

POINTS OF VIEW

Volume XX

Number 1

Summer 2013

CONTENTS

S. Viswanathan	The Other Milton — the Frolic and the Play of Mind and Wit in the Sage and Serious Poet	3
Iffat Ara	Relevance of Songs in the Comedies of Shakespeare	14
Subodh Agarwal	In the Arms of Paracelsus: Supernal Literary Eruption under the Influence of Infernal Laudanum	48
Leonard R.N. Ashley	Reading Evelyn Waugh's Social Satire: Explaining England of the Past to India of Today	60
Monika Gupta	The Religion of Exclusion in the Novels of Toni Morrison: A Comparative Study of Dalit and African-American Literature	70
K.B. Razdan	Subversion of Ethical Values in Kurt Vonnegut's <i>A Man without a Country</i>	76
Ashu Vashisht	Margaret Laurence's <i>The Diviners</i> : A Study in Metafictional Self-consciousness	88
Anuradha	Indian Concept of Ideal Love: An Analysis of Toru Dutt's Poetry	94

R. Deepta	The Death Motif in A.K. Ramanujan's <i>The Black Hen</i>	112
Sweety Bandopadhaya	Clash of Fundamentals: Mapping Cultural Stereotypes and Crevices of Violence in Hamid's <i>The Reluctant Fundamentalist</i>	120
K.K. Sharma	Jayashankar Prasad's Explication of the Nature, Birth and Growth of Mysticism in India	129
Syed Ahmad Raza Abidi	"To Serve the Cause of the Universe": An Interview with Susheel Kumar Sharma	150

BOOK REVIEWS

K.G. Srivastava	Susheel Kumar Sharma, <i>The Door Is Half Open</i>	166
Syed Ahmad Raza Abidi	Deepika Srivastava, <i>M & M</i> (<i>Murmurs and Musings</i>)	171
Yusuf Amin	Syed Yusuf Ali, <i>The Enigma of Life</i>	176
D.K. Pabby	Vikram Chopra (Ed.), <i>Shakespeare: The Indian Icon</i>	182
Alka Tyagi	Ankur Betageri, <i>Bhog and Other Stories</i>	186

CONTRIBUTORS		188
--------------	--	-----

The Other Milton — the Frolic and the Play of Mind and Wit in the Sage and Serious Poet

S. Viswanathan

The two Miltons I postulate, implicitly are not the often envisaged Milton the poet and Milton the puritan polemicist and politician (partisan), nor Milton the humanist and Milton the doctrinaire religious thinker. As the subtitle seeks to indicate, I mean to call attention to an aspect of Milton's poems, the in-its-own way playfulness of sorts, that could be traced, and felt and enjoyed in the poems with inevitable exceptions. It takes several forms; sometimes it is an expression of relaxed geniality or it is the play of wit; humour, if sometimes dry, which is one side of the sarcastic ridicule and invective which abounds in his controversial pamphlets and some other prose. Sometimes he adopts masks as his poetic *personae* in poems and makes poetic play with such masks. Sometimes it is ironic perception undergirding a poem. Most interestingly, he adopts a game-like manner of procedure in poems in the matter of design, structure and movement, and this could give the appearance of his playing with the reader by way of a subtle manipulation of response; this could be seen in his portrayal and presentation of his characters such as seen prominently in his Satan. This play does not take away from the seriousness of his theme and earnestness of engagement, but, if anything, serves only to intensify, and clarify, it and bring it home to the reader; in the ultimate effect. It is, however, more or less a hidden factor which works from within or behind him in subterranean ways.

The image of Milton as man and poet, for obvious reasons, is that of a stern and stiff personality with the halo of the grandeur of his poetic ambition and his poetic style. For too long he was regarded as a strict puritan in the popular prevalent impression of the abstinence and self-denial of his puritan way of life with little thought being given to the essential puritan doctrines of predestination and of election, much less to the individual modifications which personalities like Milton made to the ideas and adopted them for ordering their life mission. But there is evidence that Milton was not given

to austerities. His nephew who was also his pupil along his brother and others, in his experimental educational venture have testified that 'he kept a gaudy night now and then'. Nor does he appear to have adopted a strict Calvinism. The evidence of his treatise, *Doctrina Christiana* indicates, and, more, as his poems in their doctrinal orientation would show, that he adapted the Calvinist ideas in accord with his ambitious and objectives in poetry and in life. He seems to have had an uninhibited taste for good food as witness his assertion, *pace* the theologians that the angels in heaven felt hunger and ate ambrosial food with relish (*Paradise Lost*, Bk. 5, 433-446) and the engaged tone and great detail with which he portrays the feast of nature's bounty which Eve gets ready and serves with table manners as it were (Bk. 5, 3.31-349). He had a zest for the legitimate pleasures of living, though he did not allow all this in the way of 'labour and intense study' in his meditations on the Muse, his preparation and training for writing prophetic poetry, 'doctrinal to the nation'.

I

There are instances of varying degrees of his 'resolve with to drench / In mirth that after no repenting draws' ('Sonnet to Cyriac Skinner'), in his poetry and life. To quote the concluding lines of this same sonnet, one of the two he addressed to Cyriac Skinner, who was a distinguished pupil in his school,

For other things mild Heaven a time ordains,
And disapproves that care though wise in show
That with superfluous burden loads the day
And, when God sends a cheerful hour, refrains.

It is the same Milton who knew himself to be 'ever in the great 'Taskmaster's eye' who also could feel as he does in the quoted passage. His early poems, collected by him in 1645 as 'The Poems of Mr. John Milton' bear evidence of the play of wit and play with the assumption of masks or personae. When he assumes the allegro role or the penseroso role, in the diptych of poems, he lets himself go while at the same time taking opportunity to express his tastes, that for country culture and pastoral delights, in the one

poem, and that for orphic meditation and a sort of Orphicist philosophy and ideal of life in the penseroso role. The twin poems in a way signal the two sides of Milton's personality and both are active in his poetry but within the limits of decorum. To put it in another perspective, the synergy of wit and high seriousness which was once claimed for the Metaphysicals, in a way marks Milton too. The witty play with words and etymology or their phonic values or the play with spelling or pronunciation such as sounding his r's particularly hard (he was supposed to be in the habit of emphasizing his r's in ordinary speech), all this did not take away from his serious engagement with his theme. If anything, these help in the poetic communication, as, for instance, the reference at the opening of *Paradise Lost* to the fruit / of that forbidd'n tree / Whose mortal taste' in these terms; The emphasis in terms of sound values on 'r' in 'mortal' and the underlying homonymic pun on those of 'taste' which word and the word 'test' sounded more or less alike in the pronunciation of those times, when the 'Great Vowel Shift' was still transitional. The suggestion is tacitly conveyed that the forbidding was a test which God subtly set for Adam and Eve and the fruit 'brought death into our world and all our woe'; to test man's faith in and love to God.

If we consider the striking image, in 'L'Allegro' of 'the cock, with his lively din, Scatterngs the rear of darkness thin', we find a Metaphysical quality in it. The collocation of images it calls up makes the image comparable to that, in *Hamlet*, of 'the morn in russet mantle clad/ Climb(ing) up the dew of yon eastern hill', which Eliot used as a model of a sharp visual image. Eliot once blamed Milton for failure to make his images sharply particular and visual and held them to be vague and general.

Milton's two early short poems on the University carrier, Hobson, are by way of jests; one of them was gathered in a contemporary collection entitled *A Banquet of Jest*s Milton presents a comic view of the life and death of the carrier. All his life long, he was ever on the move, so that death could not catch him. Once he fell ill and had to be a stay-at-home, then only it could, the comic conceit of the poems.

The figure of Orpheus, the prototype of poet, musician and

philosopher also held a fascination for Milton; he returns to it making interesting variations on the figure, the myth and also, in the early poems especially in “Il’ Penserolo’ on the philosophical creed of Orphicism which had a vogue in the medieval and Renaissance periods; Orpheus was reckoned as a prefiguring type of Christ in neoplatonism and typology. Milton makes poetic play with the Orpheus story in ‘L’Allegro’. Towards the close of the poem, after his tribute here to Shakespeare (‘Sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy’s child’) he goes on to dally with the story. While invoking music and poetry and their pleasures, he wishes for such a combination of the two that would awaken the long since dead Orpheus in Heaven from his slumber and would enable him to please Pluto so well that the king of the underworld is moved by music to release for Orpheus his ‘half-regained Eurydice’. It is clear that Milton was not for rigorous austerities and self-denials and he in a way defends the legitimate pleasures of life, providing evidence for his zest for food, and affirmation of life. The stress on Eve’s conjugal delight and conjugal bliss is strong in Bk. 4 of *Paradise Lost*. The new arrival in Paradise, Eve is entertained by the animals that roam Paradise freely and in absolute harmony with man and woman.

Sporting the lion romped, and in his paw
 Dandled the kid; bears, tigers, ounces, pards,
 Gambolled before them; ‘th’ unwieldy elephant
 To make them mirth, used all its might and writhed
 His lithe proboscis, close the serpent
 Insinuating wove, with Gordian twine
 His braided train, and of his fatal guile
 Gave proof unheeded. Others on the grass
 Couched, and filled with pasture gazing sat
 Or bedward ruminating. (BK. 4, 341-352)

The image of the playing and greeting elephant is noteworthy. The spectacle called up is just so short of the dancing elephant. It is a spectacle of a mini-circus of animals, wild and domestic (to make a postlapsarian distinction) performing all at the same time on the paradisaic stage for Adam and Eve. (In this idyllic picture, the serpent’s natural physical insinuation and braids with their ‘terrible

beauty’ are attributed ‘fateful guile’ and ‘warning unheeded’ as a prolepsis.)

We may now sample a few more instances of the play of verbal wit and imagination in Milton which actually pays rich dividends of meaning. The sonnet Milton wrote sometime during the Long Parliament years, is an attack on the Presbyterians who seemed to be gaining the upper hand. The sonnet entitled ‘Upon the New Forcers of Conscience’ ends with the thumping close

New Presbyter is but the old priest writ large.

It is striking etymological wordplay. First, it is a telling pun because the words ‘Presbyter’ and ‘Priest’ come from the same root. Secondly, the Presbyterians through their vehement advocacy of control and guidance of the individual conscience and thought processes, are going back to the authoritarianism of the old Church of England whose Archbishop the Parliamentarians have thrown out. Thirdly, by hindsight as it were, it turns out to be a prefiguring of the retrograde turn of the policies of the Commonwealth government of Cromwell of which Milton was a vigorously active Latin Secretary and the disillusionment Milton came to feel as the years wore on. His millenarian dreams were shattered.

... as a thief bent to unhoard the cash
 Of some burgher whose substantial doors
 Cross-barred and bolted fast, fear no assault
 In at the window climbs, or o’er the tiles:
 So clomb the first grand thief into God’s fold
 So since into the church in lewd hirelings

(*Paradise Lost*, Bk. 4 188-193)

The Homeric simile, not all that long-tailed, strikes the reader as one with contemporary social realities as its point of reference and thus making a departure from the customary Homeric similes which relate to mythology or earlier epics and other kinds of lore and traditions such as the bestiary (philologus) tradition. Satan’s stealthy entry into Paradise is proto-typical of the common thief’s stealthy break-in. Still more interestingly, Milton takes opportunity to deliver an attack on his *bête noire*, the hirelings who sneak into the clergy for the sake of the pelf of pluralities and other such abuses, a one-

line glance at such, which exposes their practice as devilish.

II

We have noted instances of Milton's play of wit in the texture and local effects of his verse. We may now turn to consider the possibilities of the play element and some of the ways it works in his major poetry insofar as their design, structure, movement and total final effect are concerned.

Milton in 1634 undertook to write *Comus* for presentation as a performance at Ludlow Castle to mark the inauguration of the Earl of Bridgewater as Lord President of Wales, at the request of his friend the musician, Henry Lawes, who wrote the music. In all probability Milton had in mind the circumstances of the occasion and the then recent history of the Bridgewater family whose two sons and daughter the real personages of the masque performed each exactly these roles in *Comus*. A closer look at what Milton makes of the occasion and the opportunities for his poetry and its effects reveals something of a multiple play of mind on his part. An old tradition reported by very early critics such as Henry Reed, friend of the Coleridges, especially Hartley Coleridge, in mid-nineteenth century, in his *Lectures on the British Poets*, goes that the rather very young daughter of the Earl and her two brothers on an occasion actually did go out into the woods to gather berries and, the girl left alone for some moments, experienced a fright. It does not seem improbable the young girl played the role of the Lady, apparently as a character adult enough quite in accord with the practice then obtaining of young boys performing the lady roles in drama. A few decades ago, scholars drew attention to a couple of background factors which related to the muffled scandals that were circulating at the point of time of *Comus* as regards one or two members of the Bridgewater family and their alleged sexual deviance. Milton may have chosen the theme of chastity as a key concern of the poem and put an emphasis on the mystique of chastity, for this among reasons and poetically exploited the occasion to express himself on this theme for he was all along engaged with the theme of chastity and its true meaning, value and power, as witness the several times

he hangs on the theme and celebrates married chastity in *Paradise Lost* with reference to Adam and Eve.

Milton's play of mind can be traced in the ways he carries out his multiple intentions. The implicit appreciation and celebration of the Lady's self-control, abstinence and repulsion of Comus's temptations and allurements. Milton's handling of the theme is such that, with his sleight of mind, it could produce a prismatic effect. It could come over as at once a celebration of chastity and the power of virginity and its mystique. It could be by way of vindication of the virtuousness of the family, as amply shown by the daughter of the house in the masque. Or it could appear as a panegyric attribution of the virtue to the Bridgewater family which is meant as a reminder, or alert or inspiration to the family to sedulously cultivate the virtue; this kind of indirect adjuration often acts as the secret principles behind the panegyric tradition. Milton of course, basically treats the theme of virtue and the test of temptation it should face to prove itself, in this first of his four major poems, for the reason that the theme was close to his heart life-long and came to be the central concern of his major poems.

Milton could have had in mind both the traditional possibilities of the pastoral, and also the amateur performances of pastorals and sporting of pastoral garbs by ladies at the royal court. *Comus* combines elements of a platonic philosophical drama, a masque, a musical entertainment, a celebration of rural culture and traditions, and the theme of magic and especially its association with the land of Wales. The potent and in a way, sacramental herb haemony brought by Sabrina the river-goddess is what could bring about the miraculous recovery of the Lady from the stupor into which the evil magician had sent her, as a Parthian shot. The herb suggests a composite of medicine, magic and sacredness in addition to the intermixing of the courtly and the rural. Over and above this, Milton perhaps brings to bear a touch of nostalgia about the traditions of rural England and its cultural forms and modes of expression then being, in the process of gradual dislodgement due to the puritan hold.

The point is that Milton in what may be called his tacit dexterity

manages to have it both ways or several ways at one stroke as it were in *Comus*. Often it is assumed that Milton's poetry is all 'direct' in contrast to the presumably more interesting 'oblique' verse associated with Shakespeare and the Metaphysicals. It is not actually entirely 'direct' and Milton could implicitly integrate several points of view and present them. It is in this respect that the active play of mind and poetic imagination is a presence in poems like *Comus* and *Paradise Lost*.

In *Paradise Lost* on total view Milton may be seen playing a game 'with a difference' such that does not take away from the seriousness of his theme but serves the purpose of effective communication and total impact. Perhaps the game is not exactly the one involved in Milton's use of the Henry-Jamesian technique of 'catching the guilty reader by surprise' which Joseph Summers in his *The Muse's Method* and Stanley Fish in his early book *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in 'Paradise Lost'* proposed some decades ago. It is perhaps a game to call it thus (we can understand it is a grand strategic design), which is ordered in an even more complex fashion. To identify and recognize this, we may start with the common feeling and criticism which A.J.A. Waldock diagnosed as the main problem with Milton's epic on his *Paradise Lost and its Critics* in the late forties of the last century. It is what is perceived as a gap between the poet's intention and the effect of the poem on the reader, the impact of the poetry pulling in the opposite direction from the stated objective. This characteristic of the poem could lead Blake to conclude that Milton 'was of the Devil's party without knowing it'. William Empson sophisticated the argument and gave it a twist in his fascinating attempt in *Milton's God* to claim that Milton's secret objective was to expose in subtle ways the tyranny and lack of sensitivity of God. Milton thus, in the ultimate analysis, in Empson's view, comes not to 'justify the ways of God to man' but to justify man's questioning of theodicy, his questioning of the justice of God.

Given the long decades of Milton's cogitation on the theme and the design of *Paradise Lost*, after which he came to compose it, perhaps in some manner, he himself could anticipate the possi-

bilities of these problems and conflict between communication and response. He could well have devised a scheme which could take poetic advantage of the possibility of conflictual response the quarrel with ourselves. This is clear from his presentation of Satan. Milton was perhaps aware that he as well as his readers would view and respond to the happenings in the poem from their inevitable and inexorable fallen state in the attempt to envisage and empathise with prelapsarian situations. In that predicament Milton brings to bear on the poem a set of techniques which may be compared to an elaborate game he plays with the reader, to bring about a serious apprehension of the theme and its manifold significance in terms of the grand providence of God for mankind.

To consider briefly his presentation of Satan, Milton must have known that we in our lapsed state with the original sin of pride would feel a secret sympathy with the first fallen, the archangel Satan. The poem in the final version begins with the detailed portrayal of Satan and depiction of how he reorganizes and asserts himself, and takes, in the process, with him the host of fellow Fallen angels. Milton endows Satan with impressive stature and titanic dimensions, in striking contrast to the caricatural portrayal of Satan in terms of repulsive animal traits starting with horns in the earlier tradition. It makes for a matching and in subtle hints or overt statement telling correspondence and opposition with God in Heaven with his shining band of attending angels. By the time Satan seeks stealthy entry into newly created earth and especially Paradise in Book IV. Milton's assertions by way of puncturing of Satan's stances, are deliberately introduced as warnings to the reader. The pattern of the degeneration of Satan in the poem, so forcefully described by C.S. Lewis, is a rapid fall of Satan's status and stature in the Great Chain of Being, in a veritable apokatastasis. From the point of view of the total effect of the characters and the poem, it is a telling means to the end of a central argument of Milton that Satan sets off by contrast the right ideal of true heroism, which does not consist in martial valour, the strength of arms. It is more a matter of inner courage and fortitude, the inward strength to face and overcome the temptations of evil, and all its varied challenges, with the

help of faith in oneself and in God and his grace.

In overcoming the central problem of conceiving and communicating a prelapsarian state through, in and for the postlapsarian world and mindset of, in a way, the poet himself and the reader, Milton clearly, made a deep and complex application of mind. Aware of what he is about all along, he exercised a multiple play of intellect over this and other issues of the poem. The superficial impression that Milton is the typical bard and prophet with his robes on singing his tale straight using the grand style for elevating effect. True, Milton believed in the Muse to whom he invokes and prays as he does the Holy Ghost. He believes that the Muse 'nightly whisper(ed) into his ear'. It may be interesting to compare situations of Milton and of *Ramayana* poet, Valmiki. The preamble to the Sanskrit epic says that Lord Brahma, the Creator, came to Valmiki in a vision and endowed him with the gift of mentally transporting himself to the exact time and place and witnessing himself all the happening and personages and to read the psychology governing each one. So much so that Valmiki, though fully aware that Rama is an *avatar* of God Vishnu, sees him not so much as an *avatarapurusha*, an incarnation of God as an ideal man. Milton did not have the advantage of such supernatural vision. With an abiding faith in God and his providence and commitment to choice by free will, he had to deal with the beyond-human and the divine in human terms in his own poetic vision and envisagement. The plays and play behind the poem in its design and development are calculated to helping and guiding the reader who is in rapport with the poem towards an apprehension of what is difficult, with such a manipulation of response.

III

The foregoing attempt to study how the play element functions in certain examples of Milton's poetry is not to be understood as though Milton plays tricks with the readers or sets traps for them. It is not just clever play he employs in a game of one-upmanship. In a poem like *Paradise Lost* Milton's way of proceeding, as we have tried to see, shows how Milton is using his manner of procedure in order to all the more vividly bring home to his readers that

they all, the poet not excepted, are in the predicament of fallen mankind, so as to kindle the urge for redemption and inspire the quest for it. In other words, Milton does it all in order to get the readers acquire a right perspective on the great events and God's providence for man.

It is the play of the poetic intellect that we have been talking about. Indeed, the question may arise whether in one sense, poetry or, for that matter all creative writing, is not play, play with words, their meanings and sound values, with various forms and modes of expression and of structure etc. But the reader easily distinguishes the stance of a poem from another, of a poet from another. It becomes noteworthy when a serious poet like Milton does resort to the play of wit and poetic intellect to enhance the communication.

The Dutch scholar, familiar with the Oriental and Sanskrit traditions as well as European cultural history in medieval and Renaissance period, demonstrated the key role of the play element in various cultural institutions, in the early twentieth century in his pioneering look, *The Play Element in Culture*. Ever since other scholars have called attention to the different aspects and cultural and psychological implications of play and games. An instance is Kendall L. Walton, *Mimesis as Make believe* (1990). The figuring of the play element or of the spirit and pattern of game-playing in drama, its origins and its latter manifestations from age to age. Games of sorts as well as music, drama and dance have had all along an association with religious festivals, celebrations and worship. Though *Paradise Lost* is a great deal more than devotional poetry it has features of religious poetry which celebrates Godhead. Considering the triune against the backdrop of all such factors. It is only legitimate to try to trace this element in a not so obvious and apparently unlikely place like Milton's poetry, though his controversial prose is another proposition. Milton seems to have had an abiding sense of fun, and there are occasions in his poetry when the prophet doffs or at least loosens his prophet's robes and communicates in relatively informal and relaxed fashion.

Relevance of Songs in the Comedies of Shakespeare

Iffat Ara

According to Shakespeare comedy deals with the process of exploration. The characters get involved in situations where they are able to know themselves and their former self is replaced by a new existence which is more attractive and comprehensible. The Elizabethan comedy is marked by complexity and strange incidents. Trade and commerce and marine wealth were the pride of the nation in Elizabethan times. Also, the Italian influence both in the form of culture and literary treasure was a marked feature of the age. Shakespeare in this background of traders introduces a pattern of romance where two complex characters dominate all others. One is the Jew, named Shylock, a usurer, who could not succeed in his evil designs. The other is a sober, prudent lawyer, Portia, who successfully defeats her opponent.

The Merchant of Venice, compared to other Comedies by Shakespeare, reflects complex personalities in their particular contexts. Portia cleverly deals with the problem created by Shylock, the Jew, and uses her intelligence regarding the gift of rings and how it all works out. In the casket-scene she boldly makes comments on her suitors and handles the situation with firmness. Antonio suffers a loss in his business and seems to be heading towards crisis. He is indecisive as to join his friend who assisted him or remain bound exclusively to Portia. Portia is sensitive in matters of love but her will power and quick intelligence guide her in all situations. Shylock, on the contrary, loves his daughter well but his love is tainted by his greed and racial bitterness.

Though Shakespeare borrows his characters from different sources yet he makes them life-like with a stroke of his pen. The play teaches tolerance both in commercial affairs and matters of love. It requires mutual interaction of characters, a sense of moderation and farsightedness. Bassanio may not be a very attractive hero but he ultimately exhibits his virtuosity when faced with a crisis. The end is therefore happy and encouraging as it is in other great comedies of Shakespeare. Bassanio's success is governed by his

farsightedness in the casket-scene and Antonio's generosity is the means to achieve that end. Portia's sincerity and dedication to her dead father are reflected in her maneuvering the whole situation.

In *The Merchant of Venice* the songs are plentiful and these reflect romantic love. The allegory of the caskets is used to reach this end. The romantic illusion of love relating to the marriage-test is darkened by a conflict of commercial interest between Shylock and Antonio. The play is therefore a "commerce of love" and also a "commerce of wealth" exhibited in the courtship and court scenes. The characters in this play whether they belong to one stream of life or the other remain dissatisfied till the end.

Antonio, despite all his affluence and wealth, experiences a kind of boredom and discontent. Portia, the worthy heiress of a large fortune, derives no pleasure from the plenitude of life. In fact each character finds it hard to bear the burden of life cheerfully. And yet all of them have their personal ambitions and therefore they do not believe in abstinence. Antonio, at the end is relieved of the risk he had taken to save Bassanio to secure happiness. Portia is to be married to a man capable of offering her a normal way of life and a contented soul.

Portia, the Lady of Belmont, is a wealthy young girl with a "little body weary of this great world" (Act I, Sc. ii, 1). But she is endowed with a keen gift of perception and a satiric bent of mind. This is evident from her judgment about the suitors who wish to marry her. She may be a romantic heroine but she does not lack shrewdness and commonsense and is very perceptive in her outlook. Portia is wise and intelligent like Bluntschli in Shaw's play *Arms and the Man*. Also, like him, she is moved by the passion of love and becomes an admirer of Bassanio, who is simple and truthful.

Portia, like Isabella, Beatrice and Rosalind is guided by her intelligence and is therefore superior to many other heroines. She excels all women in her firmness of decision and is not dazed by splendor. Her wit and wisdom overcome deception and artificiality. Her best attributes are evident in the trial-scene which is followed by the courtship-scene where she exhibits dignity and self-control though she is never indifferent to her natural feelings of love. Hence

she is a warm-hearted woman but is no less armed by her intellectual powers. She is neither emotional like Juliet, nor innocent and simple like Miranda, but she weighs her love in the scales of reason. Though she is bound by the marriage-test yet when the trial is over she displays all her hidden talents.

Portia is a very refined lady, gifted with sharpness of mind, and therefore, she performs well her roles as a woman and 'civil doctor'. Harold Bloom, in his famous book, entitled *Shakespeare- Invention of the Human*, criticizes this heroine. He thinks, she hoodwinked Shylock, the Jew, who may be wrong in his demands and obduracy but once he expected justice from her he is made to suffer in a society where nobody likes him. He is deprived of all his possessions and is even forced to undergo conversion and become a member of the Christian Church for which he always had an antipathy.

Most of the characters in *The Merchant of Venice* like Portia, Antonio, Bassanio and Jessica conceal their identity. Portia is a refined ironist who paves way for the success of Bassanio and Antonio. Hence she is associated with Belmont and Venice. Shakespeare's heroines, though quite well-off usually marry below themselves. If one were to compare Rosalind's Orlando with Portia's Bassanio, the former is more amiable than the 'sincere fortune-teller'. All the characters relating to Portia have mercenary motives and yet Portia, the wisest amongst all, feels comfortable with them. One cannot deny the fact that Bassanio and Lorenzo are looking for heiresses and Portia is like the 'Golden Fleece' whom suitors follow with an eye on her wealth.

