/ it was my property(at least as much as it was anybody else's) ./ He drove me away, made himself king, set up/ his props and bided his time/ Now that they've gone/ I may return, and ask myself, not who/ they were, but who I was and what I mourn" (1) . Thus procuring citizenship rights despite having a lesbian daughter who has a non-procreative identity (due to lesbian mating) radicalizes the viewing of alternative sexualities through the lens of citizenship or vice versa. After Sycorax lesbian Caliban is going to be the next

heir and in this mode of operation Suniti achieves what Lissa Duggan calls, 'queering the state.' Family is an important place to provide for citizenship right as Binne and Brown argue in *Sexual Citizenship* (5) . Hence, producing an alternative family structure to have equal citizenship right on the land is a radical move towards claiming public and cultural sites in new imaginative ways. Suniti eloquently asks for the all female ancestry when she questions in *From the Bedside Book of Nightmares*: "We loved those kindly gentlemen, I mean / Your own father, and your daughter's father/ But in our long ancestry, / where are the women" (13) ? Further, the eclectic mapping of queer spaces in terms of Suniti's own lesbian diasporic identity — because she is a 'sexual other' in her own country and 'racial other' in the West — finds a complex manifestation in terms of overlapping of postcolonial and lesbian feminist readings of *Sycorax: New Fables And Poems* and "Snapshots of Caliban". In *Flesh and Paper* she categorically states: "For us, love is not the same; sex is not the same; /parenting is not the same; work is not the same;/safety is not the same; respect is not the same;/ trust is not the same. Only death might, perhaps, be the same" (3) . This reciprocal double bind of space and sexual identity is visible when lesbian Caliban writes her own journal and tries to document the native history of land and her lesbian identity from her own perspective and is appreciated only till the time she endorses the colonizer's idea of land and does not reassert her right on the land by proclaiming her love for Miranda. Although the journal of Miranda and the writings of Prospero are also mentioned in the poem but they appear to be used as tool to highlight the plight of Caliban by contrast.

In fact, both the notions of land and love have been demonstrated ingeniously through the metonymic figure of Caliban. The following is the passage from the Caliban's journal: "These barriers are nice, those are not nice. This water is fresh. That water is salt. I learnt. I learnt all day by myself, and I told it to them. They were so pleased. But one day when I said to myself, 'Miranda is nice,' and told it to her she didn't like it. She told it to him. I was whipped afterwards" (*From the Bedside Book of Nightmares* 57) . At times it is the heterosexuality of the space (as in case of Suniti's lesbian

identity in India) and sometimes it is the whiteness of the space (Suniti's racial othering in the West) that perpetuate the marginalization of sexual and spatial diasporas. Quoting from Heidi Mirza and Creet, Rani Kawale in "A Kiss Is Just A Kiss ... Or Is It? South Asian Lesbian and Bisexual Women and the Construction of Space" writes about this kind of sexual and spatial displacement: "... whiteness is a 'powerful place that makes invisible, or re-appropriates things, people and places it does not want to see or hear, and then through misnaming, renaming or not naming at all, invents the truth—what we are told is 'normal', neutral, universal, simply because the way it is. This applies to public places for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals too. A group or commercial venue does not need to specify that 'white' people are welcome: this is assumed, because the term 'lesbian' is racialized and usually refers to 'white' lesbians. Hence lesbians and bisexual women's places that are not overtly racially assigned tend to have little room for 'black' women to be 'black' in them"(183) . She further elaborates the technique through which only white bodies are understood as the 'somatic authentic lesbian norm.' These techniques involve considering them primarily as heterosexuals or bisexuals rather than lesbians and inferior and exoticized 'sex subjects.' No wonder the white woman is considered more lesbian in queer spaces as compared to the South Asian woman. Obviously, first of all presenting Caliban as a female (instead of male) and then investing her, instead of Miranda, with lesbian identity is a reversal of dominant culture in all possible ways and it presents an interesting postcolonial site for queer negotiation. The reversal of heterosexual love through the depiction of lesbian Caliban's infatuation for Miranda makes the heteropatriarchal boundaries porous at one level but at the other the aversion of Miranda for Caliban perpetuates the notion of lesbophobic anxiety and the intention of the poet appears somewhat opaque in this fashion. But probably this contradictory double bind emanates primarily from the fact that Caliban has been used traditionally as a stoic symbol of 'other' in multiple perspectives and this polyvalence creates a complex web of signification as has been suggested by George Lamming: "Caliban is the excluded, that which is eternally below possibility ...

He is seen as an occasion, a state of existence which can be appropriated and exploited to the purposes of another's own development" (107) .The native lesbian who has been displaced by her own land and has a living mother (thus has an alternative family) clearly reveals the clever juxtaposing of lesbian rights on the land through familial structure. Just like Caliban Miranda also writes poetry and exhibits her ambivalent homophobic anxieties through her hate poem on Caliban, the concluding line of which shows her subtle attraction towards Caliban and a reflection of lesbian continuum that transcends the racial boundaries. Importantly, when Caliban falls sick Miranda gets worried but she is surprised at her own concern for Caliban: "Caliban is ill. I can't help wondering if she is going to die. I do not want her to die. I am surprised. This thought surprises me" (*From the Bedside Book of the Nightmares* 61) . Caliban's journal in which she records incidents from postcolonial-queer perspective is an attempt to record lesbian history vis-à-vis land. She gives a poignant account of her sexual diasporic existence through the detailed descriptions of the modes of subjugation which result in the erasure of her identity. She has been deliberately kept out of intellectual endeavours such as game of chess which becomes a symbolic site for heterosexual privileges: "They are playing chess I could learn too, I am not stupid. But they say it's a game intended for two. They have left me out" (57) . Similarly, the red lining of dissident sexuality by the straight world is explicit when Caliban states that the physical labour done by him is unnoticed but when Ferdinand picks up the log, Miranda feels miserable. Thus banishment and partiality meted out to queer people in contemporary work-culture is apparent even in Caliban's island.

This anthropomorphic lesbian identity of Caliban is indeed an important marker in decentering the notion of idealized-authentic citizen subject. Hoshang Merchant adds another dimension to the whole argument when he sees this effort of assigning lesbian identity to native Caliban as a double bonanza, for it not only negates the assumption that homosexuality is a western import and questions national perception of homosexuality (because in the whole discourse instead of the white Miranda it is the native Caliban who

is queer and fights for the right of the native land) but also, in a way, tries to Indianise the predominantly queer culture. To quote his words: "While the hegemony of Europe or America is based on a subject's class, gender and ethnicity, in India it is a person's caste, gender, sexual preference, social and political affiliation and geographical location, which in many ways Namjoshi reminds us of. Identifying the diasporic lesbian self with the motherland then not only puts forward questions related to 'indianising' queer culture and community, it also upsets 'national' perception of homosexuality....it is in this sense Namjoshi, from the diaspora, is Indianising queer community" (229) . In fact, in "Cyclone In Pakistan" she connects the question of queer citizenship with other fluid identities when she proclaims that nations are emerging in all possible colours of black, brown, white , green, yellow , purple and blue and compares them with the spinning confetti of carnival day. Undoubtedly, the assertion of the right of multiple fluid identities on the land has been her preoccupation since early days and the issue pertaining to queer citizenship has come under the ambit of this larger umbrella. This recognition of the sexual and racial other indeed is a progressive move by Namjoshi but creating an isolated island in the form of Maya Diip is slightly ambivalent from the perspective of citizenship right. For, it indeed is a way of having a nation of one's own and of proclamation of lesbians as an authentic citizen subject but it also clearly reveals that hetero and homo assumptions cannot co-exist and in order to have a space of their own, the lesbians need to be banished to some exclusive remote island of their own. Although it is certainly opening up the issue of rights of lesbians over nation but it does not show the necessary displacement of heteronormativity within heterosexual structure to negotiate a queer space. In this regard Roshanabadi's "Vande Mataram" adds an interesting dimension because she uses the cult of patriotic song to reinvent a nation which is an all woman space. Quoting Sridevi K. Nair in my earlier article, "Dichotomic Representation of Lesbianism as an Act of Resistance in Contemporary Indian English Women Writers with Special Reference to Abha Dawesar and Anita Nair", I have affirmed that Roshanabadi tries to challenge masculine cultural patriotism.

She rewrites the 'whole notion' of Mother India by using the same tool of subjugation and through the ingenious inversion of "Vande Mataram!" places woman's desire for another woman (irrespective of heterosexual mother image) at the centre of it. Thus, she inscribes lesbianism at the very center of the nation rather than displacing it. In this poem she uses the trope of homoerotic desire to celebrate the independence of 'the motherland' and reaffirms that lesbians are equal citizen subjects (because patriotism is seen as an obvious marker to claim the right on the land) by re-moulding masculine desire for nation and woman. To quote from the poem: "On the solemn occasion / of the fiftieth year/ Of Indian Independence/ I salute our motherland,/Home of the most beautiful women"(Sukthankar 408) . Interestingly, in somewhat oblique fashion Caliban also expresses desire to occupy the island with people of her own choice, but do these people share her same-sex proclivities or not is unclear (*From the Bedside Books of Nightmares* 58) ?

However the reworking of myth and overturning of classic colonial patriarchal text, *The Tempest*, create a unique space for fantasy where tales of phallogocentrism can be deconstructed. As Mary Daly in *Gyn/Ecology* asserts that " patriarchy perpetuates its deception through myths" (44) , so the reworking and reimagining of myths from the queer and feminist perspectives are not always efforts to camouflage homoeroticism through symbolic attire but are meant to rectify the value systems imposed by the compulsive heterosexuality. Adrienne Rich in her essay, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision," writes that "Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction — is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival" (90) . Obviously, this revisionist myth-telling should not be understood only in terms of escapist route but should be viewed as an attempt to re-order and re-imagine identities from queer perspective and as an effort to catalogue lesbian history through recreating a past in which their presence has been systematically erased by the dominant heterosexual culture. In this way homosexual women record their existence through the inversion of age-old heteropatriarchal tales infusing queer characters in them. C.

Vijayasree in *The Artful Transgressor* asserts that “in lesbian myth-making the project gains an additional edge of urgency since it is an important aspect of their attempt to create a lesbian identity and culture. It is interesting to recall here what one of the characters in Noretta Koertge’s *Valley of the Amazon* (1984) , Helen, says of the power of myths: ‘Don’t ever doubt the power of myths... I mean women’s myth, not the bullshit stories we grew up with. We have to build a feminist mythology and recover woman’s herstory’ (75) . Interestingly, the “Beauty and the Beast” and “I See You What You Are” showcase the seemingly irreverent play with traditional tales to break open the conditioned mind-set. Reversing the paradigm she demonstrates how female beast loves beauty and tries to forge a lesbian bond but she has been jeered at. Likewise, in re-conceptualization of the stock stories like *The Twelfth Night*, cross-dresser Viola and Olivia are placed within the space of homoerotic possibilities. Regarding the technique employed for this reversal, C.Vijayasree writes that “Namjoshi retells these tales with careful but slight slippages, and gives them a subtly subversive twist which practically makes them stand on head, and lays open an unreasonably biased social order contained within them” (78) .

Apart from overturning and revisionist mythmaking, to quote C. Vijayasree’s term, the other interesting method used by Namjoshi to counter the heterosexual policing of homoerotic desire is the novel use of fables. The all pervasive animal imagery is used deftly to blur the boundaries of gender and sexuality because when one sees an animal the sex is not evident, whereas in human beings the gender markers are quite explicit and consequently also the sexual choices. In “A Quiet Life” she writes: “ ‘I don’t want to be a woman.’ ‘Do you want to be a man?’ ‘No.’ ‘What do you want?’ ‘I want to hide, to live in the bushes, to be a rabbit or a squirrel or a mythical animal...When there is nobody about, be what I am; and when people are present , disguise myself . ‘As what?’ ‘As a fake woman’“(*Feminist Fables* 51) . According to Ruth Vanita, Namjoshi calls it a fake woman for the disguises of dress, hair style and gender role camouflage the sameness of species and this produces a fake woman. Thus, in Suniti’s *Conversation of the Cow*, the cow not only turns lesbian but

magically changes gender and race by being white man Baddy and disrupts the fixities of sexual and gender roles. In “Her Form In Clear Water” Namjoshi topples the tale of fall of eve who prefers to mate with the snake rather than being in the bondage of Adam and creates a liminal space to produce counter discourse for negation of the taken for granted assumption of heterosexual matrix. To quote from the text: “ Her form in clear water made him/raise his head/ His length slid about her limbs. Eve/in her turn /encircled the snake, pressing her body/ to him/ Curious coupling, brown snake and Eve,/ caught in a twist/of the blind green coil being Adam/and evil and Eve” (*The Jackass and the Lady*, 13) . In the same collection animal trope is used for exploring the themes like coercive nature of heterosexuality in “The Arbitrary Order” where the poet vehemently cries: “ the arbitrary order: ducks/quenching in the pond/ drakes mounting them” (34) . Likewise, Namjoshi turns the mythical characters upside down and then juxtaposes them with animal imagery to circumvent heterosexual canonicity. In “Homage to Circe,” Circe turns her lovers into animals and through a symbolic riddle the subtle undertones of dissident desire are negotiated. The speaker wants to get close to Circe and therefore pleads: “ I am all animals to you?/ I could sit cat- like and gaze/ sisterly/ I am all animals to you/ could offer myself/ on a wide lily-pad” (*The Jackass and the Lady*45) .

Though Namjoshi has used both western and Indian myth with equal potency to lay bear the multiple subversive pattern of homosexuality, yet the intermingling of animal and human in order to create a ceaseless continuum of pansexuality is a very Indian expression (as one can notice that in mythological tales and religious texts, there are constant transformations of humans into animals or vice versa, at times as a result of curse or due to some situational need) and helps in Indianising the queer culture. In an invigorating interview given to C. Vijayasree, Namjoshi contemplates: “...but rather to the use I made of the Hindu notion that there was not a clear cut division between human beings and animals in order to deal with my alienation from the male centered western humanist tradition. This is too polysyllabic. I think all I meant was that if to be centrally human meant that one had to be an Anglo Saxon

heterosexual male, then I personally would rather identify with the birds and the beasts” (*Suniti Namjoshi: The Artful Transgressor* 177) . Namjoshi in *Because of India* stresses the point that ‘beast’ for her does not mean ‘bestial’ in the popular western sense because ‘ hinduism’ is after all saturated with pantheism “ and the popular notion of reincarnation attributes a soul to everyone. This may sound odd to western ears, but for me, it was as familiar as it was unconscious”(28) .The whole idea of Indian intervention in the development of queer theory takes a sharp turn when we scrutinize this ceaseless interspecies transformations in the light of nullifying sexual and gender hegemony. It ultimately helps in the formation of a very specific Indian queer literary technique. Importing a western tool to give voice to subaltern sexualities is a common practice among many queer litterateurs, specially diasporic writers. But it has been strongly criticized by queer critics and activists on account of two concerns. Firstly, because gay-subculture is perceived as a western import, which is popular only in upper-class English speaking people and thus the western queer literary theory framework used by LGBTI writers and critics(specially diasporic lesbian writers) further perpetuates the homophobic myth that tends to divorce Indianness from queer aesthetics. Secondly, from the postcolonial perspective importing western tool in the absence of exclusive Indian queer theory is indeed a backlash at the overall postcolonial literary agenda of Indian academia. In fact these racialized and class oriented aspects of the language of lesbians have been unveiled by KISS and KALI (two South Asian lesbian organization in England) .Quoting Puwar, Rani Kawale explains how speaking ‘legitimate’ English especially in a profession is a way of erasing ‘ethnic differences’ but the so– called impurities of dialects, accent and structure of native language, to some extent, help in locating an individual’s native place within a larger space. It is precisely for this reason that “the spoken English at KISS is often broken or with a South Asian accent—whether naturally or in fun. Some words, concepts and meanings do not directly translate from South Asian languages into English either, and so some women use different languages to express themselves. This particular ‘il-

legitimate’ form of English in a white space for lesbians and bisexual women would place South Asian women on the margins; but at Kiss, it contributes to the construction of the space as South Asian and locates the members certainly within that space” (“A Kiss Is Just A Kiss...Or Is It? South Asian Lesbian and Bisexual Women and the Construction of Space” 190) .This deliberate fractured use of language to create the much needed gap to assert native sexual identity is brilliantly used in lesbian Caliban’s journal where she records her romantic proclivities in broken English and is able to create a sense of her geographical sexual identity. Thus Suniti’s grotesque inversions of fables and use of fractured language (though very rarely) in her lesbian poetry is a strategic contribution to the development of exclusive Indian queer theory. Miranda and Prospero’s journals and their language as opposed to Caliban’s journal make the issue of identity and language more conspicuous because Miranda’s writing is a specimen of already established and respected identity of heterosexual white woman and hence the codes of language are not only existing but also, are well defined. As opposed to this, Caliban’s broken English and slippages are marks of deliberate erasure of native lesbian who has no language and therefore she struggles for words and reinvents her own language. It clearly brings forth the idea of developing an exclusive lesbian- language specially for South Asian woman who is still a missing dyke in the entire discourse of queer literary activism. Suniti’s Caliban indeed tries to invent lesbian-écriture. This mutually reciprocal relationship of language and identity has been wonderfully elaborated by Judith Butler: “ We do things with language, produce effects with language, and we do things to language, but language is also the thing that we do. Language is a name for our doing: both “what” we do... and that which we affect, the act and its consequences” (*Excitable Speech* 8) . In the same vein it is interesting to note that Ruth suggests etymologically word *rekhta* from which the word *rekhti* is derived literally means “mixing or pouring different things into a mould to create a new compound.”(*Gender, Sex And The City* 28) . Since language is fashioned only to give expression to accepted form of love, there is a complete lack of linguistic codes for lesbian lan-

guage and in the process of frantic search for exclusive lesbian vocabulary, there is a continuous linguistic hybridization and formation of novel linguistic structures. And this reinventing of queer language is visible even in nineteenth century *rekhti* poetry. In fact due to the all pervasive dynamics of homoerotic desire across respectable *grahastha* (domesticated) woman and courtesans—both speak quite a different language from each other—there is a curious mixing of linguistic patterns which forms a unique queer language. Ruth by quoting Rangin succinctly charts out this aspect of *rekhti*: “I do not restrict this to prostitutes (*kasbi*) or to domestic (*gharelu*) women/ I am interested here only in women’s speech (*zanani boli*) ” (28) . In fact the blurring of this binary opposition between public and domesticated women and the negation of falsely associating dissident desire only with courtesans (this notion perpetuates monolithic linguistic structure without any distinctive feature) find an interesting manifestation in the language of *khangis*. *Khangis* were married women who were involved in sex-work (both with men and women) also and therefore their lesbian experience and its articulation had a distinct hybrid flavor. Ruth writes how Rangin use to pay special attention to the speech of *khangis* to learn language for penning down women’s specific sexual experiences that fall outside the boundary of patriarchal norm in every sense of the word. To quote Ruth: “...he used to pay attention to the speech of every member of the group. Having spent some time thus, I acquire knowledge (*ilm*) of many of their idioms and sayings... This fourth (*rekhti*) collection of poetry is in their language (*zuban*) ” (28) . In this light the imperfect language of Caliban’s journal is not only a reflection of lack of lesbian vocabulary but also, an example of formation of new queer language through the hybridity created by mixing of lesbian native language and the language learnt through the white, heterosexual colonizers.

In fact like Suniti the use of animal trope to re-define desire is used by many writers as has been articulated by Ruth Vanita in her brilliant essay, *I’m an Excellent Animal*. She reveals how animal imagery is being used to forge possibilities of alternative sexualities through texts like *Manusmiriti*, the poems of Bahinabai

and Rukun Advani’s *Beethoven Among the Cows*. These symbolic riddles on the one hand open up loads of fluid space where pansexuality can be prescribed but on the other, they seem to camouflage the lesbian identity through suggestive ways of narration and unusual symbols. In fact in her interview to C. Vijayasree she seems to admit that it is an ‘unhappy’ choice because it accepts marginalization. She further states that “ A ‘ happier’ choice, which I made later, was to claim center stage for the dispossessed and to challenge the traditional assumptions”(177) . Little wonder in “Well, then let slip the masks” she blatantly pronounces lesbian eroticism: “ The curve of your breast is like the curve/ of a wave: look, held, caught, each instant/ caught, the wave tipping over and we in our bower/ the two of us sheltered, my hands on your thighs,/ your body, your back, my mouth on your mouth/ and in the hollows of your jaws and your head/ nuzzling my breasts” (*Flesh and Paper* 7-13) . And goes to the extent of asking her same sex lover: “ will you let my tongue caress you? Will you lie in my arms? Will you rest”(14-18) ? The unabashed exploration of lesbian longings may have emerged out more prominently in later poetry when she has been able to mitigate internalized homophobia more potently, but even her early poetry bears the mark of blatant exposition of sub-altern sexualities bereft of any symbolic interpretation. Quite obviously, in *From the Bedside Book of Nightmares* the usual accusation regarding the plausibility of lesbian’s sex-encounters in the absence of penetrative sex (which is a possibility even in gay- sex) is ironically turned upside down when she asks: “ I wonder what those others /—those lovers of men—do (34) ?” This is a fitting answer to the oft asked homophobic question as what the lesbians can do in bed.