If Venice is marked by storms, Belmont is 'love's magic land'. Antonio willingly sends Bassanio to Belmont to seek happiness. Bassanio truthfully accepts his selfish motive of getting Portia's hand in marriage at Antonio's expense. In the Casket-scene, Bassanio, through Portia's approval, wins the marriage-test. The lady, guided by her wit, orders the play of music to create an atmosphere of love and romance and offers Bassanio a clue while he listens to the song and chooses the right casket:

Tell me where is fancy bred,
Or in the heart, or in the head?

How begot, how nourished?

Reply, reply.

It is engend'ed in the eye,
With gazing fed, and fancy dies
In the cradle where it lies.

Let us all ring fancy's knell.

I'll begin it — Ding, dong, bell.

Ding, dong, bell. (Act III, Sc. ii, 63-72)

Songs in Shakespeare's plays are always stimulating and offer a glimpse of reality provided one follows them closely. Portia does not openly rebel against her father like Jessica, but urges Bassanio to know the intricacies of love. Bassanio attentively listens to the song, and concludes, that one must not be misled by the appearance of things. In the song emphasis is laid on 'love of the eye' which is a fleeting emotion that does not reach the heart. True love is engendered in the heart and is also governed by the mind. A.H. Fox-Strangeways thinks (*Times Literary Supplement*, 12 July 1923 472) that all the three words of the song's opening lines rhyme with 'lead'. And therefore, the song guides Bassanio to select the appropriate casket. But this comment may be misleading for it creates a bad impression about Portia's honesty and Bassanio's lack of insight. Brown's comment in this regard is more authentic: 'The song can prepare the audience for Bassanio's sentiments and choice without appearing to influence him at all. Hanmer and Johnson are of the opinion that the reply to the query about the nature of love is given in the rest of the song. W.J. Lawrence regards "Reply, reply" as merely a refrain sung by all (473). The fact that love feeds the eye and is superficial is rejected, and Bassanio, who perceives the content of the song, selects the plain lead casket. And he is blessed with the companionship of a graceful and intelligent woman. The song signifies a proper assessment of love.

If Bassanio exhibits true love, Portia ennobles love and highlights the attributes of Grace and Divinity. Though she is well-versed in all matters of life yet she gives precedence to Bassanio. This is the true spirit of love where self-dedication replaces self-assertion and the couple is happily united in marriage. She resembles

Katherine, the heroine of the *Taming of the Shrew*, who knows the relevance of the sanctity of marriage and therefore, both the lovers in *The Merchant of Venice* replace mercenary motives by genuine love.

When Shylock leaves the stage, the pairs of lovers step in and romance and music soften harshness and celebrate the happy union of Lorenzo and Jessica and Bassanio and Portia. Jessica and Lorenzo may be harbingers of sadness, for they oppose a living father, but they replace gloom by happiness. Hence light and shade accompany human life and the balance is maintained by a rejection of selfishness. As a group of musicians play music, Lorenzo highlights the spiritual and harmonious aspect of music which removes all darkness and despair:

How sweet the moonlight sleeps on the bank!
 Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
 Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night .
 Become the touches of sweet harmony.
 Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
 Is thick inlaid with patents of bright gold.
 There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
 But in his motion like an angel sings.
 Still choiring to the young-eyed cherubins.
 Such harmony is in immortal soul,
 But whilst this muddy vesture of decay.
 Doth grossly close it in. We cannot hear it.

(Act V, Sc. i, 54-65)

Lorenzo thinks that natural scenery and music create an atmosphere of romantic solitude and harmony. He invites Jessica to sit with him and watch the sky covered with a pattern of bright colours. The earth was influenced by the stars fixed in their places. But when they shine they seem to sing together. Also the friction of different planets in the universe was equated with music in the 16th century. Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* also inspired Montaigne and conveys a similar impression. All this music is for the cherubins, the beautiful winged-children. The heavenly bodies make music and human beings are also innovative in this regard. Hence 'the music

of creation' is emphasized here. Lorenzo asserts that our souls are marked by harmony and yet we do not seek harmony ingrained in our spiritual self. Shakespeare admired the Renaissance Neoplatonic idea of the "music of spheres" and the favourable effect of heavenly and earthly harmonies on the living human spirit. Lorenzo, through his song unburdens himself very effectively.

Lorenzo urges the musicians to awaken Diana (the moon-goddess of chastity) by singing a hymn, and with sweet strains make a good effect on Portia's sense perceptions. He also lays emphasis on the magnetic power of music as mentioned in the legends:

Come, ho! And wake Diana with a hymn.

With sweetest touches pierce your mistress's ear,

And draw her home with music. (Act. V, Sc. I, 66-68)

As music is played along with this song Jessica says she also has a taste for good music. Lorenzo admires Jessica's developed aesthetic sense:

The reason is your spirits are attentive.
 For do but note a wild and wanton herd
 Or race of youthful and unhandled colts
 Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud-
 Which is the hot condition of their blood-
 If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound,
 Or any air of music touch their ears,
 You shall perceive them make a mutual stand,
 Their savage eyes turned to a modest gaze
 By the sweet power of music. Therefore the poet
 Did feign that Orpheus draw trees, stones and floods;
 Since not so stockish, hard and full of rage,
 But music for the time doth change his nature.
 The man that hath no music in himself,
 Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
 Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;
 The motions of his spirit are dull as night
 And his affections dark as Erebus.
 Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.

(Act V, Sc. i, 70-88)

Lorenzo thinks that some indisciplined young men and women like young stallions have hot fluid or humour in excess in their make-up. If they chance to hear loud music or even subdued music they exhibit a similar reaction. Hence soft music changes the temperament of all. Lorenzo further describes the soothing effect of Orpheus's music (as described by Ovid in *Metamorphosis*) on the natural phenomena which is transformed under its influence. Shakespeare, through Lorenzo, conveys the truth that if one does not admire music and songs one will always remain in a state of imperceptiveness. His whole existence will become dull and his passionate self will resemble the darkest part of Hades.

Portia and her friends indulge in celebration through music and songs. The band of musicians in royal families provided entertainment. Portia merely converses with Jessica and admires good deeds that shine brightly. Then she expresses a desire to listen to music and says that nothing is good or bad but thinking makes it so:

The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark
 When neither is attended; and I think
 The nightingale, if she should sing by day
 When every goose is cackling, would be thought
 No better a musician than the wren.
 How many things by season seasoned are
 To their right praise and true perfection.
 Peace, ho! The moon sleeps with Endymion
 And would not be awaked. (Act V. Sc. i, 102-109)

The crow is also capable of singing as melodiously as the lark when they are left to themselves. They have their own virtues unknown to others. Also, during the day, a nightingale sings no better than a wren when the goose cackles in an unpleasant way. Hence many birds get recognition if they sing at the appropriate time. Then Portia admires Lorenzo and Jessica sleeping peacefully together. According to a classical legend, one may compare Lorenzo to Endymion, the beautiful youth, loved by the moon, symbolized by Jessica, and they will be united in love. Portia herself is like 'the moon gone behind a cloud' till her union with Bassanio is revived after the settlement regarding the rings. The problem is whether to continue

the celebration or let the couples enjoy themselves.

In Act V where the last songs occur it is 'Platonic' love that is idealized. It involves the whole universe made up of so many spheres. Music in all its variety is found everywhere and it also inspires tenderness of love. Also, life with all its beauty and fecundity surrounds man and he can absorb its fertility and draw pleasure like Wordsworth's Lucy who is a symbol of the perfect creation of nature. In the last act of the play the characters are redeemed like those in *As You Like It*. The characters in the play are affected by music as they come under the influence of Amiens's songs and natural music of the Forest of Arden, an abode of perfect peace and bliss. A sane view of life is the best way to live happily. Portia asserts at the end of the Merchant of Venice that the exchange of rings by lovers is a symbol of true understanding and tolerance to be cultivated by the married couples.

Much Ado About Nothing is a sparkling and witty Comedy in which, besides imagery, dance and songs are also very attractive. There are country sports which Shakespeare brings in all kinds of settings. Lovers are like birds, who are tamed for a better understanding of life and its eccentricities. Wit is really amazing in *Much Ado* and love is rather superficial. There is a duel of wit between Beatrice and Benedick. Both of them lack reciprocal confidence and have the least interest in the sanctity of marriage. Benedick uses wit in his defense and Beatrice is his fountainhead. Beatrice always wins this merry war which is based on a fashionable play upon words. She is more witty than Benedick and is the genius of the play. The pleasant mood of the play is maintained on account of the relevance of names like Beatrice, 'she who blesses' and Benedick, 'he who is blessed'. Both are victims of self-love. Beatrice is bitter and gay and Benedick is a witty intellectual.

Beatrice and Benedick are unconsciously in love with each other but Benedick is scared of her vitality. It is her freedom of response that makes her more attractive than her wit. She resembles Brontë sisters and her independent and spirited self is evident from the very expressions of her face when she reacts to the slander against her cousin, Hero, in a heightened tone. Shakespeare

admires such women and likes to present them in his plays for they are makers of their destiny, resemble their male counterparts in freedom of thought and are sometimes superior to them. They are affectionate, brave and gifted with humour and intelligence. Much Ado is a double taming of the shrew because each one of them, Beatrice and Benedick, tame themselves through their inherent noble temperament, though misled earlier by their pride and prejudice.

Claudio seeks union with Hero on account of the benefits he will get by this marriage. The ultimate harmonious relationship between Beatrice and Benedick will be based on the understanding of their nihilism. Neither of the two are “likely to be outraged or defeated” says Harold Bloom in his book entitled *Shakespeare – The Invention of the Human* (34). Beatrice and Benedick hardly respond to love, and therefore, for them, this emotion is like an illusion. The sonnets read by Benedick and Beatrice express this reaction to some extent. Benedick unconsciously becomes a victim of love but he ignores it owing to his stubbornness. He yearns for perfection in woman as he confesses thus: “one woman is fair, yet I am well, another is wise, yet I am well, another virtuous, yet I am well, but till all graces be in one woman, one woman certain; wise, or I’ll none; virtuous, or I’ll never cheapen her; fair, or I’ll never look on her; mild, or come not near me; noble, or not I for an angel; of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what colour it please God (Act II, Sc. iii, 25-33). Benedick also describes Claudio before he was love-sick and now he is attracted by Hero to the following effect: “I have known, when there was no music with him but the drum and fife; and now had he rather hear the tabor and the pipe (Act III, sc.iii, lines 12-13).

This reference to music is associated with love engendered in Claudio since he came across Hero. The drum and fife signify loud music associated with a soldier. Tabor and pipe are played by ballad singers whose ballads symbolize softness of music and tenderness of love. As Beatrice and Margaret indulge in conversation they mention the old tune ‘Light O’ love’, the original words of this song are unknown. In Act III, Sc.iv ‘Clap’s us into ‘Light O’ love’ goes without a burden. Margaret mentions this old tune and Beatrice rejects

it for she is not ready to dance on the tune. Margaret urges Beatrice to reveal the sunny side of her nature bathed in the emotion of love. This shows Shakespeare’s use of modern and ancient snatches of ballads.

Don Pedro plans the marriage of Claudio and Hero, daughter of Leonato. He gives an indirect proposal of marriage on behalf of Claudio to Hero. He therefore, celebrates this approaching happy occasion by inviting Balthazar to sing a song. The musicians are invited to produce a good effect of music on the minds of all present there. Before the commencement of music and song, Claudio unburdens himself thus:

How still the evening is,
As hush’d on purpose to grace harmony!
(Act II, Sc.iii, 36-37)

According to him nature is blessing the festive occasion by its silent communion with those who are united in love.

It is Shakespeare’s love of music that is ingrained in the sensitive characters in his plays. Balthazar is asked to sing a song to grace the occasion. He modestly calls himself a bad singer. Don Pedro admires his perfect art of singing songs. Benedick from his hiding place expresses contempt for music for he is like Hotspur, in *Henry IV Part I*, who mocks at the artistic Glendower. Balthazar sings the song thus:

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever;
One foot in sea, and one on shore,
To one thing constant never.
Then sigh not so,
But let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny.
Sing no more ditties, sing no moe
Of dumps so dull and heavy;
The fraud of men was ever so,
Since summer first was leavy.

Then sigh not so,
 But let them go,
 And be you blithe and bonny,
 Converting all your sounds of woe
 Into Hey nonny, nonny: (Act II, Sc. iii, 59-76)

In the song women are advised not to be emotional and turn indifferent to men who are disloyal. They always roam about and are fickle-minded and therefore, they should not seek their love and follow them. The women should enjoy good health and remain happy. They should give up their worries and retain bliss. They should neither sing simple, plain songs nor listen to slow melancholic music that produces a bad effect on them. Men are always deceptive and resemble summer abounding in foliage that makes them romantic. Women should forget men rather than mourn their faithlessness. Women are advised to be robust and gay and convert their sorrow into meaningless refrains of a song. This may not end their unhappiness but the soothing effect of music makes pain and displeasure less intense.

Shakespeare has special respect for beautiful women and he makes them speak poetry when they express their true feelings of love. Though considered physically weak, yet mentally alert, these women claim, and even assert, their independent existence. But Hero considers Beatrice proud, who does not allow spontaneous flow of love beneficial for both the recipients. And later when Beatrice overhears Benedick's confession of love she hardly believes her ears. The images used by Shakespeare in the comedies are quite uncommon and they reflect the dramatist's love of the country side. Ursula speaks of Beatrice thus:

Who even now
 Is couched in the woodbine coverture.
 (Act III, Sc.i, 29-30)

Hero earnestly desires Beatrice and Benedick to come closer and relish the romantic impulse as others do, but she fears Beatrice's biting wit and sarcasm that is likely to spoil all happiness. Her swift changes of temperament will never approve the sensible manhood of Benedick. After overhearing the conversation of Hero and her

maid, Beatrice accepts the pleasant truth:
 And, Benedick, love on; I will requite thee,
 Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand:
 If thou dost love, my unkindness shall incite thee
 To bind our loves up in a holy band.

(Act III, Sc.i, 111-114)

Though Benedick and Beatrice had firmly resolved not to get married yet they had to change their mind. They regarded love as irrational and the bond of marriage an end of freedom. But when awakened to reality they become dependent on each other. It is Benedick's good sense that makes him discover the gentleness of Beatrice. It makes them dance like stars and sing silently like flowers that bloom in seclusion. Some critics think that it is self-knowledge that makes them more earnest and respectable.

Hero is mild and disciplined but she cannot face a situation unarmed. Claudio may have 'the feats of a lion' (Act I, Sc.i, 14) but this romantic figure shows the worst side of his temperament when he readily believes the false allegations regarding Hero without proper inquiry.

When Beatrice and Benedick are restored to a normal state of mind Benedick sings a song which Shakespeare borrowed from a song by William Elderton. *A Miscellany* of 1584 mentions the tune:

The god of love,
 That sits above,
 And knows me, and knows me,
 How pitiful I deserve.... (Act V, Sc.ii, 24-27)

Benedick shares his love-sickness with the god of love who is a part of the ethereal world and knows the joys of love. He also longs to be united with Beatrice and till then he will abstain from singing love-songs. He mentions the fact that in the past the lovers in spite of all differences spoke politely to each other. He therefore advises Beatrice to respond to his love favorably. The news of Hero's freedom from all guilt and false accusation sheds the darkness of despair to be replaced by a spontaneous overflow of true love.

As joy and sorrow express both pleasant and unpleasant aspects of love there is a short lyrical lull before the supposed tomb

of Hero. This highlights her subdued and quiet temperament and also minimizes the weaknesses and follies of those who are unfriendly to her:

Pardon, goddess of the night,
 Those that slew thy virgin knight;
 For the which, with songs of woe,
 Round about the tomb they go.
 Midnight, assist our moan;
 Help us to sigh and groan,
 Heavily, heavily:
 Graves, yawn and yield your dead
 Till death be uttered,
 Heavily, heavily. (Act V, Sc. iii, 12-21)

Balthazar sings this song which is a sad ditty with a spiritual touch in it. An apology is offered to goddess Diana, whose virgin Knight Hero is killed by those false persons who suspected her chastity. Now, as a retribution of their sin, they describe their heart-breaking fate in a woeful song which they sing while going round Hero's tomb. These unkind young men seek assistance from the night that engulfs sorrow and gloom and they express their genuine grief. The word heavily used twice in the song means heavenly, that is, let the grave open 'till the sadness of this death be fully expressed' and Hero is enjoined to celebrate the happy moment and avoid any evil occurrence in future. Balthazar not only entertains the court by singing songs and providing festive music, but he also purges the minds of men and inspires them to accept the reality of life and admire its abiding influence.

Love's Labour's Lost, according to Harold Bloom "is a festival of language" (57). The artificial devotion to studies described here is based on classical style of living popular in Elizabethan times. *Love's Labour's Lost* abounds in elaborate puns. The dialogues also contain very attractive musical phrasing. The play may be compared to a work of music. Granville Barker thinks that the play contains song and dance for instance, the last act is "half mask and half play". It is the musical quality, revealed through language, that makes the play so attractive and coherent. It resembles an opera

for it has a perfect form and the characters are life-like. Armado is amiable and gay. The most perfect ones are Berowne and Rosaline. Navarre is the royal patron of an academy who, like Renaissance scholars in Italy, imitated Plato, who had formed philosophical debating societies. Also, the Kings in France took interest in Philology and music and patronized the poets and artists who provided entertainment to the court. Shakespeare must have read an account of the French movement in translation that was quite popular at that time. The model academy described in the play enlists four young idealists. Professor Campbell writes that very special entertainment was given to the Queen during the course of her visit on "Progress". These continued for many days and consisted of masques, serious and comic presentations, dances and songs and also dramatic performance which exhibited the talent of the local people. It was mocked at by the Queen and her followers.

The play is an exploration of reality through the language of wit. The King Ferdinand of Navarre equates love with affectation and therefore it ends in failure. The King exhibits confidence through his polished speech, and his oration regarding vital learning also reflects his negative zeal. The play therefore abounds in 'archaic heroics' and 'bombastic etiquette' and despite the presence of the King and his lords Don Armado makes it very colourful. Navarre and his companions are indifferent to life, nature and commonsense. They decide to avoid the sight of natural objects. Berowne, who is mature compared to others, thinks that one should acquire knowledge through a natural process. Berowne also focuses attention on the fact that love is a compulsive need of human beings and makes one self-sufficient. Love also inspires wisdom which book-learning fails to do. Berowne reveals the truth that men are beguiled by the eyes of women but women have a very comprehensive view regarding all affairs including love.

The Princess reminds the King of Navarre of his obligations and commitments to others. She also projects the natural way of living and restores the courtiers to normalcy. Hence the setting shifts ultimately from the court to the park. The arrival of the Princess and the ladies removes the suffocation of courtly atmosphere. Similarly

in *As You Like It* the open air of the Forest of Arden shatters the pride and false aspirations of the Court-bred nobles. And yet the Princess along with her ladies, lords and a Forester is engaged in a popular amusement of shooting the “poor deer” which is as bad as the King’s “art” of killing desires. Their display of art is against ‘nature and love’. And the Princess confesses the truth thus:

Glory grows guilty of detested crimes.

(Act IV, Sc. i, 31)

As Rosaline and Boyet comment on deer-hunt performed by the Princess and make use of quibbles Rosaline utters the tune of a song or catch which is also known to be a dance-tune which is mentioned by *Chappel's Popular Music of the Old Time* (1859) i, 239, from MS. at Oxford bearing date 1620 and *Wily Beguiled* (Malone Soc.1. 2451), 1606. The song is a short one and to the following effect:

Thou canst not hit it, hit it, hit it,

Thou canst not hit it, my good man.

(Act IV, Sc. i, 121-122)

She thinks that one cannot be sure about the shot till one has done the job successfully.

Armado, like his superiors pretends to overcome the chivalric, romantic and Petrarchan zeal or affection of which he is himself a representative. He therefore, urges Moth to describe a two-faced woman:

If she be made of white and red,

Her faults will never be known,

For blushing cheeks by faults are bred,

And fears by pale white shown:

Then if she fear, or be to blame,

By this you shall not know,

For still her cheeks possess the same.

Which native she doth owe. (Act I, Sc. ii, 93-100)

If the woman has two complexions, white and red or she uses cosmetics to hide her faults, one fails to know her real temperament concealed by her natural blush. This is Moth’s Witty cynicism. Armado considers this to be A Song of the Beggar. This song is out-

dated now but he wishes to revive it for his own satisfaction.

When Armado and Moth are together, the latter sings Concolinel, meaning, “Sing maiden fair”. It is the title of Moth’s song and reveals melody and is sung by Moth. Concolinel are the first two words of an unknown Italian song. As Armado intended to send a message of love to his beloved, Moth advised him to express his emotions through a French dance accompanied by song and music and the gestures should be: “sometime through the throat, as if you swallowed love with singing love, sometime through the nose, as if you sniffed up love by smelling love” (Act III, Sc.i, 12-15).

He is giving tips to a love-sick person. Armado wonders at his skill and says ‘But O, but O, - the hobby-horse is forgot’. This is in fact a fragment of a popular song, a well-known adjunct of the morris-dance and other May games.

The King and his lords decide to dress up as Russians and indulge in mock merriment. The Princess and her ladies hit upon a plan to defeat their deceptive art of love-making. The opposition seems to be between wearing mask and revealing oneself, and learning and experience, and affectation and self-knowledge. Even Armado and Costard in a way succeed in exposing the pretensions of their masters. Costard, with his rustic commonsense, lays emphasis on the natural human need to satisfy one’s hidden desires. Armado also thinks that: ‘Green indeed is the colour of lovers’. (Act I, Sc.ii, 81). Armado, a victim of wit and hypocrisy, gets disciplined after his exposure.

As emblems of fertility, women do not curb the creative force in men but merely discourage folly and excess. Navarre and his companions cut a sorry figure when they do not express love openly. With the arrival of ladies the restricted academy becomes a centre of freedom of thought. They condemn revels, dances and masks arranged by the lords to make love to the ladies. They insist that they should meet the ladies and express their thoughts freely. In Renaissance England two attitudes were current in wooing ladies. They were either idealized in Petrarchan fashion or condemned as base and low. In the beginning the King and lords adopted the anti-Petrarchan attitude to love and later they turned into mere idealists.

Then nightly sings the staring owl,

Tu – Whit;

Tu-who, a merry note,

While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

(Act V, Sc. ii, 884-919).

It is a musical composition, a song sung in the form of a dialogue by spring and winter. Shakespeare's use of the bird-notes is an improvement upon the conventional echo-device. Like a regular debate, there are two aspects opposed to each other. This song was very popular among the people of the Town long before the production of *Love's Labour's Lost*. It was introduced into *As You Like It* when it was first presented on the stage. The dualism, on account of two opposing partners in debate ends for the old concept of debate becomes meaningful due to the new reasoning. The song highlights the cycle of seasons that also runs throughout human life. The cuckoo, a bird of daylight, is associated with spring which marks the prime of life and confers dignity on human existence. The owl hoots at night and is a bird of the winter season which brings gloom, though the bird itself sings merrily. Each season is conscious of its relevance. Spring, despite its extravagance and fecundity has a word of fear regarding the fate of married men. Winter seeks to obtain warmth and offers consolation through the Owl's merry song. Hence there are tensions as well as resolutions relating to the enigma of life.

The song highlights the cyclical concept of Time. Time cannot be separated from Nature as the king wrongly believed. There is certain time allotted to certain activities as is indicated by a perusal of the cycle of seasons. The flowers and meadows attract the attention of the painter and hence both the painter and the painted object bring about a synthesis of nature and human imagination. The animal and vegetable existence dissolve into human life and evoke a sense of unity.

The marriages of the king and Princess, the lords and ladies are not likely to take place but the songs reflect the sense of con-

tinuity and a return to a more relaxed mode of life. Navarre and his court is replaced by the cuckoo and owl singing their songs with reference to Dick, the shepherd and greasy Joan. Dick, Joan and Marian are types who withdraw from the ill-effects of a fallen world. Tom is undergoing the penance of Adam by 'bearing logs'. It is not an escape from worldly responsibilities like that of the lords of Academy but they continue to bear the burden of life. Joan is linked to all the women who are present in the play. There is a reference to Rosaline who is Berowne's Joan and the ladies talk 'greasily' (indecently) with Costard and Boyet. The blood which becomes frozen due to blasts of winter wind is compensated by the warmth of feeling shown towards fellow beings. The creative activity of the imagination is expressed through the images and symbols used in the song.

The song of the spring is a mockery of the unceasing male fear of being cuckolded by the female partners. The song of spring is beautiful but the song of winter is superior to it due to its vivid description of life of the common man who sits around the fire and cooks food. The owl sings merrily because it remains hidden and is confined to a cozy corner. It is not visible to the public engaged in their routine work. Shakespeare dissolves the artificialities of life, the engagements of the refined courtiers into the more attractive simplicities and country phrases used by the Country-folk. This life had always attracted him.

The songs of spring and winter are concerned with experiences relating to life led by the common man. And thus the comedy becomes colorful on account of life's comparison with the cycle of seasons. The Cuckoo and the Owl, spring and Winter, birth and death give hope of a better life existing beneath mere artifice and stagnation. The Lords lost their love's labour due to lack of self-knowledge but the Ladies emerge triumphant due to their commonsense. Shakespeare excelled in blank verse and also in the composition of songs.

The speeches delivered by characters in *All's Well That Ends Well* have a fine musical quality but they also have a touch of artifice like those in a few earlier comedies of Shakespeare. In *All's Well*

Shakespeare's lyrical style is very attractive. There are many similarities between *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well* and so they are like twins in the sphere of Comedy. A conflict of Virtue and nobility is depicted through the characters of Helena and Bertram. There is a shift from France to Italy and from love to war. The motivating force is the healing done by the king. The influence of folk-tale and folk-lore is at the heart of the plot. Some impossible tasks are assigned and the successful winner is given a reward. Hence a noblewoman, Helena, undergoes suffering to achieve happiness. She is a competent aspirant for the reward she gets on account of her virtuosity. Her conversations with the clown, the steward and with Lafew show how well she manages the affairs in the noble household. France with its stale values and fallen state of affair is replaced by Italy marked by optimism and advancement in all spheres of life. And yet from Italy there is a return to France where new relationships are established. The youth after going through trial return to their lost world. The two concepts brought to light are virtue which implies chastity and military fame or honour which implies civil reputation. Bertram has his flaws and may be seen in the light of fallen humanity. Hence the old concept of blue blood being respectable and soldiership representing goodness and virtue undergoes a sort of revision. But it is expected that Bertram may be reformed because heroes do grow up in the problem plays. A Renaissance nobleman chooses sin but is saved by Grace. Helena, on the contrary, has attributes that make her excel all others. Her problem it to get a suitable husband for herself. She is an isolated and complex character. It is difficult to adjust this simple and magical heroine into a realistic background. The problem plays of Shakespeare throw light on the injustice that does not allow the inner ideals to be materialized. The play is a satire regarding the aristocratic vices of Bertram. And it is through Helena that Bertram is exposed. Helena loves Bertram but is conscious of the disparity on account of gap of status.

The clown is in love with Isabel and is seeking permission of the Countess to allow him to get married to her soon. He wishes to have progeny, and also to ensure his place in society he wants to

marry her. The Countess fears his irrational speech and lack of sobriety. In reply to that he sings a song which is infact a ballad:

For I the ballad will repeat
Which men full true shall find:
Your marriage comes by destiny,
Your cuckoo sings by kind.

The clown is interrupted by the Steward who wants to speak about Helena. But the clown continues his song further:

Was this fair face the cause, quoth she,
Why the Grecians sacked Troy?
Fond done, done fond,
Was this king Priam's joy?
With that she sighed as she stood,
With that she sighed as she stood,
And gave this sentence then:
Among nine bad if one be good,
Among nine bad if one be good,
There's yet one good in ten. (Act I, Sc. iii, 57-76)

He quotes a ballad which reveals a truth acceptable to all. Couples are united in marriage compelled by Destiny. Similarly a Cuckoo sings for she is a natural singer and she is destined to do so. The Helen of Troy was not responsible for the destruction caused by the Grecians. She could not help being beautiful and attractive and thus was taken away. It was an act of folly to receive Paris into Troy but it was unavoidable. If Priam had nine good sons only one of them was bad and he had enough satisfaction. Likewise if one woman among ten is good and virtuous and the rest bad, one may readily fall in love with her and get married. "The lamentations of Hecuba and the ladies of Troye" was a ballad – entered in the stationers' Register on 1 August 1586, but not known now. It is probably a source of this song sung by the Clown. The countess thinks that the clown makes the song corrupt by laying emphasis on badness. The clown retorts immediately that he refers to women not men and therefore he increases the number of good women.

The song refers to the truth contained in the main plot of the play. Helena, a virtuous lady, has a right to win the heart of Bertram

for she is exceptional compared to all other women. Bertram is quite an insensitive and unkind person while the lady is noble and truthful. He wrongly defends himself by indulging in falsehood. Helena makes a wrong choice because despite military competence, high rank and handsome appearance Bertram is immature and fickle-minded. Harold Bloom thinks that there are mismatched marriages described in most of the plays of Shakespeare. The only happy couple is Macbeth and lady Macbeth. Most of the heroines marry young men unsuitable for them. Shakespeare was conscious of his own unhappy marriage not an outcome of choice but something imposed by destiny.

In the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* courtly love and friendship are the two main concerns of the play. Both these lead to despair. These themes also form the central part of the sonnets and some of the leading Comedies. Also there is emphasis laid on the hiatus between appearance and reality. When the play opens the two gentlemen of Verona, namely, Valentine and Proteus talk as intimate friends do. Proteus is in love with Julia but Valentine is yet untouched by this passion. Proteus is of the opinion that his friend Valentine is bent upon acquiring honour, while he himself seeks love that has made him indifferent to everything else. Julia is also in love with Proteus, but she feels shy to express her passion openly. Valentine is gone abroad and Proteus will also be sent to Milan by his father Antonio to seek his fortune and gain experience of the world. Proteus feels miserable at the prospect of separation from Julia, whose love he cherishes more than anything else. When Valentine reaches Milan he falls in love with Silvia, the Duke's daughter. Speed his servant, notices his morose and dismal state of mind and warns him of his strange outward appearance. Silvia becomes an object of heavenly love whose adoration is a blessing for him. Silvia also woos Valentine indirectly and urges him to write letters to an imaginary suitor expressing her own passionate love. Proteus leaves Julia with a heavy heart and their parting is marked by an exchange of rings that confirms their love.

When Proteus arrives in Milan, Silvia becomes the object of his attention. He, like the sea-god. Peoteus, in Greek Mythology,

is capable of changing forms. His deceptive self urges him to transfer his love from Julia to Silvia. There is an inner conflict in the mind of Proteus which leads on to a conflict of ideas and this in turn is also responsible for a wider dramatic conflict. As opposed to Proteus, Julia is genuine throughout. She thinks that love becomes intense if it is curbed but is sweet as music if allowed to have its own way. She therefore, decides to go in pursuit of Proteus and disguises herself to conceal her identity and travel safely. The Duke of Milan intends to marry his daughter Silvia to Thurio who is a wealthy gentleman. As Silvia prefers Valentine to all other suitors they plan to leave Milan secretly. Proteus knows about the plot conceived by his friend and in order to defame him he informs the Duke regarding the secret strategy of the lovers. The latter threatens Valentine to leave Milan or face death. Valentine with a broken heart goes away but hides in the forest where he becomes the leader of the bandits who were punished by the Duke to remain in exile.

In the absence of Valentine, Proteus pretends to woo Silvia on behalf of Thurio and invites musicians and sings a song:

Who is Silvia? What is she?
That all our swains commend her?
Holy, fair, and wise is she,
The heaven such grace did lend her,
That she might admired be.

Is she kind as she is fair?
For beauty lives with kindness:
Love doth to her eyes repair,
To help him of his blindness:
And, being helped, inhabits there.
Then to Silvia let us sing,
That Silvia is excelling;
She excels each mortal thing,
Upon the dull earth dwelling:
To her let us garlands bring; (Act IV, Sc.ii, 35-49)

The disguised Julia, who serves Proteus, overhears the song in which Silvia is admired for her virtues. The song is written by Proteus

for Thurio in order to seek Silvia's goodwill. The words describe Silvia and also reflect normal human behavior. Her 'Commonsense' and 'good faith' distinguish her from other women. It is heavenly grace bequeathed on her that makes her more attractive. She is pretty and gentle and love cures itself of blindness due to her pleasant disposition. Hence celebration in honour of Silvia is essential for she is dignified and amiable.

The song also reveals the fickle-mindedness of Proteus who invents an excuse to approach Silvia. To the host who brings Julia with him, the song is sweet and melodious but to Julia it is sad and depressing. Silvia more perceptive than Julia, condemns Proteus thus:

Thou subtle, perjured, false, disloyal man,
Think'st thou I am so shallow, so conceitless,

To be seduced by thy flattery. (Act IV, Sc.ii, 72-74)

When Silvia shows indifference, Proteus desires to see the 'shadow' of her picture. He cares for outward beauty and remains insensitive to the tender feelings of love. Like many egoists Proteus loves himself and is soon fed up with the objects of love if he finds a better option. It is self gratifying desire that is paramount in his existence even if it harms others. He does not care for natural ties and brushes aside all relationships like Edmund in *King Lear*. His egoism and selfishness make him a betrayer and thus he represents the limitations of romantic love. Like Duke Orsino in *Twelfth Night*, his songs of love are also mere artifice for he is not stable by temperament. Both women, namely Julia and Silvia are realistic in their approach and overlook idolatry and prefer true love. The song sung in natural surroundings reflects what the confinement of the Court conceals. Speed thinks that Valentine is in love for he listens to a love song like a robin-redbreast. Silvia rejects the song composed by Proteus though it reflects the dual aspect of his personality. Like the Greek goddess Hydra, Proteus also bears many faces. When Silvia remains unmoved Proteus threatens her and Valentine comes out of his hiding place to save her and condemns his friend. Julia also removes her disguise and Proteus is exposed. Finally he makes amends and is forgiven and the two couples are

most likely to be united. This awakening to reality is made possible through the song in which virtuous Silvia is idealized like a Petrarchan heroine and she casts her spell on those who are in touch with her.

The Merry Wives of Windsor was specially designed to be staged before Queen Elizabeth who wished to see Falstaff in love. This hero-villain of the play, who always indulged in lively intrigues, becomes a victim of his own manipulations here. He makes love to two mistresses, namely, Mrs. Page and Mrs. Ford simultaneously, but the way he is carried in a basket and thrown into the Thames shows his rejection by them. Also, when he appears in disguise, dressed up as Mrs. Ford's maid's aunt, 'the fat woman of Brentford' (v,i) he is beaten and punished for his faults. Since the play is also one of the romantic comedies, towards the end, in the surroundings of Windsor Forest, the Fairies, under the oak of Windsor Park, sing a song. They expose this comic character and the fleshy aspect of his temperament, which makes him an undesirable member of society:

Fie on sinful fantasy!
Fie on lust and luxury!
Lust is but a blood fire,
Kindled with unchaste desire,
Fed in heart, whose flames aspire
As thoughts do blow them, higher and higher.

(Act V, Sc.V, 99-104)

This song presents Falstaff as an immoral person. His uncontrollable carnal instincts and unlawful desires grow in excess and run fast like thoughts. The fairies prepare us for his expulsion:

Pinch him, fairies, mutually:
Pinch him for his villainy:
Pinch him, and burn him, and turn him about,
Till candles and starlight and moonshine be out.

(Act V, Sc. v, 105-108)

This unhappy imposter teased and mocked at by the fairies is shown in a miserable plight. And yet this memorable character has a heroic aspect to his personality. The magical words uttered by the fairies and all other chastisement experienced by this wicked man are likely

to guarantee his purification. Similar rites were performed in olden days to punish the sinners.

Hence the sufferings of this life relate him to a more dignified life he is likely to enjoy in future and that will bestow dignity and grace on him. Also, as Harold Blolom thinks, this famous character, like other impressive ones created by Shakespeare, is a representative of the author's own display of wit and wisdom. Shakespeare, as some feminist critics suggested, was scared of growing old and losing his sexual energy. Hence the punishment given to his substitute by the Merry wives of Windsor shows their enjoyment by mocking at his loss of masculine strength. He deceived the two women by making love to both of them at the same time and disturbed their domestic life. Hence the ladies wreak revenge and expose him accordingly. Shakespeare was thus trying to get rid of all the horrors relating to himself by transferring his sins and sufferings to this character. Hence Falstaff's exhibition of false energy and heroism has both good and bad results but this character and songs make the play lively and cheerful.

In Shakespeare's times women always obeyed their husbands. They were not degraded, they could give suggestions on household affairs but the husband's decision was considered more authentic and final. This also made the man more responsible regarding his duties to the family. He had to provide all comforts of life, govern children and look after domestic matters, take care of relatives if they were dependent on him and arrange marriages of the children of his house. The wife in turn, performed domestic duties efficiently. The mother specially took care of children, nursing them, persuading them to read and write and learn domestic skills. The women were expected to be wise and sagacious in order to grapple with difficult situations and also maintain harmony and peace within the home. Marriage and the role of women in this sphere was a favorite theme of plays but it had to be dealt with carefully.

In the 20th Century *The Taming of the Shrew* was presented as a musical composition with the title kiss me Kate and the words and music were provided by Cole Porter. It got popularity. *The Taming of the Shrew* is a play within a play, a device used by Shakespeare

also in *Hamlet*. It was performed by a group of traveling actors at different platforms and they carried costumes, musical instruments and other necessary equipment with them. The wives who were unstable in their behaviour were described in old ballads and folk-tales. Such wives were made disciplined by force exercised by their husbands. Shakespeare, in his play, makes the husband deal tactfully with his wife to make her amiable without using force.

Kate in her final speech speaks about a wife's duties 'to serve, love and obey'. This is an echo of the injunctions regarding marriage service directed by the Church of England. Elizabethans followed Christian Values embodied by the Church. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Petruchio envisaged Kate's indecent behaviour by indulging in similar tantrums with which she used to disturb others. And thus, she could readily conceive her own ugly image that she had never seen before. She is truly repentant and learns to overcome her faults and also becomes sensitive about others. It is love and service rendered to others that is the chief concern of the play.

Petruchio has an irresistible temperament and therefore he decides to marry Kate, a shrew, despite her stubborn wildness. Bianca is wooed by two suitors, Horentio, a music teacher and Lucentio who teaches Latin grammar. She is won over by Lucentio. Petruchio agrees to marry Kate but his abnormal behaviour shocks Kate thoroughly. He behaved strangely throughout for he wished to tame his wife in his own way. He wants to bring to the surface the kind soul concealed beneath her undesirable exterior. Petruchio by his artful device won the 'battle of the sexes'. When the couples unite in marriage a feast is organized to celebrate the happy union and all the husbands decide to test their wives's obedience. They call for their wives but except Kate no one responds and Petruchio wins the game. Kate further confirms her obedience by expressing her views about an ideal wife. She maintains a cordial relationship with her husband by overcoming her pride to bring in warmth of feeling by being truly submissive. She accepts her husband's supremacy and he pours down unalloyed love on her.

Shakespeare always looked forward to happy marriages. Marriage may be a business transaction but it is made more re-

spectable by a flavour of love and generosity. And this is a normal concept of marriage as opposed to an idealistic one. Petruchio exercises commonsense to grasp reality and does not indulge in false flights of romanticism which is likely to be short-lived and transitory. Petruchio is able to mould Kate in order to put her in a framework of normal married life. It is Petruchio's peculiar style of discipline that makes Kate sensitive when for instance he strikes the servants she protests out of sympathy for them. He thus lays emphasis on the natural relationship between men and women likely to be developed through marriage. And he gets the reward in the form of a loving and obedient wife.

In *The Taming of the Shrew* there is the title of an old catch, of which the music has survived. The words of this catch, which involves four voices, are:

Jack, boy, ho. boy, news; (Act IV, Sc. i, 35)

The cat is in the well,
Let us ring now for her knell,
Ding, dong, ding, dong, bell. (Anonymous)

This signifies the death of the Cat and Kate represents the cat whose death is but the suppressed ego of the woman concerned. Hence the celebration indicates the triumph of the husband who makes her an obedient wife. The music, like many other catches, is unknown for it is related to an age prior to Shakespearean age. On another occasion when Petruchio and Kate were supposed to have supper, the servants were scolded for no apparent reason. Petruchio sings a song to make everything look normal despite his loss of temper:

Where is the life that late I led –
.....

It was the friar of orders grey,
As he forth walked on his way. (Act IV, Sc. i, 121-127)

It is the fragment of a lost ballad. He wishes to emphasize the fact that his life style has changed for he is no more governed by the religious order founded by the Grey Friars. And to bring in normalcy he will have to make efforts and Kate will also contribute in this difficult task to make her husband happy.

In *Measure for Measure* Angelo, Deputy to the Duke is resolved to punish Claudio with death for he argues if the offender is forgiven he creates mischief. Isabella, his sister, approaches Angelo not to defend her brother for spoiling the chastity of Juliet but to plead mercy for him. It is God's mercy to mankind an ideal, which man must follow. It is chastity which is preserved and correction which is offered. Both Isabella and Angelo fail to understand the complexities of good and evil which involve human passion. Being a law-giver, Angelo is expected to help others attain harmony but he fails to maintain a balance between the opposites.

There is a kind of sexual malaise in *Measure for Measure*. Most of the Characters are obsessed with the temptation of the flesh and to control this raging passion, law based on the dictates of reason, must be enforced. The civil power, which is temporarily given to Angelo by the Duke, is expected to be used by him without any prejudice. Claudio the culprit, is ready to accept the just law, but he fails to stand up to his own ideal. Hence a conflict is shown between 'liberty' and moral law. But an emptiness of the moral law, along with a fear of death, involves most of the characters. The masses do not condemn acts of baseness, but think that since law prohibits all these, one has to follow the injunctions issued by the exponents of justice. What is required is firmness along with moderation and impartiality.

When Isabella approaches Angelo to plead for her brother, the deputy is sexually moved by her beauty and proposes to satisfy his lust in return for sparing the life of Claudio. He is more inspired to indulge in fornication by the coldness and holiness of Isabel. She argues that one should judge others in the light of one's own offences. Through Isabella, Shakespeare seems to pay tribute to celibacy (for she is supposed to join the nunnery) which has its own joy and dignity for it needs sacrifice and self-control.

Both Angelo and Isabella lack self-knowledge owing to the absence of maturity in them. The Duke will have to search an adequate solution to the problem since he grasps the seriousness of the situation. He is gifted with understanding and a sense of humanity and finally gains mastery over what is irrational. The Duke

wisely traps Angelo, and relieves those who had been involved in this matter. He wished to emphasize the fact that justice and mercy can co-exist in the drama of human life. The Duke practices temperance and hence he is presented as an ideal Christian ruler. The Christian message he conveys is that: 'We are all sinners, Children of wrath and in need of mercy'. Isabella represents the soul of man and is a partaker of the message of Jesus Christ. Love and death are two ultimate facts and therefore moderation in human relationships is required to understand the enigma of life. To enforce both justice and mercy, and end all corruption, the Duke will maintain a balance between terror and love. He brings about a union of lovers and leaves the sinners to be dealt with by heaven. It is the ideal of the ultimacy of human welfare which is sought for by the frail human beings.

Act four opens with a song sung by a boy (though he is a female singer disguised as a boy). It is a famous stanza composed by Shakespeare and its musical setting is done by John Wilson. It is probably the popular Latin-poem 'Ad Lydian' read with interest in the 16th. Century that bears likeness to the song. The virtuous Mariana, who appears on the scene for the first time, and whose fate is uncertain like the sea that is both calm and violent, was deserted by Angelo. She was betrothed to this unpredictable gentleman. But as Mariana's brother suffered ship-wreck, and lost all the wealth he brought to be given to his sister as dowry, she lost her marriage contract. The greedy Angelo turned indifferent to the girl whose face was her fortune now:

Take, o take those lips away
 That so sweetly were forsworn,
 And those eyes, the break of day
 Lights that do mislead the morn:
 But my kisses bring again,
 Bring again;
 Seals of love, but seal'd in vain,
 Seal'd in vain. (Act IV, Sc. i, 1-6)

The innocent maid is advised to forget the false lover who broke the marriage vow. She also must not get any inspiration from those

eyes that hide the reality of love. The comparison is made with those false lights that indicate the commencement of a new day. Mariana thinks that she can revive the bond of love but she is again warned regarding the indifference of the lover.

The arrival of the Duke made Mariana nervous and she asked the singer to stop singing. She warmly welcomed the Duke whose presence relieved her of a disturbed state of mind. She apologized to the Duke who found her seeking pleasure through music. But she asserted that music and song act as a balm to her grieved existence. The Duke thought that music is sometimes misleading in its effect. When the Duke learns about the sufferings of Mariana he resolves to intervene because the guidance of authority is required for immediate relief. He thinks that Mariana deserves to be the wife of Angelo, and therefore it is essential to deceive this false man. Since Isabella was invited by Angelo to spend the night with him, both Mariana and Isabella decide to exchange places to achieve their lawful status. Angelo, on the contrary is a 'corrupt magistrate' whose reawakening is essential.

Mariana is a subdued soul who needs the inspiration and support of Isabel and the Duke. The Duke highlights the moral and legal right of Mariana who fails to face the situation all by herself. The Duke is both a psychologist and a moral and social reformer who punishes those who violate the normal way of living. The Duke is rather liberal in his views, whereas Angelo and Isabella interpret law objectively. And none is perfect but the Duke learns about the spirit of justice from these two extremists. There is a conflict between passion and reason. Shakespeare prefers a proper combination of the two. If Angelo is governed by unlawful desires, Isabella's virtuosity lacks a sense of maturity. The Duke as head of church and state uses his intelligence. The virtuosity and goodness of Isabella and Mariana bring them happiness that is shared by Angelo. Evil is exposed and chastity is applauded and restored to its former state and therefore, a healthy society will emerge, from the ashes of corruption.

Songs are like soliloquies, for the words of the songs reflect upon human character and temperament. Also there are seminal

ideas like love, order and eternity which are suggested through characters singing songs to rub off monotony and dullness. Shakespeare does not imitate life, he reflects it and makes us ponder over its constituents. He also creates characters who undergo the necessary process of evolution. It is the playwright's intellect that is reflected through characters singing songs on most appropriate occasions. An ideal is always suggested for a better direction of the self. It moulds a person and a new dimension of human personality emerges from it. The songs in comedies reflect love and its intricacies. Music removes darkness and despair by its sweet effect. Music is ingrained in human existence and changes human life by making it more cohesive. The songs about seasons involve the whole cosmos and reflect the unity of human existence. The more prominent characters represent either Shakespeare or nature and songs and music are the essential ingredients of the whole texture of the plays.

Works Cited

- Bloom, Harold. *Shakespeare – The Invention of the Human*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1998.
- Derek, Traversi. *An Approach to Shakespeare, Part I, Henry VI to Twelfth Night*. London: Hollis & Carter, 1968.
- Nylor, Edward W. *Shakespeare and Music*. London: Ans Press, 1965.
- Sen Gupta, S.C. *Shakespearian Comedy*. Calcutta: N.M. Publishers, 1994.
- Shakespeare, William. *All's Well That Ends Well*. The Arden Shakespeare. Ed. Hunter G.K. London: Methuen and Co., 1965.
- . *Love's Labour's Lost*. The Arden Shakespeare. Ed. David Richard. London: Methuen and Co., 1966.
- . *Measure for Measure*. The Arden Shakespeare. Ed. J.W. Lever. London: Methuen and Co., 1965.
- . *The Merchant of Venice*. The New Cambridge Shakespeare. Ed. M.M. Mahood. Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- . *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Cassell's Illustrated Shake-

- speare with a Biographical and Critical Introduction by F.J. Furnivall and John Murno. London, New York, Undated.
- . *Much Ado About Nothing*. The New Clarendon Shakespeare. Ed. Philip Wayne. London: Clarendon Press, 1954.
- . *The Taming of the Shrew*. New Penguin Shakespeare. Ed. G.R. Hibbard. Harmondworth, 1978.
- . *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Ed. William T. Detken. New York: Dardavon Books, 1982.
- The Times Literary Supplement*. 12 July 1923.

In the Arms of Paracelsus: Supernal Literary Eruption under the Influence of Infernal Laudanum

Subodh Agarwal

Laudanum is a type of opium drug, made into an alcohol solution or tincture, and occasionally it can refer to any tincture or preparation that contains opium as its main ingredient. The benefits of the drug were first noted by a 16th century German-Swiss alchemist, Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus Von Hohenheim, immortalized as “Paracelsus” (Geoffrey Davenport, Ian McDonald, Caroline Moss-Gibbons, eds., *The Royal College of Physicians and Its Collections: An Illustrated History*, May 2001). Paracelsus, meaning “equal to or greater than Celsus”, refers to the Roman encyclopedist Aulus Cornelius Celsus of the 1st century, well-known for his tract on medicine. Paracelsus gave the name laudanum to this opium tincture because of the extraordinary benefits of the drug. *Laudare*, in Latin, means to praise. Unfortunately while Paracelsus praised the wonders of the drug, he did not recognize the highly addictive nature of opium, from which modern drugs like morphine and the street drug heroin are derived. Initially, the term “laudanum” referred to any combination of opium and alcohol. Indeed, Paracelsus’ laudanum was strikingly different from the standard laudanum of the 17th century and beyond. His preparation contained opium, crushed pearls, musk, amber, and other adulterants.

Laudanum remained largely unknown until the 1660s when an English physician named Thomas Sydenham compounded a proprietary opium tincture that he also named laudanum, although it differed substantially from the laudanum of Paracelsus. Sydenham was an outstanding pioneer of clinical medicine, an ideal General Practitioner and has been called ‘The Father of English Medicine’. In 1676 Sydenham published a seminal work, *Medical Observations Concerning the History and Cure of Acute Diseases*, in which he promoted his brand of opium tincture, and advocated its use for a range of medical conditions. By the 18th century, the medicinal properties of opium and laudanum were well-known. Several physi-

cians, including John Jones, John Brown, and George Young, the latter of whom published a comprehensive medical text entitled *Treatise on Opium* (1753) extolled the virtues of laudanum and recommended the drug for practically every ailment. By the 19th century, laudanum was used in many patent medicines to “relieve pain... to produce sleep... to allay irritation... to check excessive secretions... to support the system... [and] as a soporific”(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laudanum). Sir William Osler_(1849-1919) was a Canadian physician. He was perhaps the most famous practitioner of clinical medicine in the world at the turn of the nineteenth century. He was a user of intravenous opium.

The early 20th century brought increased regulation of all manner of narcotics, including laudanum, as the addictive properties of opium became more widely understood. In the United States, the Harrison Narcotics Tax Act of 1914 restricted the manufacture and distribution of opiates, including laudanum, and coca derivatives. Toward the middle 20th century, the use of opiates was generally limited to the treatment of pain, and opium was no longer a medically-accepted “cure-all.” Further, the pharmaceutical industry began synthesizing various opioids, such as propoxyphene, oxycodone and oxycodone. These synthetic opioids, along with codeine and morphine were preferable to laudanum since a single opioid could be prescribed for different types of pain rather than the “cocktail” of laudanum, which contains nearly all of the opium alkaloids.

The Romantic and Victorian eras were marked by the widespread use of laudanum in Europe and the United States. Readers of Romantic poetry usually come into contact with literary criticisms about the influence of opium on its works. Usually these criticisms tend to focus on poets such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Thomas De Quincey, and George Crabbe. In the 1986 movie *Gothic*, Lord Byron pours Bysshe Shelley a glass of wine which he refers to as “opiate,” probably Laudanum. The film *Gothic* portrays the stereotypical image of that society. Notable addicted literary figures include: Edgar Allan Poe, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Iolo Morganwg, Charles Dickens, Antonin Artaud, and Charles Baudelaire.

There were also political figures, such as Patrick Henry, William Wilberforce and Meriwether Lewis, who used the drug. George Washington was usually on the drug Laudanum because of the constant pain his hippo-ivory teeth caused him. Mary Todd Lincoln, the wife of President Abraham Lincoln, was prescribed laudanum for a sleeping disorder. She was later committed to an asylum.