Moreover a new twist to the entire discourse is being given by Ruth and which has been identified by Shohini Ghosh in her essay, “ Bombay Cinema’s Queer Vision” as ‘ analogical identification.’ Quoting Ruth, Shohini argues that the idea of analogical identification has been first used by Ruth in her essay on Virginia Woolf’s *Flush* about Brett Browning’s pet dog whose despair emanates from its inability to fulfill Elizabeth’s needs. Because of biological com-

pulsion it is already an outsider in the domain of intimacies and this inter-species difference is effectively used by writers in terms of social gap and sexual and gender hierarchies. In yet another essay, “ ‘I’ m an Excellent Animal” Ruth quoting Wittig affirms that the negation to remain heterosexual is being associated with the refusal to become a man or woman wittingly or unwittingly and “ it is likely that every culture has fashioned spaces for such refusal; every written literature certainly has. The apparently uncrossable cultural gulf between human and non-human animals often functions as a metaphor for the equally uncrossable, although socially created, sexual gulf between human members of the same gender”(*Gandhi's Tiger and Sita's Smile* 291) . In this respect re-viewing Suniti's method of incessant use of animals is certainly not an 'unhappy choice' as she calls it, but unwittingly unveils the multiple and interlinked complex systems of oppression which cannot be reduced only to an escapist strategy of making homoeroticism palatable to a largely straight readers. Raj Rao twists the tale of the argument further by elaborating on Dollimore's notion of need of elusive 'other' as a prerequisite for any romantic alliances. And since unlike cross-gender relationships the same – sex lovers have same gender (as per the stringent and limited notion of gender) , the need of the other for sexual intimacies is compensated by re-inventing the categories of otherness through “ the dream of age, youth, equipment, animalism and so on (Chanana Kuhu , *Indian Literature* 155) . Thus the use of animal imagery cannot be interpreted as a monolithic regressive tool for hiding dissident sexuality only, rather it has to be understood in terms of dismantling closed, stable and unitary sexual identity. Thus the method of unabashed proclamation and re-sexualization of transgressive desire in *Flesh and Paper* has its own advantages but revisiting myths and fables for the exploration of lesbian desire also adds to the agenda of providing unique cultural spaces, which further contribute to the formation of exclusive 'queer aesthetics' (to quote Raj Rao's term) .

The world of fantasy is supposedly believed to divorce us from the hard core realities of working- class underprivileged lesbians as has been catalogued by contemporary lesbian poet, Maya Sharma's

hard- hitting and below one's belt way of depicting the plights of working- class lesbians. As opposed to the use of symbols, myth and fables of Suniti, Maya Sharma's engagement with the lesbian world is expressed through concrete hard- hitting realistic style of narration. This style mostly emerges from her serious concern for working- class lesbians, a sub- group which has been largely ignored in the lesbian discourse. In fact her lesbian anthology *Loving Women* is a collection of tales told by exclusively working- class women and deconstructs the notion that same-sex desire is whimsical, sexual experimentation of over- sexed and west- oriented rich women. She in her poem, “ For You” highlights this aspect : “How can I bear / the weight of you/ so near to me? I, who am so used / to carrying bricks,/stones, mud./I turn my face,/push your hand away/ Even then, you sit so near?/Is the shelter you offer / the truth or a dream?/tell me”(403) . However a close examination of lesbian Caliban's unpaid labour puts her into the category of working-class lesbian and is counter-productive of the conception that the world of fantasy and fables cannot portray the various marginalized identities within the oppressed groups. Therefore, the use of the concrete and hard-hitting language with the underplay of imagery is not the only means of articulating every aspect of the protean nature of desire.

Hence viewing Namjoshi's fantasy- laden lesbian world of poetry as a product of schizophrenic anxiety or a tool to perpetuate one step forward and two steps backward sort of movement, will be a serious misreading of her work. Raj Rao in his exclusive interview, given to me for the special number of *Indian Literature* on same-sex desire, talks about evolving a distinct 'queer aesthetic' which should focus on 'hybridization and corruption' of language by deliberately shunning the elegant English language in the line of 'dalit literature' to shock the sensibilities of reader and thereby puncturing the very idea of 'normalcy.' Though this has been successfully adopted by the sensational use of the so-called crude language in Abha Dawesar 's *Baby ji* and Raj Rao's *Boyfriend* and *Hostel Room 131*, yet Namjoshi's deliberate hyper-elegance, constant lesbian fabulation, creation of fantastic lands where animals freely transform into multiple

identities, fractured narration and employment of rich and evocative symbols also propound another extreme of queer aesthetics which equally helps in breaking all conventions of heteronormative reality by evincing multiple possibilities through varied techniques and thereby celebrating queer inconsistencies. Suniti's incessant mixing of genres (poetry and prose) coupled with her photographic snapshots in "Snapshots of Caliban" give impetus to deliberately structured gaps which readers can fill according to their own subjective positions, and this helps the author in producing much needed plural interpretations. Thus by intentionally avoiding straight forward articulation of lesbian desires, specially in her early writings, she is not following an escapist route but is destabilizing the complex codes of stringent, monolithic, sensational and blunt sort of 'queer aesthetics' which is certainly a potent tool to counter the heteronorm as a primary signifier, but this is not the only way of doing so. Through her distinct lesbian fabulation, Suniti presents an alternative way of achieving the much desired aim of queer aesthetics. In the light of the inherent celebration of plural sexual subjectivities that queer literature aims at, the employment of multiple polyvalent techniques is a necessity and Suniti accomplishes this brilliantly. Her own sense of liminal identity further contributes to the development of this unique, experimental lesbian style (which is a representation of authorial and ontological realities and an answer to the well-established literary writings of the custodians of patriarchy) in the absence of any accepted codes for queer articulation. She points out the spatial schisms that are equally applicable to fissures in lesbian literature, and both these require not only an urgent attention but also a novel method to fill them up. In this context she writes: "I had thought once that I felt most at home in a plane in mid-air; but that isn't true. I belong to India and to the West. Both belong to me and both reject me. I have to make sense of what has been and what there is" (*Suniti Namjoshi: The Artful Transgressor* 181). Also I believe that her lesbian anxiety which bears a close semblance with her spatial dilemma prompts her to devise methods of overturning the myths to inhabit lesbian characters in a fantasy land. To conclude, we must take her work as an

explication of new mode of queer aesthetics, and hence it will be erroneous to brand it as an escapist strategy.

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MANEUVERING GENDER ROLES THROUGH MEDIA IN LAURENCE'S *FIRE-DWELLERS*

Vallari Gaur

The novels of Margaret Laurence explore the issues of gender construction and conditioning. She exhibits how the construction and interrelationship of hegemonic and subordinate sexualities adversely affect the burgeoning of individuality. She talks about the hidden structural determinants of feminine experience, and the social and economic forces that limit women to a sexual class. This aspect of gender theory can be specially discerned in *The Fire-Dwellers*. Published in 1969, *The Fire-Dwellers* analyzes the gendered identities and social structures from the perspective of Stacey MacAindra. The novel covers several months in Stacey's thirty-ninth year, ending on the eve of her fortieth birthday.

Prophylactic patriarchal norms inculcate docility and obedience among women by permeating literature and mass media with sexual stereotypes of women and asserting male-authority. Perhaps owing to her thematic designs, Laurence seeks a form to convey a sense of simultaneity and complexity, "Narration, dreams, memories, inner running commentary, — all had to be brief, even fragmented, to convey the jangled quality of Stacey's life" (*GG* 10) . She has admitted to the influence of television on her technique in *The Fire-Dwellers*. She wanted to capture sharp visual images, "the effect of voices and pictures" as she felt that the readers conditioned by the visual media, need visual variety on the page.

Stacey is the wife of Clifford "Mac" MacAindra, a salesman, and the mother of four children, Jen, Duncan, Ian and Katie. The MacAindras live in Vancouver of the nineteen sixties in a large, slightly shabby house. She is a confused and self-doubting housewife who has not been able to adjust to her life. Her family is structured along binaries. She is the image of a suburban housewife who is being projected as a model for contemporary north-American girls by the popular media. She is also financially and emotionally dependent on her husband Clifford "Mac" MacAindra. Mac is a sales-

man, first of encyclopedias, then of essences like peppermint and so forth, and finally of Richalife, an all purpose vitamin. Owing to his job, he is normally away from home. But even while at home, he is silent and uncommunicative. Unconsciously she tries to goad Mac to speak, "Mac, talk to me. Mac? (*FD* 130) . Inevitably, she feels lonely and frustrated, and desperately in search for identity.

Institutionalized heterosexuality encourages women's subordination which is further stressed by popular culture and media. Such patriarchal attitudes constitute the 'coat-rack' view of self-identity in that "the body is viewed as a frame-work upon which cultural meanings are thrown" (*Barker* 289) . Market and media forces constitute the gendered identity by ways of speaking about and disciplining bodies. These forces thrive on the promotion of the stereotypes which involves the reduction of individuality to a set of exaggerated, usually negative, character traits, fixing and highlighting gendered differences and patriarchal power structure. *The Fire-Dwellers* showcases this aspect of the construction of gendered identity by depicting Stacey's victimization. Stacey is beleaguered by and under pressure of the market strategies of portraying the good wife as being domestic, attractive, and home-centered; and the mother as being sacrificing, without any desires of her own.

The world Stacey lives in is terrible. The new symbols of authority are a product of consumerism and technology, and are terrifying in their power – TV, newspapers, films, and businesses such as Polyglam plastics and Richalife vitamins. Her inner vacuity and lack of awareness make her an easy victim of the lies fabricated by the world of business and advertising. To her, the aisles of the supermarket seem like those of a temple with side chapels and music "hymning from invisible choirs" (*FD* 74) . She also uses religious terms when she describes her visit to the beauty parlor. She sees the hair dressers as "priestesses ... clad in pale mauve smocks" (*FD* 99) , working busily on a client who leans back her head "to receive the benediction of the shampoo" (*FD* 99) .

Gendered images of mother portray her as an uncomplaining, self-sacrificing person who finds her happiness in serving her children. At the same time, she should possess a cult of beauty, cloth-

ing, cosmetics, perfumes and hairdos. She should also be a pseudo-intellectual, and a person who keeps herself acquainted with various developments. Stacey epitomizes this gendered creature. She imagines herself as a young girl with flawless skin must see her:

What's she seeing? Housewife, mother of four, this slightly too short and too amply ruffled woman with coat of yester year, hemlines all the wrong length as Katie is always telling me, lipstick wrong color, and crowning comictouch, the hat ... I want to explain. *Under the chapeau lurks a mermaid, a whore, a tigress.* (FD15)

Advertising has imprinted the image of young, beautiful, slim models as the ultimate achievable end in the psyche of the women. Advertising campaigns often promote the image of the woman as the object of male desire. *The Fire-Dwellers* illustrates this aspect of gender conditioning through Stacey and Tess. When Tess is told by an anxious sales woman that there is something “unfresh” about creams made from animal substances, she accepts it joyously. Tess also permits the Polyglam Plastic Lady a display session in her apartment. Stacey addresses the sales-woman as a plastic lady in her mind which underscores the artificiality of the saleswoman (FD7980) .

Similar analysis of gendered identities can be seen in the description of the party which is arranged by Thor Thorlaksen, the menacing silver-maned director of Richalife Vitamins. Stacey has been dragged to this social gathering of salesmen and their wives. Against Mac's injunctions, she drinks heavily and tells Thor what she thinks of the quiz he has foisted on the family, calling it an “infrusion”, her drunken amalgam of “intrusion” and “infringement.” Judgmentally silent, Mac shepherds her away. Giving a figurative slap on her wrist he says, “... no use (talking to you) in your condition” (FD104) . The scene can be interpreted as Stacey's attempt to dislodge images that reflect social and gendered power relationships. It is important for a woman, trapped in her femininity, to develop her independent power of speech. Laurence has depicted a society in *The Fire-Dwellers* in which women were isolated from each other and could not easily share their secret emptiness with anyone.

Gendered norms create conflict in Stacey's life. Newspaper headlines and television voices batter her spirit as well. The grue-

some violence of the public world overwhelms her. Her anxiety and constant worry about her children is reflected in the choice of the nursery rhyme she is trying to teach her two year old Jen, and which is also the epitaph of the novel – Ladybird, ladybird/Fly away home/Your house is on fire/ your children are gone. She imagines disaster at every step. Clara Thomas has rightly pointed out that Stacey is the lady bird “whose house is on fire and she must live in the torture of that element” (Thomas 117) . She also interposes science fiction to capture and come to terms with the oddities of her world.

Stacey continually tries to counter the patriarchal socio-economic culture by subverting the public/private divide. She is frustrated with her confinement to the socially prescribed roles and yearns to be herself:

... Reprieve. I'm not a goner yet. Did I really think I was? ... Yeh? It doesn't matter about you, Stacey? Well, it shouldn't matter. Why not? I'm not a good mother; I'm not a good wife. I don't want to be. I'm Stacey Cameron and I still love to dance. (FD124)

Her desire to find out an alternative to patriarchal constraints encourages her to find solace in nature and love. She knows that an alternate life exists, and she wants to attain it:

Out there in unknown houses are people who live without lies and who touch each other. One day she will discover them, pierce through to them. Then everything will be all right, and she will live in the light of the morning. (FD85)

Another significant gendered representation of women within western culture is that of the ‘slender body’. Stacey in *The Fire-Dwellers* and Morag during her early married days in *The Diviners* portray the ill effects of this discourse which has become a disciplinary cultural norm. Slenderness and a concern with diet are considered to be the cultural norms in most of the societies. Older women also find it difficult to escape the pressures of beautifying themselves as exhibited in the characterization of Rachel's mother. Rachel, Stacey and Morag constantly fidget to maintain a tighter, smoother and more constrained body profile. Advertisements and popular discourses associate slenderness with a feminine charm. It is the appearance, not the talent, which patriarchy encourages in a woman. Simone de Beauvoir has appropriately remarked that the

smart appearance for a woman “is a weapon, a flag, a defense, a letter of recommendation” (Beauvoir 548) . Laurence’s novels neatly sum up this idea of gender discourse and suggest that the content of gender beliefs promoted by media, while purports to be a universal depiction, in fact represents the understandings of gender by dominant social groups that shape our institutions. Laurence exhibits how the notion of gender and its meaning is continuously created through various social practices. She highlights how the identities of women, as well as men, are framed by gender. Her male characters also display the impact of gendered differences and sexual binaries. During the interactions of men and women gendered differences are easily transformed into inequality through a variety of social processes. The binary of man and woman is not absolute even within patriarchy; it is broken up through other social/cultural/political terms which generate categories of difference. Laurence also portrays how gender functions across racial boundaries. Stacey begins her adult life under the illusion that a woman’s job is to “inspire in her home a vision of the meaning of life and freedom ... to help her husband find values that will give purpose to his specialized daily chores ... to teach her children the uniqueness of each individual human being” (Friedan 60-1) . In the course of the novel, though she rebels and wants more out of the life, something which the en-gendered psyche of patriarchy is unable to provide. Laurence’s portrayal of a rebellious housewife drew a lot of hostility from her several male critics, and she was hurt as *The Fire-Dwellers* had been her most overtly autobiographical fiction. There had been parts of Margaret’s character in Hagar and Rachel but Stacey was really a version of herself, as she admitted to Al Purdy in a letter.

Margaret Laurence also discusses the mother-child relationship from the perspective of gender. *This Side Jordan* portrays expectant mothers, who are struggling against gender and racial differences. *The Stone Angel* presents before us Hagar, whose attitude towards her own children, as well as towards her father, is conditioned by her internalization of gendered social roles. *A Jest of God* presents the relationship of May Cameron and Rachel to illustrate how a mother can be a vassal of patriarchy and discourage

her own daughter in her pursuit of autonomy. The novel also presents the significance of feminine bonding and sisterhood through the friendship of Rachel and Calla. *The Fire-Dwellers* posits the figure of a young mother in Stacey, who is fidgeting under the pressures of media-created images of motherhood. The hyper-sexualized female images portrayed in popular culture and media generate the desire to conform and make a woman’s struggle to retain her individuality tougher. Taken collectively, Laurence’s novels indicate a shift from the exploration of motherhood as an institution to that of motherhood as an experience. Laurence has shown motherhood from the perspective of gender theories clearly asserting that gendered notions of self-worth and identity hinder a woman’s capability to nurture this sensitive relationship. Only when a woman is able to eschew gendered thinking, she is able to transform this experience from an exploitative/oppressive one to that of celebration and recognition. *The Fire-Dwellers* thus presents the quintessence of gender – its construction, forces that propagate it, its limiting impact on the psyche and cognition of men and women, as well as the difficulties in overcoming the involvedness of gendered images propagated by media to attain selfhood.

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**“THE PAGEANT OF LIFE GOING BLITHELY AND
FLEET/ TO THE FEAST OF ETERNITY”:
SAROJINI NAIDU'S VISION OF LIFE**

Manju

Unlike her illustrious contemporary Indian English poets such as Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu does not delineate life with its variegated aspects and problems, dimensions and dynamics from the viewpoint of a philosopher or a metaphysician. True, in her attitude to life, she is a visionary realist who confronts with the vicissitude of life with fortitude and courage, and loves life fathomlessly notwithstanding its sufferings and disillusionments. She is incessantly inquisitive to know from the Creator the essence and the basic, varied truths of life — life with all its joys and sorrows. Apropos of this, she writes in her poem titled, “The Soul’s Prayer”:

In childhood’s pride I said to Thee:
“O Thou, who mad’st me of Thy breath,
Speak, Master, and reveal to me
Thine inmost laws of life and death.

“Give me to drink each joy and pain
Which Thine eternal hand can mete,
For my insatiate soul would drain
Earth’s utmost bitter, utmost sweet.

“Spare me no bliss, no pang of strife,
Withhold no gift or grief I crave,
The intricate lore of love and life

And mystic knowledge of the grave.” (*The Sceptred Flute* 123; italics added)

Granting the poet’s prayer, God tells her the essence of life and death thus:

“I, bending from my sevenfold height
Will teach thee of My quickening grace,
*Life is a prism of my light,
And death the shadow of My face.*” (124)

Sarojini Naidu’s writings and her actual life unmistakably evidence her profound attachment to life, irrespective of its joys and sufferings. The struggles and perils of life fascinate her as much as the ivory tower of dreams. Patently, in the exquisite poem, “In the

Forest”, she wishes to get ready to confront courageously the strife of life and to triumph over the sorrows of life, caring little for life’s treasured dreams:

But soon we must rise, O my heart, we must wander again
Into the war of the world and the strife of the throng;

.....
We will conquer the sorrow of life with the sorrow of song. (32-3)

To Sarojini Naidu, life may be a dream but not an empty, “walking shadow signifying nothing”. Again and again, she reaffirms her unflinching faith in life which is full of struggles and challenges which man is required to accept and meet with courage. She believes that man must bear and battle with life’s sufferings and fears with fortitude and patience, and should know how to cope with “the conflict of dream-shattering years” (“Life,” *The Sceptred Flute* 35) and the obstructing forces of life.

Sarojini Naidu clearly describes life as a challenge to bear patiently and boldly lovely dreams, deep desires, passions and intense sorrows. She wants the children to prepare themselves for all this as they have not yet tasted the fundamental realities of life, and only know with their little experience and observations that

Life is a lovely stalactite of dreams,
Or carnival of careless joys and leap.... (Ibid.)

In her poetry, Sarojini Naidu deals with life in its simple totality. As such, she shows the lady in the poem, “The Pardah Nashin”, immersed in visions and ideas:

Her life is a revolving dream
Of languid and sequestered ease..... (53)

But the reality of life, according to her, is that one cannot live in dreams for ever and one also has to meet face to face the sordid realities of life sooner or later. So she writes:

Time lifts the curtain unawares,
And sorrow looks into her face.... (Ibid.)

In the short lyric entitled “Alabaster”, Sarojini Naidu attempts to present the entire picture of life: a person “Carven with delicate dreams”, preoccupied with “many a subtle and exquisite thought” and full of “rich and passionate memories” of “song and sorrow and life and love” (“Alabaster,” *The Sceptred Flute* 24) . Sarojini Naidu

knows that life, though not without ecstasies, sometimes is bent "low with pain" ("Ecstasy," *The Sceptred Flute* 25) . But, in her view, ecstatic satisfaction is not the only idea of life; she unmistakably perceives the faint, thirsting and languid throats of men toiling indefatigably in the fields in the blazing sun just "to forge a little gain" ("Street Cries," *The Sceptred Flute* 57) . The 'Nightingale of India' (this was the name given to Sarojini Naidu by her illustrious contemporaries) pours out heartening notes to impart relief and joy to the labourers working hard under the scorching sun. Obviously, her poems overtly reveal Shelley's strong democratic sympathies. More than the rich and great, she loves and respects the common people. She sings of those who labour on the burning earth with thirsty throats. She observes that the real throb of life is in the veins of the toiling millions, who suffer but sing their pangs away in the tune and music of their song, "Row, brothers, row", on the unending stream of life. The rulers and the wealthy may delight in the company of their consorts, but the boat of life glides gently in the company of the poor and the rich alike on "to the blue of the verge" ("Coromandel Fishers," *The Sceptred Flute* 7) where the earth and heaven become one with eternity for ever. Believing in the democratic socialism, she shows the downtrodden having strong spirits. The oppression creates in the common men the unflinching urge to shatter the old, unjust social order fearlessly. So, she writes in the poem, "Wandering Beggars":

Life may grant us or withhold
 Roof or raiment, bread or gold,
 But our hearts are gay and bold.
Y' Allah! Y' Yllah!