Sir Thomas De Quincey turned his laudanum addiction into literary success with the publication of *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. Opium eating was catapulted into fame by the drug experiences of Thomas De Quincy and insinuated itself into the lives and works of many literary figures such as Lewis Carroll, Charles Dickens, Louisa May Alcott, Lord Byron, Shelley, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, John Keats, the Brontë sisters [Charlotte Brontë (1816–55), Emily Brontë (1818–48) and Anne Brontë (1820–49), three British writers], Samuel Taylor Coleridge and many others.

Edward Williams, better known by his bardic name Iolo Morganwg (10 March 1747 – 18 December 1826) was an influential Welsh antiquarian, and poet. He was widely considered a leading collector and expert on medieval Welsh literature in his day. He was a genius — one of the founder members of the Unitarian movement in Wales, a political radical who supported the French Revolution, a pacifist, a hymn-writer and an able lyrical poet who called himself 'The Bard of Liberty'. He was addicted to the drug laudanum and this probably affected his perception of the world. His "Ode To Laudanum" (*Poems, Lyric and Pastoral*, Vol I 1-5. <http://www.iolomorganwg.wales.ac.uk/gwaith-laudanum.php>) hints at it:

1

WHILST, crowding on my woful hour,
Fate's deep'ning glooms indignant low'r,
And crush my wearie soul;
Thou, Laudanum, can'st quickly steep
My burning eyes in balmy sleep,
And ev'ry grief controul.

2

When Reason strives, but strives in vain,
To banish care, to vanquish pain,

And calm sad thoughts to rest;
Thy soothing virtues can impart
A bland sensation to my heart,
And heal my wounded breast.

3

Whilst fell Disease, with rapid flame
Preys ireful on my feeble frame,
Pervading ev'ry vein;
Thou canst repel the venom'd rage,
The fever'd anguish canst assuage,
And blunt the tooth of Pain.

4

When wakeful Sensibility
Her wrongs recounts, I fly to thee,
And feel her touch no more;
At painful Memory's loud call,
'Twas she, with fingers dipt in gall,
My rankling bosom tore.

5

With soul-corroding thought oppress'd
Whilst keen affliction fills my breast,
And swells the tide of grief;
O! shed thy balm into my heart,
And, plucking thence the piercing dart,
Bestow thy kind relief.

6

Now Comfort shuns my woful sight,
And sad returns the sleepless night,
In sable glooms array'd;
I court thy pow'rs with anxious mind,
And, on the down of rest reclin'd,
I bless thy lenient aid.

7

My joyless hours I waste alone,
Unpitied weep, unheeded moan,
Unfriended sigh forlorn;

Consign to grief my crawling years,
 The victim of desponding cares,
 Existing but to mourn.

8

Thou faithful friend in all my grief,
 In thy soft arms I find relief;
 In thee forget my woes:
 Unfeeling waste my wint'ry day,
 And pass with thee the night away,
 Reclin'd in soft repose.

9

O! still exert thy soothing pow'r,
 Till fate leads on the welcom'd hour,
 To bear me hence away;
 To where pursues no ruthless foe,
 No feeling keen awakens woe,
 No faithless friends betray.

(“Ode To Laudanum” by Iolo Morganwg)

Antoine Marie Joseph Artaud, better known as Antonin Artaud (4 September 1896 – 4 March 1948), was a French playwright, poet, actor and theatre director. Artaud was an unruly child and spent much of his youth confined in convalescence clinics, where he was first introduced to laudanum, triggering life-long addictions to a vast range of drugs. When he was four years old, Artaud had a severe case of meningitis, which gave Artaud a nervous, irritable temperament throughout his adolescence. He also suffered from neuralgia, stammering and severe bouts of clinical depression, which was treated with the use of opium. Artaud's parents arranged a long series of sanatorium stays for their temperamental son, which were both prolonged and expensive. This lasted five years, with a break of two months in June and July 1916, when Artaud was conscripted into the French Army. He was allegedly discharged due to his self-induced habit of sleepwalking. During Artaud's 'rest cures' at the sanatorium, he read Arthur Rimbaud, Charles Baudelaire and Edgar Allan Poe. In May 1919, the director of the sanatorium prescribed laudanum for Artaud, precipitating a lifelong addiction to that and

other opiates. In 1920, he moved to Paris, wrote his first collections of poetry and began to work as a theatre and then film actor; in 1924, he joined the Surrealist movement and was director of its research bureau before being expelled in 1926 in a dispute about the nature of revolution.

William Wilkie Collins (8 January 1824 – 23 September 1889) was an English novelist, playwright, and author of short stories. He was very popular during the Victorian era and wrote 30 novels, more than 60 short stories, 14 plays, and more than 100 nonfictional essays. He was a lifelong friend of Charles Dickens. He had a prodigious opium habit. He is famous for writing one of the first detective-novels in British fiction, *The Moonstone* (1868). Opium is central to the plot. The moonstone of the title is a sacred Hindu diamond “growing and lessening in lustre with the waxing and waning of the moon.” The gem is stolen by a laudanum-intoxicated thief who later remembers nothing of the crime.

Numerous Victorian literary works and authors, who usually came from environments that didn't make their living working for wages, dealt with opiates whose function was sometimes medicinal, but frequently also was a way to re-vivify imagination or relocate into a world more colorful than Victorian England. Alfred Lord Tennyson's less-famous brother Charles was an opium addict, and his wife Louisa (the sister of Alfred's wife) suffered from a nervous collapse after years of trying to help Charles get over his addiction. There is speculation that Charles's problem of opium was so debilitating that rather than inspiring him, it prevented him from becoming a more prolific writer. His poem “Silkworms and Spiders” alludes to the “web” of drug addiction and the opium-induced “trance” which is “deadly-deep”:

The worm long fosters his transforming sleep,
 But claims th' unalienable life again,
 Which tho' it be but one, yet seemeth twain,
 The trance between is all so deadly-deep:

The careful spider spreads before his lair
 The web, ygather'd near his filmy heart

Withouten throes or any vital smart,
 And of his entrails makes his foes a snare:
 In both a mighty mystery resides,

A truth, on whose developement they thrive;
 One for the cravings of his life provides,
 One weaves himself another way to live;
 To search the secret is beyond our lore,
 And man must rest, till God doth furnish more!

(Tennyson, "Silkworms and Spiders," *Sonnets and Fugitive Pieces*)

The style of decadence and aestheticism which characterized the end of the nineteenth century as well as the end of the Victorian era was fraught with languorous images alluding to opium use. Oscar Wilde, reputed to be an opium smoker, details this decadent lifestyle in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). In the novel, Dorian epitomizes the British literary dandy whose haunts include opium dens tucked away in the dark corners of London streets. "There were opium dens where one could buy oblivion, dens of horror where the memory of old sins could be destroyed by the madness of sins that were new." Or so, at any rate, asserts the histrionic narrator of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The opium den episode in Wilde's novel is in many ways typical of a genre that flourished in late Victorian novels, tales, and periodicals—a genre that provides a glimpse, if not of the dens themselves, of the strategies used to represent the opium den.

Opium is also widely believed to have provided inspiration for Lewis Carroll's hallucinatory images in his popular book *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland*. But the experts are usually sceptical. Carroll wasn't thought to have been a recreational user of opium or laudanum, and the references may say more about the people making them than the author ("Is Alice in Wonderland really about drugs?" *BBC: News Magazine*, 20 August 2012. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-19254839>).

Frankenstein: or The Modern Prometheus is a novel written by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley about a creature produced by an unorthodox scientific experiment. Shelley started writing the story when

she was nineteen, and the novel was published when she was twenty-one. The first edition was published anonymously in London in 1818. Shelley's name appears on the second edition, published in France in 1823. Victor Frankenstein is the main character of the novel. He sets all of the action in motion when he goes to the university in Ingolstadt and creates his "monster." Henry Clerval is Frankenstein's best friend with whom he grew up. Henry is passionate like Victor, and is imaginative. Victor Frankenstein uses laudanum to help him sleep after the death of Henry Clerval.

Jack Finney (October 2, 1911 – November 14, 1995) was an American author. His best-known works are science fiction and thrillers, including *The Body Snatchers* and *Time and Again*. *Time and Again* is a 1970 illustrated novel. In this novel, the main character, Simon Morley, wonders if a live baby in an 1882 display case has been "doped up with one of the laudanum preparations I'd seen advertised in Harper's."

Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly is an anti-slavery novel by American author Harriet Beecher Stowe. Published in 1852, the novel "helped lay the groundwork for the Civil War", according to Will Kaufman. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the best-selling novel of the 19th century and the second best-selling book of that century, following the Bible. The character Cassy in Uncle Tom's Cabin kills one of her children with laudanum to prevent it from growing up in slavery. *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, the tale of a missing boy and an opium-addicted choir master, was only half-written when its author, Charles Dickens, died. In *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, it is the drink of choice for the sinister uncle Jasper.

Abraham "Bram" Stoker (8 November 1847 – 20 April 1912) was an Irish novelist and short story writer, best known today for his 1897 Gothic novel *Dracula* about an aristocratic vampire Lucy Westenra in Transylvania. The sequel, *Dracula's Guest*, was not published for 17 years after the publication of *Dracula*, two years after Stoker's death. During his lifetime, Stoker was better known as personal assistant of actor Henry Irving and business manager of the Lyceum Theatre in London, which Irving owned. In Bram Stoker's classic novel *Dracula*, Lucy Westenra's maids are poisoned

(though not killed) by Dracula with a dose of laudanum put into wine.

Coleridge was widely known to have been a regular user of opium as a relaxant, analgesic, antidepressant, and treatment for numerous health concerns. The degree to which he experimented with the drug as a creative enhancement is not clear. Although he largely kept his addiction as hidden as possible from those close to him, it became public knowledge with the 1822 publication of *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* by his close friend Thomas de Quincey who painted a rather negative picture of Coleridge and his reputation suffered accordingly. Where Coleridge first developed his opium habit is an issue of some scholarly dispute but it clearly dates from a fairly youthful period in his life. Coleridge's own explanation is clearly laid out in a letter to Joseph Cottle:

...I was seduced into the accursed habit ignorantly – I had been almost bed ridden for many months with swelling in my knees – in a medical journal I happily met with an account of a cure performed in a similar case ... by rubbing in of Laudanum, at the same time taking a given dose internally – it acted like a charm, like a miracle! ... At length, the unusual stimulus subsided – the complaint returned – the supposed remedy was recurred to – but I cannot go thro' the dreary history – suffice to say, that effects were produced, which acted on me by terror & cowardice of pain and sudden death. (Griggs, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*).

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" was based upon a laudanum-induced dream. One day 1797, Coleridge took a dose of laudanum while relaxing in a chair and reading Samuel Purchas's *Pilgrimage [Purchas His Pilgrimage: or Relations of the World and the Religions observed in all Ages and Places discovered, from the Creation unto this Present (1613)]* is collection of fantastical accounts of foreign lands. It profoundly influenced generations of readers, from King James I to Samuel Taylor Coleridge. King James is said to have read it seven times.] The laudanum made Coleridge drowsy, and right before falling asleep, he read a sentence about Kubla Khan that stated, "Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto: and thus ten miles of

fertile ground were enclosed with a wall." Coleridge slept for three hours, and, during this time, he had a vision of a strange, exotic place. When he woke up, he began to write down his vision, but was interrupted by a resident of Porlock. By the time the visitor left, an hour had passed and Coleridge forgot most of the vision. What he did remember, though, he wrote down. In other words, "Kubla Khan" is the unexpected result of a dose of laudanum. The fact that "Kubla Khan" is generally regarded as one of Coleridge's best is one of the reasons for the continuing interest and debate about the role that opium may have played in his creative output, and in Romanticism in general. Coleridge, in his lucid moments, understood the problems with which he struggled better than most. In an 1814 letter to his friend John Morgan, Coleridge wrote about his difficulties:

In exact proportion, as I loved any person or persons more than others, & would have sacrificed my life to them, were they sure to be the most barbarously mistreated by silence, absence, or breach of promise? What Crime is there scarcely which has not been included in or followed from the one guilt of taking opium? Not to speak of ingratitude to my maker for the wasted Talents; of ingratitude to so many friends who have loved me I know not why; of barbarous neglect of my family ... I have in this one dirty business of Laudanum an hundred times deceived, tricked, nay, actually & consciously lied. And yet all these vices are so opposite to my nature that but for the free-agency-annihilating poison, I verily believe that I should have suffered myself to be cut in pieces rather than have committed any one of them.

Even those who despised drugs were sometimes forced to take it. Sir Walter Scott, suffering from abdominal cramps while writing *The Bride of Lammermoor* but pressed for money, composed two chapters under its influence. He took six grams of laudanum a day while writing *The Bride of Lammermoor*. Later he confessed that he could remember not a word of what he had written but judged the opium chapters to be the best. *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819) is a historical novel, set in Lammermuir Hills Scotland in the reign of Queen Anne (1702–1714). The novel tells of a tragic love affair between Lucy Ashton (Janet Dalrymple) and her family's enemy

Edgar Ravenswood. Scott indicated the plot was based on an actual incident.

The Romantic Age was the child of the Industrial Revolution, perhaps a reaction to it, and the Industrial Revolution unleashed the most devastating epidemic of modern times. Tuberculosis transgressed social barriers and killed not just babies, children and the old but the young in their creative prime. Inexorably consuming their bodies, it ushered in their death but also kindled their genius. Though often painless at first – coughing up bright red blood was a classical first manifestation – it could become agonizing in its late stages. Only one remedy stilled the suffering and made life of an especially exalted kind possible. It was the “magical conspiracy between opium, tuberculosis and God” that inspired Keats’s great odes, Shelley’s laments, Schiller’s ballads, Novalis’s mysterious hymns, Chopin’s nocturnes, Murger’s brilliant vignettes of Bohemian life and countless other treasures of Romantic literature, music and the arts.

The son of a beloved country physician, Hector Berlioz (11 December 1803- 11 March 1869) was sent to Paris to study medicine but abandoned this idea after investigating, simultaneously, the city morgue and the Opera. His brand of Romanticism—and his future wife, the actress Harriet Smithson—were discovered in 1827 at performances of Shakespeare by an English theater troupe. The next year he learned the symphonies of Beethoven at concerts by the new Paris Conservatory Orchestra. All this culminated in his first symphony, *The Symphonie fantastique* (1830). He wrote *The Symphonie fantastique* in an opiate haze.

George Crabbe was an English poet, surgeon, and clergyman. He is best known for his early use of the realistic narrative form and his descriptions of working and middle-class lives. Lord Byron, an avowed admirer of Crabbe’s poetry, described him as “nature’s sternest painter, yet the best.” Crabbe’s poetry was predominantly in the form of heroic couplets, and has been described as unsentimental in its depiction of provincial life and society. Crabbe’s *The Borough: Peter Grimes* was deeply opium-inspired.

Frédéric François Chopin or Fryderyk Franciszek Chopin (1 March or 22 February 1810 – 17 October 1849) was a Polish com-

poser and virtuoso pianist. He is widely considered one of the greatest Romantic composers. *The Chopin nocturnes* constitute 21 short pieces for solo piano between 1827 and 1846. They are generally considered among the finest short solo works for the instrument and hold an important place in contemporary concert repertoire. Chopin took laudanum (opium), and...this forms the best explanation possible for the hallucinations (probably better than Temporal Lobe Epilepsy). As the authors concede, toxic hallucinations can be of any form, synesthetic, visual, auditory or tactile.

Novalis was the pseudonym of Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg (May 2, 1772 – March 25, 1801), a poet, an author and philosopher of early German Romanticism. Novalis’s famous *Hymns to the Night*, a cycle of prose poems dedicated to his fiancée who had died suddenly at the age of fifteen, remains the very epitome of Romantic literature: evocative, mysterious, fantastic and irrational. Novalis praises opium in his *Hymns to the Night*, in which he celebrates night, or death, as an entry into a higher life. Novalis influenced, among others, the novelist and theologian George MacDonald, who translated his *Hymns to the Night* in 1897.

Works Cited

- Davenport, Geoffrey, Ian McDonald, Caroline Moss-Gibbons, eds. *The Royal College of Physicians and Its Collections: An Illustrated History*. London: Royal College of Physicians, May 2001.
- Griggs, E. L., ed. *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (6 Volumes). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956–1971.
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laudanum>
- “Is Alice in Wonderland really about drugs?” *BBC: News Magazine*, 20 August 2012. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-19254839>
- Poems, Lyric and Pastoral*. Vol. I. pp 1-5. <http://www.iolomorganwg.wales.ac.uk/gwaith-laudanum.php>
- Tennyson, Charles. *Sonnets and Fugitive Pieces*. Cambridge: B. Bridges, 1830.

Reading Evelyn Waugh's Social Satire: Explaining England of the Past to India of Today

Leonard R.N. Ashley

Introduction

This essay for a literary journal published in India is designed to engage readers in India today with certain novels of life in a small circle of Londoners between the first and second world wars. It dares to deal with the work of a comic genius despite the fact that attempting to explain the humor of one nation to quite another kind of nation is always uphill going. What I am going to tackle are old novels from the pen of Evelyn Waugh that still are both relevant and charming. This essay written by a scholar who is bilingual (in British and American English) wants to suggest to speakers of Indian English, and perhaps native Indian languages some of whose words appear in Indian English texts, the necessity of a certain amount of cultural and linguistic translation over and above the work needed to understand fictional people of a couple of generations back. It may also suggest the need for explaining fiction written in Indian English to readers in Britain, America, and other English-speaking nations, Indian fiction, we can say, also demands understanding of cultural conditions and vocabulary on the part of foreigners, whether it be serious or joking. Indian literary critics are encouraged here to write for overseas readers articles that will make their grasp of fiction with Indian characters and Indian ways of expression in it more comprehensible and more enriched in other climes. This author also wishes to suggest that it would be useful if Indian scholars explained to readers of English worldwide not the unique sense of humor of India—too large an undertaking, perhaps—but at least the various forms of address in Indian life and literature. It would be nice if Indian critics made clearer to us foreigners if not the point of Indian jokes at least the points that are made by the use of those terms of address, among other devices, particularly when it comes to writing satire.

Names and Terms of Address

Terms of address are always indicators of the structure of society and they are used in lieu of personal names with more thought and more effect. They give us significant information about social dynamics. In satire as in didactic literature and allegories the character names are often what the Germans call *redende Namen*, significant names. Waugh's fiction is basically realistic but his sardonic temperament encourages him to use character names that are clearly fictitious, though in his first novel, *Decline and Fall*, they are not as outrageous as, for example, in his later look at the Bright Young Things of Mayfair called *Vile Bodies* in the first few pages of which we encounter Mrs Ape (an Amy Semple Macpherson sort of evangelist), Throbbing, and, yes, Outrageous (the name of last week's prime minister). These of course do not puzzle readers as do some other details. A reference to Amy Semple Macpherson may send a non-American online or to a library to decode the reference—or the reader may decide (s)he cannot get everything from a foreign book and just press on. That chocs are "chocolates" you can get from context but at other times the reader may be called upon to know something quite obscure and maybe very trivial, for example that "strawberry leaves" indicate a coronet on a crest above a coat of arms. Waugh shows off and the knowledgeable reader can do the same. This can annoy the less learned or those too lazy or too caught up in the story to pause and research. The more you know the more you enjoy the references, in *Decline and Fall* and *Put Out More Flags* and *Vile Bodies* to many things in the exclusive little world between Park Lane and Bond Street.

One example is what Waugh calls Shepheard's Hotel, which is in fact not where he says but in Duke Street, and there was a real hotel run by a colorful woman who was nicknamed the Duchess of Duke Street. Those who know British celebrities will see someone behind Waugh's characters such as his enterprising decorator (Elsie de Wolf or is it Sybil Maugham?). Anyway she is outrageous, like the Art Deco period, chromium plating walls of old houses and putting down easily soiled white sheepskin rugs. Probably it is Mrs. Maugham who was intended. She with no talent for color made a

fetish of black and white and for a while was le dernier cri or “the bee’s knees”. For the insider there is always some fun in the roman à clef with its sly hint as old novels used to say that “all is true”. Well, a bit distorted, true, as in a fun-house mirror, but based on real people. If you happen to be able to recognize them you feel a snobbish thrill.

The invented names hint at and make fun of real people in many cases. Waugh has a penchant in all his novels of the era between the wars for mocking hyphenated upper-class surnames and coming up with weird titles of peers (the Earl of Circumference, the Viscount Metroland, recalling Anthony Trollope’s Duke of Omnium). The British tradition is that peers sign not their surnames but their titles (usually placenames) and there are courtesy titles for the eldest sons while the father is alive (Lord Tangent in Waugh’s fiction, Lord Ashley the son of the Earl of Shaftesbury in real life) while all the children of superior peers (not barons) use a forename. Lord Peter Whimsey in *Dame Agatha Christie* is the son of a duke. Lord David Cecil in real life was the son of an earl. Other children of the title are styled Hon[ourable]. That prime minister mentioned above was Right Honourable, in title if not in fact, which lets Waugh get in what Americans call a dig, a point scored against him.

Members of parliament put MP after their full names. Knights do not sign themselves Sir, just (say) forename and surname but you are supposed to address them as Sir + forename. Sir Laurence Olivier, was Sir Larry, not as Americans sometimes thought Sir Olivier, until he gained a life peerage—not inheritable—at which time he became Lord Olivier and signed himself and by friends might be called just Olivier. The wives of knights and baronets (hereditary knights) and barons (the lowest rank of lords) are all Lady + surname but of course never for example Lady Mary + surname. American literary critics consistently refer to Lady Mary Worth, but she was the wife of a knight and so Lady Worth, not the daughter of an important peer). Americans may be surprised to learn that the wife of an earl is a countess. In democracies all this may seem silly. Waugh plays amusingly with all this as well as the names

of places (Pigmanston) and dialects of the lower classes. These, along with Welshmen trying to speak English, are supposed to be funny and Waugh does not exaggerate the dialects. Where he may confuse us is when he uses the upper-class “I shouldn’t have thought so” which translated into American is not “I didn’t think so” but “I was wrong to think so,” which is not what the speaker meant at all. Also, in British wants means “lacks” (that wall wants painting) and not US “desires”. The British and Americans, as you are probably aware the Irishman George Bernard Shaw observed, are “divided by a common language”. Even more are the British, American, and Indian speakers of English. Personal names, for instance, that India regards as simple and common the British and Americans may find very odd, even funny—just as our names may be unusual or risible to people in India.

In all the Waugh novels of Mayfair between the wars the comic names are carefully, sometimes boldly, chosen. Waugh makes much of them, despite the fact that in *Vile Bodies* he has two characters, the hotel keeper Lottie Crump and the aged Col. Blount, who can never remember the names of anybody. Names are useful to bring up to emphasize that English is spoken in very different ways in different countries and to make us consider to what extent Waugh’s world can be understood and appreciated in later times and different climes.

Waugh’s World

Why bother with all this? Well, because we need to grasp meaning, know grammar and syntax, and always the author intends for us to grasp his message. To read intelligently you really have to know among the meanings of obscure words and phrases and old-fashioned slang (shame-making of the debutante set, university brekkers for “breakfast” and champers for “champagne”) just as you need to register the big symbols (a school or a country house “tarted up” to look medieval, like a castle, suggesting The Empire trying to look ancien régime). Waugh likewise plays with the detritus of imperial grandeur that the British in India brought home along with words such as tiffin and stengah. Once in a while Waugh goes over the top with eccentricity. He has a dotty vicar in a rural English

church in one novel who delivers sermons full of tigers and camels and yearning for home back in Blighty. One has to know that tea is not only a drink but a meal (so people can drink but also eat tea), that a fey photographe named Lennox probably is meant to suggest Cecil Beaton. Lennox perpetrates a portrait of a society woman seen with her back to the camera. One must recognize that two characters in *Decline and Fall* are the team of W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, both of whom fled to America.

You might say with one of Waugh's characters, a cook, that "nothing is to be gained by multiplying social distinction" but those occupy Waugh a great deal. Harder to find out so outlined here, is the elaborate British system of terms of address, just as you need to know the ways levels of intimacy are conveyed in Russian novels. You must know when and why forenames or surnames are used between friends and acquaintances, that a commoner married to an earl's daughter will refer when talking to a servant not to "my wife" but "her ladyship," and all the onomastic (name) rules obtaining in great households. A butler is always addressed by his surname, a valet by his forename, a cook as Mrs with a surname (whether she is married or not), a maid by a surname (unless she is a personal maid, in which case she is called by a forename), footmen who became chauffeurs were all often called James ("Home, James!"). With the lack of servants in modern Europe all this is old-fashioned. Times change. By Waugh's time the older fashion governing the daughters of a family had pretty much disappeared; that required the eldest to be called (say) Miss Smith, the family name, but the others to be called by a forename, such as Miss Emily or Miss Amy.

A nanny or governess might be called Miss with a surname. In Waugh's time former officers of the rank of captain, major, and colonel, etc., often used those titles in civilian society. The vicar would usually be called Vicar, maybe Padre (perhaps jocularly) by an army man, but not Father unless one was extremely High Church Anglican or a Roman Catholic. An upper-class youth would not have a Mum and Dad. A public school boy might call them by Latin names, Mater and Pater. If two boys of the same surname were in

a public school together they would be (say) Smith Major and Smith Minor. I one cherished UK comic novel a schoolboy calls himself Molesworth 2 (because he has an older brother at the school). Once Waugh confuses ma[jor] with mi[nor] after a surname. "Old boy" and similar expressions might be used by intimate male friends of about the same (but not elderly) age. Generally an Old Boy is an alumnus of a public school, for example a Shirburnian of Sherborn.

Getting all this right adds to the atmosphere (emotional weather reports, and snobbery) in Waugh's novels. The artificiality of the odd names Waugh chooses distances the reader from the otherwise exact, realistic details. He is excellent at those. He has an eagle eye; he describes late Utrillo as all slapdash and splotchy, after which you will never see those paintings as once you did. Waugh knows about clothes and fancy cars and girlish gossip and clubmen and ditzzy dames and he always gets correct even the titles of hymns sung at church services. They are sometimes apt, sometimes funny, but in *Decline and Fall* none as hilarious as the invented one of that American evangelist in *Vile Bodies*, which is called *There Ain't No Flies on the Lamb of God*. That gets her number, as we say in US English. Waugh deftly suggests the lumber of a person's mind by mentioning "spot on" the titles of the books on his shelf as well as the objects in his drawing room or on his bedroom dresser. In the drama Ibsen does this book trick for his Mrs. Alving in *Ghosts* but it does not work as well as in fiction, where Martin Amis and others do it well, if not with Amis' "rather nasty relish," as Waugh would say. In fiction the reader can pause to delight in the narrative tricks. In the theater few if any of the audience could see (say) Darwin's name on a book binding even if seated around a set no larger than a big rug that suggests the limits of a room.

Waugh's world between the wars—world war breaks out again as *Vile Bodies* closes and as the Coward song goes "the party's over now"—is not as darkly seen as Forest Lawn Cemetery in Los Angeles, the setting of *The Loved One*, but Waugh wrings a lot out of people of the Jazz (the name of a playboy's yacht in one of his books) that Sir Noël Coward, who was not so sarcastic, was ac-

cused of being “brittle” for depicting, “thin, thin, thin”. Waugh’s light repartee often has a more somber undercurrent than Sir Noël’s. Like all satirists, in the tradition of Petronius Arbiter of *Satyricon* he assembles groups at parties to give, like the figures on the Shield of Achilles, an image of the whole society. He chuckles so he will not cry. He seldom or never moralizes, though all satirists are disappointed moralists. He lightens the tone—the startling conclusion of *Put Out More Flags* is totally unexpected—as he throws together elements of the comic mixups of farce, the characters of Theophrates, the Renaissance comedies of humours and so-called city comedies, the broad canvas eighteenth-century novels, the nineteenth-century “silver spoon” society novels of Disraeli, and more. The more you know of literary and dramatic history the more you will recognize. His plots are often reminiscent of the tangled affairs of romances, the politics of *Academe* in C. P. Snow and others, and there are some swipes at British politicians and publishers (Lord Beaverbrook lurks behind one of his characters). The modern tabloid press is recalled in *Chatterbox*. This is the pseudonym adopted by the 8th Earl of Balcairn who writes a gossip column for *The Excess* (*The Daily Express*) and whose society reporting brings on, as it was latter to do in real life for Truman Capote with *Answered Prayers*, a downfall.

Perhaps most notable of all the new language, not as full of wordplay as Amis but more like Capote’s fly-on-the-wall reporting. A Waugh gossip writer remarks “It is so depressing to be in a profession in which literally all conversation is ‘shop,’” all you experience something for the book. Waugh’s ear is excellent. He seldom is as blatant as Tom Sharpe, a satirist who names a gardener Blott so the title can be *Blott on the Landscape*. He does the “different voices” modern fiction likes, and perfectly. As for structure, his crosscuts and closeups and panoramas, etc., show that he had mastered the narrative techniques of what was then called the cinematograph—in the US the biograph). He makes some fun of the cinema but he writes we should say today cinematically. He exhibits little of the bookish preciousness of Ronald Firbank, not too much of the incredible derring-do of Anthony Hope (Hawkins) al-

though a king of Ruritania (alas, no longer) does appear in one of the novels speaking amusingly awkward English. There is a touch of the acerbic but amused attitude of Norman Douglas, perhaps too much French for current readers of English, and a lot of the brand of satire that later was to become so popular in Tom Sharpe’s rollicking satires and Martin Amis’ taking deadly aim at a fat Englishman in *New York in Money: A Suicide Note*.

In articles published elsewhere I have analyzed the *Wilt* novels by Tom Sharpe, that novel by Martin Amis, and a delightful satire by Matt Beaumont of the advertising industry and the making of commercials for television, undertaking to explain the British language to the Americans, who might otherwise miss points, for there are always challenges comparable to Waugh’s *NBG* (*No Bloody Good*) and market cross and mutt (*US sucker*) and the ‘thirties dated slang of shy-making, divine, bogus, shirty (angry), the in-groupspeak of schoolboys and soldiers and playboys and so on. All that is not just like winking (*US “easy as pie”*). Every text is in code, demanding of the interpreter. Some present translation as well as other reception problems.

Popular modern novels tend to educate the reader in police procedures, the operations of espionage or legal practice, and so on. The Waugh kind of novel requires you come to it with some education. More than many other novels, classic or contemporary, Waugh’s novels may call for what we may call foreign language proficiency. For native English speakers if they can cope with old-fashioned slang the prose is (at least Bridgid Brophy felt, or because she loved to raise hackles said she felt) “as fluid, lovely, and lacking in intellectual content as a weeping willow”—but there are those of us who think it to be trenchant funny, and insightful. This even when it has all the snobbery that appealed to grownups in Waugh’s time and all the sugar-excited and maybe saccharine nature that characterizes modern youth which conceives even vampires as sentimental.

Conclusion

Finally, it can be argued that the lighthearted young people in these novels by Waugh who as Americans say “lived it up” between

the wars and suddenly found themselves at the end of a rather carefree era confronted with unexpected challenge and a disruption of all that they had known are, in fact, not too dissimilar to the young people of today who are faced with new challenges even if hostilities in the Middle East quiet down, which it would be Pollyanna to expect. A character in one of Waugh's novels, *Vile Bodies*, the novel which ends with the outbreak of World War II, says of the Bright Young Things:

They had a chance after the war that no generation has ever had. There was a whole civilization to be saved and re-made — and all they seemed to do was to play the fool....there's something wanton about young people today.

One supposes that has been said of youth by oldsters of every new generation, but even oldsters who bemoan the passing of now questioned old values and youngsters who complain about having perhaps less certainty and far less opportunity than their forebears are at least dimly aware that the young are entering a era of extraordinary importance in the march of civilization. They are citizens of a much more exciting, if smaller, world than anyone has seen before. It is a world of speedier change and greater possibilities for good as well as for bad. Perhaps the young can learn some sobering lessons from Waugh's satires about social inequalities and youthful exuberance and social progress and sober responsibilities. These things are matters of concern in the subcontinent of India as well as in the European and American and other continent, in the whole world. Waugh's novels may look very dated. They include some characters that seem to be right out of the Edwardian era in which P.G. Wodehouse found the setting for all his comic works. There is nothing today exactly like some insouciant Beautiful People of the Roaring Twenties and the early 'thirties of the last century. There is not anything still like the Beautiful People of the middle of the last century. Indeed the young are remarkably different even from their parents, whether they live in Manchester or Mobile or Mumbai. At the same time there is some globalization or youth, better connected by modern technology than any group has ever been before in the whole history of mankind. They are reading each others' literature

across various Englishes and across various continents. They are, you might say, of a new international nationality. Let us hope that for the young here now, on which the future depends, wherever they live it will be bliss to be young in the vibrant present decade and happy and successful in the years to come. Let us hope that the twenty-first century will not be like the twentieth, which was the bloodiest in human history—thus far.

Works Cited

- Ambry, Mark, ed. *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980.
- Bradbury, Malcolm. *Evelyn Waugh Bibliography*. London: Oliver & Boyd, 1964.
- Carens, James Francis. *The Satirical Art of Evelyn Waugh*. University of Washington Press, 1966.
- . ed. *Critical Essays on Evelyn Waugh*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987.
- Davis, R. M. et al. *Waugh: A Checklist of Primary and Secondary Material*. Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1985. See online for updates.
- Garnett, Robert R. *From Grimes to Brideshead: The Early Novels of Evelyn Waugh*. Bucknell University Press, 1990.
- Hastings, Selina. *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994.
- Page, Norman. *An Evelyn Waugh Chronology*. New York: St. Martins Press, 1997.
- Rolo, C. J., ed. *The World of Waugh*. New York: Harper's, 1958.
- Stopp, Frederick J. *Evelyn Waugh: Portrait of an Artist*. London: Chapman & Hall, 1958.
- Sykes, Christopher. *Evelyn Waugh*. London: Collins, 1975.
- Waugh, Evelyn. *A Little Learning* [early autobiography]. London: Chapman & Hall, 1985. And of course the Waugh novels 1928–1942.

The Religion of Exclusion in the Novels of Toni Morrison: A Comparative Study of Dalit and African-American Literature

Monika Gupta

Pain spares no religion, color or gender and is undeniably universal so far as it is grounded emotionally to the foundation of humanity. Toni Morrison holds this universal approach and through her specialization in African- American literature she reaches to the hearts of the rest of the world, especially, the Third World countries like India. The Nobel Prize for literature of 1993 holds its own importance as Toni Morrison became the first African- American woman, that is, first 'Black Negro woman' to be awarded with such an honor. This token of acknowledgement was a milestone for the writers of marginalized literature kindling hopes for geographically separated but oppressed minority classes across the globe.

'Dalit' in India form the major sect in the movement of marginalized. With over, "166 million" (census internet) Dalits exclusively in India, the minority has grown conscious on identity issues that were suppressed in the past. Dalit is a self-designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchable.

The 'Chaturvarna' scheme for social stratification in the ancient India classified untouchable below any class and they were called 'Panchamas', that is, born outside the four classes. Even the 'Brahminical' hierarchy of classification in medieval India, have degraded the status of a lower class. The identity of Dalit was defined in context to the religious doctrine of rebirth, "Legitimized by the theory of 'Karma' and reincarnation, the Panchamas deserved to be untouchables" (Oommen). Today, Hinduism has become a religion of exclusion where the suburbs or Dalit are not simply untouchables but include every oppressed group that has no stand in the society, and this encompasses the schedule caste, schedule tribes and even women.

The word 'Dalit' has been deconstructed over the times and is taken in its literal sense which means 'broken', 'oppressed' and 'crushed'. Separated from its mythical and religious interpretation it

bears a close relationship with the African-American past of slavery. Shame, anger, sorrow and indomitable hope are the common consequences of oppression in both the groups. B.R. Ambedkar has analyzed the peculiarities of being a Dalit as someone who challenges the hierarchal system of classification that gives immense power to the Brahminical sect. According to him, a Dalit is one who is prohibited to use sacred places used by other higher classes; one who does not worship the holy cow and instead feeds on it; and one whose shadow epitomizes evil, therefore, called untouchables. This classification holds equally apt for the Negro community of America. A Negro is one who has challenged the supremacy of the Whites in power; one who suffered the segregation and was prohibited to use same churches, buses, schools, public toilets etc. on account of being inferior; one who starved and eventually became the scavenger and one who was stereotyped as a 'brute', the embodiment of darkness by the Whites.

'Literature of Marginalized' is the term used for literature written by a minority class residing within a nation but distinguished from the other privileged classes in terms of lifestyle and the basic rights, thus, causing the uneven status, feeling of inferiority complex and exploitation of the underprivileged ones. With the revolutionary theories such as Marxism, Post-colonialism etc. coming into existence, literature has acquired the title of propagator. Toni Morrison as a conscious Black writer has explored the reasons and consequences of slavery which are accepted universally irrespective of time and space limits.

Morrison holds a universal approach and for the same reasons her works are easily comparable with Dalit literature. There is a similarity of pain, oppression, and segregation in both the literatures. The disgust in the very existence of a particular community and the trauma it brings along for the people especially women are prominent issues of the literature of marginalized. Slavery and its consequences, physical and psychological, is also an important issue discussed in marginalized literature.

In her first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), Morrison takes her protagonist as the most vulnerable member of society, that is, a girl

child. The story deals with the neurotic desire of Pecola Breedlove, a Black Negro girl, to possess blue eyes. Her urge to have blue eyes drives her insane in the end. But the message that the writer wants to convey resonates throughout the novel. It is the inferiority complex that eats one's self-esteem, the desire to be like the oppressors by accepting the codes set by them. Pecola believed that her life could have been better if the color of her eyes matched the dominators. The child psychology made her believe that, ". . . if her eyes, those eyes that held the pictures, and knew the sights — if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different" (Morrison *The Bluest Eye* 34). Trained in a setup to bear the oppression and never to revolt, Pecola is silenced throughout the novel even when she is raped by her father. The seclusion of Black community on the account of being ugly, racially inferior and uncivilized are few reasons that have been well pondered in Dalit literature too.

Like Brahmanism is associated with learning and intellect in the same way white skin has been repeatedly used as a synonym for virtue and power in all Morrison's works. Pecola's inferiority complex is the repercussion of the superiority of the dominant white race. Pecola is teased at school, neglected by her mother, raped by her father, used by the priest and deprived of her normal senses by God. All these factors suggest the disgust and pathos of being born with a black skin.

Morrison's next novel *Sula*, exemplifies the impact of capitalism on the racially subjugated classes. The Negroes who were economically exploited by the Whites were later given the most unproductive land in exchange called 'Bottom'. The word itself symbolizes the degradation of the Negro society bringing them down to the bottom of the hierarchy. The irony of the Blacks is that in spite of living on the top of the mountain they called it Bottom, as designated by their white masters. This allocation of unfruitful lands to the minority community is also a part of oppression. In the same way the Dalit in Indian setup were forced to live on the outskirts of the villages. The '*Doli-Palki*' movement in Pauri and Kumaoun, Uttarakhand is the brutal truth of dehumanization of Dalits in India.

In this incident '*baraat*' of a Dalit was massacred for the reason that the bride and groom crossed the Brahmin village sitting in a *palki*. The furious mob of the upper class killed the bride, groom and every member who participated in the marriage ceremony. The movement was criticized severely by national leaders of the time like Mahatma Gandhi, Lala Lajpat Rai and in 1940 the court granted the rights to the Dalits to sit in a '*palki*'.

After the abolition of slavery, began a new struggle for the Negroes to prove their existence. In fact, slavery was abolished in words and not in actions. In *Song of Solomon* the racial issues such as prohibition on the Negroes to use the hospitals that were made exclusively for the whites. The Mercy Hospital for the Whites alias No Mercy Hospital for the Blacks epitomizes racism as the hospital never allowed any colored to enter the premise for treatment. The brutal records of assaults on Blacks, molestation, lynching, and all other forms of violence makes the story relive the bygone times of America. But Morrison hints at a possible solution for racism in the novel that is self-discovery through searching one's true roots. Through the character of Milkman Dead, Morrison calls for the young generation stuck in the chaos of materialism to spare time for the hardship their ancestors suffered and still suffering in one form or the other. This call for collectivism, forming one group of marginalized, is also seen in the recent trends of Dalit literature. Toni Morrison uses a similar incident in her novel *Paradise* where the nurse looks for a veterinary doctor to take care of Negro girl who eventually dies due to negligence on the part of the Hospital. There is a call for a '*Paradise*' where different races can peacefully coexist.

One important factor that brings Morrison close to the Indian experiences is the issue of double oppression raised by the women. In the chronicles of human history, no other group has ever suffered from such a socio-economic, physical, cultural and sexual torment and agonies like the African-American women and the Dalit women of India. Both are victims of the triple jeopardy of racism, sexism and classism. In literature they have been portrayed as a being without voice or self. "Slavery is terrible for men, but it is far more terrible for women; super added to the burden common to all, they

have wrongs, and suffering and mortification peculiar to their own” (Brent 405).

Toni Morrison recreated the history of slavery in 1987 with the publication of her fifth novel *Beloved* which grabbed the prestigious award of Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. The novel deals with the psychic consequences of slavery just as Dalit literature focuses on the agitation arising due to the bonded labor. *Beloved* is based on a real life incident of a slave woman, Margaret Garner, who attempts to escape the bondage of slavery with her children but finding no hope for freedom she attempts to kill her children and succeeds in killing one of her daughters by slashing her throat with a butcher knife. The act was her resistance towards the entire system of slavery. Sethe is forced to submit herself to her white masters besides all mean tasks she has to perform as a slave. She is transported as an object to one place to another. Sethe is treasured only for her reproducing qualities so that she could produce generations of slaves to enhance the economy of the whites. They are assigned the most degraded tasks at the owners place. The slaves were deprived of forming a family and their young ones were traded as a material of utility. Sethe is robbed of her identity, her freedom and above all she is robbed of her maternal milk. In Sethe words the whites, “. . . could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn’t like yourself anymore. Dirty you so bad you forget who you were and couldn’t think it up” (Morrison *Beloved* 308).

In *Tar Baby* (1982), Morrison offers three possibilities for the problem of identity crisis in the Blacks. The first lead towards westernization, the other insists in returning to one’s own origins and third is living in the foreign land without incorporating the foreign values. Jadine, the female protagonist, follows the first path leading to westernization. Like Pecola Breedlove in *The Bluest Eye*, Jadine also accepts the Western standards of beauty. Son, Jadine’s lover, moves towards the other extreme by returning to his roots where he actually belonged. However, Ondine and Sydney, Jadine’s relatives and guardian, manage to create their own world in the foreign land while serving the whites. Son tries hard to preach the message that

“. . . white folks and black folks should not sit down and eat together” (Morrison *Tar Baby* 211) as the cultural shock and the mixed breed generation was producing the threat to the identity of the Blacks. The circular end of the novel suggests the multidimensional attitude of the community towards the problem of the identity crisis.

The attitude of Whites towards the Negroes in America is similar to the racist attitude of superior classes towards the Dalits in India. In fact both Euro-American culture and Indian culture is racist. The negative connotation such as ‘Black’, ‘Nigger’, ‘Negro’ carry the same sense of insult as in the words ‘Chandalas’, ‘Chamara’, and ‘Dalit’. These connotation out lashes the concept of unity in diversity and incite a new religion of exclusion.

Works Cited

- Brent, Linda. “Incidents in the life of a slave girl”. *The Classic Slave Narratives*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates. New York: American Library, 1987. Print.
- Census 16Oct.2012. Web. <http://www.censusindia.gov.in/census_data_india/at_lance/scst.aspx>.
- Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. New York: Knopf, 1987. Print.
- . *Tar Baby*. London: Vintage, 1981. Print.
- . *The Bluest Eye*. London: Vintage, 1999. Print.
- Oommen, T.K. “Panchams to Dalits: The context and Content of Identity,” *Times of India*, 11 May 1994. Print.

Subversion of Ethical Values in Kurt Vonnegut's *A Man without a Country*

K.B. Razdan

"But man, proud man.....
Most ignorant of what he is most
assured,
His glassy essence like an
angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high
heaven
As make the angles weep."

— Aldous Huxley, *Ape and Essence*

PRELUDE

It is the Witches' Sabbath
The Dance of the Harpies
With Scylla and Charybids
Manning the Orchestra
and Faustus playing the Host

Where is the Gorgon Medusa?
Gone to meet Gog and Magog?

— K. B. Razdan

A Man without a Country (2005) is Kurt Vonnegut's swan-song, as after the publication of this work in 2005 it was in December 2010 that Vonnegut slipped while descending the stairs in his house and the resultant fall give him a head injury which eventually caused his death. As a modern and postmodernist American novelist, Vonnegut has earned various labels: a black humorist", "lover of the Apocalypse," "redeemer of mankind," "a writer-knight in infallible armor," "champion of moral and ethical values", to mention only a few. In *A Man without a Country*, any reader can easily discern that the author himself is the twentieth-cum-twenty first century reincarnation of Mark Twain. In this novel, the author dons the mantle of Mark Twain's immortal hero, Huck Finn, dissecting, indicting, and castigating everything unethical and dehumanized in American politics, administration and bureaucracy right from the White House

downwards. Even the then U.S. President, George Bush is not spared, especially Bush's invasion of Iraq to eliminate the Iraqi ruler Saddam Hussain. Vonnegut considers American invasion of Iraq as totally unethical, immoral and highly unjustified war. A host of other identical issues, in American politics and sociological ambience, come under the author's scanner for a ruthless, no-holds-barred analysis.

A Man without a Country in doxifie style of narratology can be called as an autobiographical-cum-fabulatory work, in which Vonnegut dishes out a "contradictory mix of joy and sorrow, hope and despair, humor and gravity." A marked and well pronounced erosion of the human behavior, private, public, political and administrative, spills over from every page of this prismatic work. Fabulation in details of facts and incidents from Vonnegut's own life become the king on the cake. Right from the opening of the narrative to its very end, what makes the author virtually angry and unforgivable is the irretrievable degeneration of human ethical thinking and behavior.

As a thematic prologue to what the reader will have to encounter in this novel's narrative, the author announces his intentions, vis-à-vis the heroics of unmaking:

"THERE IS NO REASON
GOOD
CAN'T TRIUMPH
OVER EVIL,
IF ONLY ANGELS
WILL
GET ORGANIZED
ALONG THE
LINES
OF THE MAFIA

(*A Man without a Country* 3)

The narrative begins with a virtual mirror reflection [the 'mirror' being the author's mind and psyche] as a syntagm:

"OH, A LION HUNTER
IN THE JUNGLE PARK
AND A SLEEPING DRUNKARD
UP IN CENTRAL PARK

AND A CHINESE DENTIST'
 AND A BRITISH QUEEN
 ALL FIT TOGETHER
 IN THE SAME MACHINE
 NICE, NICE
 SUCH VERY DIFFERENT
 PEOPLE IN THE SAME
 DEVICE!"

— BOKONON

Bokonon is a religious prophet in Vonnegut's highly apocalyptic novel of the 1960's, *Cat's Cradle*, whose highly absurdist, ironic, and satirical credo "Bokononism" simply tears to smithereens modern man's totally irrational, stupid and moronish thinking. The opening chapter of *A Man without a Country*, becomes the normative sociology of the author's life as a kid, being the "youngest member" of his family. Says the author;

"As a kid, I was the youngest member
 of my family and the youngest
 child in any family is always
 a joke maker, because a joke is
 the only way he can enter into an
 adult conversion...." (1)

Vonnegut revels in true fabulatory aesthetics of autobiographical narratology that he grew up "at a time when comedy in this country was superb – it was the Great Depression..." (2).

As already stated, the very essence in terms of thematic symbology in *A Man without a Country*, is Vonnegut's oft repeated refrain that the emasculation of contemporary man's ethical and moral thinking-cum-behavior is so appalling that only being funny can be the true antidote to this unnerving truth:

When I'm being funny, I try not to offend...I don't think I have embarrassed many people or distressed them. The only shocks I use are an occasional obscene word.... And it's not possible for me to make a joke about the death of John F. Kennedy or Martin Luther King.... Total catastrophes are terribly amusing, as Voltaire demonstrated.... I saw the de-

struction of Dresden, I saw the city before and then came out of an air-raid shelter and saw it afterward and certainly and response was laughter. God knows, that's the soul seeking some relief.... (3)

In fact, the Dresden experience became a permanent scar on Vonnegut's soul and he wrestled with this inner trauma for 24 years till the publication of *Slaughterhouse-Five* in which the central protagonist Billy Pilgrii, too, suffers the same agony, when he, too, like his creator, is in the city of Dresden when this beautiful German habitation is fire-bombed by Allied bombers. When Billy comes out of the underground meat-locker, he says: "Dresden looked like the moon." Vonnegut goes on to recount his days as a young school boy in Indianapolis talking about the terms "twerp" and "snarf." A twerp was a guy "who stuck a set of false teeth up his butt and bit the buttons off the back seats of taxicabs. And a snarf was a guy who sniffed the seats of girls' bicycles" (7).

Again resorting to "Bokononism" Vonnegut, puts in these words which simply constitute a barometer, depicting a total absence of any behavioral ethics in whatever the so-called progressive and scientific man of twentieth-cum-twenty-first century did or does:

I WANTED ALL
 THINGS TO SEEM TO
 MAKE SOME SENSE
 SO WE COULD ALL BE
 HAPPY, YES, INSTEAD
 OF TENSE, AND I
 MADE UP LIES, SO
 THEY ALL FIT NICE
 AND I MADE THIS
 SAD WORLD A
 PARADISE. (6)

Continuing with his tirade against his fellow countrymen for their addiction to a demonic dose of unethical ways and practices especially warfare and super-power bullying, the author says:

What a mistake we are. We have mortally wounded this sweet life supporting planet- the only one in the Milky Way....Our

government is conducting a war against drugs, is it? Let them go after petroleum. Talk about a destructive high!...Hey as long as are struck with being homo sapiens, why mess-around. Let's wreck the whole joint. Anybody got an atomic bomb? Who doesn't have an atomic bomb nowadays? (9)

The Dresden experience again haunts Vonnegut in this novel as well. Why? The answer is simple: the bombers of his own country and allies napalm-bombed the denizens of a beautiful city, the author escaping certain death by being lodged in an air-raid shelter along with other prisoners of war. What could be more atrocious, unethical and criminal than annihilating innocent people? For that matter, Vonnegut always considered World War II, or any other war as a blatant crime against humanity, totally unjustified:

of course, as prisoners of war we dealt handsomely with dead Germans, digging them out of basements because they had suffocated there, and taking them to a huge funeral pyre. And I heard- I didn't see it done-that they gave up this procedure because it was too slow... the city was starting to smell pretty bad. And they sent in guys with flamethrowers. Why my fellow prisoners of war and I weren't killed I don't know. (18)

These words amply illustrate Vonnegut's intrinsic hatred of war and brutal killings and torture of humans as a type of collective *hubris*, an Orpheus who sings on a lyre without strings. The ethics of super power hegemony and bamboozling is simply a kind of "Witches' Sabbath", with Scylla and Charybids manning the Orchestra and Faustus playing the host.

In section after section, Vonnegut steps on the accelerator of absurdity, illogicality, meaninglessness, hopelessness, despair, and above all irretrievable erosion of ethical rationality vis-à-vis the monstrous crimes committed against humanity. Again, to illuminate the apotheosis of a world of tribulation, apostasy, and damnation, the author talks about Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and the hero of Franz Kafka's immortal work, *Gregor Samsa*:

Now there's a Franz Kafka story.... A young man is rather unattractive and not very personable. He has disagreeable

relatives and has had a lot of jobs with no chance of promotion. He doesn't get paid enough to take his girl dancing or to go to the beer hall to have a beer with a friend. One morning he wakes up, it's time to go to work again, and he has turned into a cockroach.... It's a pessimistic story. (31-32)

Obviously, Vonnegut in this last novel of his feels so overwhelmed, distressed, and depressed with all that has been going on in the world during the last 50-60 years that not to talk or imagine about anything ethical or justifiable and rational, it is now certainly the "world of the nightmare and the scapegoat ... instruments of torture and monuments of folly...." It is "the hell man creates on earth" [Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 148-150]. The demonic human, animal, vegetable, and mineral worlds, have made a satanic mishmash of everything that could be, or can be, conceived as progressive, healthy, contributive, or evolutionary. The author's disillusionment with everything can be gauged from these words he writes in one of the sections of this novel:

I DON'T KNOW
ABOUT YOU
BUT I PRACTICE
A DISORGANISED
RELIGION
I BELONG TO AN
UNHOLY DISORDER
WE CALL OURSELVES.... (38)

Ostensibly, as an apocalypticist, he, in the beginning of the twenty-first century, feels the futility of hanging on to a forlorn hope of being a gradualist. The power of gods has certainly come in the hands of children, with George Bush as the Secular Satan!