.....
 So we go a fearless band,
 The staff of freedom in our hand
 Wandering from land to land,
Y' Allah! Y' Yllah!

Till we meet the Night that brings
 Both to beggars and to kings
 The end of all their journeyings
Y' Allah! Y' Yllah! (*The Sceptred Flute* 165-66)

Sarojini Naidu's attitude to life demonstrates her a robust optimist like P.B. Shelley and Robert Browning. Like the former, she carries with weary heart "The heavy loved burden of dreams that are dead..." ("In the Forest," *The Sceptred Flute* 32) . She believes that the ashes of the dreams that are dead will engender a renewed vigour to fight the negative forces that man comes across at every stage of life and to live again a meaningful life. With optimistic expectancy and hope, she speaks of the shattered dreams resulting in wearisome life:

Let us scatter their ashes away, for a while let us mourn;
 We will rest, O my heart, till the shadow are gray in the west.

But soon we must rise, O my heart, we must wander again
 Into the war of the world and the strife of the throng... (32)

Sarojini Naidu's invincible faith in life cannot be adversely affected by any kind of despair and defeat in life. She is ceaselessly in love with life. She wants to live each and every moment of life joyously and zealously. No wonder she once wrote to Arthur Symons: "I too have learnt the subtle philosophy of living from moment to moment. Yes, it is a subtle philosophy, though it appears merely an epicurean doctrine. 'Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die'" ("Introduction," *The Golden Threshold* 19-20) . No doubt, she was destined to live in close companionship with the sorrows of life all through her life , but her strong will power and indomitable spirit never succumbed even to the most perplexing and difficult moments. This is the reason why she ejaculates in the lyric, "In the Forest":

Let us rise, O my heart, let us gather the dreams that remain,
 We will conquer the sorrow of life with the sorrow of song.
 (*The Sceptred Flute* 33)

Sarojini Naidu is endowed with such a positive and hopeful vision as even the crowded streets and glittering lights fill her mind with new ideas and hopes. She sees the warmth clearing the mists from life. Thus, in many of her poems we notice that she, very much like Shelley, optimistically shrieks with joy on perceiving the joyous present replacing the miserable past like the resplendent dawn peeping out of the gloomy night. She writes in the lovely lyric, "The Broken Wing":

The great dawn breaks, the mournful night is past,
 From her deep age-long sleep she wakes at last!
 sweet and long-slumbering buds of gladness ope
 Fresh lips to the returning winds of hope,
 Our eager hearts renew their radiant flight
 Towards the glory reascent light,
 Life and our land wait their destined spring.... (*The Sceptred Flute* 145)

Indeed, she seems to be obsessed by a rainbow arch of life, irrespective of place and time.

Sarojini Naidu feels that life, though bitter, is not full of incurable despondency. inevitably, we do not find in her poetry Matthew Arnold-like elegiac note due to the sense of religious loss and spiritual isolation. Also, her poetry has no tinge of King Lear's cry of despair which makes man lose faith in life. Wearing and torn of conflicts, inner and outer, she dreams of a world free from tears and wants to take refuge in it:

Far from the toil and weariness, the praise and prayers of men.
 O let us fling all care away, and lie alone and dream.... ("Summer Woods," *The Sceptred Flute* 190)

In fact, she pleads for the infusion of true confidence into man so as to enable him to fight successfully the storms and tribulations of life. Also, she accentuates the depth of faith in living ecstasy and in the "essence of eternity" which can enable man to defy "The relentless sickle of relentless fate" and attain blissful peace so as to get rid of the depressing loneliness of life and the dull presages of doom: "What care I for the world's loud weariness...." ("In Salutation to the Eternal Peace," *The Sceptred Flute* 137) ? And this leads her to affirm and reaffirm her faith in the values of life which shield man from the shaking fears. The intrinsic values of life are like "The opal lies in the river,/ The pearl in the ocean's breast" ("Medley," *The Sceptred Flute* 138) . Her poetry transmits the message that man should not feel discouraged by any kind of adverse situation, for the spirit of life is permeated with goodness which always gives a hopeful, positive shape to the world "full of fear and hate" ("In Salutation to the Eternal Peace," *The Sceptred Flute* 137) . At last it is goodness that invariably prevails over the conflict-ridden humanity, and people sit relaxed "Drinking together of life's poignant

sweet" ("Street Cries," *The Sceptred Flute* 57) .

In Sarojini Naidu's poetry, man's whole life, his progress from cradle to pyre, is portrayed graphically with picturesque images. Thus, in the poem, "Cradle-Song", she sings of the lovely dreams, which she steals "from the poppy-bole", and presents them to her children with soft caress, and talks to them about fairies and fire-flies. This is how she paints the picture of childhood, the initiation of life on the earth. Then, in the poem called "To Youth", she speaks of transient pleasure, false ephemeral vow and the parting of ways with "mournful eyelids" which characterise the young age ("To Youth," *The Sceptred Flute* 54) . Thus, the pageant of life moves on. During this stage of human existence, the magic of love brightens the darkest hours of life. A young person tries to discover the secret of the joy of the Spring and the beautiful world all around him:

The bliss at the core of your magical mirth,
 That quickens the pulse of the morning to wonder
 And hastens the seeds of all beauty to birth,
 That captures the heavens and conquers to blossom
 The roots of delight in the heart of the earth? ("The Joy of the Springtime," *The Sceptred Flute* 89)

But soon the eyes are fed up with this kind of bliss and lips become weary of song. Obviously, Sarojini Naidu says in the lyric titled "Ecstasy":

My soul is bent low with the pain
 And the burden of love like the grace
 Of a flower that is smitten with rain.... (25)

Far from the world of dreams, the middle-aged people find themselves entangled in another mode of life. Little wonder Sarojini Naidu depicts them engaged in toil for the sustenance of life in several of her poems. She speaks of middle-aged men belonging to various walks of life given to different kinds of activities: weavers weaving garments for gay occasions as well as for funeral shroud; fishermen gathering nets from the shore to capture the wealth of the sea; snake-charmers moving to palace-bower; men working in the fields and praying the God for agricultural prosperity; and many others of this kind. But all these people are possessed with resplendent dreams and visions. No doubt man's life is full of hazards and he

has to face the cruel, crushing Fate, but Sarojini Naidu urges him to accept the rebuffs and setbacks in life and drown sorrow into “the deep source of universal joy” (“A Challenge to Fate,” *The Sceptred Flute* 135) . Also, life of man, according to her, must move towards the higher goal of service to humanity and nation. She believes that man should pursue the right path and faith patiently, and that life ultimately offers its bliss to man of action. The optimistic picture of old age, the last stage of human existence on the earth, is vividly portrayed in the beautiful lyric, “The Old Woman”, in which an aged, desolate woman is shown watching with sorrowful eyes patiently the pageant of life moving joyfully towards the realms of eternity:

A lonely old woman sits out on the street
 "Neath the boughs of a banyan tree,
 And hears the bight echo of hurrying feet,
 The pageant of life going blithely and fleet
 To the feast of eternity.

.....
 She is poor, she is bent, she is blind,
 But she lifts a brave heart to the jest of the days,
 And her withered, brave voice croons its paean of praise,
 Be the gay world kind or unkind:

.....
 In her youth she hath comforted lover and son
 in her weary old age, O dear God, is there none
 To bless her tired eyelids to rest?....
 Tho' the world may not tarry to help her or heed,
 More clear than the cry of her sorrow and need
 Is the faith that doth solace her breast..... (“The Old Woman ” 126-27)

The very appellations of Sarojini Naidu's three volumes of poetry — viz. *The Golden Threshold*, *The Bird of Time* and *The Broken Wing* — (published years after her death in one volume entitled *The Sceptred Flute* in 1958) reveal suggestively, but clearly, her approach to life, her vision of life. Published in 1905, *The Golden Threshold* is a collection of poems which records the golden vision and dreams of a person (her own) whose “race is just begun”, to quote Shelley's words from “ To a Skylark”. These poems, studded with exquisite images, demonstrate her love of joyous life. The following lines from one of her earliest poems, “The Snake-Charmer”

fully illustrate it:

... what moonlight-tangled meshes of perfume,

 To a palace-bower where golden-vested maidens
 Thread with mellow laughter the petals of delight

 Come, thou subtle bride of my mellifluous wooing
 Come, thou silver-breasted moonbeam of desire! (*The Sceptred flute* 8)

She feels the ecstasy of flying to the “mellifluous wooing” and the “silver-breasted moonbeam of desire”.

In 1912 came out Sarojini Naidu's second book of poems, *The Bird of Time* in which she presents a fairly complete picture of life with its joys, hopes, dreams, faith, peace and indomitable will power, accompanied by sorrows, struggles, sighs, sobs, pity and death. True, she — “The Bird of Time” — sings of

.... the glory and gladness of life,
 Of poignant sorrow and passionate strife,
 And the lilting joy of the spring;
 Of hope that sows for the years unborn,
 And faith that dreams of a tarrying morn,
 The fragrant peace of the twilight's breath,
 And the mystic silence that men call death. (“The Bird of Time,” *The Sceptred Flute* 65)

She presents life saturated with the joy of the springtime. Little wonder in the lyric, “The Joy of the Springtime,” she shows life passing through the refreshing streams of love and delight, and it, like the springtime, is accompanied by such delightful and lovely things as

The lilt of a bulbul, the laugh of a rose,
 The dance of the dew on the wings of a moonbeam,

 The hope of a bride or the dream of a maiden

 The bliss at the core of your magical mirth
 That quickens the pulse of the morning to wonder
 And hastens the seeds of all beauty to birth,
 That captures the heavens and conquers to blossom
 The roots of delight in the heart of the earth? (*The Septred Flute* 89)

The bird of time (i.e. a human being) has a short sojourn and is

again on its wings and passes through the unknown regions; in a word, it continues its flight ceaselessly.

The third collection of Sarojini Naidu's poems appeared in 1917 under the title, *The Broken Wing*, which show how notwithstanding her advancing age marked by the exhaustion of youthful dreams and zeal, shattered health, active participation in the hard and hazardous struggle for India's freedom from the British rule, the blind arrows of fate, etc., she firmly believes that life is to be continued tirelessly with high aims and aspirations. This is why, even in the poem titled "The Broken Wing", she vociferously and dauntlessly says:

My flight to the high realms of my desire?
Behold! I rise to meet the destined spring
And scale the stars upon my broken wing! (*The Sceptred Flute* 145)

To Sarojini Naidu, life is cosmic ripple, and not a meaningless bubble; indeed, it is a great reality, only next to the Eternal. Life is continuous and perennial, thus defying all changes. A 'prism of light', it is overshadowed by death but only temporarily; it is as integral a part of the cycle of universe as death is. True, the stream of life flows from the Eternal and ultimately merges, though temporarily only, into the ocean of eternity. To quote the poet's exact words:

And all our mortal moments are
A session of the Infinite. ("To a Buddha Seated on a Lotus," *The Sceptred Flute* 62)

The unending flow of life, with all its joys and sorrows, is, in Sarojini Naidu's view, truly rhythmic and it invariably takes a sort of refreshing rest by joining the Infinite for the time being: "And the silence (death) is but a rich pause in the music of life." Importantly, she prefers the pangs of life's "manifold strife" to the silence of the grave ("Solitude," *The Sceptred Flute* 132) because the burning flame of pain purges life of its "dross" of earthly desires ("The Soul's Prayer," *The Sceptred Flute* 123) and the dependence on endless happiness is a hindrance in the way of self-discovery.

Sarojini Naidu believes that the events of life are preordained by a certain divinity. But she feels that the pleasures and pains of life should be borne with calm and fortitude and one should have some high aim in life. As such, she is prepared to face the destined poignant sufferings but only after she has achieved her higher goals of life:

Shall my soul falter or my body fear
Its poignant hour of bitter suffering,
Or fail ere I achieve my destined deed
Of song or service for my country's need? ("Death and Life," *The Sceptred Flute* 119)

To sum up, Sarojini Naidu's approach to life is clearly marked by robust optimism and meaningfulness. She entertains "new hopes, new dreams, new faces" ("Transience," *The Sceptred Flute* 125) . She bears the burden of the present misery in the hope of a brighter future. At times hard work and misery create in her a desire to escape, but she only temporarily escapes from this world of worries. In fact, by dint of her inexhaustible zest for life, she gets the better of despair, depression, pain and agony which usually overwhelm a person's spirit. Moreover, the persistent consciousness of the higher mission of life strengthens her will to live meaningfully and joyously, and hence she does not desire to escape the fierce struggles of life. Endowed with dauntless spirit, in the darkness of night she dreams of the dawn of splendour, and in silence she strives "for the joy of the morrow" ("At Dawn," *The Sceptred flute* 129) . As a matter of fact, she loves deeply all that belongs to this earth. The apparent transience of human life is of no consequence to her because the colourful pageant of men, women and children, though moves in different directions, ultimately reaches the realms of eternity only. The melodious ripples, chirping birds, lyrical dawn, fragrant blossoms, wild bees dancing over the mango blossoms, fireflies "weaving aerial dances" ("A Song in Spring," *The Sceptred Flute* 88) , etc. fill her with life's overpowering, perennial loveliness. She sings of people's courage in the face of vicissitudes, their higher goals in life, and their will to conquer the sorrows of life. In short, her vision of life, in her own words, is: "The pageant of life going blithely and fleet / To the feast of eternity" ("The Old Woman," *The Sceptred Flute* 126) .

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SHALIMAR THE CLOWN : A MANY-SIDED ALLEGORICAL NARRATIVE

Deepika Srivastava

Shalimar the Clown derives its title from the ethereal Shalimar Gardens situated in the vicinity of Srinagar. The novel is steeped in allegory, with characters enacting allegorical roles to convey the destiny of Kashmir, the origins of global Islamic terrorism and the worldwide degeneration caused by vested interests of great nations. Though based in Kashmir, the story begins from Los Angeles shifting to Strasbourg, Pakistan, North Africa, Philippines and London, recalling devastating historical events in the wake of the Second World War. The enormous cast of characters enthralls, but the protagonist, India, nee Kashmira, the illegitimate daughter of Maximilian Ophuls, a Second World War Resistance hero and a former U.S. ambassador to India, is quite disappointing and lustreless. The tragedy of the novel is transformation of Kashmir from a garden of Eden populated with cordial, humble, simple village folks into a ravaged Hell taken over by cold-blooded fanatic, malevolent extremists from Pakistan. Clearly, Kashmir is allegorized as the garden of Eden, Shalimar, the hero, as Adam, and Boonyi, the heroine, as Eve, interspersed with the evil-minded Max who tempts the charming, naive Kashmiri beauty away from Heaven to a hellish world luring her with sinful temptations leading to her downfall and ultimately, death. In both *Shalimar the Clown* and *Midnight's Children* allegory is heavily employed to stress the importance of tolerance and polyvocality. By this method, Rushdie sketches the nation as a polyvocal centre and laments its loss when polyvocality is brutally demolished by propagators of Jihadist ideologies.

Rushdie employs polyvocal allegory to contest the Manichean allegory which is commonly preferred by colonial novelists to project Europeans as a superior creed as compared to indigenous milieu. By doing so, Rushdie stresses on the subjectivity of indigenous individuals and their unique social and historical lineage. Another level of allegory is also perceivable in *Shalimar the Clown* through which his characters allegorize one another. Oddly critics fail to

acknowledge these intricacies present in the novel propagating that his use of allegory is a big failure. Neil Murphy holds that the novel is an allegory about Kashmir's corrupt practices through American neocolonialism, and that Rushdie is unable to differentiate between the allegorical and literal levels. The fact is that Rushdie does not blur the allegorical with the literal, but at times the two levels of allegory oppose each other and hence may not be easily comprehensible. Along with this, is the readers' lack of sufficient knowledge of Kashmir's rich history, heritage and culture, blocking their perception of the novel's allegory.

The Western interest in Kashmir is ciphered by the European born Jewish-American Ambassador to India, Max, who visits Kashmir. Having fought against Nazis in the Second World War he later became a secret negotiator for the U.S.A's interest around the globe. His involvement in Kashmir is registered through his impact upon the ravishing Boonyi whom he seduces, impregnates and ruthlessly abandons, and upon the eponymous Shalimar, her tightrope-performer husband, who, embittered by his wife's infidelities, turns a hardcore terrorist getting involved in guerrilla activities to seek revenge. Trained in Afghanistan using ammunition that Ophuls himself has provided when the U.S.A. was covertly arming Islamic terrorists after Russian invasion in 1979, the simple yokel from Kashmir becomes a hard-hearted assassin and eventually murders Ophuls on the doorsteps of his illegitimate daughter's apartment in Los Angeles. Ophul's seduction of the married Boonyi, their subsequent licentious live-in relationship and his abandonment of her, can explicitly be interpreted as an allegory of America's relations with what Rushdie terms in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) as "The backyards of the world" (205). When Boonyi speaks, it is in the voice of Kashmir. She tells Ophuls:

I am your handiwork made flesh. You took beauty and created hideousness, and out of this monstrosity your child will be born. Look at me, I am the meaning of your deeds. I am the meaning of your so-called love, your destructive, selfish, wanton love. Look at me your love looks just like hatred. (*Shalimar the Clown* 205).

Allegory is literally used to depict Kashmir initially as a polyvocal

state, which later gets erased through foreign influences. Kashmir is represented by both a Hindu, Boonyi, and a Muslim, Shalimar. Boonyi is named after the chinar tree while Shalimar gets his name from the Shalimar Gardens. The couple enter into a clandestine sexual relationship in their native Pachigam. When the affair becomes public, instead of disowning them, the villagers bless this inter-religious duo, constructing their alliance as an allegorical reference to polyvocal Kashmir:

“We are brothers and sisters here,” said Abdullah. “There is no Hindu-Muslim issue. Two Kashmiri — two Pachigami — youngsters wish to marry, that’s all. A love match is acceptable to both families and so a marriage there will be, both Hindu and Muslim customs will be observed.” (110)

The sly snapping of matrimonial ties between Boonyi and Shalimar is allegorized as Kashmir’s shattered image once foreign influence in the form of Max, allegorized as the USA, enters the peaceful area. Murphy states:

Max becomes one of the major allegorical anchors, representative as he is of U.S. imperialism, Western theft and destruction, racial dominance and essentially an extension of the nocolonial pattern that has had such an impact on India, Pakistan and (of course) Kashmir. (Murphy, 354)

Just as Boonyi seeks protection from Max for an opulent life-style, Kashmir sought American largesse to stabilize prevailing conditions, including poverty. The Americans exploited Kashmiris just as Max did Boonyi. She was totally ruined in his company losing her beauty, figure and charm turning a drug addict. Allegory also illustrates how American policies introduced Islamic terrorism in the valley by showing Shalimar’s transformation as a terrorist in the changed scenario. He unabashedly joined hands with an Islamic gang to avenge his humiliation and murdered both Boonyi and Max.

Bulbul Fakh, the Iron Mullah, one of the men “who were miraculously born from these rusting war metals, who went out into the valley to preach resistance and revenge”, (115) allegorically represents Islamic terrorism and is the main culprit of introducing and spreading arson and hatred in Shirmal, the peaceful village in the neighbourhood of Pachigam. He incites Muslim villagers by his anti-Hindu views. Shalimar and his brother Anees, along with likeminded followers, join Bulbul’s organization and turn into hard-core militants.

In retaliation a Hindu General of the Indian Army, Hammir Dev Suryavans Kachhwala, attacks Pachigam, killing indiscriminately to seek revenge. Idyllic Pachigam, through which the mesmerizing Muskadoon river gently flows, once known for its Hindu-Muslim tolerance, thus gets brutally erased from history (308-309) .

Not only are characters allegorized, the nation too is allegorically referred to in the form of the illegitimate daughter of Ophuls, who is aptly named India. When Ophuls and Boonyi split, his wife, Margaret Rhodes Ophuls, dispatches her husband’s mistress to Kashmir but forcibly keeps her daughter Kashmiria with her, rechristens the baby-girl as India and takes her to England. The girl despite her name, does not visit India, her motherland, does not meet her mother and takes pride in projecting herself as an American. The allegorical significance of her name matters little to her:

India still felt wrong to her, it felt exoticist, colonial, suggesting the appropriation to a reality that was not hers to own, and she insisted to herself that it didn’t fit her anyway, she didn’t feel like an India. (5)

Having no affinity with India, the young girl allegorizes rootlessness and alienation brought about by globalization and starts yearning to revert to her original name Kashmiria. Not only that, she lands in India to search for her mother Boonyi. It is at this point that she switches to Kashmiria, the name chosen by her mother: “She would not be India in India. She would be her mother’s child” (356) . It is evident that the name change was a farce as she remains essentially an American preferring Los Angeles(she flies back there) to Kashmir. However, the name change introduces another level of allegory by which she emulates characters and zones. By calling herself Kashmiria she connects her persona to something larger as “the terms Kashmir and paradise were synonymous” (4) .