George W. Bush has gathered around him upper-crust C-students who know no history or geography, plays... white supremacists, aka Christians,...plus most frighteningly psychopathic personalities, or PPs the medical term for smart personable people who have no consciences. (99)

Vonnegut also coins a term the "Guessers," who know everything and decide everything. "Persuasive guessing,' says the au-

thor, 'has been at the core of leadership for so long' It is now their turn to guess and guess and be listened to " [82-83]. Needless to say, it is only Bush's "Guessers" who decide and formulate policy matters for him, but unfortunately "the guessers, in fact, know no more than the common people and sometime less...." [82]. The "Guessers," Vonnegut firmly believes are presently the curse that has befallen mankind, that's why the author again coins a Bokonon calypso to symbolize the colossal absurdity surrounding us, on the occasion of his eighty-second birthday on November 11, 2004. Yet, says Vonnegut, "No matter how corrupt, greedy, and hear less our government, our corporations, our media, and our religious and charitable institutions may become, the music will still be wonderful" (66). And again:

If I should ever die, God forbid, let this be my epitaph:

THE ONLY PROOF HE NEEDED
FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD
WAS MUSIC.

As an incorrigible apocalypticist, Vonnegut firmly believes that very few people believe that there is going to be a world for their grandchildren (67).

One can visibly see that Vonnegut is a committed humanist, excessively worried about the future of mankind. In an earlier work, *Breakfast of Champions*, it is again an appalling absence of ethical conduct and thinking which makes the hero of this novel, Dwayne Hoover a multimillion Pontiac dealer, hell bent upon finding out the meaning of life. In *A Man without a Country*, the author feels so disgusted with the absurdity and hopelessness, itinerant in every human endeavor and enterprise, as to declare:

WE ARE HERE
ON EARTH
TO FART AROUND
DON'T LET
ANYBODY
TELL YOU
ANY DIFFERENT. (54)

These words amply illustrate Vonnegut's abysmal disgust with the

demonic absence of ethical and rational existence in a world, which is increasingly becoming more and more Kafkaesque. In fact, for this very reason, Vonnegut eulogizes music as the perfect antidote to the colossal ennui unleashed by unethical practices and policies. He says:

Back to music. It makes practically everybody fonder of life than he or she would be without it. Even military bands... always cheer me up. And I really like Strauss and Mozart and all.... That specific remedy for the worldwide epidemic of depression is a gift called the blues. All pop music today—jazz, swing, bebop, Elvis Presley, the Beatles, the Stones, rock-and-roll, hip-hop and on and on—is derived from the Blues. (68)

That postmodern homo-sapiens has become more unethical than even animals, can be gauged from these words Vonnegut uses about his own country, America:

But I know now that there is not a chance in hell of America becoming humane and reasonable. Because power corrupts us and absolute power corrupts us absolutely. Human beings are chimpanzees who get crazy drunk on power. By saying that our leaders are power-drunk chimpanzees, am I in danger of wrecking the morale of our soldiers fighting and dying in the Middle East. Then morale, like so many lifeless bodies, is already shot to pieces. They are being treated, as I never was, like toys, a rich kid got for Christmas. (72)

War is a human virus, believes Vonnegut, and he wonders what Abraham Lincoln or Mark Twain would say about their country, were they alive today? Slavery, practiced by Americans in the nineteenth century, was not only a beastly and grossly inhuman and unethical practice, but it was Lincoln's eagerness to abolish slavery as an Abolitionist, that eventually cost him his life. Vonnegut feels totally obsessed with this demonic erosion of ethical values and principles, which makes take to task, the President of his own country, George W. Bush:

Speaking of plunging into war, do you know why I think George W. Bush is so pissed off at Arabs? They brought us algebra. Also the numbers we use, including a symbol for nothing,

which Europeans had never had before. You think Arabs are dumb? Try doing long division with Roman numerical. (77)

Vonnegut's disgust with the grossly unethical practices and policies in American administration, including White House politics is so striking that one is reminded of Irving Howe's well read and realistic observations about "Mass Society and Postmodern Fiction, when he defines our present day "Mass Society" as " a relatively comfortable, half welfare and half garrison society in which the population grows passive, in different atomized in which traditional loyalties, ties and associations become lax or dissolve entirely... in which man becomes a consumer, himself mass-produced like the products, diversions and values that he absorbs." (Irving Howe, *Partisan Review* 26, 426-36). From a conscientious reader's perspective, one can observe that, as a novelist Kurt Vonnegut has been able to deal successfully and scathingly with recent American life. In *A Man without a Country*, what the author feels most offended about is the brazen, corrosive and unsettling exhibition of hegemonistic appropriations by the "Guessers" who control and shape the global policies of the U.S. President, beside implementing the "Witches Sabbath" to make "rabbit republics" fight proxy wars, simply to add to the so-called awesome global stature of the Orwellian "big-Brother". What could be more nauseatingly unethical than this? At least, it is precisely how Vonnegut feels about the state of affairs in his own country. In fact, he even speaks about Hamlet's sighting the Ghost of his murdered father and confronting his uncle Claudius about it, killing polonius mistakingly, presuming it is the former hiding behind the curtains? Is George W. Bush the postmodern Claudius who has unethically "slain" the author's "father"? Who is the symbolic, thematic "father"? of course the mother and father rolled in one: the once defined as the land of Hope, Promise, and Faith: Thomas Jefferson's, Benjamin Franklin's and Jonathan Edwards' America, a "Secular Garden of Eden", in which the American Adam would earnestly aspire to, and believe in, recapturing the "Original State" of "Innocence, purity, and Heroism"! Paradoxically, ironically, and above all, unethically, this land of "Hope and Promise," which appeared after the attachment of Ameri-

can Independence to be "poised on the threshold of infinite and wondrous possibilities for the future" now, in the dawn of the 21st century, sunk irretrievably into a stinking quagmire of apostatic, unethical, and tribulatory policies and practices.

Before concluding his vitriolic and highly scathing indictment of American policy makers and practitioners, percolating down from the White House to the lowest echelons of American bureaucratic governance, Vonnegut wonders as already mentioned what would Mark Twain and Abraham Lincoln do had they been alive today to witness the mess their country was in, now?

Where are Mark Twain and Abraham Lincoln now when we need them? both of them made the American people laugh at themselves and appreciate really important, really moral policies. Imagine what they would have to say today. (75) Needless to say, Kurt Vonnegut has often been called as the modern and postmodern Mark Twain, the contemporary Huck Finn, who earnestly desires to "light out for the territory." He feels neither a "sense of social release nor a feeling of personal joy," instead there is an increasingly awareness of "social dependence and powerlessness.' Vonnegut feels that passivity has become, in his country a widespread social attitude. Not only this in Bush's America, "Opinion tends to flow unilaterally, from the top down, in measured quantities, it becomes a market commodity" (Irving Howe, 426-36).

In the climactic sections of *A Man without a Country*, Vonnegut's apocalyptic mood mellows down and donning the concern of an incorrigible gradualist, he, in a veiled manner, muses over the grossly unethical state of affairs vis-à-vis the people who govern his country:

Well, one wishes that those who took over our federal government and hence the world, by means of a Mickey Mouse coup d'etat, who disconnected all the burglar alarms prescribed by the Constitution, which is to say the House and Senate, and the Supreme Court and We, the people, were truly Christians. But as William Shakespeare told us long ago, "the devil can cite Scripture for his purpose. (111)

The author also talks about, in fact reproduces, some lines from a letter a man from San Francisco wrote to him:

How can the American Public be so stupid? People still believe that Bush was elected, that he cares about us and has some idea of what he is doing. How can we “save” people by killing them and destroying their country? How can we strike first on the belief that we will soon be attacked? No sense, no reason, no moral grounds have gotten through to him. He is nothing but a moron puppet leading us all over the precipice. Why can't people see that the military dictator in the White House has not clothes? (111)

The author told the letter writer that “if he doubted that we (the Americans) are demons in Hell, he should read *The Mysterious Stranger* which Mark Twain wrote in 1898” (111). The implication is obvious: Bush had not only made America..... the most unethical nation in the world, bullying and mentally bludgeoning smaller and weaker nations to fall in line, but rendered the people of his nation as veritable demons, “let loose in a demonic human world.”² In Twain's classic work about a secular Satan on the rampage among humans, to create mayhem and anarchy, the thematic essence focuses upon the fact, as Vonnegut says, “that Satan and not God created the planet earth and the damned human race” (112).

Finally, Kurt Vonnegut believes that we humans have treated the planet earth so unethically, cruelly, and thoughtlessly that the planet immune system is now planning to get rid of us though AIDS and even natural catastrophes like tsunamis, quakes, typhoons, etc. The author quotes his own hero, Eugene Debs Hartke, the central protagonist of an earlier work, *Hocus Pocus* (1997), again to highlight the blatantly ignored truth that how essential and central to human conscience and behaviour is the decisive and structuring role of ethical action and thinking.

As long as there is a lower class, I am in it.

As long as there is a criminal element, I'm of it.

As long as there is a soul in prison, I am Not free. (10)

Vonnegut's disgust with animal humans spills over in his mind and psyche. He ends *A Man without a Country* – With a “REQ-UIEM,” which goes like this:

The crucified planet Earth, should it find a voice and a sense

of irony might now well say of our abuse of it, “Forgive them Father, They know not what they do.”

The irony would be that we know what we are doing.

When the last living thing has died on account of us, how poetical it would be if Earth could say in a voice floating up perhaps from the floor of the Grand Canyon, ‘It is done’.

People did not like it here. (137)

The element of heteroglossia coupled with the author's awesome self-reflexivity, is so overwhelming in *A Man without a Country*, as to make him entertain the innovative idea that had God been alive today in his own nation, he would have to be an atheist. The implication is obvious: America as a country, has buried ethical policies and conduct fathoms deep and the Americans as humans being yoked to an existence subscribing to a “world of the nightmare and the scapegoat... instrument of torture and monuments of folly” [Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 147-149] Kurt Vonnegut's admiration of Mark Twain borders upon sheer veneration, as Twain also detested highly the loss of ethical values and conduct in all human activity, the very quintessential matrix of Huckleberry Finn. *A Man without a Country*, as a work of innovation and renovation, creation and recreation, thematically, symbolically as well as imagistically, subscribes to Twain's abhorrence of the unethical creature called homo sapiens. Perhaps Mark Twain famous definition of man may have been echoing in Vonnegut's mind: “Man is a museum of diseases whose only function is the entertainment and nourishment of microbes. He begins as dirt and departs as stench...” *A Man without a Country* epitomizes the thematic essence of Twain's vitriolic rather Swiftonian definition of man.

Works Cited

- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton Univ. Press, 1973.
 Howe, Irving Howe. *Partisan Review* 26, 426-36.
 Vonnegut, Kurt. *A Man without a Country*. New York: Dell Publishing House, 2005.

Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*: A Study in Metafictional Self-consciousness

Ashu Vashisht

Canadian literature especially fiction, attained its apotheosis in the 1960s and the '70s, depicting the female self as an explorer, an identity seeking to rediscover itself and place itself new in history, in time, in culture, in family life and above all in memory. The novels of Margaret Laurence, epitomized by the acclaimed Manawaka series (*A Jest of God*, *The Stone Angel*, *The Fire-Dwellers*, and *A Bird in the House*), present the female personality in quest of an identity, an identity which in symbolic terms could be defined as an existential oasis. *The Diviners* is no exception. Also belonging to the famous Manawaka series, *The Diviners* (1974) is a typical work of post—modernist fiction in which the issue of human identity, the female identity, becomes synonymous with the figure of a woman as the survivor. Morag Gunn is the narrator—protagonist, a woman for whom growing up in an inconsequential Canadian prairie town becomes a hardening process, an existential predicament. Morag survives her childhood by becoming a fighter, a cynic, a romantic in a world that wanted her extinction and loathed every part of her. Ironically, the loneliness and the solitude that once are forced upon Morag, constitute a precious right, a woman's way of reconstructing her identity, of willing and living a life strengthened by dignity and the ability to give and receive love.

The very opening lines of the novel symbolize Morag's existential paradox in the form of an identity that seeks to identify itself with the contradictory flow of the river current:

The river flowed both ways. The current moved from north to south, but the wind usually came from the south, rippling the bronze-green water in the opposite direction. This apparently impossible contradiction, made apparent and possible, still fascinated Morag, even after the years of river....Morag watched, trying to avoid thought, but this ploy was not successful. (*The Diviners* 3)

Years of "river-watching" have had a catalytic impact upon Morag's quintessential struggle for a viable and invigorating iden-

tity. Here, in Lioracj's ardent existential struggle, a struggle to evolve and practice an identity of her own, we get a good illustration of the postmodernist female self eager to convey "the notion of identity" (Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton eds., *Tech-nologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* 25) whereby an individual feels, "one is the same, in this place, this time as at that time and at that place, past or future; it is that by which one is identified" (R.D. Laing, *Self and Others* 70). Morag's self, struggling with forlornness and inauthenticity of the 'present', manifests its identity in the "opposition to social pressures" (Thomas Kreilkamp, *The Corrosion of the Self* 33), and does not "exist until presented" (33) amidst the structural manifestations of the past. In other words, Morag's past which she relives in order to have a better understanding of her family members, becomes an existential paradigm by which the heroine's female identity constitutes an exercise in metafictional self-reflexiveness. It is Morag's self—reflexiveness which helps her in becoming a writer and initiate the inaugural step toward the reconstruction of her identity. This also, like the river-watching, becomes clear in the very beginning of the heroine's narrative: "If I hadn't been a writer, I might've been a first—rate mess at this point" (*The Diviners* 4). Writing has helped Morag to extricate herself from an existential morass and free herself from a callous and brutal husband, so that she could live the way she desired, freely, unfettered and above all with an identity of her own.

The Diviners as a work of postmodernist Canadian fiction can also be better understood in the context of what Laurence is doing with the highly complex issue of relating history to fiction and fiction to history. In this context, Morag, explaining her stance vis-a-vis her novel, *Shadow of Eden* to her friend Ella, writes: "I like the thoughts of history and fiction interweaving" (418). Morag also considers herself as a "a wordsmith. Liar, more likely. Weaving fabrications. Yet, with typical ambiguity, convinced that fiction was more true than fact. Or that fact was in fact fiction" (25). The interplay, the commingling of lie and truth, fiction and fact, constitutes the role-playing matrix of Morag's narrative in *The Diviners*. What's exactly Laurence doing here, in as far as the heroine is concerned?

Obviously, it is the postmodernist self, the human identity cast adrift amidst the turbulent 'waves' of a chaotic world, desperately trying to build a perspective on its life and the world it inhabits. With a "clarity and simplicity of phrase, the perfect sense of timing, the funny incongruity and shrewd sense of idiom" (Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, "Books of the Times 'Palm Sunday,'" *New York Times* 21.), Morag, bit by bit, recreates her past, relives it and retrospectively reconstructs her identity as a climactic essence of historiographic, metafictional self-reflexivity.

Yet another important feature of Morag's existential odyssey to reconstruct her identity in the fictional present of *The Diviners*, gets related to her metamorphosis as a human being. Such a fact "transcends gender distinctions, because we see a steady expansion in her awareness of herself as a human being, and not merely a woman. In reconstructing her past, she recalls it and confronts it, and also revises it. She also judges and evaluates herself in relation to it. She learns that she need not have felt ashamed of coming from a poor background, losing her parents very early in life, or having lived with poor acquaintances" (T.N. Dhar, "Making the Truth Outlive the Lie," *The India-Canada Relationship* 435). Even at school, Morag feels that she need not have felt ashamed about her association with Christie Logan. Morag, instead of "having been grateful to him and his wife, she had neglected them. Christie had tried to make her see that handling muck did not make one full of muck and that real muck was in a person's head, but she had refused to understand" (435).

Another instance of Morag's desperate need to construct a privilege free, unconditioned identity, is her eagerness to structure her future with her husband Brooks, in which, paradoxically, she obliterates her past. When Brooks asks her about it, she replies in an evasive and ambiguous manner: "I don't know. I just feel as though I don't have a past. As though it was more or less blank". (*The Diviners* 194). Some time later, Morag is more forthright in her statement: "It doesn't exist. It's unimportant" (198). As an important part of the rewinding of her existence in order to churn out an identity out of her past, Morag realizes at last how hurting it can be to lie to

one's own self. Regret and intense realization set in. Says Morag: "Do I only pretend to see, in writing? What did I ever see about you, Christie, until it was too late? I told my child tales about you, while the living you was there alone in that mouldering house" (412).

Morag's reconstructed identity in the fictional present of the novel, also rests itself upon certain aspects of Canadian life misrepresentations and are simply shameful. Morag, by virtue of a personal contact with the Indians and Metis, visualizes how shocking and inhuman the behaviour of her ancestors had been. They slew these hapless people in thousands, simply because they had been there. Christie narrates the story of Morag's ancestors and she learns the truth: the history books only narrated lies. One of the native leaders had been killed, simply because he resisted the unjust and immoral attempts of Morag's ancestors to grab and usurp the property of his follow-men: "The Metis were losing the land — it was taken from them. All he wanted was for them to have their rights. The government hanged him for that" (132). Even Jules, Morag's classmate and lover and the father of her daughter, Pique, talks about her ancestors with hatred and contempt. Finally, to evolve her new and comforting identity in order to cope with these national perfidies of her forefathers, Morag learns to sing. She incorporates the songs of Jules about his community and its ostracization and repression by her ancestors, into the honest, precise and truthful account of the national past of her country. Some crucial and symbolic lines from the song of Jules have to be recorded by Morag, to give the truth about these unfortunate people and destroy the falsehood:

They say the dead don't always die;
They say the truth outlives the lie -
The wind calls their voices there,
The Metis men, like Jules Tonnerre.

The most painful aspect of Morag's refurbished identity is her awakened consciousness that her daughter, Pique, is a child begotten by a half-breed. Pique has also undergone the trauma of being labelled and pinpointed as a freak, a girl whom society snarls at and whose ancestors have been obliterated and relegated to the dust—

bin of oblivion, by the same society. Pique has had problems in school ironically in her own country, and not in England where among her classmates were also Africans, Pakistanis and West Indians. The message is obvious: it is regrettable that half-breeds are despised, thanks to racial and cultural prejudices and animosities. These humans can also be good and civilized and the message assumes greater importance in case of multiracial and multicultural societies.

Morag's issue of identity in the context of postmodernist culture, can also be viewed as a passage from innocence to experience, and like Mark Twain's Huck Finn, an ultimate rejection of a hypocritical and debased society by "lighting out for the territory", as Huck does at the end of his narrative in Huckleberry Finn. Like the modernist and postmodernist American hero, Morag's "reconstruction of her past affirms a step-by-step growth to integration and acceptance of herself and her place..." (Clara Thomas, "Myth and Manitoba in *The Diviners*," *The Canadian Novel: Here and Now*, ed; John Moss 111). Like Huck, for whom the real identity gets evolved during the trip down the River with the fugitive Jim, Morag, in a picaresque fashion, travels back to her past, explores and reconstructs it hit by bit, and the venture involves even leaving Manawaka in order "to grow and eventually, to understand where she had been" (111). Morag's narrative in *The Diviners* can also be construed as an act of initiation into a new identity, a refurbished pattern of existence. The story of the young Morag as narrated by the adult Morag, also remains "faithful to the basic conventions of the initiation novel" (111). Yet, this initiation into a new identity has its own dark night of the soul. Laurence does employ apocalyptic imagery while awakening her heroine to the fact that the world is like a bad dream. Morag, faced with this apocalyptic scenario, feels concerned about her daughter's future as "the world seems full of more hazards now. Doom all around. In various shapes and forms" (*The Diviners* 27). This demonic human world is "largely dedicated to death, slavery and the pursuit of unhappiness" (356). Even the media lies continually, and Pique, Morag's daughter, has to live with violence. As an antidote to this unnerving existential hell man creates on

earth, Morag decides to opt for a cloistered and sheltered life, safe from violence and death, urban dehumanization and lurking dangers. Through a game of survival a new kind of identity is sought to be established. But the big question is: will there always be a new heaven and earth after the apocalyptic destruction? Can we always dream of and struggle for a new existential identity? Perhaps, as Laurence would make us believe, we have to keep on trying.

Works Cited

- Dhar, T.N. "Making the Truth Outlive the Lie." *The India-Canada Relationship*. Ed. J.S.Grewal and Hugh Johnston. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1994.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *The Politics of Postmodernism*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Kreilkamp, Thomas, *The Corrosion of the Self*. New York Univ. Press, 1976.
- Laing, R.D. *Self and Others*. London: Tavistock Publications Ltd.; 1961.
- Laurence, Margaret. *The Diviners*. Toronto: Seal Books, 1974.
- Lehmann-Haupt, Christopher. "Books of the Times 'Palm Sunday.'" *New York Times*. March 27, 1981.
- Martin, Luther H., Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton, eds. *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1988.
- Thomas, Clara. "Myth and Manitoba in *The Diviners*." *The Canadian Novel: Here and Now*. Ed. John Moss. Toronto: New Press Ltd., 1983.

Indian Concept of Ideal Love: An Analysis of Toru Dutt's Poetry

Anuradha

Love has always been an irresistible and inexhaustible theme in literature the world over since time immemorial because it is the fountain-head of all kinds of life in the cosmos. Despite his everyday awareness of the inevitability of death, man asserts his self and the perpetuity of life by only one way, and that is love. Life is enigmatic, and perhaps the only solution to it is love, though it, being multi-dimensional, defies definition. However, all forms of love, as Eric Fromm points out, have certain basic elements — viz. “... care, responsibility, respect and knowledge” (*The Art of Loving* 26). Speaking of the timeless, universal phenomenon of love, which is much higher than mere sexuality and is a perennial source of joy and beauty, the celebrated modern thinker Herbert Marcuse observes: “Precisely in his gratification and especially in his sexual gratification, man has to be a higher being, committed to higher values, and sexuality is to be gratified by love” (*Eros and Civilization* 69). No wonder, love is the principal creative force behind art in all its variegated forms — music, literature, painting, sculpture, etc. Inevitably, it, like death, is an archetypal theme. But each age has its own emphasis on love and every artist treats it in his own way in consonance with his conviction and taste. Interestingly, Indian art is very vocal and subjective in the delineation of love, which is called ‘Shringar Rasa’ in Indian aesthetics.

No doubt there are many male poets who have written very fine love poetry, some women are simply matchless in this regard. Thus, the love poetry of Sappho, Emile Bronte, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christiana Rossetti, Emily Dickinson, Sylvia Plath, Meera, Mahadevi Verma, and Kamala Das, to name a few only, is not only deeply touching but is also imbued with feminine point of view. Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu, the two distinguished women poets of the early phase of Indian English poetry, belong to this category of illustrious women love poets of the world.

Though died untimely at the age of just twenty-one before she

could fully blossom and mature as a litterateur, Toru Dutt bequeathed to the posterity memorable literature, no matter quite meagre bulk-wise. Unlike Sarojini Naidu who looked to the English Romantics for inspiration and support, Toru Dutt, though spent a lot of time in France and England, remained deeply rooted in her own native culture and literature. Besides, though her entire family embraced Christianity, she could use it for enriching her own cultural inheritance and for sharpening and broadening her creative powers. In fact, despite her constant close contact with the Western life and literature, she had essentially an Indian view of life, and had she lived longer, “she could have interpreted,” as Amaranath Jha rightly points out, “to the West the spirit of India” (“Introductory Memoirs,” *Ancient ballads and Legends of Hindustan* 36).

Inevitably, she is out and out Indian in her attitude to love which is inescapably ideal as it is founded on the time-honoured legends of Savitri, Sita, Uma, Dhruva, Prahlad and Buttoo narrated in great Indian works like the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, the *Puranas*, etc. She was also fascinated by Kalidasa's writings, particularly *Abhigyan Shakuntalam* which she once planned to translate into English. Obviously, idealism embraces the varied forms of love delineated by her — viz. love between the lovers, love between husband and wife, love between parents and children, disciple's love for the teacher, and man's for God.

A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields — poetic translations of 209 French poems into English, eight of which were done by Aru and the rest by Toru — is the only work that Toru Dutt published in her life time. The French poets translated into English include the famous ones like Sainte-Beuve, Victor Hugo, Musset, Lamartine, Baudlaire, Mme. Viot, Pierre Corneille, Leconte de Lisle, Parny and many others. It is necessary to devote some space to these poems here, for they reflect Toru's attitude towards love. Importantly, she picked up that part of French poetry which is usually labelled as the Romantic School of literature. Small wonder thirty-one poems of Victor Hugo, who occupies the most prominent place in the Romantic School of France, figure in Toru Dutt's volume of translations.

The anthology comprises some moving and delightful lyrics

marked by youthful love, separation, loneliness, frustration, longing, exile, captivity, illusion, dejection, loss, bereavement, death, etc. Some of the most notable poems in this connection are: Victor Hugo's "Lines", Beranger's "My Vocation", and F. Berat's "My Normandy". Perhaps the most captivating love poem in this volume is Parny's "On the Death of a Young Girl" which exquisitely paints the birth and evolution of love in a young growing maiden. What makes it specially significant is the fact that though written by the French poet Parny, it becomes amazingly autobiographical. Toru sees and foresees her own painful brief life soaked in wistfulness and would-be love. "Chanson" is another remarkable love poem saturated with loveful dreams and romantic longings.

Ancient ballads and Legends of Hindustan is Toru Dutt's *magnum opus* on which her reputation as an outstanding woman of letters rests, and it is in this only collection of her original poems in English that her concept of love, steeped in idealism, finds full expression. Despite her Western education and faith, she learnt Sanskrit and closely read ancient Indian literature, with the result she acquired mastery over ancient Indian legends and myths. She took the material of her poems from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, the *Vishnu Purana* and the *Bhagavata Purana*. The volume appeared posthumously in 1882 with an introduction by the celebrated British critic Sir Edmund Gosse who observed: "... we believe that the original English poems which we present to the public for the first time to-day, will be ultimately found to constitute Toru's chief legacy to posterity" ("Introductory Memoirs" xii-xiii).