Likewise, her mother Boonyi changes her original name Bhoomi as “it is mud and dirt and stone and I don’t want it,”(46) to Boonyi because “this was the local word for the celestial Kashmiri Chinar Tree “.(46) . Murphy explains that “its implications of grandeur and aspiration” (Murphy, 357) was the deciding factor, Boonyi’s decision to clandestinely leave the boring life of her village to chase her dream of acquiring name and wealth by becoming a famous dancer

is her zest for grandeur and therefore, and excuses employed by her to justify her action become an allegory. This strategy is repeated again when Max's wife, Peggy Ophuls, is named Peggy-Mata in India, a name she readily adopts to assume social pomposity as: "Transformed into her new persona of Peggy-Mata, mother of the motherless, she had embarked on a nonstop nationwide tour of Indian orphanages" (186) . She is thus allegorized as a universal mother to obliterate her barrenness. It is ironical that she fails miserably in this divine role, proving to be a horrid, deplorable mother to Boonyi's daughter, India, after her separation with Ophuls.

Similarly, Colonel Hammir Kachhwaha's name-change to an English one Hammer, because it is "an English play on Hammer. A good soldierly name" (94) , reveals the mindset of some Indians to foolishly ape English mannerisms. This ploy of name change is repeatedly adopted by characters and Shalimar's mother Firdaus also falls a prey to its lure. She falsely claims of being a descendant of Alexander the Great which is jokingly mocked by villagers as "the Alexandrian fantasy of Firdaus woman" (73) . Max, continuing this tradition, adopts famous names to glorify himself, like Sebastian Brant, Niccolo, Jacques Wimpfeling and Sturmbatinfuhre. The historical person, Max Ophuls, on whom he is named, was a German film producer. Max however, has no resemblance or common traits with these achievers.

By allegorizing the reckless affair of Max and Boonyi as an international treaty, the two had doomed the alliance at the outset preparing the readers of the inevitable split. As a consequence, both suffered its aftermath. Max's career was marred by the scandal that broke out and Boonyi was disgraced and shunned by her kith and kin, left to face alienation and death. Her daughter, India, too did not fare any better. Her love-life was far from satisfactory. Her lop-sided affair is allegorized as the love-hate relationship Kashmir has with Washington, DC.

While dealing with Shalimar and India, Rushdie favours to thaw their relations as Boonyi is the strongest link between them. But despite his efforts, an affinity between them cannot be established owing to the raging revenge gripping in them. Shalimar yearns to kill

her in continuing his hatred for her mother, while India is gunning for him to avenge her father's murder. Thus, it becomes impossible for both of them to experience reciprocal recognition. Shalimar refuses to recognise India as an individual and India also detests him. It is at this juncture that the novel ends. Shalimar breaks into her apartment with a knife to kill her while she has just a bow for defence. Either she would win in her mission, or he would (198) . The poignant situation can be interpreted as an allegorical reference to wars fought between India and Pakistan. The end is vague: who wins and who loses is as perplexing as the cold vibes between India and Pakistan.

Rushdie addresses numerous problems by allegorical references in *Shalimar the Clown* to focus on the futility of senseless killing which leads to political mayhem. The outstanding parts are the scenes of havoc in Kashmir written with conviction. Unfortunately, he offers no viable solution to Kashmir's problems. Kashmiriness is annihilated without redemption rendering the slogan "Kashmir for the Kashmiris a moronic Idea" (101) ; "No longer an option" (17) . Inevitably, *Shalimar the Clown* is relentlessly grim and bleak. Rushdie's outrage at the slaughter carried out in Puchigam by both Islamic insurgents and the Indian Army is discernible by the questions 'why' and 'who'. These act as a plea to Muslims to be less fanatical and to Europeans and Americans to carve a political perspective that aids rather than hinders global understanding. This is Rushdie's aim to allegorize; and he does it beautifully by quoting a Shakespearean epigraph from *Romeo and Juliet* at the beginning: "A curse on both your houses".

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WRITING THE PARTITION: EXPLORING THE HUMANE ASPECT OF BAPSI SIDHWA'S *CRACKING INDIA*

Sonali Das

There are numerous Indian English novels which deal with the horrors of Partition are depicted. The foremost attempt in this regard is Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*. Singh depicted an imaginative village Mano Majra, where communal harmony prevailed, like in the case of Sidhwa's *Cracking India*. The tragic event not only divided India but even the heart and soul of the people alienated. Other significant novels on this theme are Manohar Malgaonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges*, Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, Attia Hosain's *The Sunlight on a Broken Column*, K.S. Duggal's *Twice Born Twice Dead*, R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma*, and Shiv K. Kumar's *A River with Three Banks*. What separates Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*, originally published as *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) , from other versions is that it is a novel written by a Parsi on the theme of Partition, and narrated by an eight year old precocious girl, Lenny, a polio patient.

In a conversation with Urvashi Butalia in January 2000 (www.jstor.org/stable/4289700, accessed on 5.10.12) , Sidhwa opined that historians in both India and Pakistan had been slow in addressing the human aspect of Partition. They are more interested in the politics of the situation than what happened to the victims of partition. She further says that people, directly affected by Partition, lost relatives, suffered harm, and had to flee their homelands, seem to have rebuilt their lives and have moved on. They understand that each group had suffered and was both a victim and a victimizer. In this conversation, Sidhwa mentions the reason for writing *Ice-Candy-Man* (which was later renamed as *Cracking India*, since candy-man means a drug peddler in America) . She says the writings in India had been biased against Pakistan. And unfortunately, there had not been enough works from Pakistan to defend its position. Hence, Sidhwa decided to write a book, giving an objective view of, the holocaust.

The main characters in *Cracking India* are Lenny's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Sethi, her brother Adi, Cousin, Godmother, Ayah, and Ayah's admirers cutting across all sections — Ice-Candy-Man, the Masseur, Sharbat Khan, Imam Din, Sher Singh, Slavesister, Ranna, Dost Mohammad and others. When the plot unfolds, we find an atmosphere of communal amity and the three communities — the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs — lived in peace with one another. Both the Hindus and the Muslims at Lahore and its surrounding villages led their lives in peace maintaining their religious identities. But the intimations of an imminent death and destruction lurked in the symbolic significance of Lenny's nightmares of the Nazi soldiers: "Coming to get me on his motorcycle" (22) and that of men in uniforms quietly slicing off "a child's arm here, a leg there" (22) .

The nightmare suggests the impending vivisection of India, which was as cruel as the dismemberment of that child. This chilling horror that she feels no one being concerned about what is happening, sums up the lack of concern on the part of the authorities to check the unbridled display of barbarianism during Partition. The hungry lion of the zoo in Lenny's nightmare appears to be a symbol of the flood of mutual hatred that the dawn of independence released to play havoc with the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs on both the sides of the border. With these symbols the novelist prepares the readers for the gruesome and gory pattern of communal discord that became blatantly obvious during Partition.

Lenny visits Pir Pindo, the village of Imam Din, the cook, which was situated forty miles from Lahore. Imam Din had uneasy feelings about the deteriorating relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims in cities. Hence, he decided to visit his village. However, his fear was dismissed by the Sikh priest, Jagjeet Singh, who believes: "Brother, our villages come from the same racial stock. Muslim or Sikh, we are basically Jats. We are brothers. How can we fight each other" (56) ? The conversation between Imam Din and Pir Pindo village Chaudhry revealed how the communal goodwill and friendship prevailed in the villages in the wake of the Indian partition, while cities were in the grip of communal tension. The roots of communal amity in rural Punjab was so deep that the members of the

two communities were even ready to sacrifice their lives for protecting each other: “If need be, we’ll protect our Muslim brothers with our lives!” says Jagjeet Singh. Mr. Singh, however, thinks that once India gains Independence, they’ll be able to settle all their differences, since the problems are created by the British: “You always set one up against the other... You just give Home Rule and see. We will settle our differences and everything” (63) !

The basic unity among the various religious groups is well demonstrated by the Hindu Ayah and her multi-religious admirers — the Mali Hari, the Ice-Candy-Man, the Masseur, Sharbat Khan, Imam Din and Sher Singh. The Ayah is indiscriminating towards all and thus she becomes a symbol of the composite culture that India is. With the imminence of partition there appears communal discord in the group of Ayah’s admirers: “One man’s religion [became] another man’s poison” (117) . Statements of characters from different communities prove this. For instance, Ice-Candy-Man says: “With all due respect, malijee ... but aren’t you Hindus expert at just this kind of thing? Twisting tails behind the scene ... and getting someone else to slaughter your goats” (90-91) ? When Masseur advises Sher Singh that it would be good for their community to be loyal to one country rather than be divided into two halves and lose their “clout in either place”, Sher Singh fumes and remarks: “You don’t worry about our clout! ... We can look out for ourselves ... You’ll feel our clout all right when the time comes” (129) !

Sher Singh and the “restaurant owning wrestler” threaten the Muslims with dire consequences in the event of partition. Lenny’s observation on these changing relations becomes significant:

Gandhi, Jinnah, Nehru, Iqbal, Tara Singh, Mountbatten are names I hear.
And I become aware of religious differences. It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves – and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian.
People shrink, dwindling into symbols. (93)

Through Ayah the novelist wants to impress on the fact that it was the sectarianism of the national leaders which disturbed the atmosphere of communal harmony that existed prior to the partition. This is voiced by Ayah in the following lines: “What’s it to us if Jinnah, Nehru and Patel fight? They are not fighting our fight” (75) .

In *Cracking India*, Sidhwa portrays violence of Partition mainly through the traumatized bodies of women and children as narrated by a young girl. Ayah’s admirer before partition, the Ice-Candy-Man, turns into her abductor in the wake of partition. He lost his mind after he saw a train from Gurdaspur loaded with mutilated Muslim bodies, and sacks full of female breasts, with no trace of their bodies around. This caused his hatredness for the Hindu community and subsequent abduction of Ayah, whom he loved dearly. Ayah’s tragedy speaks for the collective suffering of female victims during Partition. The abduction and subsequent forced prostitution of Ayah by the Muslim mob symbolizes one such triumph over a female body. Ayah, who used to be the love interest of people cutting across all religions, suddenly became a Hindu. The author remarks: “Ayah is no longer just my all-encompassing Ayah — she is also a token. A Hindu” (101) . She is forced into prostitution by the Ice-Candy-Man. Her name is changed from Shanta to Mumtaz and she is kept at Hira Mandi even after her marriage. However, the novel presents the resilience power of Ayah. Godmother’s visit to her place gives her a sense of hope and she musters courage to leave the world which had been forced upon her. She is firm and decisive. “I want to go to my family... I will not live with him”, she tells Godmother. With the help of Godmother she reaches the Recovered Women’s Camp. The Ice-Candy-Man follows her to the camp, weeps, pleads and begs forgiveness and even receives a thrashing at the hands of the burly Sikh Guard. However, Ayah remains unmoved and leaves for Amritsar, India.

The most horrifying experience of violence, however comes from Ranna’s story of genocidal massacres. When Lenny sees Ranna the third time, he is orphaned and bears “the improbable wound on the back of his shaved head,” — “a grisly scar like a brutally gouged and premature bald spot” (194) . “The ‘improbability’ of the wound not only refers to the incredible extent to which Ranna had been wounded, but also subtly alludes to the broken promises of solidarity voiced by village elders” (Pin-chia Feng 234) . Ranna’s village Pir Pindo is attacked by sword-wielding Sikhs. Ranna is torn away from his mother and forced to hide in a tiny room. Ranna hears the endless

screams of people of his village being tortured and murdered. As the Sikhs infiltrate into their room, Ranna witnesses the beheadings of his father, uncles, brothers and cousins. Then, Ranna himself “felt a blow cleave the back of his head and the warm flow of blood” (201) . But he miraculously escapes to his uncle’s village. However, he continues to bear witness to the “improbable” atrocities as he roams around the burning city of Amritsar:

He saw a naked woman ... hanging head down from a ceiling fan. And looked on with a child’s boundless acceptance and curiosity as jeering men set her long hair on fire. He saw babies, snatched from their mothers, smashed against walls and their howling mothers brutally raped and killed. (207)

It is difficult on Ranna’s part to erase the psychological effects of Partition. He recollects every minute detail of the scene when his father was beheaded. Along with his father’s beheading, he witnesses the scene replicate repeatedly with all of his family members. Perhaps after witnessing so many deaths he has become immune to the scene. As the narrator comments on “how soon he [has] become accustomed to thinking of people he [has] known all his life as bodies” (203) , and how “he [feels] on such easy terms with death” (203) . Through Ranna’s “knowing” eyes, Sidhwa depicts the rapes and murders of women and children during the Partition riots.

In contrast to the mental and physical suffering of Ranna during Partition, Lenny falls a victim only at a psychological level. Lenny belonged to a financially well off family and being a Parsi saved her from being directly affected by Partition. Hence, she merely observes the things happening around her and reports them. She understood Partition in its physical sense. This is evident from her comment: “India is going to be broken. Can one break a country? And what happens if they break it where our house is? Or crack it further up on Warris Road? How will I ever get to Godmother’s then?” (92) . Lenny suffers psychologically the most when her truth betrayed Ayah and led to her abduction by the Muslim mob. He is guilt driven: “For three days I stand in front of the bathroom mirror staring at my tongue. I ... try to wrench it out: but slippery and slick as a fish it slips from my fingers and mocks me with its sharp rapier tip darting

as poisonous as a snake. I punish it with rigorous scourings from my pricking toothbrush until it is sore and bleeding” (184) .

On one hand, Sidhwa has portrayed the character of Shanta, the Ayah, who becomes a victim of the communal violence; but on the other, she has depicted female characters like that of Lenny’s mother, Electric aunt and above all Godmother’s, who are indeed women of substance and in the novel rescue people affected by communalism. Godmother’s character stands out amongst all. The author presents the power of Godmother in the following words: “Godmother can move mountains from the paths of those she befriends, and erects mountainous barriers where she deems it necessary” (211) . This is evident when she lambasts Ice-Candy-Man for turning Ayah into a ‘dancing-girl’ and making her stay at Hira Mandi, a red light district, even after marrying her: ““You have permitted your wife to be disgraced! Destroyed her modesty! Lived off her womanhood! ... You’re the son of pigs and pimps”” (249) !

Set in 1940s India, *Cracking India* brings to life the peaceful, communal amity that prevailed in India during pre-partition stage. Then, it vividly portrays what religious hatred and communal violence can do to people, who under normal circumstances were harmless and were ready to sacrifice their lives for each other. Partition period is a dark phase of our subcontinent’s history which affected women and children the most and left an indelible mark on the psyche of the victims. Even then the novel shows the triumph of basic human values in the face of terror.

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EDIFICE OF SEXUALITY IN THE SHORT STORIES OF MANTO

Rashmi Gaur

Saadat Hasan Manto, a journalist, critic and film writer, has published twenty-two story collections. Several of his stories were banned by the then Governments of India and Pakistan on the plea that they were too sex oriented, and were not palatable to the conservative society of that time (net 1) . During his career, thrice he had to face court trials by successive governments. Though he was acquitted in the end in each of these cases, he was deeply anguished and felt humiliated by these experiences. It affected his personal life, goading him to become a cynic, alcoholic and narcissist.

Most of Manto's fiction traces the chaotic and tumultuous times of the partition of the Indian sub-continent. The partition was a result of the cartographical imposition of colonial will, which resulted in the largest forced migration of human history — roughly one million human beings were butchered and about 14 million people were displaced to take up shelter across the border (net 2) . Several literary works in English, Hindi, Urdu and Bangla have attempted to come to terms with the tormenting experience from different perspectives. Manto is perhaps the first writer to focus on the repulsive hostility and sadism of a political decision.

In comparison to historical or ethnographic records, fiction provides a very singular imaginative space from which to analyze the issues pertaining to gendered identities. Historical or ethnographic accounts provide snapshots of the definitive occurrence in women's lives. As a result, issues are convoluted by the concessions and accommodations that simply have to be made to sustain relationships or work conditions. In clear cut juxtaposition to these modes, fiction allows for issues/ resistance to be suggestively and intentionally constructed in terms of metaphorical intricacy, narrative resolution and ideological conquest. Mundane realities are creatively circumvented to create an uncluttered space of liberation and truth. Manto, the famous and infamous writer of his times, has portrayed the perception and edifice of sexuality of his times.

The word sexuality has multiple meanings. It is related with the body and also with the desire. A basic feature of human life, the word has become like a palimpsest — meanings and innuendos appear and disappear, leading to historical associations, myths, cultural taboos, legal regulations about licit and illicit as Foucault has termed it, and psychic conditions. Jeffrey Weeks has correctly pointed out that sexuality as a concept is “uneasily poised between the biological, the social and the psychic”. He has pointed out that even Freud confessed to the difficulty of agreeing to any generally recognized criterion in this context (Weeks 198) . Post-modernist criticism assailed the sexual binaries and focused on the psyche of peripheral sexualities – the delinquents, traditionally defined as perverts, and the homosexuals. Foucault put forward the idea of the interlinking of sexual desires and centers of powers in his essay “The History of Sexuality” (Foucault 690) .

The discursive practices of patriarchal society have always linked the perception of sexuality with the edifice of power. The canon of gender binarism treats sexuality and sexual violence as an act of power to ensure the perpetuation of relations of dominance and subordination. Sexual violence against women is not only a biological aggression; it also has sociological and historical contours. Feminist criticism has viewed sexual violence against women, especially rape, not only as “the inevitable by-product of an inherently aggressive masculinity”, but also as “the ritualistic enactment of power relationships that play on cultural meanings about sexuality” (Weeks 196) . Manto's fiction represents these ideas in an evocative manner.

Perhaps the most illustrative story in this context is “The Return”. The story was published soon after the partition of the country. The story represents how Manto saw the great upheaval ensuing from the colonial edict, “If independence was, Manto seemed to say, was something bright and good, then it was fringed with black” (Hasan xix) . The story is about a comatose girl who is abused by those who are expected to protect her. Her objectification is so chillingly complete that she can respond to normal conversation in a sexist context only. The story presents how the gender insensitivity and cultural

edifice of sexual practices take up the position and power of social regulation in moments of uncertainty. Violence against women can be condoned if it is somehow associated with jingoistic tenets; rape becomes a bludgeon of state-sponsored intimidation. At the same time, commoditization of women and violence on them becomes a major issue during ethnic and religious conflicts. Kristen Barber quotes Nagel to point out that violence on women during ethnic/racial conflicts is carried out because of “time-honored reasons”, to terrorize and humiliate the enemy and as a means of creating protection for small groups through mutual guilt. The Indian partition had also recorded tumultuous times; religion became one’s identity which could result in rape or violent deaths Barber 47) .

Another story “Bitter Harvest” also showcases how the feminine body becomes the stage of acting out one’s anger and frustration. This is a story of a father whose daughter is assaulted and murdered in his absence. Demented after looking at her dead body, he runs around to take vengeance of this brutality on persons belonging to different faith, murdering several men and ending up ravaging and killing an adolescent girl of his daughter’s age. Only after the act is done he realizes the enormity of his brutality. The girl whom he has raped and murdered becomes the embodiment of his own daughter. His clumsy attempts to cover the body of the girl with a blanket duplicate his efforts to cover the naked body of his own daughter. Through alternate perspectives and shifting backdrop Manto has displayed the grief of a father, yet the limitations of true choices in a scenario in which the tradition has based manhood on the edifice of sexuality, and individualities are defined by religious identities.

That rape is a means of victimizing the enemy is illustrated in “Colder than Ice”. This story presents the sense of guilt of a man who abducts a girl during the partition riots and rapes her repeatedly, only to find out that the girl had already died, “I had carried a dead body ... a heap of cold flesh” (29) .This experience turns him into an impotent. His mistress kills him when she comes to know of this incident. This story is often read as a comment on the unnecessary violence perpetrated on a woman’s body and

foregrounds the fact that women are victimized during wars and ethnic clashes not only for displaying power over women, but also to humiliate and scare the rival men. The story also has a deep understanding of a woman’s sexuality. Manto had to face a court trial on obscenity charges on account of it. Women are expected to be coy, bashful and timid in the expression of their sexuality. Kalwant Kaur, a main character in “Colder than Ice”, defied the traditional norms and openly demonstrated her desires. Her blatant sexuality does not indicate only a carnal desire; it is also her expression of decisive intimacy with Isher Singh which results in her violent attack on him. Unfazed by the structures of patriarchal phallicism, Manto has presented the volatile nature of sexuality which can lead to unrestrained liberation, as well as obliteration.