Toru Dutt's masterpiece, which consists of admirable sixteen poems, opens with her longest and perhaps the best poem entitled "Savitri". This narrative poem gives an account of the life of the legendary princess Savitri, her ideal love for Satyavan before and after marriage, and her bold encounter with Yama the God of Death. She is the very embodiment of female chastity and devotion to her lover-husband, and hence the story, to quote the words of Harihar Das, is "the highest standard of conjugal love" ("The Classical Tradition in Toru Dutt's Poetry," *Asiatic Review* 700) even to-day. She was the only child of the king of Madra and lived in those far off

ancient times when Indian women were not confined to 'zenanas'. Owing to her beauty and sweet nature, she was liked and loved by everyone, and to her parents she was the most lovable gift of God. The romantic atmosphere is apparent at the very beginning of the poem when the poetess paints her ravishing beauty in the prime of her youth through the amorous image of the moon kissing the opening petals of the lotus. In addition to the common charms of a blooming beauty, she possessed unusual child-like innocence, sweet simplicity, glorious grace and sunshine-like joyousness.

In those olden days, as pointed out earlier, young girls were granted all freedom to move anywhere, and so Savitri also enjoyed 'boyish freedom'. Small wonder when one day she chanced to go to the hermitage, she saw the young Satyavan, tall and 'royal in sport'. The two pure and innocent youthful souls met each other, and Savitri gazed and gazed at him as if she were under some magic spell. Toru Dutt paints Savitri's incipient love in these words:

So frank and noble, that the eye
Was loth to quit that sun-browned face;
She looked and looked, — then gave a sigh,
And slackened suddenly her pace.

("Savitri," *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* 40)

Toru Dutt's commentary on Savitri's first meeting with Satyavan, engendering instant infatuation and liking for him, overtly expresses her belief in love at first sight, exquisitely accentuated by Christopher Marlowe and eloquently reproduced by Shakespeare in these words: "Who ever lov'd that lov'd not at first sight?" The following extract from the poem bears witness to it:

What was the meaning — was it love?
Love at first sight, as poets sing,
Is then no fiction? Heaven above
Is witness, that the heart its king
Finds often like a lightning flash.... (40)

Savitri's and Satyavan's eyes met and they immediately fell madly in love with each other. Their love at first sight was most convincing and was founded on logic and rationality. Savitri had the most extraordinary parentage as well as physical and moral charms, and the same was true of Satyavan. The consequence was inevitable:

the instantaneous, apparent birth of true sublime love in both. Savitri was the first to see the man of her heart, and hence the first to be bitten by love and overtaken by a sort of maiden shyness leading her to seek refuge in a Muni's cottage. After some time when she left Muni's hut for her home, she was fully conscious of the loss of her 'virgin heart' and of her getting 'richer for the loss'. She saw a sea change in her life and the world all around her; she found every thing completely transformed and clothed in the gay glow of mad-denying love. She discerned celestial light colouring every item of the world:

.... A ray,
 Shot down from heaven, appeared to tinge
 All objects with supernal light,
 The thatches had a rainbow fringe,
 The cornfields looked more green and bright. (41)

Savitri's fathomless love for Satyavan was described by her father to Narad Muni whose sagacious advice he sought in the matter. Her unflinching sublime love for Satyavan was absolutely explicit when the sage asked her not to marry him and choose some other person as her husband, and she turned down his advice stating that she had given her heart to him and was unable to take it back. Her reply to him in the presence of her parents is worth quoting:

"And why should I? When I have given
 My heart away, though but in thought,
 Can I take back? Forbid it, Heaven!
 It were a deadly sin, I wot.
 And why should I? I know no crime
 In him or his."¹⁸

Savitri's love for Satyavan was not mere infatuation or physical attraction; it was too profound to be measured. This was the reason why she was not affected at all by the prophecy of the great sage Narad that the young prince Satyavan would die in one year only. The parents shuddered at the revelation of this fatal truth, but she remained unfazed and her true love did not let fear of definite widowhood touch her. Since her whole being was in love with Satyavan, she found it impossible to retreat from the chosen path of love. Mark her spontaneous utterances wrapped in unswerving

love:

"Once, and once only, have I given
 My heart and faith — 'tis past recall;
 With conscience none have ever striven,
 And none may strive, without a fall.
 Not the less solemn was my vow
 Because unheard, and oh! the sin
 Will not be less, if I should now
 Deny the feeling felt within...." (47)

Her parents were dumbfounded and they tried their best to persuade her to change her decision by making her foresee the woes of widowhood just after one year of marriage, but she stood unmoved like a rock having the deep foundation of genuine love. For the sake of her parents' happiness she was ready to live a life of an unmarried woman till the end, but firmly reiterated her stand of not loving and marrying anyone else excepting Satyavan. She honestly and consolingly said to her father:

Unwedded to my dying day
 I must, my father dear, remain;
 'Tis well, if so thou will'st, but say
 Can man balk Fate, or break its chain? (47)

Savitri intelligently and convincingly argued that if Fate was all powerful to rule human destiny and if she was destined to undergo the unbearable miseries of widowhood, nobody could avert it and help her. She philosophized over the situation and stressed the strength of virtue and the weakness of expediency. Unfrightened of widowhood and death, she expressed in the following lines her sublime love for Satyavan couched in idealism and philosophy:

"If Fate so rules, that I should feel
 The miseries of a widow's life,
 Can man's device the doom repeal?

 Death comes to all or soon or late
 And peace is but a wandering fire;
 Expediency leads wild astray;
 The Right must be our guiding star;
 Duty our watchword, come what may;
 Judge for me, friends, — as wiser far." (47)

At last both Narad Muni and her father felt convinced by her faith

in love and the Almighty, and finally declared that she would “...wed the youth she loves” (48)

Savitri’s love for her husband and his parents was so genuine that it enhanced day by day after her marriage. Thus, it was not surprising at all that she, who was born and brought up amidst the best possible comforts and luxuries readily available to the only child of a mighty king, did not feel any discomfort at the house of her father-in-law, a blind hermit-monarch living a hard, austere life. Beaming with love, she did all manual work with pleasure and enjoyed meagre clothes and meals:

The manual labour, and the want
Of comforts that her rank became,
Valkala robes, meals poor and scant,
All undermine the fragile frame? (51)

Obviously, as she liked her new life very much, she proved all the fears of her parents absolutely wrong. She was as happy in the new lowly home of her husband as she was in the palace of her parents. Her intense, lofty love for her husband and his family made her the very embodiment of a lovable, dutiful wife. Without grumbling, grudging, sighing and pining, she performed all household works with rare love and grace. The entire ambience got illumined by her. Her new world, suffused with love and joy, is painted by the poetess thus:

.... Arcadian love,
With tender smiles and honeyed words,
All bliss of earth thou art above! (53)

Her perfect love created some doubt as on the fateful day “Which shall be victor, Death or Love!” (54)

At last the pre-destined evening arrived and Savitri, though full of fear, was not nervous and was fully prepared to face the situation with the might of her pure, unconquerable love. She considered it her duty to accompany her husband when he decided to go to forest to collect fruits, etc. Everyone advised her not to follow him as the journey to the forest was quite risky, but she did not heed to it and insisted to go. Mark the following lines replete with her unfeigned love and profound sense of duty:

She urged the nature of her vows,
Required her now the rites were done

To follow where her loving spouse
Might e’en a chance of danger run. (57)

Consequently, ‘the faithful wife’ passed the dense forest ‘hand in hand’ with her husband. And when he was being overpowered by the approaching death and was nearing his mortal end, she, free from fear, said to him with utmost love: “Lean, love, thy head upon my breast,/... ‘here,/So shalt thou better breathe and rest” (59). However, soon her love breathed his last. The posture in which he was lying dead with part of his body upon her breast and lap and she, completely stunned and stupefied, revealed the higher, spiritual love of the two:

His head upon her breast; his frame
Part on her lap, part on the ground,
Thus lies he. Hours pass. Still the same,
The pair look statues, magic-bound. (60)

The result was that even the messengers of the God of Death felt petrified by their love and had no courage to take away the soul of Satyavan in the presence of Savitri. On being questioned by their master, they said:

“... We fled from thence in wild surprise,
And left him in that solitude.
We dared not touch him, for there sits,
Beside him, lighting all the place,
A woman fair.... (61)

The ideal, divine love of Savitri forced the God of Death to execute the ordain of Fate Himself and so went to the place where she was sitting beside Satyavan’s dead body. When He left the place taking away the soul of her husband, she, out of sheer love for her spouse, meekly followed Him hoping against hope. Naturally, He advised, persuaded and commanded her not to follow Him but return to her home to perform the rituals and duties for the peace and rest of the departed soul, but she did not abide by His behest giving strong, unrefutable arguments emanating from her unfathomable love for her husband. She very humbly but persuasively said to Yama:

“Where’er my husband dear is led,
Or journeys of his own free will,
I too must go, though darkness spread

Across my path, portending ill,
 'Tis thus my duty I have read!
 If I am wrong, oh! with me bear;
 But do not bid me backward tread
 My way forlorn, — for I can dare
 All things but that.... ” (65-66)

Toru Dutt demonstrated her full faith in ancient Indian philosophy and wisdom when she made Savitri tell Death that the world was transient and all delusion, that all life was entangled in the 'frail and fair' web of *Maya*, that everything was perishable, and “ Love cry, — Lo, this is my sum...” (67). She then pointed out that all rituals were futile and she could not save her husband by performing them, and that perfect bliss was an illusion and we must be tried by fire like gold. However, she gave vent to her belief that love was invincible, if it was embedded in virtue, duty and goodness. Since such was Savitri's lofty love for her spouse, she was able to argue successfully with Death without making Him angry and was able to follow Him indefatigably. The lines, cited below, fully bring out her sublime concept of love:

“No weariness, O Death, I feel,
 And how should I, when by the side
 Of Satyavan? In woe and weal
 To be a helpmate swears the bride.
 This is my place; by solemn oath
 Wherever thou conductest him
 I too must go, to keep my troth” (69)

Yama was so spell-bound by Savitri's wisdom and her impeccable faithfulness to her husband that He asked Savitri to demand boons. Thus, she was able to see the disappearance of the great gulf between love and death, and “felt Death was Love” (73). Ultimately, she found Yama all merciful and was able to make Him grant the all important boon:

“.... Let my Satyavan live again
 And children unto us be born,
 Wise, brave, and valiant.” (73)

This was how higher love conquered death and Savitri regained her dear husband to live for four centuries.

The poem also focuses on another side of love — the love

between parents and children. Savitri's love for her parents was evident from the fact that she made Yama bless her father with many sons. Then, on regaining consciousness Satyavan was extremely worried about his parents, and hastened away to home because of their intense love for him:

Oh what a love is theirs — how fond!
 Whom now Despair, perhaps, benights. (78)

He also loved his parents more than his life, and hence said: “.... Upon their safety hangs my life” (78)! He continually prayed the Eternal to grant all peace to them. During all this he also revealed his unending love for Him Who is Truth: “Oh, ever have I loved Thy truth,/ Therefore on Thee I dare to call...” (79). When he was so much upset because of his long absence from his parents during the hours of night, Savitri, as usual, came to his help and smiled away his fears by gently wiping his falling tears. Supporting him physically, she led him “like a child along” (79) putting her arm around him. The poem ends with an eulogy to Savitri, the very incarnation of the highest form of womanhood. To quote the words of the poetess:

As for Savitri, to this day
 Her name is named, when couples wed,
 And to the bride the parents say,
 Be thou like her, in heart and head. (81)

The second poem in Toru Dutt's monumental collection of poems, *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*, is “Lakshman” which merits discussion in this study as it sheds light on some facets of the poetess' idea of pure love. The poem concentrates on an episode of the *Ramayana* which forms one of the turning points in the great narrative — Sita's forcing Lakshman, by hook or by crook, to leave her alone in the forest and go to help Rama, after a Rama-like voice for help was heard indicating that he was in danger while chasing a demon-turned deer. The conversation that ensued between Sita and Lakshman as a result of this critical situation bring to light three types of ideal love — a wife's love for her husband, a younger brother's love for his elder brother, and a young man's love and respect for his sister-in-law (elder brother's wife) — and all these kinds of love are inalienable from duty and sacrifice at their

best. Out of her love for Rama Sita was so terribly upset to hear her husband's cry for help that she asked Lakshman to rush to the rescue of his brother who seemed to be surrounded by his foes and had uttered "... That wail, — it means death's final throes! ..."

("Lakshan," *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* 82). When her brother-in-law stood stupefied and did not accede to her wishes, she urged him to leave the place immediately, for anymore delay would hold him responsible for his death. As a devoted loving wife she was in unbearable agony:

"... That cry, — that cry, — it seems to ring
Still in my ears, — I cannot bear
Suspense..." (83)

Lakshman, a true devotee of his elder brother who had entrusted him with the duty/ responsibility of taking full care of Sita in the fearful forest and a brother-in-law who loved and respected her like a mother, argued against his leaving her alone in the place crowded with Rakshasas and Danvas by talking about the might of unconquerable Rama. He further pointed out that the piercing cry was delusive because he could never shriek for help like a child. His love and duty for his elder brother and his sister-in-law were explicit when he affirmed that he had to guard her even at the cost of his life. This and her blind fathomless love for Rama infuriated and mentally imbalanced her so much so that she rebuked Lakshman and misconstrued his pure love by remarking bitterly: "... one brother takes/ His kingdom, — one would take his wife!..." (85). And after that she told him bluntly that if he did not go to help him in his dire need, she would rush to him flinging aside all restraints and weaknesses. Her words, quoted below, are the finest instance of a noble, pure woman's lofty love and sacrifice for her husband:

"Learn this, — whatever comes may come,
But I shall not survive my Love, —
Of all my thoughts here is the sum!
Witness it gods in heaven above.
If fire can burn, or water drown,
I follow him: — choose what thou wilt..." (86)

In the madness of her love for Rama and out of sheer fear of losing him, she alleged Lakshman of evil designs against his brother and

her. Her irrational, bitter words shocked him terribly and broke his heart, for "... They lacerate my inmost heart/ And torture me, like poisoned swords..." (87). He asked her if he deserved this for his unfathomable love and "lifelong loyalty and truth" (87). His pure love and sense of duty for his elder brother and her were so profound that even when he was getting ready to go to his brother, he made a magic circle all around her for her safety and requested her not to go out of it at any cost.

"Jogadhya Uma", the next poem in the anthology, is based on the legend of Goddess Uma that was told to Toru Dutt by a lovable old family nurse named Suchee. A fine poem, characterised by dreaminess and mystic beauty, is notable in this context only for two lines which express the poetess' unwavering belief in true love based on complete fidelity that imparts permanence to marriage and makes life "... Happy, and rich, and fair, and young" (Jogadhya Uma," *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* 92).

The poem, following it, is "The Royal Ascetic and the Hind" which is immersed in tenderness of love and its power. It recounts the story of Bharat the hermit-king of Saligram. Leaving behind the entire royal pomp and all dear ones, he embraced the life of an ascetic in a forest and practised religious penances in order to realise his soul and the Eternal. But all this asceticism and spirituality vanished the moment his entire being overflowed with tender love for the newly born of a hind who had leapt up to death on hearing a lion's roar and her offspring, tumbling from her womb into the rushing stream, struggled for its life. He could leave forever a kingdom, children and other loving persons without shedding a tear, but he could not bear the sight of "The tiny thing still struggled for its life" ("The Royal Ascetic and the Hind," *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* 102). The poem successfully demonstrates that love is greater than prayers to the Eternal and asceticism: love is life, love is God. The following lines are worth citing in this connection:

That God is Love, and not to be adored
By a devotion born of stoic pride,
Or with ascetic rites, or penance hard,

But with a love, in character akin
To His unselfish, all-including love. (105)

The poetess holds that no religion and no form of spirituality or asceticism should regard any form of pure love as sin. Thus, it is in the fitness of things that the little hind engendered love in the hermit-king's withered heart, and he was called back "To ways marked out for him by Love divine" (106). Toru Dutt ends the poem with the assertion that it is not through seclusion and peaceful surroundings, but through striving for a loving soul that a man could attain a real higher life. She writes:

Must he still labour with a loving soul
Who strives to enter through the narrow gate. (106)

The two poems, namely "The Legend of Dhruva" and "Sindhu", are the glaring instances of parental and pious love. The first one, taken from *Vishnu Purana* (Book I, Chapter XI), is the poetic narration of the story of Prince Dhruva, the son of a less favoured queen Suneetee who preferred spiritual greatness to worldly power. Dhruva, who was ambitious by nature, was bitten with jealousy when he saw his father Utanpado having his step brother on his knees lovingly. Naturally, he craved for the same kind of love of his father, but got only insult and frustration:

Led on by love he came, but found, alas!
Scant welcome and encouragement.... (The Legend of
Dhruva," *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* 107)

Repulsed in silence from his father's lap, he got furious and went to his mother to tell her all about it. The mother consoled him and asked him to aspire for higher love — love for God's entire creation. She exhorted him thus:

Be meek, devout, and friendly, full of love,
Intent to do good to the human race
And to all creatures sentient made of God.... (111)

Discarding earthly "repulsing Love" (111), he solemnly resolved to become a great devotee of God in order to achieve the highest good and the loftiest place in the world. At last, by dint of hard penance and fervent prayers to the Eternal, he attained a position higher and more glorious than her father's crown:

By prayer and penance Dhruva gained at last

The highest heavens, and there he shines a star! (112)

"Sindhu" is, again, the story of the ideal love between parents and son. The only child of blind, aged sage-parents, he dedicated his whole life to serve them in the best possible manner. Attentive, duteous, loving, kind, thoughtful, sedate and calm, he "loved to be their slave" (Sindhu," *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* 126). Inevitably, the parents, too, loved him immeasurably: "Dear to their hearts he was, — so dear,/ That none his place might fill" (126). One evening when King Dasarath was out for hunting, Sindhu went to a nearby river for bringing fresh water for his parents and unfortunately the king killed him with his dart mistaking him to be an animal drinking water. The dying hermit-son told the king that he should accept his fate as an appropriate punishment for the sin he once committed by killing a male dove and thus making the female dove a widow. The two birds lived "happy in their loves" and "Never were they two separate" (134) before his wicked act in playfulness. In the acute agony of separation, the 'love-lorn' female dove "...gave a plaintive wail/ And looked me in the face!" (135) implying plainly that she would not be able to live a 'widowed life' and hence "...The forfeit thou must pay" (135). After that, out of fathomless love and concern for his parents, he requested the king to take him and the pitcher of water to his parents who were dying with thirst. The scene of the parents' meeting their dead son was not only pathetic but also saturated with love and complete dependence. Mark the following lines:

The parents their dead child embraced,
And kissed his forehead pale.
"Our hearts are broken. Come, dear wife,
On earth no more we dwell;
Now welcome death, and farewell Life,
And thou, O king, farewell!...." (140)

The poem entitled "Buttoo" deals with the deep love, reverence and sacrifice of a pupil for the teacher. Taken from the *Mahabharata*, it is the story of a low caste hunter's son Buttoo (or Ekalavya) who burnt with the desire to learn the magic and archery of the matchless master Dronachariya. One day he approached the great guru surrounded by his royal pupils, including his favourite Arjuna. He

respectfully apprised the great teacher of his intention, and told him that he knew no fear in the world. Upon this the master unleashed a magic arrow and Buttoo, to the laughter and scorn of the princes, fell flat on the ground. Red with shame, he left the place with the determination that he would acquire all possible skill in magic and archery to prove that real worth was independent of caste or rank. He went to a forest to learn Nature's secrets, and made a perfect statue of Dronachariya as his teacher. At the statue's feet he placed a bow and arrows, and became his sincere, devoted pupil on his own. Soon he gained all possible knowledge and skill and felt confident of his competence. When by chance Arjuna came to know about all this, he went to Guru Dronavhariya and told him indignantly that he, much against his promise, had already taught everything to another person, i.e. Buttoo. The master did not believe it, but when he saw his statue and Buttoo, he was amazed and stupefied. Cleverly the teacher asked for his due from him, and the latter instantly agreed to it expressing his utmost love and reverence for his teacher:

"All that I have, O Master mine,
All I shall conquer by my skill,
Gladly shall I to thee resign,
Let me but know thy gracious will." ("Buttoo," *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* 123)

Dronachariya demanded his right-hand thumb in order to end all his expertise in archery, and the youth happily gave it to him out of sheer love, reverence and gratitude. Overwhelmed with love for his pupil, the master spontaneously blessed him and proclaimed:

"For this," — ... "Fame
Shall sound thy praise from sea to sea,
And men shall ever link thy name
With Self-help, Truth, and Modesty." (124)

"Prahlad", based on the *Mahabharata*, deals with the enlightened Prahlad's unflinching love for, and belief in, God. He did not fear at all his tyrannical father, King Heerun Kasyapu, who was a terror both for men and gods and who, condemning the holy *Vedas* and all sacred rituals, commanded all to "worship me, and me alone." The king repeatedly threatened and warned him to abandon his faith in God, but the child refused to do so. It was God's miracle that

the swords of the king's soldiers were not able to harm his body at all. Then he was thrown into the dungeon, but his trust in God was absolutely unswerving. Defying and offending his mighty father, he assertively expressed his fathomless love for God in these words:

"... There is one God — One only, — mark!
To Him is all our service due..."

.....
.....
"I fear not fire, I fear not sword,
All dangers, father, I can dare;
Alone, I can confront a horde,
For oh! my God is everywhere!"

.....
.....
"Yes, father, God is even here,
And if he choose this very hour
Can strike us dead, with ghastly fear,
And vindicate His name and power." ("Prahlad," *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* 155-56)

At last when the cruel king asked his son Prahlad if God was in the crystal pillar against which he leaned and the moment he hit the pillar hard to disprove his son's belief in the omnipresence of God, out of the broken pillar there came out a stately warrior who

...had a lion head and eyes,
A human body, feet and hands,
Colossal.... (157)

This strange creature ripped the king down, and hailing Prahlad as the king of the entire region, disappeared in a thunder clap.

Of Toru Dutt's miscellaneous poems, only two — "Near Hastings" and "Our Casuarina Tree" — deserve a brief discussion so far as her treatment of love is concerned. The first one is a record of an incident in Toru's life in England. When one day she and her sister were taking rest on the beach near Hastings, a lady chanced to meet them and after a friendly conversation she offered Aru some beautiful roses before parting with them. Toru fondly remembered the unknown lady's sudden liking and love for them, and with gratitude wrote thus:

But sweeter was the love that gave
 Those flowers to one unknown,
 I think that He who came to save
 The gift a debt will own. ("Near Hastings," *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* 164)

The poet felt the depth of the lady's selfless love for them and this engendered a deep, unforgettable love in her for the stranger who met her only once. The profundity of the unpremeditated love and the reciprocation to it with love and thankfulness are well expressed touchingly and sincerely in the concluding stanza of the poem which undoubtedly haunts the reader very much like that of Wordsworth's "The Reaper":

The lady's name I do not know,
 Her face no more may see,
 But yet, oh yet I love her so!
 Blest, happy, may she be!
 Her memory will not depart,
 Though grief my years should shade,
 Still bloom her roses in my heart!
 And they shall never fade! (164)

"Our Casuarina Tree", supposed to be the last poem written by Toru Dutt, is the record of her love for the actual tree and its associations with the poetess' childhood. She intensely loved the tree, for it was inalienable from the persons whom she had loved all through her life and whose memory was engraved upon her entire being. No wonder she fondly writes:

But not because of its magnificence
 Dear is the Casuarina to my soul:
 Beneath it we have played; though years may roll,
 O sweet companions, loved with love intense,
 For your sakes shall the tree be ever dear!
 Blent with your images, it shall arise
 In memory, till the hot tears blind mine eyes! ("Our Casuarina Tree," *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* 174)

To the poetess, the childhood companions were dearer than life and so was the tree. Therefore, she believed that love would save the tree and the loved ones from the curse of oblivion. With a rare gift of concentration, the romantic imagination of Toru Dutt, very much

like that of Kalidasa in *Shakuntala* and that of Keats in his great Odes, writes the following delightful last line of the poem which demonstrates her firm faith in the immortality of Love and the loved ones:

May Love defend thee from Oblivion's curse. (175)

Works Cited

- Das, Harihar. "The Classical Tradition in Toru Dutt's Poetry." *Asiatic Review*. October 1931. 695-700.
- Dutt, Toru. *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*. Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1969.
- . *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*. London: Messrs. Kegan Paul & Co., 1880.
- Fromm, Eric. *The Art of Loving*. New York: Harper and Row, 1956.
- Gosse, Edmund. "Introductory Memoir." *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*. London: Kegan Paul, 1882.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *Eros and Civilization*. London: Faber and Faber, 1989.

The Death Motif in A.K. Ramanujan's *The Black Hen*

R. Deepta

The Black Hen, the final and posthumously published volume of poetry of A.K. Ramanujan is at once a continuation as well as a divergence from his earlier volumes of poetry. It certainly carries the typical Ramanujan-like purposeful bareness of style, simplicity of language, striking colourful image and the signature delight in irony and paradox. But one conspicuous difference one notices, as Bruce King very perceptively comments, is the presence of a tone of bitterness and suppressed anger in recognizing that death seems fast approaching and seems to hover over all the activities of life which itself is full of pain (King 119). Though Ramanujan always avoided the personal confessional lyric and aimed and achieved impersonality through irony and paradox, it would not be out of place to mention here that Ramanujan suffered from undiagnosed pains leading to an operation in which he died. *The Black Hen* which is often seen as "offering summarized or epitomized statements of his (Ramanujan's) view of all life" (118) has many poems which deal directly with death, fear of death or which look at life with unavoidable death lingering in the background all the time. Further, this volume also includes some metapoetic poems that deal with the fear of destruction or death of poetic faculties. Also adding to the variety are the 'Mythologies' poems which deal with the very spiritual concept of life in death.

Life today appears seemingly comfortable for it allows "eating persimmons and sleeping safe in the arms of a lover" ("Bosnia," *The Collected Poems* 247) but even a glance beyond surface comfort reveals that the world is torn by civil wars 'Bosnia, Biafra, Bangladesh', women suffering and dying of ovarian cancer, young women harmed by jealous husbands or mothers desperate to send their babies to safety in "lorries fleeing to the borders'. Old dictators have died only to be replaced by new ones, while heroes such as Gandhi and Martin Luther King have become just figures on coins and bills. The poor harvest cocaine as a means of livelihood, the product of

which ends up in Needle parks of Chicago or Zurich "for your daughter or nephew to die in". In such a life of precarious safety, the poet questions himself what he can do

but sleep, work at love and work, blunder
sleep again. ("A Report," *The Collected Poems* 249)

The fear of death does not leave the poet and he is constantly reminded of it. The 'nothing' in 'Salamanders' is as much death as it is zero. The poet begins the poem abruptly as if blurting out his fear 'Again, here it comes, the nothing'. The nothing, the non-existence, death is such a place

... where numbers die or begin
the sunless day, the moonless month,
where sounds do not become words
nor words the rivals of silence.