Among his contemporaries, Manto is perhaps the only writer who has given an uninhibited portrayal of feminine sexuality in his works. “The Woman in the Red Raincoat” depicts the suppressed desires of an elderly school teacher. Manto has depicted the feminine desires of Miss ‘M’, which had been suppressed by her spinsterhood. Her coquettishness and sensuous passion are displayed in the brief intimate scene which takes place in the darkness of a stormy night. When the electricity is restored, she is spurned by the man as the wrinkles of her face have stated her age. Her silent withdrawal vociferously speaks out her dejection and helplessness. The young man named as ‘S’ who had amorous design on her before he realized her age acts out the stereotypes of cultural gerontology. Manto’s stand is suggested by his friend when he suggests that ‘S’ has unknowingly become the perpetrator of a strange tragedy,

‘That night when you let her out of your house, she died in a car accident. You are her murderer. In fact, you are the murderer of two women. One, who is known as a great artist, and the other who was born from the body of the first woman in your living room that night and whom you alone know.’ (57)

The story brings out the rigidity and cruelty of social norms that constraint sexuality and related behavior. Manto has also depicted how sexuality becomes a tool for engineering the gender binary. Masculinity is projected by aggression — conventional manhood is

equated with physical power and fierceness. In one of his stories "The Great Divide" Manto has stated it pithily, "... if you gave in, you were less than a man" (132) .

Manto has written several stories depicting the sexual curiosity of young children. Sexuality among children and adolescents is not discussed openly in Indian society. Sexuality is a part of human behavior and personality development, though cultural concerns treat it as a taboo. As children move into adolescence, their sexual curiosity is blended with normative social expectations and intriguing physical changes. The sexuality of a child unfolds gradually and has complex associations during the developmental process; however, many aspects remain hidden owing to the absence of structured social dialogue. Culturally regulated suppression of child's sexuality often results in clandestine romantic attitudes and expressions. This aspect has been portrayed by Manto beautifully in two stories, viz., "Blouse" and "Ten Rupees". The first story is based on a sixteen year old boy, a menial servant in a household who is troubled and confused about his physical changes. He is unconsciously drawn towards the young daughters of his mistress who are busy in the stitching of new clothes for the festival. While they copy patterns, do preliminary stitches and take measures, Momin is often called for help or errands. The blouse which Shakeela was stitching, becomes the focal point of his sexuality.

"Ten Rupees" is based on Sarita, a young girl of about fifteen, who has been pushed into prostitution by her mother and a procurer. Sarita is too innocent to know that she has become a prostitute or that it carries a taboo in the society. Having lived in a Mumbai chawl, she loves her rides in cars and the blasts of wind on her face. Her exhilaration during the ride, obliterates the sordidity of bargain which she does not understand as yet. The story narrates a day which Sarita spends with three young clients in the countryside. Her awkwardness changes into excitement as the car picks up speed. When the car stops at the sea shore, she starts running on the shore. Like Momin, she is also unable to understand or express her desires. The story ends in an anti-climax when Sarita returns the ten rupee note to her customers, "This ... why should I take this

money?" Manto presents the loaded silence of the victim, as well as the impregnated silence of the desire. He has looked at the edifice of sexuality in his times and depicted how the instinctive passion is converted into a culturally coded edifice of sexuality.

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VIOLENCE WITHOUT BORDERS: CRITIQUING TEHMINA DURANI'S *MY FEUDAL LORD* AND *BLASPHEMY*

Anupama Chowdhury

Violences against women are without borders and boundaries. These transcend the borderlines of time and space. Be it Kiranjit from India (in Kiranjit Ahluwalia's *Provoked*), Maya from Bangladesh (in Taslima Nasrin's *Lajja*), Tsomo from Bhutan (in Kunzang Choden's *The Circle of Karma*), Mariam from Afghanistan (in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*), Zaitoon from Pakistan (in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*) or Nasserine from Iran (in Betty Mahmoody's *Not Without My Daughter*) — all are the victims of violence in all forms: social, domestic, marital, physical, economic and psychological.

Tehmina Durrani's *My Feudal Lord*, published in 1994, and *Blasphemy*, published four years later in 1998, have greater connotations as Durrani portrays the vulnerable conditions of women in Pakistan in both these texts. Women in this subcontinent live in a world, which is structured by strict religious, family and tribal customs. They are subjected to discrimination and violence on a daily basis. These violences are often not conceived as a violation of human rights but rather as a normal aspect of lives of Pakistani people. Thus these hapless gendered subalterns constantly live in an atmosphere of fear and their lives are guaranteed in exchange for obedience to social norms and traditions. Durrani, by speaking of her own violent marriage, situates the women in Pakistan's elite social life and gives a crucial insight on the vulnerable situation of women in the subcontinent. Her autobiography, *My Feudal Lord*, ceases to be a mere personal account and becomes a critique of wider social pattern of patriarchy and an exposure of the misinterpretation of religion by the feudal lords who justify the maltreatment and oppression of women in the name of religion. The issues dealt with in *My Feudal Lord* are very current and in the present context even go across geographical boundaries. As depicted by Durrani, domestic violence permeates almost all strata of societies across

the globe, the only variant being the number and the degree of abuse.

My Feudal Lord is a burning account of Durrani's traumatic and brutal marital life with Gulam Mustafa Khar, the renowned "Sher-e-Punjab". Tehmina, born in an elite Pakistani family, got married to her first husband, Anees Khan, at the age of seventeen but the marital bliss did not last long as the charmlessness of their relationship became apparent to both of them. Then she met Gulam Mustafa Khar at a party, the "second most powerful politician in the whole of Pakistan" (20). Mustafa's "authoritarian, conservative and overpowering" (39) magnetic personality captivated her feminine sensibility. She was hypnotized by "his glittering eyes, like those of a cobra ready to strike" (19) and "was drawn to him like a moth in the flame" (21). Mustafa, despite being married to another woman at that time, had a roaring affair with Tehmina which totally mesmerized her. Later he proposed marriage to her and she, in order to be socially acceptable in the high circle, agreed. The "gracious and rational" (64) and the 'ideal lover' Mustafa in his post-marriage days was a horrifying revelation to his new wife:

The awareness that has been growing slowly now blossomed into full and ghastly flower. I had fallen into a classic trap of the Pakistani woman. The goal is marriage and once achieved, the future is a life of total subordination. I had no power, no rights, no will of my own. (100)

The enormous amount of significance attached to marriage in Pakistan and the breakup of conjugal ties being recognized as the "reflection of a woman's failure" (29) accounts for an oft-asked question as to why Durrani persisted through such an abusive relationship or why she repeatedly fell into the snare of living with Mustafa. The victim, herself, gives the answer. She writes- "Escape was not an option. He would take the children. He would take the money. He might even take my life" (168). Mustafa's treachery and male chauvinistic attitudes were pretty obvious from the very beginning when he severely thrashed pregnant Tehmina on the suspicion of her responding sexually to her first husband, and all this happened in the holy month of Ramadan when a husband is not supposed even to talk loudly to his wife. Thus Tehmina is battered, beaten blue and black, raped, mentally abused by her feudal lord. Her body becomes

the site of control — she becomes 'barefoot and pregnant' again and again. Body has always been an important site for feminist discourse. Female body is most often rendered "docile" under the domination of patriarchy. It becomes primarily a source of social control in an andocentric social order. Cowering under patriarchal dominion and subjugation, it is never free. The body thus becomes the "practical direct locus of social control" (Bordo, 2362) .

The denial of the right of women victims of violence to get justice begins from their homes and families and this unjust treatment is reflected within the larger community to which they belong. The family, the community and the state are all implicated in providing tolerance and support to the perpetrator and viewing his criminal acts as normal and acceptable. They consider cases of violence against women as a private family matter that ought not be brought out in public courts, systematically denying that a serious human rights violation has been committed. Tehmina's supposedly very sophisticated and educated family chooses to overlook her predicament. The tradition of getting married and living under the belief of parting the husband's house only in a coffin under any circumstances is a paradigm that is almost an implicit law in Pakistan. In such societies even contemplating divorce is blasphemy and a "divorcee ... is a prime target for malicious gossips. Wagging tongues and leering glances..." (85) . She becomes a "reflection of a woman's failure" (29) . These kinds of opinions and the fear of being unaided prevents Tehmina from deserting Mustafa. In the absence of familial support and the prerogatives and privileges which come along with marriage, Tehmina voluntarily accepts a subaltern position just to remain married and be socially acceptable as a woman. This makes Tehmina perceive her physical, sexual and emotional assault as her inevitable destiny. The situation turns worse when Mustafa begins seducing Adila, her younger sister. He tells blatant lies to her regarding his illicit relationship and subjects his legally wedded wife to unimaginable humiliation. Psychological violence included all the tactics (e.g., jeering at her, raping her almost publicly, stripping her) designed by her feudal lord to undermine her

self-confidence.

In many cases domestic violence covers the entire gamut of physical, sexual, verbal and psychological violence. Often a woman who has been battered by her husband may have been raped by him, maligned, psychologically scarred and financially deprived. This kind of relationship implies the use of power, physical strength, threat and coercion. At the one end of the scale, there is threat and intimidation. At the other, there is death. The gray area between these two extremes can be ambivalent, beginning with financial deprivations and ending with death, which is concrete and final, signifying the tragic unfairness of the power play that is a part of marriage or of a man-woman relationship within a patriarchal ideology. Tehmina is left broken, desolate, disgraced, with nowhere to go. Mustafa shatters her confidence completely. Finally she decides to rebel. Though the price she paid for this decision was extremely high, (as a Muslim woman seeking a divorce, she signed away all financial support, lost the custody of her four children, and found herself alienated from her friends and disowned by her parents) , yet she found an identity of her own.

Pakistani society has a special place for pirs; they are the custodians of a religious sanction or order, also known as "silsila". The pirs usually live off the donations of offerings of their disciples. Disciples have faith in the power of the pirs and believe they can invoke miracles. In most cases they have the highest authority over everything. Cloaked in their religious attire they carry on all forms of sinful tasks in the name of religion and hoodwink others. The plot of *Blasphemy* revolves around a 15 year old girl, Heer, who is forced into marriage to a much older Pir and her subsequent trauma as she undergoes torture and faces sexual perversion. In the Pakistani society, marriage is considered to be the ultimate goal of a woman's life. A young woman hardly ever influences the decision about her marriage and is forced to leave everything up to her parents. Paradoxically, the burden of making a marriage successful lies solely on the daughter, who is taught by her parents that the husband's house is the ultimate place for her until her death. Heer too, has no choice but to succumb to what her mother has destined for her. The holy

man has already killed his two previous wives of tender age by sexual excesses. Durrani's novel touches on incest, child abuse, prostitution and domestic violence in all forms. It talks about women who appeared at the shrine childless, were "blessed" by the pir and went back pregnant. Pir Sain, the man of God, commits adultery, rape, incest and all forms of violence in the name of Allah.

Thus, Durrani sarcastically unveils the debauchery of the so called religious Maulanas who misuse their sacred authority for their personal gratification. As Heer reflects:

To me, my husband was my son's murderer. He was also my daughter's molester. A parasite nibbling on the Holy Book, he was Lucifer, holding me by the throat and driving me to sin every night. He was bhai's destroyer, Amma Sains's tormentor. He had humbled Ma, exploited the people. He was the rapist of orphans and the fiend that fed on the weak. But over and above all this, he was known to be the man closed to Allah, the one who could reach Him and save us. (143)

Innocent men and women are killed mercilessly in the name of honour. Heer hears their piteous shrieks in the haveli almost everyday. The study of the status of women in Pakistan reveals a culture in which misogyny is deeply rooted. There is a lexicon of horrific practices that characterise the brutalisation and murder of girls and women by members of their own families. Many of these practices are almost unimaginable, almost beyond language, to describe. The pirs hide the original content of the *Koran* from ordinary men and women who are not allowed to understand the Holy Book. Pir Sain rapes Heer and physically tortures her every night- "A monster snored. Beneath his feet, a woman crouched with her arms spread out and her palms upturned on the floor like a tortured devil worshipper" (119) . He forces her to wear provocative clothes and heavy make-up at night, makes her watch pornographic films, forcibly pours alcohol down her throat and compels her into prostitution while he makes a video of each and every detail. Sexual violence has a wider connotation and assumes a psychological dimension. The trauma of the nights never left Heer even for a moment. Tehmina in *My Feudal Lord* could ultimately get free but Heer was not even that fortunate. Though she escaped from the tortures of her husband on his death, yet there was no freedom. Her own son replaced the father and the tale of

violence continued without an intermission.

Thus, Durrani decides to unearth the hypocrisy of the feudal lords and religious Pirs of Pakistan. Estranged from family, friends, and her identity, she undertakes a pilgrimage for authentic selfhood. In an interview given to *Tribune* ("Out of the Realm of Fear", Vol 11, Issue 4, Fourth Quarterly, 2003) , the author said: "Silence condones injustice, breeds subservience and fosters malignant hypocrisy. Mustafa Khar and other feudal lords thrive and multiply on silence. Muslim women must learn to raise their voices against injustice." It may be worth noting that this forceful writer recently instigated a movement "Ana Hadjra Laback" which endeavours at purging Islam of corruption and recuperating the Muslim women entombed by patriarchy. She has also helped Fakhra Khar to voice her protest against the terrible injustice melted out to women in the name of honour and religion. Fakhra Khar was married into the same feudal family, to Mustafa's son, Bilal. Like Tehmina, she too escaped the physical and mental torture after years of abuse but paid a heavier price for leaving her prison. Bilal attacked her with acid, mutilating her for life. She had to undergo innumerable surgeries because most of her internal organs were burnt. Finally she committed suicide but her husband, strangely enough, was set scot free.

Unless the traditional thoughts regarding women as inferior, or as personal property are changed, it might be difficult for women to get any sort of freedom from this atmosphere of fear. To conclude, we may say that the dreams of women may differ, their struggles even more so but their need for air to breathe is the same. When one moves across culture, similar problem can be seen surfacing everywhere. In narrating the plight of Heer and her own self, Durrani narrates the nation. The socio-political injustice and gender discrimination go together to make these texts the moving tales of suffering humanity (particularly women) in Pakistan.

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THE AESTHETIC AND ETHIC OF HOMOSEXUALITY: SOME OBSERVATIONS

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Sexualities — viz. homosexuality (male and female) , hetrosexuality, bi-sexuality, etc. — have always caught the imagination of people right from the inception of human civilization and have been closely examined in every age, though the Stonewall Riots of 1969 may be said to be the beginning of the gay liberation movement in the modern age. The ancient civilizations of the world, particularly those of Greece and India, are interspersed with texts on this subject: Plato's and Xenophon's two great *Symposiums*, the *Phaedrus*, Demosthenes' *Erotic Essay*, Artemidorus' *The Interpretation of Dreams*, etc., and Vatsayan's *Kamasutra* written about two thousand years before bear witness to it. Little wonder the contemporary academic world, especially that of the higher educational centres of Indian metropolitan areas (perhaps more than those of the West) , is flooded with critical and journalistic writings on the theory and practice of inersive sexuality¹, also designated in the recent spate of discourses on it as 'sexual dissidence', 'Queer theory' or 'queer deviations and perversions', 'transgressive sexuality or aesthetic', 'transgressive ethic', 'transgressive reinscription', 'sexual non-conformity', 'sexual deviance', ' aberrant sexuality or sexual aberrations', 'decadent sexuality', 'alternate sexuality', 'sexual identity', 'sexual radicalism', 'homosexuality', 'homo-erotism' (a term coined by the famous psychologist Ferenczi who preferred it to 'homosexuality') , 'homosexual closet', 'homosexual underworld', 'abnormal sexuality', 'sexual subversion', 'sexual naturalness', 'inversion or sexual inversion', 'subversive inversion', 'perversion or perversity', 'same sex relationship', 'same gender sexuality', 'essentialism or essentialist conviction', 'anti-essentialism or non-essentialist conviction', 'sexual liberation or homosexual liberation', 'sexual individualism', 'decentralized subjectivity', 'deviant desire', 'vagrant desire', 'repressed or suppressed desire', 'transgressive desire', 'liberated desire', 'homoerotic desire', 'desire' (used in this sense by Oscar Wilde when, pointing to Mohammed the flute player in a hotel

in Algeria in January 1895, he said to Andre Gide: "Do you desire the musician" [cited in Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence* 6]) , 'gay sensibility', 'lesbianism', 'pre-culture', 'escape from culture', 'instinct-as-destiny' and so on and so forth. Certainly, it is now a well-established and widely recognized social, political and literary/aesthetic reality, and hence finds a place in the syllabai of many universities and in the journals and newspapers the world over, though since antiquity the free play of "the inversion of sexual roles and intercourse between individuals of the same sex" have always been surrounded by negative reactions and "the repulsive aura" (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Volume Three 18) . Naturally, Tony Purvis asserts that in the past two decades or so "sex and sexualities are theorized, televisualized, and talked about more than ever" ("Sexualities," *Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Patricia Waugh 427) . Inevitably, it necessitates a serious consideration and reconsideration of the issues related to it with a view to attaining a better, clear understanding of this comparatively new aesthetic/ethic which, in the opinion of most of its exponents and academics, defies definitional definitiveness and coherence as it is still wrapped in puzzlingly complex attitudes and approaches because, as Freud in the concluding paragraph of his famous work entitled *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* asserts, "... we know far too little of the biological processes constituting the essence of sexuality to be able to construct from our fragmentary information a theory adequate to the understanding alike of normal and of pathological conditions" (120) .

I have no intention and pretention of propounding a new theory of alternative, non-conformist sexuality in this paper. But on the basis of a close reading of a good deal of literature on this subject and a lot of direct and oblong information in this regard as a sensitive and observant man of seventy-five, very much like any person of my type, I endeavour to present simply, coherently, persuasively and objectively the issue, which has been unnecessarily made very complex and tangled in the present age by a good number of socio-political movements, the semiotic and linguistic researches, the so-called modern elites' obsession with individuality and identity, the fashion of defiance in private and public life verging on the

passion for looking queer, etc.

Now I briefly make a mention of some of the principal forms of homosexuality, and thereafter will make a few observations on the basic causes of it. There are in existence numerous kinds of sexual dissidence — indeed, there is such a large variety of it as Roland Barthes opines that we should talk about homosexualities, and not homosexuality because its diversity is so baffling as it defies “the binary logic of sexual dissidence (Bartha 69) —, of which a few basic ones are being touched here for the clear comprehension of the subject. The most patent types of it are two: male-male sexuality and female-female sexual relationship. For the followers of the first the commonly used expression is gay men, while the practitioners of the second are universally called lesbians. Each of these two principal divisions of homosexuality have several subdivisions, the most important of which deserve a mention here. The most common form of man-man sexuality since time immemorial has been the genital one or anus sex (also named sodomy) , the penetrative one, which can be of two types: one in which both are active and passive turn by turn and this is based on the principle of equality; and the other in which one is always active while the other is passive and hence it is founded on the principle of inequality, i.e. domination and subordination, the centre and the margin. The second type has several subtypes, of which four are as important even now as they were in ancient Greece, and these are: relationship between boys, between men and boys, between two adults and between two adolescents. These relationships are marked sometimes by definitiveness and at times by precariousness. One thing more: the male homosexuality of this kind is considered both natural and unnatural — natural because it gratifies an invert's sense of beauty and pleasure, and unnatural because it entails passivity for one of the partners, thus making him estranged from his own essential nature, i.e. activeness and aggression. Obviously, there is necessarily an oscillating attitude (of acceptance and rejection) towards male inversion, and this can be best illustrated from Plato's example: “As for Plato, there is no reason to suppose that, having been a believer in male love as a youth, he later ‘got wise’ to the

extent that he condemned it as being a relationship ‘contrary to nature’” (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Volume Three 222) . Undoubtedly, the passive male usually strives frantically to escape from sexual abuse, and yields to it only for personal gain taking into account the active/dominant male's merit, status, power and virtue; he hardly ever gives himself to it for pleasure alone because there is scarcely any joy in it.

Then the male homosexuality, different from the previous one in which body, heart (feelings) , mind (thoughts) and genitals are operational, can be non-penetrative, non-anus sex, steeped in intense pleasure emanating from bodily, emotional and intellectual intimacy. Besides the above varieties, it may be purely Platonic, i.e. the closeness between the two males fills them with the profound experience of joy, beauty and satisfaction without bodily and genital intimacy; it is above and beyond all this and is essentially sublime and idealistic founded on a lofty form of ideation. Of course, the basis of it is equality, no domination or subordination, no centre or margin. One more variety of gay sensibility should be pointed out here, very often talked about in Muslim world as *ishqa* (love) or *ashiq*a (lover) and *mashuqa* (beloved) . This relationship is shrouded in a sort of mystery which leads us to believe that it may be penetrative or non-penetrative, but one thing clear about it is that *ashiq*a is the dominant partner (the centre) while *mashuqa* is the subordinate one (the margin) . Thus the gay sensibility is a human phenomenon existent throughout human history. John Boswell's book, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (1980) , concentrates on this aspect of homosexuality in considerable detail.

The sexual closeness between two women, known as lesbianism, has also several divisions and subdivisions of which a few important are enumerated here. It may be penetrative or non-penetrative relationship. In it one woman plays the role of a male (with artificial male organ, and the other of the female. A patent instance of this is the first legal lesbian marriage in India in July 2011 between two fast friends of several years' standing, Sarita and Bina,

the former living for all purposes as woman and the latter as man both in appearance and reality. The penetrative lesbianism is very old and it was very well known to the ancient Greek world, as is evident from the fact that Artemidorus in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, written in the second century A.D., holds that even in dreams it is one of the “unnatural acts”, though this view is grossly wrong according to Michel Foucault (*The History of Sexuality*, Volume Two 24-5) . Then there can be two homosexual women living as women in conformity with the law of domination and subordination, the centre and the margin. Besides, two lesbians may live together on terms of perfect equality. Also, they may enter wedlock or live freely outside it in live-in relationship. Sometimes, they may be wonderful friends centring their lives upon each other.

Of late, lesbianism has assumed a very radical form known as lesbian feminism, the lesbian continuum or radicalesbianism. This new kind of female sexuality is based on the conviction that the earlier categories of lesbianism did not set aside completely heterosexuality. An important exponent of this, Adrienne Rich uses the term “lesbian continuum” by which she means a whole range of female relations such as mutual help, friendship, genital intimacy, etc. Also, she holds that it is the many-sided lesbianism which is truly creative. A New York group of lesbians in early 1970s became known as the radicalesbians whose manifesto was “The Woman Identified Woman”. According to this group, the lesbians are given to the cause of women, and are opposed to be identified in terms of men; they must acquire their identities with other women only with the conviction that only women can infuse into one another the sense of self. Such a lesbian is a free, emancipated being, and this kind of lesbianism, to quote Martha Shelley, “is a sign of mental health” (Martha Shelley 25) . Discarding patriarchy in toto, the radicalesbians plead for separation based on the complete elimination of homophobia. Here it is worthwhile to refer to the views of Monique Wittig, the writer of the revolutionary book entitled *The Lesbian Body* and several highly provocative articles. Rejecting outright the prevalent beliefs, she holds that the lesbian is not a woman in the usual sense and that gender, sexual difference, woman

and man are not biological or natural realities; these are the creations of the tyrannical heterosexuality. A lesbian, according to her, is outside the norms of sex. To quote her words: “... women belong to men. Thus a lesbian has to be something else, a not-woman, a not-man, a product of society, not a product of nature, for there is no nature in society” (“One Is Not Born a Woman” 49) . Thus lesbianism provides a woman with a social structure to live freely without observing at all the so-called cultural, social and sexual norms. To establish a lesbian as “an absolute I” is the chief objective of Wittig's works, specially *The Lesbian Body*.

But one thing is fundamental about most of the homosexual intimacies, male and female — viz. each one of them aims at self-realization, genuine subjectivity, identity or ego and space of his/her own, and thus seeking fulfilment, overt and covert; he or she considers it something absolutely natural, normal and the true cultural centre. The homosexual is proud and confident of his/her same gender sexuality, though outwardly he/she may show signs of diffidence, nervousness, evasiveness, phobia of family rejection and public condemnation, etc.; but unfazed, undaunted and defiant, he/she scoffs at all the so-called social norms, tags and conventions.

In certain cases homosexuality is latent and not patent at all. This type of gay sensibility is certainly more harmful creatively to an artist than its binary opposite. The celebrated American fictionist Norman Mailer is a case in point. To conceal his homosexual desires, he hypocritically presented sexual non-conformity inalienable from evil and this was the result of his homosexual phobia. He has admitted that this affected his art adversely, and this we clearly perceive in his well-known novel, *An American Dream*. He, therefore, came out fearlessly with the significant admission: “... fear of homosexuality as a subject was stifling my creative reflexes” (*Advertisements* 200) . However, quite often a great artist endeavours to suppress his gay sensibility and get the better of it by transcending and sublimating or overcoming it in his creative writings. D.H. Lawrence and Joseph Conrad (the latter's *Victory* is very relevant in this connection as it deals with the theme of homosexuality centring around the character of Heyst) , besides several others, are instances

of it, and therefore authors such as these can be put in this category of homosexual writers. Here a passing mention should also be made of Marcel Proust, who, without being labelled as a writer of homosexual fiction, could, by his suggestive and subtle delineation of this subject in his masterly work called *Remembrance of Things Past*, inspire an iconoclastic lesbian thinker Monique Wittig as she herself admits it ("The Point of View: Universal or Particular?" 65) .

There are usually four main forms of homosexuality: accidental or casual, occasional, frequent and permanent. In the first, the two persons of the same gender, male or female, by chance, feel attracted towards each other and impulsively have penetrative or non-penetrative sex and thereafter forget each other. In the second one, two males or females occasionally, say once in a blue moon, indulge in intimate physical relationship, genital or non-genital. The third state means the involvement of two men or women in penetrative or non-penetrative sexuality often and have frequent craving for each other. In the last one, there is a continuous, permanent physical relationship between two same-sex persons with or without the use of genitals. It is a universal truth, whether one admits it or not, that every person passes through the first state of sexuality at one point or another in his or her life. It is a commonplace of lesbianism that a homosexual woman generally passes through all these stages, and, quite often, unless she is a hard-core lesbian, abandons homosexuality of any form in favour of going straight to have a socially and economically stable and culturally respectable life and to have kids in order to achieve the essential womanly fulfilment. This is well corroborated by the case of Mink Brar, whose statement in this connection is worth citing:

... "I'm a lesbian," says she, "But that doesn't mean that i shall be a lesbian for ever.

Further elaborating on her magical lesbian qualities she adds, "I can turn straight and plan to settle and marry and have kids in future." ("I am a lesbian, for now at least," *The Times of India* August 10, 2011 2)

As regards the root causes of homosexuality, it is almost impossible to discern and pinpoint all of them precisely since it is indubitably one of the most complex and complicated human phenomena because, besides being innate in human beings, it ema-

nates from varied socio-political, psychological and biological factors. However, some of the common, glaring reasons of it can certainly be brought to light. Initially, it was the consequence of political power leading to social and economic domination verging on blatant exploitation of the weaker/ subordinate; the centre must have subjugated the margin. Inevitably, its earliest manifestation was male homosexuality. The powerful men — politically and physically (i.e. distinguished, brave soldiers, etc.) frequently indulged in penetrative gay sexuality (sodomy or the use of anal orifice for penetrative sexual pleasure) and sometimes in one-sided masturbation on account of sexual starvation due to their long separation from their wives and paramours. The physically, socially and economically marginalized were subjected to the sexual gratification of the centralized. The equals or the persons of the same standard and position must have had recourse to mutual masturbation. Apparently, this leads us to believe that gay sensibility is as old as human race.

The inhuman slavery system further gave impetus to homosexuality. The slaves were not only physically and economically exploited by their masters, but were also subjected to forced passive male homosexuality. Social history and literature about the shameful slavery system abound in instances of this. Freud points out another important thing in this connection: "The education of boys by male persons (by slaves, in antiquity) seems to encourage homosexuality. The frequency of inversion among the present-day aristocracy is made somewhat more intelligible by their employment of male servants, as well as by the fact that their mothers give less personal care to their children" (*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* 107) . Later on, the female slavery system (Dasi pratha) gave birth to lesbianism. The queens and the wives of the wealthy and powerful people would resort to lesbianism (sexual gratification, usually non-penetrative, with their women slaves) when they were ignored and neglected by their husbands on account of their younger wives and concubines. Sometimes, the socially and economically powerful ladies would have recourse to lesbianism for the sake of change and new experience. Interestingly, many of the socially centralized men would derive pleasure in homosexuality on account

of the stiffness of anus in comparison with vagina and many would seek sexual thrill and satisfaction by forcing oral sex or masturbation on their slaves. In short, political, social and economic centre would exploit those on the periphery by compelling them to submit to homosexuality for their sexual pleasure. Obviously, colonialism played a definite role in promoting it and imparting it new dimensions, for the colonials thrust their homosexual leanings upon the colonized with ease without any opposition.

Freud, Foucault and other psychological thinkers believe that a person's psychology is, to a great degree, responsible for his sexuality, whatever its form may be. In his monumental works, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), "Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness" (1908) and *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), Freud holds that a man's id/ unconscious is at the back of the *trieb* (drive) of his/her sexuality, including the non-conformist one; it is this which governs the relationship between body, sex and pleasure. He holds that psychoanalytic research does not lead us to believe that the homosexuals have a special character and are entirely different from the rest of the people, for homosexuality is innate in human beings in one way or another, and they

... are capable of making a homosexual object-choice and have in fact made one in their unconscious. Indeed, libidinal attachments to persons of the same sex play no less a part as factors in normal mental life, and a greater part as a motive force for illness, than do similar attachments to the opposite sex. On the contrary, psycho-analysis considers that a choice of an object independently of its sex — freedom to range equally over male and female objects — as it is found in childhood, in primitive states of society and early periods of history, is the original basis from which, as a result of restriction in one direction or the other, both the normal and the inverted types develop.... In inverted types, a predominance of archaic constitutions and primitive psychic mechanisms is regularly to be found. Their most essential characteristics seem to be a coming into operation of narcissistic object-choice and a retention of the erotic significance of the anal zone. There is nothing to be gained, however, by separating the most extreme types of inversion from the rest on the basis of constitutional peculiarities of that kind. What we find as an apparently sufficient explanation of these types can be equally shown to be present, though less strongly, in the constitution of transitional types and of those whose manifest attitude is normal. (*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* 23-24n)

He thinks that homosexuality should not be suppressed, for its repression results in paranoia leading to social alienation, and naturally he is in favour of its outlet. In fact, Freud opines that psychoneurosis is usually inalienable from overt as well as covert inversion; it has a "decisive influence on any theory of homosexuality" (45n.1). An important assertion made by Freud about male homosexuality (sodomy) is that it is the consequence of narcissism, since a person's persistent love of himself finds its external manifestation in a young man. Apropos of the pederasts, he affirms that they proceed from 'narcissistic libido' or ego libido, "a narcissistic basis, and look for young man who resembles themselves and whom *they* may love as their mother loved *them*" (23n).

Freud points to three varieties of sexual inversion on the basis of the inverts' behaviour. The first one is called absolute inverts who are strictly homosexuals, and hence are cold and indifferent towards the opposite sex; they are, as a matter of fact, incapable of having sexual act or pleasure with anyone of the opposite sex. The persons of the second kind are described as *amphigenic*, i.e. 'psychosexual hermaphrodites' whose inversion is devoid of exclusiveness. The third variety of the inverts is named as contingent, who, on account of continuous absence of normal sexual object, have a recourse to sexual intercourse with persons of their own gender. The inverts also differ in their attitudes towards their inversion; some regard it as natural and normal, while many of them are opposed to it and consider it as a 'pathological compulsion' only. Moreover, some resort to inversion in the beginning of their sexual life, and some much later in their lives after a successful, normal and traditional sexual life for years (14-5).

True, a person's psychological abnormality due to his circumstances infuses into him same-sex drive instinctively and impulsively. Speaking of the accidental factors, specially frustration in early life mainly due to the absence of strong father or proper parents, causing sexual inversion in people, Freud states: "... we have found that frustration (in the form of an early deterrence, by fear, from sexual activity) deserves attention, and we have observed that the presence of both parents plays an important part. The absence

of a strong father in childhood not infrequently favours the occurrence of inversion" (24n) . It is not with any idea of denigrating a person that I refer to a university teacher, who openly declares himself to be a gay, in support of my statement. This fellow is very talented: a distinguished creative writer of four admirable books, and a scholarly critic with a British Ph.D. degree to his credit. He attributes his queer life to his early family ambience: his father a liquor-addict, mother a worthless person, and poverty and humiliation all around. He deserves a place in any university department, but is still without a permanent job. So what I stress is that a person's psychology, shaped by variegated factors, greatly governs his sex life, his attitude towards sex and sexualities (homo, hetero and bisexual) .

Homosexuality finds quite a considerable space in Michel Foucault's monumental work, *The History of Sexuality* (3 Vols.) , and therefore his discussion of it merits a brief examination here. In volume three of his study, he tells us how Socrates, Plato, Demosthenes and several others in ancient Greece discussed openly male homosexuality, though they wrapped a sort of mysterious aura of philosophical asceticism around it. These great philosophers and other Greek intellectuals talked about boys as object of pleasure, but it "was a theme of anxiety" for them, and this, Foucault holds, "is paradoxical in a society that is believed to have 'tolerated' what we call 'homosexuality'" (187) . However, the modern general concept of same-gender sexuality cannot be fully applicable to the Greeks' attitude in this regard, for "they did not see love for one's own sex and love for the other sex as opposites, as two exclusive choices, two radically different types of behavior. The dividing line did not follow that kind of boundary" (187) . The fact was that of the two — homosexuality and heterosexuality —, they did not prefer one to the other, and the two could easily coexist in the same person. Apparently, they were bisexual, and were after beautiful persons, irrespective of their gender; in fact, it was a general practice that a Greek male would "change to a preference for women after 'boy-loving' inclinations in his youth" (188) . Unlike the modern inverts, they could not conceive that a man "might need a different nature

— an 'other' nature — in order to love a man", but they were of the definite view that the pleasures a man derived from the same-sex relationship must be given "an ethical form different from the one that was required of the heterosexual love" (192) .

Foucault shows concern for the construction of sexual identity. He refers to the attempts regarding the assertion of sexual identity towards the end of the nineteenth century as exhibited in the bold stands taken by Oscar Wilde, Andre Gide and several others. What is striking in this connection is that despite a good deal of indictment, prohibitions and punishments meted out to non-heterosexuality, particularly gay sex, at the hands of authorities, social, religious and legal, male inversion continued to exist unabated. Foucault affirms that in the nineteenth century the homosexual "became a personage ... a type of life, a life form" having a peculiar, "mysterious physiology"; the sexuality of a homosexual was "written immodestly on his face and body", of course, "less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature" (*The History of Sexuality*, Volume First 43) . In fact, with the passage of time, the nature of homosexuality underwent a seachange: instead of being a kind or variety of sexual relation, it was characterised by "a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself", and this gave birth to "the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality" (43) . Foucault points out that male homosexuality in the nineteenth century assumed a new form and definite identity of its own, different in dimensions and dynamics from that of sodomy because it, unlike sodomy, was marked by inner androgyny, and thus a new species of the inverts came into existence. To quote his words: "Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (43) . Indeed, the eighteenth-century view of sodomy as "the greatest sin against nature" underwent a complete change in the nineteenth century when pederasty could be seen only in army and courts, and there were numerous "discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inver-

sion, pederasty and 'psychic hermaphroditism' (101) . What was most striking about this changed attitude towards sexual nonconformity was the fact that the homosexuals became vocal, pleaded confidently for the legitimacy of sexual inversion, and pressed their demand for its instantaneous acceptance. True, since the nineteenth century homosexuality has become not only an integral part of a homosexual's identity but also of the culture, and a new subculture has come into being. The Western social structure of the the post-Stonewall riots is an evidence of it. Nonetheless, even now most of the homosexuals all over the world prefer to live in their own private, sequestered world of secrecy and invisible isolation, and are, in most of the cases, virtually untraceable.

In the modern age, identity problem has become very conspicuous. Individuality and self or identity assertion are the patent characteristics of the modern man. Thus while upto the Victorian age there was almost nothing like sexual identity, in the period following it the scenario underwent a complete transformation. Even in the heterosexual world, men as well as women became conscious of a separate, independent identity. Virginia Woolf, the writer of *A Room of One's Own* and numerous remarkable fictional and non-fictional writings, is a case in point. Common people, writers and thinkers — all became fully aware of the necessity of attaining sexual identity. Among the educated persons, particularly of the big towns, sex and sexualities were commonplace matters; and many of them, for one reason or another, naturally or deliberately, resorted to non-conformist sexuality so as to establish their sexual identity. Freud's discussion of sex, sexual development and sexual identity, without focusing on homosexuality but referring to it, definitely contributed to the emergence of nonconformist sexuality, along with homophobia and misogyny in the twentieth century.

As a matter of fact, the staunch homosexuals, undeterred by public criticism and political and social marginalization, are fervently after uncharted individual freedom, specially in matters of love, and thus they seek reversion to primitivism because individual liberty, as Freud rightly asserts, "is not an asset of civilization. It was greatest before there was any civilization, though admittedly even then it

was largely worthless, because it was hardly in a position to defend it.... The urge for freedom is thus directed against particular forms and claims of civilization as a whole" (*Civilization and Its Discontents* 42) . Of course, the homosexuals' search for complete freedom, as stated above, is primarily governed by genital love, or we may say, is chiefly in the realm of genital love; they are totally against inhibitions and restrictions pertaining to love and friendship which civilization/ culture imposes on people. Inevitably, they revolt against the so-called civilized notion that "most extra-genital gratifications" should be "forbidden as perversions" (52) . They believe that only heterosexual genital love and monogamy are unnatural and these are "gross invasion of their sexual freedom" by the modern civilization (53) . Hence they freely indulge in transgressions to which civilized society has often turned a blind eye for ages. Since they scoff at all the norms of socio-religious set-up, they are usually not believed to be mentally normal. No wonder the former Family and Health Welfare Minister of India, Gulam Nabi Azad, has stated that these people suffer from mental malady which needs adequate remedy and treatment. Surey, it is a harsh indictment of homosexual culture/ subculture, but it is not without substance.

Almost complete rejection of heterosexuality by an invert certainly evinces an abnormal state of mind which completely sets aside the universally accepted conviction that a human being, like most of the normal animals, has unmistakably a bisexual disposition. To quote Freud's words: "The individual represents a fusion of two symmetrical halves, one of these, in the opinion of some investigators, is purely male, the other female. It is equally possible that each half was originally hermaphrodite" (54n) . True, human mind has the basic characteristics and impulses of the two sexes — male and female —, and the androgynous nature of human mind stands for this. Patently, human mind consists of the male and the female qualities, impulses, needs and properties, which are not incompatible, but complementary to each other. The two must live in perfect harmony in a normal mind. The maleness of the mind stands for the faculty which is concerned with the hard, physical facts, the light and the surface, and is active at the rational level.

On the other hand, the femaleness of the mind means that faculty which always turns to the dark and the deep spiritual significance in physical acts, and is mostly active at the unconscious level, and not at the physical. Every human mind has both the powers — male and female — corresponding to the two sexes in the body. In man's mind the man dominates over the woman, while in woman's mind the woman governs over the man. But in every man the female part of his mind must have its due importance, and in every woman's mind the male part must have its place. The ideal state of the androgynous mind is one in which the two sexes fully co-operate, and have perfect intimacy with each other. Speaking of the fundamental nature of the androgynous mind and its utmost importance for worthwhile creation in all spheres of life, Virginia Woolf in her epoch-making book, *A Room of One's Own*, says:

If one is a man, still the woman part of his brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. 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....

Coleridge certainly did not mean, when he said that a great mind is androgynous, that it is a mind that has any special sympathy with women.... Perhaps the androgynous mind is less apt to make these distinctions than the single-sexed mind. He meant, perhaps, that the androgynous mind is resonant and porous; that it transmits emotion without impediment; that it is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided. (94)

However, Freud seems to support the theory of bisexuality, but he opines that it is still enwrapped in obscurity. Even if it is accepted that “every individual seeks to satisfy both male and female desires in his or her sexual life,” Freud thinks that these are not fully satiated by the same object (*Civilization and Its Discontents* 54n) . Naturally, bigamy, extra-marital sexuality and even non-conformist sexuality cannot be, and have never been, completely ruled out by even the most civilized society, but at the same time these cannot, and will never be, the dominant, common features of human life in any country in any age.

The emergence of the ‘queer theory’ in the last two decades or so has almost turned upside down the entire discourse on

sexualities, including homosexuality. Before it, homosexuality was closely related to a kind of definite identity such as gay, lesbian, etc., the construction of which, as Foucault points out, was inalienable from power and knowledge which play an important role in all walks of life including family and human relationships particularly in this context. But the exponents of the queer theory — Eve Sedgwick, Lee Edelman, Judith Butler and others —, under the impact of the basic tenets of post-structuralism, deconstruction, sociology, epistemology, etc., demonstrate that all the categories of sexual identity are characterized by ‘queering’ because the current terms like gay sensibility, lesbianism, bisexuality, etc. no longer have any consistency and fixity, and that even all earlier theories in this regard are conspicuously marked by an absence of coherence and definitiveness. In *Tendencies*, Eve Sedgwick, relying on the best of Foucault and Derrida, points out that one's gender or sexuality cannot always be characterized by sameness or uniformity, and hence the authenticity of the queer theory because the word ‘queer’ in it stands for “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically” (*Tendencies* 8) . While Roland Barthes holds that the vagueness of the differences in sexual relations makes the different forms of sexualities as “objects of free play” (Barthes 74) , Sedgwick argues that the uncertain, ambiguous nature of the texts on sexuality helps us defy heterosexual control in support of homosexuality which usually has homophobia in the background. Commenting on the ‘minoritizing’ and ‘universalizing’ of sexuality and identity, she states in her famous later critical work, *The Epistemology of the Closet*, thus:

... that there is a distinct population of persons who ‘really are’ gay; at the same time, [the universalizing view holds that sexual desire is an unpredictably powerful solvent of stable identities; that apparently heterosexual persons and object choices are strongly marked by same-sex influences and desires, and vice versa for apparently homosexual ones; and that at least male heterosexual identity and modern masculinist culture may require for their maintenance the scapegoating crystallization of a same-sex male desire that is widespread and in the first place internal. (85)

Homosexuality, particularly the male one, has been imparted new dimensions by Lee Edelman in his notable work, *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory*. He agrees, to some extent, with Foucault that the homosexual has a being distinctly marked both internally and externally, and hence, according to Edelman, the need for the decoding of the homosexual as a body; it is with the help of the homograph that his 'sexual self' can be communicated and comprehended. He is aware of the value of homosexuals' activities for self-assertion and other strategies in this regard, but at the same time he feels that political and social acts of the inverts also endorse the homophobic attitude which considers the homosexual identity as a vice writ large on the bodies of the homosexuals. To quote his words: "... the gay advocate and the enforcer of homophobic norms both inflect the issue of gay legibility with a sense of painful urgency — an urgency that bespeaks, at least in part, their differing anxieties and differing stakes in the culture's reading of homosexuality" (Edelman 4) . Edelman's arguments lead to a chasm between the homo and heterosexual interaction, and at the same time they fail to offer or suggest a truly convincing way of constructing and handling homosexuality which has always been problematic for both the inverts and their opposites.

The contribution of Judith Butler, the author of three outstanding books titled *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, *Bodies that Matter* and *Excitable Speech*, to literature on sexualities, specially female sexuality, is remarkable. She vigorously and persuasively points to the problems regarding the management of sexuality and gender. She opines that the feminine and masculine identities are wrongly based on human anatomy which makes a clear-cut distinction between sex and gender identities as male/masculine and female/ feminine since time immemorial. Accepting several important prepositions of Foucault, Derrida and Lacan, she, in her own way, points out that gender is not necessarily always determined by sex; no doubt sexes are binary in their constitution, but it does not mean that genders ought to be like them. As a matter of fact, gender does not necessarily represent sex and thus she rejects the idea of innate gender identity. Also, she holds

that "drag plays upon the difference between the anatomical body of the performer and the gender that is being performed" (Tony Purvis 442) . However, drag is not exclusively related to lesbian, gay and queer cultures. Obviously, 'queer' is not totally compatible with any particular identity, person or category.

Thus, the queer theory presents the varied forms of sexuality as fluid, indeterminate and contradictory; they are inalienable from body, but at the same time are also closely connected to language. The later queer theorists such as Tim Dean demonstrate that sexual desire is radically impersonal. Deriving a lot from Lacan's *Encore*, Dean accentuates the detachment of sexual desire from gender in *Beyond Sexuality*:

Lacan helps to free desire from normative heterosexuality — that is, from the pervasive assumption that *all* desire, even same-sex attraction, is effectively heterosexual by virtue of its flowing between masculine and feminine subject-positions, regardless of the participants' actual anatomy in any given sexual encounter. (18)

The homosexual desires, activities and identities are immensely variegated, despite the overt fixity and resilience about them, and therefore none of the forms of homosexuality can be said to be finally defined and categorized. Even no linguistic attempt, as the noted creative writer Edmund White laments, can be truly successful in this regard:

None of the metaphors I've suggested quite fits the homosexual. This failure should be instructive and cause for celebration — and for more adequate myth-making. So much of the distress I've suffered and that I've seen my friends suffer has come from unsuccessful attempts to jam the homosexual experience into ready-made molds. ("The Gay Philosopher," *The Burning Library*18)

In a word, there is not a single term, including the 'queer' which has a wide range of implications and is now used for all types of gay and lesbian persons and hence truly co-sexual imparting equal importance to men and women, that can explain satisfactorily any of the varieties of homosexual subjects or identities, and thus inversion of every kind will always be elusive, defying a definite definition.

Before I make the concluding observations on homosexuality, let me state that in the caption of this paper the two nouns — 'aes-

thetic' and 'ethic' — have been carefully and purposively used. We all know that aesthetics is closely related to beauty and joy — these two are its most basic ingredients. Since the champions, theorists and practitioners (both in life and art) of alternate sexuality unflinchingly believe that it is an experience saturated with intense pleasure and queer loveliness, it is in the fitness of things to employ the word 'aesthetic' for it. Indeed, to the homosexuals, it, like any act of art, is embedded in 'dizzy raptures' and is simply beautiful, though it may look repulsive, obnoxious and abnormal to many of us; to them, it is a thing of beauty and "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever" as John Keats asserts. This is corroborated not only by many established creative texts on this theme and by many well-known practitioners' authenticated and honest articulations of their own experiences, but also by the latest candid confession of the much talked about lesbian Mink Brar, a famous Indian-born American actress, who, while commenting on the much circulated new video shoot/ clip of her kissing passionately an African young girl in a swimming pool, declares it "as *a thing of beauty*, 'I just love watching the video. I saw it posted online and it's *amazing*" ("I am a Lesbian for now at least," *The Times of India* 2; italics added) . Even Freud is of the view that beauty and attractiveness "are originally properties of the sexual object", and that although the genitals themselves are only always exciting and are hardly ever regarded as beautiful, but "the quality of beauty seems to attach to certain secondary sexual characteristics" (*Civilization and Its Discontents* 25-6) . He also states that sexual love of any kind provides us with "the most potent experience of overwhelming pleasure and thereby set a pattern for our quest for happiness" (24) . The second noun 'ethic', in this context, is doubtless debatable. Most of the people, from ancient times to the present, have believed, genuinely or hypocritically, that the same gender sexuality is not in conformity with the age-old, time-honoured social and religious norms and standards; to them, it has never been something common, normal and biologically sound in any country in any age in human history, though, of course, it has never been totally absent from society in any clime in any period. On the contrary, to the exponents of homosexu-

ality, it is essentially quite normal, age-old, and hence a sincere search for an identity truly religious and ethical, as is very well enunciated and demonstrated in the first outstanding fictional work on the theme of lesbianism, *The Well of Loneliness* written by Marquerite Radclyffe Hall in late 1920s.

To conclude, though there is no end to a discussion on any important subject related to humanity, yet homosexuality has been one of the most debatable and complex social and psychological issues for the past fifty years or so and its debatability is on the increase day by day. What was a strictly latent and private matter even in the early twentieth century has now assumed the form of a multidimensional movement. But at the same time there has always been a patent and puissant antihomosexual bias all over the world, including the advanced Western countries that have been its centre for more than half a century, and this prejudice very much exists even to-day and, I believe, will continue to exist unabated in the coming times too. No doubt homosexuality has been legalized in many countries, including India, and it is a great victory of the people given to homoerotic desire. Nonetheless, what is generally felt the world over is that it is not an integral part of culture, but at best is only a subculture which is, more or less, a disintegration of culture, a rejection of all universally accepted cultural and social tags and norms. This is the reason why it is generally labelled as 'homosexual underworld'. It is often seen that homoerotic desire causes a decline in an artist's art. Andre Gide and Norman Mailer may be exceptions, but Oscar Wilde, Burroughs, Genet and several others evince the negative, adverse effects of their homosexual cravings. Little wonder, citing the examples of Rechy, Genet, Burroughs and others, Meyers draws the inference that "the emancipation of the homosexual has led, paradoxically, to the decline of his art" (Meyers 3) . Homosexuality not only degrades the art of the artist but also depraves the man in him; it engenders misery and alienation of the lowest order. Perhaps the homosexuals are frequently born of miseries, live in miseries and die in miseries. The most conspicuous, well-known instance of this is Oscar Wilde. Towards the end of his life, Wilde, always dazzlingly vivacious and witty, was a totally

shattered man — physically, mentally and economically —, and was almost a pauper who would beg 200 francs from Gide. Bundles of contradictions and paradoxes like Wilde and Gide, a fairly large number of them are usually unorganised and their carefree, careless, indisciplined and unconventional life often lead them to impoverishment and misery. As a matter of fact, homosexuality, at the most, is something natural only for the time being, only as a temporary phase in the life of a person; it cannot be a permanent mode of life without being odd and abnormal, and no wonder Gulam Nabi Azad has recently called homosexuality “unnatural” (*The Hindustan Times* 2) . I feel the homosexuals now do not suffer from homophobia as much as from heterophobia. These concluding remarks and the comments interspersed throughout this article may elicit the wrath of the exponents and champions of non-conformist sexuality, and I may be dubbed as dodo and may be seen as anachronism in the present age, but unfazed by such labels I, as an objective observer cum evaluator of this human phenomenon, dare call a spade a spade and the *sahridaya*, unjaundiced reader, I believe, would surely endorse, to a great extent, my views.

NOTES

1. In the last five decades or so, there has, indeed, been such a proliferation of discourses on homosexuality as it is almost impossible to refer to all of them in this article. In 1958 came out Clifford Allen's seminal work, *Homosexuality: Its Nature, Causation and Treatment*, and since then there has been no end to the discussion on this subject till to-day. A critical analysis of the major studies and debates in this connection merits a full length research paper, which, God willing, I shall try to undertake in near future.
2. The term “androgynous” is the adjective form of the word “androgyny” which is made of two Greek words “andro” and “gyn” which mean male and female respectively. Perhaps it is for the androgynous mind that Thomas G. Rosenmeyer uses the term Dionysiac energy. Dionysus, according to him, “appears to be neither woman nor man; or, better, he presents himself as woman-in-man or man-in-woman, the unlimited personality” (“Tragedy and Religion; The Bacchae,” *Euripides*, ed. Erich Segal [Englewood Cliffs, 1968], p.154) .

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GENDER IN THE GHAZAL

Wafa Hamid

In this paper I plan to discuss the play of gender in the ghazal. While analysing this aspect, I hope to delve deeper into the various dimensions of the fluidity and transference of the gender of the lover and the beloved through the use of language, the problems of translating gender in the ghazal, and last but not the least the evolution of the expression of gender in the ghazal. But before launching into the argument one needs to first understand what a ghazal is. The term *ghazal* is etymologically a word of Arabic origin, like the genre itself, and literally means “flirtation” or poetically “a love serenade” or “conversation with beloved”. The ghazal form can be traced back to the seventh-century Arabic literature. It is derived from the Arabic panegyric aside, *qasida*¹ (which was written in praise of the emperor or his noblemen). The ghazal was an integrated part of the *qasida* of the time in general and formed a distinctive poetic genre only later. Whereas the *qasida* sometimes ran into as many as 100 couplets, the ghazal settled down to an average of seven couplets or so. From Arabic the ghazal took a Persian form. The ghazal travelled to India with the advent of the Muslims in the Delhi Sultanate and then the rest of India from the twelfth-century onwards and its Persian form underwent a change as it came to be written in what is known as *sabk-e-hindi*.² When the form was adapted in Urdu, it drew from *sabk-e-hindi* whereby a poet uses the same theme for multiple meanings. The ghazal is nowadays associated primarily with Urdu, although it is still composed in Persian, Arabic and even in Hindi and English.

After all, the classical ghazal, on the face of it, follows strict norms of according agency and a “voice” to the gendered male. The poet always assumes the voice of an adult male, a passionate lover who is determinedly pursuing a beloved who may be an unavailable respectable lady, a fickle courtesan, or of course God. The beloved is never allowed to emerge as a person, but is made to say only flirtatious or fickle things suitable to the role of sex object. Even after rejection the lover is sure that the beloved is merely testing him. But at the most fundamental level, it has to be kept in mind

that the mark of the gender in the ghazal is not the grammar but the style. In almost all classical ghazal verses the poet speaks in the voice of the lover, freely referring to himself as “I” (main), or colloquially as “we” (hum). In Urdu, “main” and “hum” can be used for both, the male as well as the female. Thus, the image of the lover being rendered universally applicable to both males and females. The reason for the conventional use of considering the narrator to be a male however, was the fact that ghazal is a performing art and is deeply entwined with the tradition of recitation in *mushairas*. Thus, ghazal is not written to be read but rather recited in gatherings. However, in the times and the Urdu speaking largely Muslim society where the ghazal was evolving, women were not supposed to attend public gatherings in the society and most of the earlier poets of ghazals were males thus, resulting in the formation of such a convention.

Now, for the beloved whose gender is never specified. One important reason behind this is the fact that the theme of the ghazal is divine love as well as earthly love and accordingly the beloved maybe either a human being or even God. Thus, the “voh” might refer to either. Below is a *sher* by Ghalib transcribed along with its translation by Frances W. Pritchett to illustrate the point.

Unke dekhe se jo aa jati hai munh par raunak
Voh samajhte hain ki bimaar ka haal achcha hai
(The flush that suffuses my face when I look at him/her
He/she interprets as a sign of my return to good health)

Carla Petievich draws a distinction between the classical Urdu ghazal (*Rekhta*, which literally means ‘that which is scattered’) and the sub genre *Rekhti*.⁸ *Rekhti* is a sub genre of the ghazal where the narrator has a feminine voice. The creator of *Rekhti* was Sa’adat Yar Khan ‘Rangin’ (1755/56– 1834/35). Other authors include Insha’ Allah Khan ‘Insha’ (1756– 1817/18), Qalandar Bakhsh ‘Jur’at’ (d. 1810), and Mir Yar Ali Khan ‘Jan Sahib’ (1818– 1897/98).

As opposed to the classical Urdu ghazal, where the beloved is grammatically masculine even though he/she maybe female, both the narrator and the beloved in *rekhti* are feminine. Women’s language was not spoken by women alone—it was the language of

non-elites and was adopted by poets to represent an indigenous urbanity. Petievich also considers it one of the greatest ironies that though narrated by one “woman” who usually addresses another in intimate terms, existing records indicate that *rekhti* was recited by male poets to a male audience. The reason for this has already been explained above as the norms in the society did not allow women to do so.

An example of *rekhti* is given below, where the narrator (a male) overtly assuming the persona of a woman, often reciting the verses clad in women’s attire, speaks in the women’s idiom of the ‘*zimana*’.

Hai gi meri dogana ki sajaavat khaasi
 Chunpai rang ghazab tis pe khichaavat khaasi
 All decked out, my other half is something special
 Her complexion is golden, her figure splendid to match

Sarke taviz sitam aur faleh pechajib
Baal mehke hue choti ki gandhaavat khaasi
 The forehead gem’s a killer! The braided coiffure a wonder
 Her perfumed hair and fragrant forelock choice
 (Rangin translated by Carla Petievich)

Petievich says that the idea of the narrator as male in the ghazal is jealously guarded giving more power to males. However, if one looks at the dynamics of power in the ghazal one immediately realises that the overwhelmingly powerful one is the beloved, not the lover. The lover suffers and dies; the beloved however thrives.

But the truth is that the role of the “woman” who sits among rival lovers and the “man” who pines for her are in fact sexually reversed roles of a masculine lover and a feminine beloved. (Faruqi, 1994)

The beloved in various ghazals is often referred to as ‘*saqi*’ (pronounced *saqi*) . *Saqi* was actually a boy in his early teens who served drinks at the caravan-*sarai* (the desert ‘caravan-park’) . Sometimes he was seduced by travel-weary merchants, parted from their wives for long periods. The presence of *Saqi* listed in the dramatic personae associated with Urdu and Persian literary culture and the oft-mentioned “*maikhana*”, “*jaam*” and “*mina*” implies a homosexual tendency in the once male-dominated traditional literary scene. Ghazal couplets often invoke *Saqi* who has taken on metaphoric or mythological status starting from ancient Persian times.

Much of the sexuality in the lyrics of the great Persian poet Hafiz is homoerotic. He was at one time banished from Shiraz at the request of religious leaders because his *ghazals* were viewed as having a negative influence on society. His ghazals are infused with a homoerotic mysticism and the expression of male-male love as not merely approaching but actually reaching a state of divinity. Hafiz believed one can see an image of God in the face of one’s beloved. One of the examples is:

“If that Tartar, that fair-skinned Turk of Shiraz, gets hold of my heart / I’ll give Bokhara and Samarkand for the Indian-black mole on his cheek.”
 (Petievich, 2004)

Now, many female poets also write ghazals and use the same conventions. What differentiates their ghazals is more their style than the pronouns used. Many famous women poets like Kishwatr Naheed, Fahmida Riaz and Parveen Shakir have been writing ghazals and have been appreciated. These poets use the same pronouns of “main” and “hum” for the narrator and “who” for the beloved. But one cannot miss the distinctive feminine voice in their ghazals. One ghazal by Parveen Shakir goes thus:

Ku-ba-kuu phail gai baat shanaasai ki
 Usne khushboo ki tarah meri pazirai ki
 (Ku-ba-kuu = everywhere; shanaasai = knowledge/acquaintance;
 Pazirai = acceptance)

Kaise keh dun ki mujhe chor diya hai usne?
Baat to sach hai magar hai rusvaai ki
 (rusvaai = disgrace/ disrepute)

Voh kahin bhi gaya louta toh mere pas aya
 Bas yahi baat hai achchi mere harjaai ki
 (harjaai = someone who can’t be trusted)

Tera pahu mere dil ki tarah abaad rahe
 Tujhe guzre na qayamat shab-e-tanhaai ki
 (pahu = side/ flank; abaad = inhabited;
 Qayamat = doomsday; shab-e-tanhaai = night of separation)

The theme of such ghazals rather than always being love for the beloved can also be seen to have shifted to a more feminist meditations on life, experiences, love, etc. They talk of the expe-

periences of women in the Urdu speaking urban milieu. For example Shakir's ghazals are considered "a combination of classical tradition with modern sensitivity," and mainly deal with the feminine perspective on love and romance, and associated themes such as beauty, intimacy, separation, break-ups, distances, distrust and infidelity and disloyalty. The ghazals traditional theme of expressing love for the beloved was changed by Ghalib who incorporated philosophical moorings and discussions in the genre. Thereafter the ghazal slowly evolved to give expression not only to earthly or divine love but also metaphysical and philosophical thoughts on life, death, soul, the body and the mind.

Poets like Simin Behbahani and Ishrat Afrin made the ghazal a vehicle for political and feminist testimonials. Behbahani's ghazals overturned the conventions of producing women as objects of the male gaze, thereby according women agency as the holder of the gaze. Traditionally, ghazals were written as love poems for and about women who were the subjects and audience of that poetry. Behbahani's work seized the position of woman as producer of the love poem and consigned men to the position of the gazed-at-beloved about whom lyrics are composed. The ghazals talk about a broad range of issues such as those pertaining to gender and discriminatory practices against women, social inequalities, and poverty. An example of this can be seen in the following extract from the ghazal by Ishrat Afreen below.

Ye nazuk si mere andar ki larki

Ajab jazbe ajab tevar ki larki

(This fragile girl inside of me

Of strange aspect, girl of strange countenance)

Yuhin zakhmi nahi hain haath mere

Taraashi main ik patthar ki larki

(Not for nothing are my hands wounded

I carved a girl of stone)

Khari hai fikr ke Aazaar-kadey men

Burida-dast phir Aazaar ki larki

(She stands in the idolater's house of thought

With wounded hands, again, Aazar's girl)

Moreover, the ghazal acts as a vehicle of not only the expression of love of the same or opposite sexes but also as that of the love for the divine entity, God. Some of the common images which had earlier been used by poets like Hafiz for the expression of homoerotic love as explained earlier were later used in many of the ghazals especially by Ghalib and then later to show the love for the divine are *saqi* (the boy who served liquor) who stands for God, *maikhana* (the tavern) which also stands for *duniya* or this world, *jaam* (literally meaning the glass of liquor) for God's grace, *peena* (to drink) for offering oneself or devotion.

Thus, the ghazal is open to everybody, of all ages and classes and genders and conditions, and its very stylization and complexity are what make it so. Classical ghazals composed by women poets are virtually indistinguishable from those composed by men. Women can, in short, enter the ghazal world just as intimately and accessibly and identifying as men, without being put off by sexism. For it contains no real men and women, but only the lovers and beloveds, God and devotees. Thus, the ghazal rather than restricting, is an all liberating genre which liberates and frees poets from the shackles of gender and enables them to express love, devotion, personality, times, problems and society.

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YESTERDAY'S VICTIM, TODAY'S VICTIMISER: DALIT CONSCIOUSNESS IN VIJAY TENDULKAR'S *KANYADAAN*

Ajay Kumar Shukla

In the post-Independence Indian Theatre, Vijay Tendulkar has brought a sea change in the world of Theatre as he shocked the sensibility of the conservative audience by projecting the stark realities of life. In a sense, he is a silent 'social activist' who covertly wishes to bring about a change in people's modes of thinking, feeling, and behaviour. His plays raise questions rather than providing a guideline to the solutions of the problems they deal with. The play *Kanyadaan* has the background of the twentieth century history of the struggle against the practice of untouchability and of the Dalit movement in Maharashtra and in the nation as a whole. It is a psychological study of the social tensions caused by casteism in India and of the development of Jyoti's character from a highly cultured Brahmin girl into a hardened spouse of her Dalit husband. He was awarded the Saraswati Samman for *Kanyadaan*. On the occasion of the prestigious award he said:

I have written about my own experiences and about what I have seen in others around me. I have been true to all this and have not cheated my generation. Sometimes my plays jolted society out of its stupor and I was punished. I found this without regrets. My plays could not have been about anything else. They contain my perception of society and its values and I cannot write what I do not perceive. ("Afterword," *Kanyadaan* 71)

Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* is a unique achievement in Indian English Fiction; he is, indeed, the "fiery voice" of those people who form the Untouchable caste. Tendulkar has taken up decades later the same issue in his play. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who had been struggling all through his life for the reformation of dalits, was definitely a rebel in this regard. Maharashtra has been a region where demands for the rights of dalits and protest against untouchability were most vocal. Ambedkar wanted to end the caste system itself.

Through *Kanyadaan* Tendulkar probes deeply into the layers of Indian caste-psychology by presenting before us the complicated, conflicting and tense relationship between Indian middle class and

untouchable community. In *Kanyadaan* he brings to the fore the contradiction implicated in one's commitment to eradicate casteism and in the process draws us to seriously rethink as why we fail in our objective to bring about social equality. The relationship between a dalit, Arun, and a Brahmin family forms the principal theme of *Kanyadaan*. The head of the Brahmin family is Nath Devlalikar. Arun comes in contact with this family through his marriage to Nath's daughter Jyoti. The problems start arising when his lower class habits start shaking the middle class values of Nath's family. Also, he does not know how to control his reactions according to the social environment. Though he is a talented, creative writer, he does not try to imbibe in himself the 'cultured' and 'civilized' manners of the middle class people. Nath's ideal notions come to a test when his daughter Jyoti decides to marry a poor and socially inferior young man, Arun. At this point he does not show any discrimination between his ideals and his practical deeds. He faces all the opposition from his wife and son and argues in favour of Jyoti. Here Nath reminds us of a Brahmin father Madhuvarsa in Girish Karnad's play *Tale-Danda*. Arun descends from the untouchable, lowest working section of the society, and has crude and uncivilized manners in the eyes of Nath's wife and son. He is very much critical of the sophisticated and high caste people. He terms the civilized and polished society of culture as "unwrinkled tinopal world" (17) . Though he loves Jyoti he often beats her and criticizes her high caste associations. The situation reminds us of 'angry young man' of John Osborne's *Look Back In Anger* (1956) ; there is a huge gulf between Jimmy Porter and his wife Alison as her family is upper middle class, while Jimmy is from the working class.

The play consists of two Acts. Act One contains two scenes whereas Act Two consists of three scenes. There are five major characters. Act I Scene I begins with the drawing room of Nath Devlalikar, a sexagenarian. He is a member of State Legislative Council, great social worker, believes in egalitarian society. Pictures of Mahatma Gandhi, Acharya Narendra Dev and few more are hanging on the walls. Jyoti aged 20 is his daughter and Jai Prakash, his son is 23 years old; Seva, his wife is also engaged in the service

of the society. Both husband and wife are social workers and that is why Jai Prakash calls them in light mood, “the repairers of the world” (2) . Nath is so dedicated to social service that he says, “the call of the nation is far more important than the call of wife” (5) . Everything runs very smoothly, the turning point comes when Jyoti wants to share something with her parents. She wants to get married. Both Jai Prakash and Seva become serious and start asking about the boy.

Jyoti: [Both diffident and serious.] His name is Arun Athavale.

Nath: [Wind out of his sails.] A brahmin?

Jyoti: No, he is a dalit.

Nath: [Excited.] Marvellous! But the name sounded like a Brahmin's. (8)

Now Nath is excited because for him it is marvelous because he has the vision of casteless and classless society and it is a very appropriate time for him to begin this work from his own house. Jyoti tells that Arun is doing B.A. and he works part time in Shramik Samachar. She met him two months back in a socialist study group. His parents live in a village; they have a bit of land and seven children. Their condition is quite poor and that is why Arun has to send money every month. Arun is a great poet and now-a-days he is writing autobiography. Seva shows her anxiety and says,

You know very well that Nath and I have been fighting untouchability tooth and nail, God knows since when. So that's not the issue. But your life has been patterned in a certain manner. You have been brought up in a specific culture. To erase or to change all this overnight is just not possible. He is different in every way. You may not be able to handle it (13) .

We have the appearance of Arun in Scene II of Act I. He is a dark complexioned boy and when he meets Jyoti in her house, he feels uncomfortable. It is pertinent to note in this context that Dalits led a very penurious life in the past and this was later on penned down by them in their creative writing. Tendulkar raises an important social issue, that is, Dalit consciousness. Dalit literature, it should be noted flourished in Maharashtra between 1960s and 1980s. It was basically a literature of revolt where dalit writers depicted their pitiable plight and tried to react against the system. Now what Arun says to Jyoti,

If you see my father's hut you'll understand. Ten of us, big and small, lived in that eight feet by ten feet. The heat of our bodies to warm us in winter.

No clothes on our back, no food in our stomach, but we felt very safe. Here, these damn houses of the city people, they're like the bellies of sharks and crocodiles, each one alone in them! "I feel safe on the street. The bigger the crowds, the safer I feel. My heart shudders when walls of cement and concrete surround me (16) .

Arun also discusses with Jyoti what his ancestors faced:

Our grandfathers and great grandfathers used to roam, barefoot, miles and miles, in the heat, in the rain, day and night. . . till the rags on their butt fell apart. . . used to wander shouting 'Johaar, Maayi—baap! Sir—Madam, sweeper!' and their calls polluted the brahmins' ears.... Generation after generation, their stomachs used to the stale, stinking bread they have begged! Our tongues always tasting the flesh of dead animals, and with relish! Surely we can't fit into your unwrinkled Tinopal world. How can there be any give and take between our ways and your fragrant, ghee spread, wheatbread culture? (17) .

Arun asks Jyoti, “Will you marry me and eat stinking bread with spoilt dal in my father's hut? Without vomiting?” (17) . Through the character of Arun, Tendulkar depicted the exact condition of Dalits in India. They were not allowed to study. But now a dalit cannot tolerate such humiliation, oppression, degradation, discrimination for a very long time. Anger is prefixed by D and it becomes danger. This volcano of resentment erupts as is visible in the statement made by Arun, “At times a fire blazes-I want to set fire to the whole world, strangle throats, rape and kill. Drink up the blood of the beasts, your high caste society” (18) . It is a cultural difference which is a matter of great concern for Seva in the marriage of Jyoti with Arun. Jai Prakash asks about his business and future, she says that he will be brewing illicit liquor.

Nath, an idealist is extremely happy because his concept of egalitarian society will begin from his own house, “ ‘Break the caste system’ was a mere slogan for us. I've attended many intercaste marriages and made speeches. But today I have broken the caste barrier in the real sense. My home has become Indian in the real sense of the term. I am happy today, very happy. I have no need to change my clothes today. Today I have changed. I have become new..”(23) .

Jai Prakash and Seva do not like the culture and demeanour of Arun. Jai Prakash says, “But to me he didn't in any way appear

to be good man. I can't tolerate him" (26) . Seva says, "But I will never accept him as my Jyoti's husband. Never" (27) . Nath is very excited because he thinks that they will act as catalyst in this transformation, but Seva is upset because she does not want to use her daughter for an experiment and so she says, "I will say that Jyoti can never be happy with that man If you like take it from me in writing" (28) . Even Jyoti is diffident. She says to her father:

At times I feel I can trust him, but the very next instant I am left miles behind him. I ask myself- this thing that I want to do, is it the right thing. . . ? I am afraid- then my own mind assures me that he is not bad at heart, by nature he is not vile. He is complex (29) .

But Nath is optimistic and says he is like unrefined gold that needs to be melted and moulded.

After the marriage of Jyoti with Arun when Jyoti comes to her parental house she appears thinner and older. She did the marriage by her own wish but she is not leading a happy marital life. Through the conversation with Jai Prakash and Seva we come to know that she is being beaten by her husband. The marriage is over, and the play unfolds layers hidden in the schizophrenic mindset of Arun Athole, who makes his devoted wife his punching bag, beating her everyday, getting dead drunk, taunting her Brahmin antecedents, living off her earnings and, in short, using her as his object of hate against the entire hierarchy of caste that has humiliated, oppressed, insulted and tortured his Dalit forefathers. Her silent response and quiet tolerance of this all-pervasive violence anger him for further violence, creating a vicious circle for both the violator and the victim. The beating of wife is supposed to be something strange and barbaric in high class society but very common among Arun's community. Arun says, "What am I but the son of scavengers. We don't know the non-violent ways of Brahmins like you. We drink and beat our wives ... we make love to them ..." (44) . Nath reads his autobiography and is very happy but when he comes to know about his behavior towards a pregnant wife, he is also shocked. Seva is quite apprehensive that by beating Jyoti he is taking revenge upon high class society, and thus in this case marriage becomes a tool for revenge. Seva says:

Doesn't his wife belong to the high caste? In this way he is returning all the kicks aimed at generations of his ancestors by men of high caste. It appears that this is the monumental mission he has set out to fulfill (48) .

Seva is militant in her voice when she says that in the autobiography Arun is talking about the exploitation of his ancestors by high class people but

... this man himself exploits my daughter. Like a shameless parasite, he lives on my daughter's blood, and on top of that he gets drunk and bashes her up. Constantly he taunts her about her caste and about her parents, heaping foul abuse on them for being highborn (49) .

Jai Prakash also says, "Perhaps those who are hunted derive great pleasure in hunting others when they get an opportunity to do so. The oppressed are overjoyed when they get a chance to oppress others"(51) . Also, he says that the person who was victimized yesterday has become a victimizer today, "If he has been shot yesterday, he shoots today ... there is no hope of a man's gaining nobility through experience, he can only become a greater devil" (51) .

Tendulkar does not side with either party because Nath's idealism suddenly turns into realism. He regrets, "I had this maniacal urge to uproot casteism and caste distinctions from our society. As a result I pushed my own daughter into a sea of misery..." (61) . It was difficult for Jyoti to decide what to do but even in the odd circumstances, she prefers to stay with her husband. In a very harsh tone she says to her father:

I have my husband. I am not a widow. Even if I become one shan't knock at your door. I am not Jyoti Yadunath Devlalikar now, I am Jyoti Arun Athavale, a scavenger. I don't say harijan. I despise the term. I am an untouchable, a scavenger. I am one of them. Don't touch me. Fly from my shadow, otherwise my fire will scorch your comfortable values (70) .

The end of the drama leaves a question in the readers' mind as to what is the future of Jyoti's marriage? The marriage does not succeed. It is suggested that the class-divide and the conflict between the upper-class and the Dalit would continue to remain, and this is surely very sad.

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BOOK REVIEWS**O.P. MATHUR, *THE SPECTRUM OF LITERATURE: EXPERIMENTS IN EXPLORATION***

(New Delhi: Sarup Book Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2011) ,
pp.192+XX, Rs.750.00

R.S. Sharma

The first impression one gets in reading this book is that it is a voice of wisdom, mature thinking, careful research and wide-ranging sympathy. And this is also the last impression when you have finished reading the book. The first article highlights the greatest problem of this postmodern age — loss of values. Jacques Derrida deconstructed the traditional values but never proposed any new value system. We are left in a void. Mathur's engaging style and serious theme can both be sampled with the following passage:

The NAV (Net Asset Value) of our studies is to be calculated in terms of the three Ps, the payment, the pleasure and the spiritual profit, the last of which really matters. This profit is the most important for it is the universal currency of literature, when things are falling apart, when missiles are guided and men misguided, when in this wasteland of values senses and senseless sex are rated much higher than true sense and sensibility.

Science is always tentative; it cannot be a source of values. Mathur regrets that the study of English at our universities is completely divested of human values. Yet, he asserts, "it should not be difficult to choose authors and works more clearly and efficiently embodying the essential values of human life." He also points out the qualities of a good teacher who must have the ability "of being an effective vehicle not only of knowledge but also of the values of life...."

In some of his articles, O.P. Mathur delineates some specific values like universal love and creative thinking. The best example is his article titled "English Poetry around the Nightingale: Myth, Reality and Imagination" in which he explains the structure and significance of the myth and then studies how the myth has been handled by English poets from Sir Philip Sidney to W.B. Yeats.

Professor Mathur's discussion of 'closet drama' is authorita-

tive and illuminating. His article "The Closet Drama of the Romantics: Then and Now" throws considerable light on the nature of closet drama. This is followed by a discussion of plays by the Romantics. This essay also includes a very sensible statement which will settle the controversy between performance and reading of drama: "Theatrical performance and mere reading of great drama, as we have seen, are not contradictory but coexistent."

In the chapter "Beatrice Cenci: Femininity and Feminism", Professor Mathur makes some fundamental statements. He makes an important distinction between femininity and (by implication) masculinity — thus the binary opposition is pushed to a deeper level:

No woman, or man either, can walk save upon her or his own shadow, and any brand of feminism which denies the woman's essential femininity, thereby making her an Amazonian oddity is as much of an aberration as an effeminate male.

Professor Mathur does full justice to writers who would otherwise be regarded as minor authors — viz., I.K. Sharma, Syed Amiruddin and Rafique Zakaria. Then, devotes two papers on Basavaraj Naikar — one examining *A Treasure of Freedom* as a closet play with South Indian background, and the other evaluating his short stories. There is also an article on Arvind Adiga's *Between the Assassinations* (between those of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi) portraying the injustices, pathos and rage pervading the Indian life and the underlying unity of perception. *The Haunted Man*, a symbolic portrayal of the Emergency, has a thick coating of anger and horror. The book also includes articles on established Indian English writers like Tagore. Amitav Ghosh's reputed novel *The Shadow Lines* has two articles approaching it from two different angles. Special reference may be made to Mathur's evaluation of Salman Rushdie's recent novel *The Enchantress of Florence* as one of the first evaluations of this remarkable novel.

On the whole, the book is a triumph of scholarly acumen. The author's sympathetic and critical perception moves like the spring breeze opening up many flowers, big and small. It is sure to be of interest and benefit to everyone desiring to know more about important works of Indian English writers, more well known or less.

**SUSHEEL KUMAR SHARMA,
*THE DOOR IS HALF OPEN***

(New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers, 2012) , pp. 92+49, Rs. 150.00
Shubha Dwivedi

The anthology under review is a collection of fifty-two poems on diverse topics. It could very well be seen as a poetic itinerary which culminates in the poet's realization of his poetic and spiritual self. The poet adopts different personas through the collection as he sometimes seems to have acquired the role of a hermit, on other occasions it is that of a thwarted artist, a social conscience, a lover, an observer and a philanthropist. The expansion of the poetic vision is clearly discernible as the poet struggles through the personal/public state of affairs. The estrangement felt by the poet on several occasions due to the fatigue and ennui caused by the complex modern lifestyle takes him to the edge of the living experience and hence the urgency or the soul's deep craving for spiritual awakening. One of the poems, significantly titled as "crisis" is worth quoting here, "I don't have to look into/ My wallet to find a piece of paper/ To know who I am and to / Wear a mask accordingly". The high point of self realization is the final line: "I've embraced peace now."

The very first poem titled "Ganga Mata- A prayer" is of topical relevance as it voices serious ecological concerns and attempts to reinforce the age-old reputation of the ancient Indian River. Poems like "Routine", "Dilemma", "one step Together", "Grief", "Camouflage", "struggle", "Masquerade", etc. ensue from the excruciating experience of the poet's "social self". Memory and desire seem to be at work in most of the poems and they seem to trivialize the poet's encounter with the present events and happenings. Childhood experiences, ancient knowledge received through saints, preachers and reformers and discussion of moral values and the degeneration of human self in our times are themes woven through the anthology. Socio-economic problems particularly the rich and the poor divide have found expressions in various poems. For example, the poet observes in the poem titled "Dilemma": "Is it really possible for one/ to remain poor and / Also to hold the head high? (17) . "For a Bride

Who Thinks of Suicide", "Nithari and Beyond", "Democracy: Old and New" are poems which cry out the need for a social and political regeneration of India. The poet's vision is humanistic and his writings confirm his faith in the spiritual unity of the world demolishing all barriers of caste, class, colour, gender and nationality. Some of the poems are marked by a personal conflict arising in his mind due to the clash between the individual needs versus social needs. The poet's positioning as a middle class citizen and the expression of his dilemmas and quandaries make the anthology a relevant voice. The poet's existence in the mortal, sordid world seems to be full of inconsequential acts, futile memories and hopeless prospects. He reflects about his despair in the poem "Dwellings" in the following words: "For Autumn had come/ but Spring could not/ Locate my home./ Laden with colourful leaves/ Hope passed by like a stranger on the road."

Prof. Sharma stands true to the role of the poet as a "conscience-keeper" and a "critical insider" who fearlessly voices his humanistic concerns. The agonizing experience of living in a sordid universe is captured adequately through plurality of voices and variety of moods. Stuck deep into the mire the heart of the poet cries out for the purification of the soul: "A Conch is rising from the lotus./ The conch is covered with /A design of a world./ The world is a jungle/ The Jungle is burning./ Fire consumes sins./ Fire consumes virtues./ After Purgation/ Nothing remains./ Brahma is revealed." Oneness with the inner self and the divine self leads to self-knowledge.

Apparently, the anthology begins with an invocation to the Goddess Ganges and ends with a poem entitled "Liberation at Varanasi" which encapsulates the poet's traversing of the life-journey through different episodes in life. Thus, the culmination of the poetic process is the attainment of the highest truth, i.e. the high point of human existence as reflected in the following lines: "Hope gives me courage/ To enter the gates of Heaven/ Where I have to face God/ To accept my retribution./ Hope gives courage to us to get rid of our pain." In the end, I would like to mention that Prof. Sharma's second anthology *The Door Is Half open* is an authentic and relevant expression of Humanistic concerns and it justifies its ends in a very refreshing manner.

BASAVARAJ NAIKAR, *THE RANI OF KITTUR*

(New Delhi: Gnosis, 2012) , pp. 123, Rs. 250.00

O.P. Mathur

Prof. Naikar is a distinguished writer of multi-sided achievement. In addition to fiction, poetry and translations of two plays, he has authored at least two plays: *The Dreamer of Freedom* and *The Rani of Kittur*, the latter of which is the subject of this Review. He had already a full-length novel *The Queen of Kittur* which shows his deep interest in the characters and events belonging to the ambit of this theme treated in Indian literature, like that of Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi.

The opening scenes constitute an excellent Exposition of the relations between the two Ranis and Raja Mallasarja with a hint of future succession by the two Ranis. As regards the characters, most of them have been portrayed with a thorough understanding and grasp. The character most powerfully and convincingly portrayed is that of Rani Chennamma as an affectionate and loving wife bearing the vicissitudes of fortune with tolerance, deep strength, understanding of politics, a tiger-like bravery and ultimately resignation to fate. She has to face the arrows of fortune from various sides, the determination of 'Company Sarkar' to grab the tiny kingdom of Kittur by any means, fair or foul, the traitors who sign a dishonourable treaty or adulterate the gunpowder within her own court, two them committing the government of kingdom to almost surrendering their independence to the Company in spite an earlier agreement of Munro to honour the independence of Kittur in internal matters and that of a third traitor who at the time of actual war adulterates the gunpowder of the royal cannons. The Rani recognizes all these treacheries but only when it is too late. Yet her courage and bravery are not cowed down, and she fights as chivalrously as a queen. Among the other major characters the one most graphically portayed is Gurudasappa, the loyal Prime Minister. The characters who fade into insignificance, the most faintly portrayed are the elder queen Rudrappa and a few servants or maid servants.

Among the characters of the Company, they are committed to implement the Proclamation of Lord Dalhousie about annexing any

Indian state that has no legal heir. The most villainous of the British characters is the Collector Thackeray who quickly poisons the young ruling prince who is still childless, so that the state may be left without a legal heir. The prince Sivalingarudrasaraja is saved but dies soon after. The adopted ruler Mallarsarja I is not recognized by the Company who declare the state along with its treasury to be Company property. Destiny punishes too for Thackeray's unauthorized mischievous poisoning of the Prince and he is shot dead by a soldier of the Rani's army – a punishment he fully deserves, but it further infuriates the higher officer of the Company and a regular battle ensues in which Rani Chennamma reveals her nobility in treating with full consideration the women and officers and soldiers. But by making false promises the Company makes her release all of them in two or three stages. After that the Company collects all its soldiers and makes an all-out attack which the Rani's smaller army cannot stop from capturing the palace and also the Rani whom they make to pass her remaining life comfortably as a master of eleven villages and a large number of servants whom she does not need. But they execute all the other important courtiers including Gurusiddhappa, the former Diwan and demolishing the palace to destroy the Rani's memory altogether.

The play is well-planned and well-written, but it suffers from some of the limitations that his earlier play *The Dream of Freedom* also suffered from. The language used is completely anglicized with hardly any trace of Kannada or any other Indian language, which makes it so unrealistic. Hence we can only conclude that it is a powerful and well-planned play, but meant only to be read – a powerful 'closet play'. But those who can read it should not miss it, for it is a real multi-dimensional achievement in Indian English literature.

Naikar's *The Rani of Kittur* deserves to be taken out of the 'closet' and displayed in select gatherings or on English channels of T.V. In the body of Indian literature, if translated into Hindi, Kannada or other Indian languages, it can achieve an important place, specially because it deals with a subject of relevance to our own freedom struggle under the leadership of Bahadurshah Zafar and of Mahatma Gandhi in our own times.

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