("Salamanders," *The Collected Poems* 202)

The fear of death looms so large over life that all life seems to be determined by it. Stravinsky feared that his blood 'would crystallize into rubies if he didn't keep drinking beer and whisky', T.S. Eliot was worried over his thin blood, the neighbour's doctor is afraid that her skeleton may 'crack beginning with the backbone' due to osteoporosis. As we sit in watch over our own lives we

Watch it crumble. Watch the soul
watch both itself and its corporeal
twin sweat. dry out, ache burn,
flicker,

We see our lives fizzle out into "nothing".

("Fizzle," *The Collected Poems* 236)

Yet it is this fear of death and non-existence and fizzling out into nothing that paradoxically prompts us to

... wish for, work towards,
build ships and shape whole cities with?

("Salamanders," *The Collected Poems* 202)

Twisting the well known idea of death as the Universal Leveler, the poet asserts 'This body I sometimes call me,/ sometimes mine,'

will one day be short of breath

lose its thrust
 turn cold, dehydrate and leave
 a jawbone with half a grin
 near a pond. (“One More on the Deathless Theme,”
The Collected Poems 209)

just like the pet dog which he would take for a walk every now and then ‘to let him pass water and express his waste’ ‘will be buried’ one day or just like every other person in the street who die one day or the other to ‘lie under stones/ or be scattered as ash / in rivers and oceans.’ Ironically death of the body, regardless of species, is the only ‘deathless theme’.

The motif of death so much informs the poet’s consciousness that it is enmeshed in his notion of time. The poetic persona sees life as an oil press and we humans as oxen at the oil press ‘Stuck in the need to move on’ and are always ‘restless’ and ‘unable to move’. As our ‘hands strain against the present tense’ ‘a swirl of fog’ lifts an hour at a time and death ‘a cold’ that paradoxically ‘burns without blisters’ ticks off our life as “an umpire over a fallen wrestler” (“Fog,” *The Collected Poems* 208). ‘As the time moves in and out of’ the poet, he realizes that Death therefore manifests everything in life including the daily routine

.... Mornings brown
 Into evenings before I turn around
 (“Sonnet”, *The Collected Poems* 220)

and even in personal relationships

.... Postage stamps, words
 of unwritten letters complete with commas,
 misplaced leases and passports, excuses
 and blame swirl through the night (220)

Even though the poet finds life unsatisfactory he puts his faith in rebirth that comes after death. Life as an organic process of birth, being, death, decomposition and being reborn as part of nature is not new to Ramanujan. The idea is very well expressed in “*Elements of Composition*” in his third volume of poetry *Second Sight*.

I lose, decompose
 into my elements,

into other names and forms
 past and passing, tenses
 without time,
 caterpillar on a leaf, eating,
 being eaten. (*The Collected Poems* 121)

In fact Ramanujan here, reworks the Upanishadic thought “I am the food which eats the Eater of food” (*Taittiriya Upanishad* 3.10.5). The birth-death-rebirth motif recurs in *The Black Hen* too in poems like “Death in Search of Comfortable Metaphor” but it is not limited to the human world alone. Though the poetic persona fears that the grandmother version of scorpions dying to give birth to young ones may not be true, but it sounds true. He elaborates how a scorpion ‘bursts its back /and gives birth/to numerous dying things, baby scorpions’ which in turn burst their backs to become a feast

... for working
 ants, humus for elephant
 grasses that become elephants.... (*The Collected Poems* 273)

This cycle does not stop there. It contains “every kind of real and imaginary being” reflecting the “body-nature nexus.” [Vinay Dharwadker, xxiii] It includes gods, both major and minor

... our god
 who used to be everywhere but is now housed
 in the kitchen.

... a God Whose One Half
 is woman.... (“One more on the Deathless theme,” *The Collected Poems* 209-11)

Parts of the same cycle, the poet discerns a similarity between birth and death even though ‘Birth takes a long time/ though death can be sudden’

Yet one would like to think,
 One kicks and grabs the air
 In death throes as a baby
 does in its mother’s womb
 months before the event.

(“Birthdays,” *The Collected Poems* 206)

Once death which is nothing but a “dispersal /of gathered energies/

back into their elements,/ earth, air, water, and fire" (*The Collected Poems* 207) takes place the reworking into other moulds begins.

As always the death-rebirth motif comes with a Ramanujanesque twist in his poems. For instance, in "*A Meditation*" the poet imagines himself as reborn as a black walnut tree to be honoured with a warm piss of a golden retriever, to fall down in a rain storm, to be made into a butcher's block, table and chair and to be made into paper so that as he sits down to write a poem he knows

.... I'm writing now on my head,
 now on my torso, my living
 hands moving
 on a dead one, a firm imagined body
 working with the transience
 of breathless
 real bodies. (*The Collected Poems* 240)

Obsessed with the idea that creation is bound to lead to destruction Ramanujan explores this facet in terms of poetic creativity in the poem "No Fifth Man" adapting a Sanskrit parable. The parable as Ramanujan retells it has five Brahmin youth, instead of four, who are returning home through a forest after learning the 64 arts in the gurukula. They see a single bone of a dead tigress. Eager to show off their knowledge, the first three Brahmins create the dead tiger's skeleton, fill it with flesh, blood and beautiful yellow skin with stripes. The fourth Brahmin wishes to breathe life into the lifeless tigress. The fifth one, who is a coward and who has not learnt anything in the gurukula, a creation of Ramanujan's, climbs up a tree for safety. The fourth Brahmin chants a mantra to give the tigress 'a life, death, a heartbeat' and changes it 'a nothing into a thing never before', 'a terror in beauty'. The tigress pounces on the four Brahmins and eats them away leaving nothing 'not even a bone'. The poet comments

Poetry too is a tigress,
 except there's no fifth
 man left on a tree
 when she takes your breath
 away.

("No Fifth Man," *The Collected Poems* 245)

The phrase 'take breath away' especially taken in the light of Ramanujan's comment "... after having written a poem there is always a question, a fear whether you will ever write another" [Interview to Chirantan Kulasreshta] foregrounds the fear of the poet that his creative faculties may get annihilated, in short the fear of his 'metaphorical death'. This idea gets expressed in yet another succinct way in the very short poem "Museum".

As who appear in dreams
 are not themselves, the horses
 not horses in the Chinese painting
 that prance out of the walls
 to trample the flowers
 in the emperor's gardens
 night after night. (*The Collected Poems* 256)

The horses are not completely themselves just as the people in dreams are not completely themselves. Yet like real horses they prance in the emperor's garden night after night destroying the flowers in the garden. The action that the poem describes is happening in a Chinese painting making the poem a poem on art and life. As the poem involves a comparison with dream, just as the parts of dream are parts of the dreamer, parts of the painting – horses and flowers are part of maker/artist. The poem thus becomes the expression of artist's fear of his own 'death' in the hands of aspects of his own creation. Paradoxically, the fear of metaphorical death spurs the poet to further poetic creation bringing in a variant of the death-rebirth motif.¹

The 'Mythologies' poems add another facet to the death motif hitherto not seen in Ramanujan's poetry – the aspect of life in death. As their titles would suggest, the three poems "Mythologies 1", "Mythologies 2", and "Mythologies 3" deal with myths known for their spiritual content. Akkamahadevi's devotion to Lord Mallikarjuna, a form of Shiva, forms the content of "Mythologies 2". Akka of the poem is a well-known Virasaiva woman saint-poet of the twelfth century AD who believed that she was wedded to Shiva and dedicated her life to Him. She wrote a number of *vachanas* (religious

lyrics) in praise of Shiva in Kannada. For the God-intoxicated Akka who breathed 'Om, Om' with 'every breath', the touch of her earthly husband is 'deathly cold'. She longs for the warm and immortal touch of Shiva. Ramanujan, as it is habit with him, places the contrasting loves for the readers to judge without any comment—one purely physical that of Akka's husband and the other spiritual that of Akka. The purely physical and earthly which does not go beyond the body 'all he could think of was her round breast, her musk, her darling navel and the rest' is as good as 'death' while Akka's spiritual love which makes her shed even her modesty in search of Shiva is life-giving and life-enhancing.

"Mythologies 1", on the other hand presents in poetic terms the very popular episode from *Srimadbhagavatam* describing the *lila* of Krishna where Putana the she-demon tries to kill the baby Krishna in the guise of breast-feeding and gets killed instead in his hands. When Putana offers her breast "of poison and milk" to Baby Krishna, he takes it and sucks her life right out of her chest. This death in the hands of god, the poet cryptically says 'changed' her. She is 'undone' by grace. From a 'mother' who is deadly with her poisonous milk she turns out to be a 'happy demon' not because she has succeeded in her goal – killing Krishna - but because she has found 'life in death'. Being killed by God, Putana is redeemed of all venom, evil and the curse that made her live the life of demon. Death in this instance too turns life enhancing. Further, the poem ends with the poet-speaker's prayer

O terror with baby face
Suck me dry, Drink my Venom
Renew my breath. (The Collected Poems 221)

This prayer along with the prayer the poet makes to Narasimha "Vishnu, man lion, neither and both" in "Mythologies 2" "slay now my faith in doubt" brings out the similarity between 'doubt' and 'death' and 'faith' and 'breath'.²

To sum up, *The Black Hen* which foregrounds many of A.K. Ramanujan's life-long poetic interests displays a variety never seen before in its exploration especially of the death motif. True, while the poems which show awareness of death hovering around life

have a wry ironical stance to it [which makes the poet see life as part of the cycle of birth-death-rebirth] like his earlier poems, the metapoetic poems and the mythology poems which are unique to the volume highlight the paradoxical nature of life and death. Together, they take the shape of his vision of death, so of life.

Notes

1. For a more detailed analysis of the metapoetic element in Ramanujan's poetry as well as the death-rebirth angle to it, see my article "Metapoetic Elements in Some poems of A. K. Ramanujan", *Sri Venkateswara University Journal of English Studies*, Vol. 8, Jan, 2011, pp. 110-116
2. A closer analysis of the Mythologies Poems of A.K. Ramanujan could be found in my article published in *Points of View*, Vol. XIV, No1, Summer 2007 under the title "A.K. Ramanujan's 'Mythologies' Poems: An Analysis," pp.74-81.

Works Cited

- Dharwadker, Vinay. "Introduction." *The Collected Poems*. New Delhi: OUP, 1995.
- King, Bruce. *Three Indian Poets*. New Delhi: OUP, 2005.
- Ramanujan, A.K.. *The Collected Poems*. New Delhi: OUP, 1995.
- . "Interview to Chirantan Kulasreshta." *Oxford India Ramanujan*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004

Clash of Fundamentals: Mapping Cultural Stereotypes and Crevices of Violence in Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

Sweetie Bandopadhaya

Violence in twenty first century remains one of the most ominous global phenomenons, which multiplies and mutates with rapidity that frustrates all attempts at interpretation, codification and containment. Although there is no dearth of violence in its most gruesome manifestation in every corner of the globe, what still continues to elude us is the insidious process of its genesis and its gradual evolution into a full blown conflict with its attendant horrors of death and devastation. Do we miss the early warning signs or simply choose to ignore it or perhaps are deluded enough by the repeated pattern of occurrence to deem it potentially harmless and hence normal. The creation of stereotypes, while making it easier to handle the deluge of information let loose by the very act of sharing the world with 'others' also create rigid categories and narrow fragmented world view. The interface of two different cultures in Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* with their sets of social, moral and economic value system is a site fraught with enormous conflict potential. Stress generated by extreme polarization and privileging of the fundamentals of each culture leads to creation of fissures along the cultural faultlines wide enough to engulf human beings into depth of existential despair and violence. J. Samuel Bois in his *The Art of Awareness* points out some of these dichotomies accepted as natural and inherent in human nature:

Our mental model of 'man' is nothing but a formulation that dates from the prelogical days of our civilization. 'Man is a rational animal,' said Aristotle, thus confirming the myth by giving it a place in his classification of the parts of the universe as it was known in his days. Since then, we have taken it for granted that a human being is made up of two elements, different in nature and in action: one is the mind and other is the body; one is spirit and one is matter; one displays rationality and one animality. The interaction of these two elements, each belonging to a

different order of existence has remained for centuries one of the most baffling problems of our philosophy. The problem still lurks behind many common-sense dichotomies, materialism versus idealism, psychological versus physiological, and—in a derivative way—between the 'two cultures,' of which we have heard so much in recent years. (29)

In the post 9/11 world suffused with mutual distrust and suspicion *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* explores the twin theme of infatuation and subsequent disenchantment with America set on the fault lines of current east west relationship, and finely tuned to the ironies of mutual and especially American prejudices and misrepresentation.

The novelist problematizes and disrupts the moral universe of the protagonist Changez and introduces a note of moral ambivalence, which disturbs the normal pattern of his engagement and response to the act of direct violence — the destruction of the twin towers and the huge loss of life at its wake. The novel take us on the journey along the path of, a process of gradual realization, of awareness of the abyss between the two cultures. Hamid begins with a broader canvass, the international scene, by referring to the contract taken by the American firm Underwood and Samson, to value a recorded music business in Philippines, and later a book publishing business at Valparaiso Chile, and moves to increasingly particular: as Changez moves from New York to Lahore, he moves towards a greater understanding of the nature of American conduct and interference in affairs of other countries with lesser economic and military might. At the end of the novel he is able to arrive at a decision, "Moreover I knew from my experience a Pakistani—of alternating periods of American aids and sanctions—that finance was a primary means by which the American empire exercised its power. It was right for me to refuse to participate any longer in facilitating this project of domination" (Hamid 156). The present paper focuses on the manner language mirrors the deep rooted prejudices and suspicion and at some level of cognition and is often invoked to further entrench the cultural prejudices and assumptions which shape the worldviews and construct the identities of the characters in the text. Slavoj Žižek in his book *Violence* states:

It was Heidegger who elaborated this feature at the formal ontological level when in his reading of “essence or wessen” as a verb (“essencing”), he provides a de-essentialised notion of essence. Traditionally “essence” refers to a stable core that guarantees the identity of a thing. For Heidegger “essence” is something that depends on the historical context, on the epochal disclosure of being that occurs in and through language. He calls this the “house of being.” His “*wesen der sprache*” does not mean “the essence of language” but the “essencing,” the making of essences that is the work of language. (67)

The apparently unintentional choice of words and phrases made by the protagonist Changez to describe his associations, affiliations, prejudices, likes, dislikes, and the assumptions regarding the identity, demeanor, inclinations, motives, likes and dislikes of the unnamed American character who never directly intervenes in the narrative—at one level affirms his cultural identity and at another level ascribes to the other character the attributes of ‘who he is not’—the ‘others.’ Noble Laureate Amartya Sen remarks in his book *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, “A Strong — and exclusive — sense of belonging to one group can in many cases carry with it the perception of distance and divergence from other groups” (1-2).

My paper explores the role of language and emphasizes the power it wields in representation of worldviews and ascription of reductive identities to others which quite often couples with denigration. The language of the people reflects their worldview in form of its distinctive syntactic structures and untranslatable connotations and its denotations. Eminent writer Steven Pinker in his *The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature* notes, “The shifting association to the name for person are an example of the power of a word to soak up emotional coloring—to have a connotation as well as denotation” (18). He further explains the concept of connotation by conjugation formula devised by Bertrand Russell in a 1950 radio interview: “I am firm; you are obstinate; he is pig headed” (18). The opening paragraph of Hamid’s novel introduces the two central characters Changez, the Princeton educated Pakistani and the unnamed American stranger in Lahore whom he pro-

poses to assist. It also foregrounds the paradigm of interaction and interpretation of the two characters within the framework of opposing words and word clusters charged with either positive or negative connotations. The potential for violence latent in such dichotomies in our usage of language is by nature inimical to the conditions necessary for cross cultural exchanges, often necessitated by the permeability of geographical and economic zones. The words ‘assistance’ ‘lover’ ‘services’ evoke a benevolent ambience of hospitality and help as offered by Changez and the words and word cluster ‘alarmed’ ‘looking for something’ and ‘mission’ in the opening paragraph evoke the sinister and murky haze of suspicion and sets the tone of the novel.

As the narrative progresses Hamid debunks the elitist myth of American dream conceptualized by the educational institutes and job industries as crass commercial entrapments. The ideals and institutions representing the essence of American culture are attired in language of consumerism—Even Princeton university the very epitome of excellence in American education system is treated with scant respect—considered as a willing ally of mindless market economy oriented towards maximization of profits at all cost. The “beautiful campus” and all it represents becomes the whore attracting the highest bidders. “Every fall, Princeton raised her skirt for the corporate recruiters... showed them some skin” (Hamid4). The moral laxity associated with American value system is underscored further when job offers to aspirants by the top notch firms, —the trading of skills is equated with flesh trade.. “I was a perfect breast, if you will—tan succulent, seemingly defiant of gravity—and I was confident of getting any job” (Hamid5). Changez’s location in the foreign culture, as both the insider and the outsider at the same time facilitates the moral and ethical problematic reflecting Hamid’s concerns regarding the efficacy of cross cultural negotiations.

The tension between two very different value systems, one in which anger, aggression and hunger is defined as necessary attributes of success and the other in which traditional sense of deference to elders, modesty, politeness, defined the way of life, is highlighted and cemented in cultural stereotypes. The paper attempts to locate

the deep structures of violence encoded in the heightened sense of cultural sensitivity and cultural superiority that prevent effective social cohesion of different cultural groups and propel them to collision path. Homi Bhabha in his *The Location of Culture* explains the insidious and self-sustaining nature of stereotype in context of colonial discourse:

Likewise the stereotype, which is its major discursive strategy, is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place' already known and something that must be anxiously repeated...as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatics or the bestial sexual license of the African that need no proof can never really, in discourse, be proved. (94-95).

Jim who is the chief recruiter and interviewer for the firm Underwood and Samson compliments Changez on his performance in the firm by calling him a 'shark' and a 'warrior'—words which are associated with quality of aggression and suggest a culture in which these words having traditionally negative connotations are appreciated and accepted as markers for positive values. Repeated usage of such words and word clusters though slowly but surely codifies the cultural components into sealed compartments and rigidifies the cultural boundaries rendering them impermeable to and opaque for multiple interpretations.

The text is the linguistic form of social interaction, text here refers to the instances of linguistic interaction in which people actually engage, in spoken or written form in an operational context. According to M.A.K. Halliday:

It is a continuous progression of meanings, combining both simultaneously and in succession. The meanings are the selections made by speaker from the option that constitute the meaning potential; text is actualization of this meaning potential, the process of semantic choice. The selection in meaning derive from different functional origins, and are mapped onto one another in the course of their realization as lexicogrammatical structure. (377)

The office of the Firm Underwood and Samson in Hamid's novel becomes the prototype of claustrophobic materialistic space in which

even the light hearted banter amongst colleagues become the linguistic realizations of materialistic code—the American obsession with power and self. In the highly competitive system of meritocracy prevailing in American offices as Underwood and Samson, the ambience effectively stymies the formation and recognition of bonding other than purely professional ones.

Through frequent exchange of dialogues from popular Hollywood movies like *Top Gun* and *Star Trek* between Wainwright and Changez, Hamid reproduces the semantic landscape the member of a specific culture typically associates with a situation type, "Twirling his pen between his fingers in a fashion reminiscent of Val Kilmer in *Top Gun*, he leaned towards me and whispered, "No points for second place Maverick." "you 'are dangerous Ice Man," I replied—attempting to approximate a naval aviator's drawl—and the two of us exchanged a grin (Hamid 35). Informal gathering with colleagues also occasions such remarks from Wainwright who quotes from *Star Trek* in completely casual manner, "Beware the dark side, young sky-walker"(Hamid38).

Changez is aware of the culture specific semantic code that govern the exchanges between Wainwright and himself and its interpretation, to place it in proper context, yet the code which controls the semantic styles of Wainwright's culture is definitely not his. Poems of Ghalib and Faiz would have facilitated the mood of relaxation and defined the essence of informal gatherings in his culture. His uneasiness with the code due to different cultural orientation is apparent "But I suspect Wainwright made this particular allusion to *Star Trek* mostly in jest, for immediately afterwards he, like I—like all of us, for that matter drank heartily "(Hamid 38). Foucault in his *The Archeology of Knowledge* talks about the process of discourse formation which at lower level of abstraction almost always involves the building of antagonism and the charting of political frontiers between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. The construction of discourses involves the exercise of power, of might, and the guiding principle of the American firm to focus on the 'fundamentals' successfully obliterates other possible dimensions of discourses which, does not pertain to aggressive domination or agglomeration

of profit. The protagonist Changez in the novel finds himself unable to withdraw so completely and insulate his talent for finance from any possible ethical or moral considerations. Devastating repercussion of the untiring quest for dominance unhinges his moral world and brings in a degree of ambivalence in his attitude towards America, and in his response to the destruction of twin tower. The twin tower is symbolically reconstructed as the epitome of America's economic hegemony, and its fall, a challenge to its might:

Focus on the fundamentals. This was Underwood Samson's guiding principle, drilled into us since our first day at work. It mandated a single-minded attention to financial detail, teasing out the true nature of those drivers that determines an asset's value. And that was precisely what I continued to do, more often than not with both skill and enthusiasm. Because to be perfectly honest, sir, compassionate pangs I felt for soon-to-be-redundant workers were not overwhelming in their frequency; our job required a degree of commitment that left one with rather limited time for distractions. (Hamid 98-99)

As Changez progresses toward greater understanding of his position as, a fellow being sharing the universal human condition in the larger scheme of things, he deliberately tries to distance himself from what he comes to view as his complicity in the project of economic subjugation and annihilation of the weak. The gradual awareness and his reluctance to concern himself solely with the fundamentals of profit oriented economic principles are what transforms him into 'The Reluctant Fundamentalist'. The paradigm of 'other' and 'otherness' attributed to American culture and worldview by Hamid is formulated through components of language which both interprets and is in turn interpreted by it. The choice of words to describe the American work culture, ambience and the disproportionately large space it occupies in the narrative almost makes it stand as the metaphor for American value system overriding all other dimensions. It is what Zeizek refers to as " A fundamental violence exists in this "essencing" ability of our language: our world is given a partial twist, it loses its balanced innocence, one partial colour gives the tone of the whole "(68). The words and

phrases 'Microsoft Family Time' 'maximum return' 'Systematic pragmatism' 'professionalism' 'efficiency' used in connection with the work ethics of Underwood and Samson carry connotation of materialism, the verbal equivalents of materialistic ideologies.

The conflict between two cultures is brought to the fore more forcefully, when Changez equates gratification of senses, which is the focal point of consumerist culture prevailing in America, with shame. He tries to explain the apparent contradiction to the American visitor "I felt at once satiated and ashamed"(Hamid 106) he states, in context of his love making with Erica. Explaining the nuances of his culture to the unnamed American character he remarks, not without a certain sense of pride, the capacity for abstinence so common in the youths from his part of the world "So we learn to savor the denial of gratification—that most un-American of pleasures!"(Hamid 69). The word 'denial' in the western context, whether forced or self-inflicted, would be traditionally associated with impediment in the path of fulfillment of a particular desire, which would not significantly change the connotation of pain associated with it. However, soaked in the emotional coloring of his culture the same word takes a different hue for the narrator, as he uses the word 'savor' to affirm a positive connotation associated with pleasure.

The content of a signification system depends on the cultural organization of the world into categories. In the novel there are for instance both positive and negative connotations associated with the quality of sweetness. Playing the perfect host, Changez offers a desert of ricepudding to his American guest in Lahore and simultaneously reminds him about the ration of chocolate with which American soldiers are sent to conduct the bloody task of killing. The contrast between the customs and codes governing the two different cultures is repeatedly stressed upon by Changez in course of offering snippets of information to the American, about the etiquettes of his land. "You wish to pay half? Absolutely not; besides, we pay all or we pay none. You reminded me of how alien I found the concept of acquaintances splitting a bill when I first arrived in your country"(Hamid 161). Speech utterances and expressions construct the Socio-Cultural framework and in turn are decoded by the same system

within the same framework. However Hamid also utilizes the polyphonic space of the novel to sound a warning to the readers against the lure of subsuming the complexities of cultural identity under cultural stereotypes. The narrator at the conclusion of the novel so aptly remarks, "It seems an obvious thing to say, but you should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that you Americans are all under-cover assassins" (Hamid 183). The multiple interpretations offered for the bulge near the sternum area visible under the light weight suit of the American, alternatively as the armpit holster for sidearm or the outlines of the travel wallets; the source of sinister metallic glint, as gun or possibly the holder of business cards, sustain the ambience of mutual suspicion which irrevocably reduce the characters in the novel into cultural stereotypes.

Works Cited

- Bois, J. Samuel. *The Art of Awareness*. Santa Monica, California: Continuum Press and Productions, 1996. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Tavistock, 1972. Print.
- Halliday, M.A.K. "Language as Social Semiotic." *The Communication Theory Reader*. Ed. Paul Cobley. London: Routledge, 1996. Print.
- Hamid, Mohsin. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2007. Print.
- Pinker, Steven. *The Stuff of Thought: Language as Window into Human Nature*. New York: Penguin, 2007. Print.
- Sen, Amartya. *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*. London: Allen Lane, 2006. Print.
- Zizek, Slavoj. *Violence*. New York: Picador, 2008. Print.

Jayashankar Prasad's Explication of the Nature, Birth and Growth of Mysticism in India

K.K. Sharma

With the growth of civilization, man also developed his moral sense and inner consciousness resulting in spiritual awareness and well being. He began to focus not only on his physical growth but also on the betterment of his inner being, his soul — the very essence of his existence. This consciousness found its expression in his utterances as he began to think of the eternal being in man and the Everlasting Whose manifestation is reflected in the entire universe. Little wonder the great writings, religious or otherwise, in most of the ancient civilizations often show immense concern for the human soul and the Infinite Soul, as well as for the unbreakable relationship between the two. And this is what is commonly understood by the term 'Mysticism' — viz. the human spirit's pining for the direct communion with the Eternal or God — which is doubtless a universal human phenomenon since ages. The eminent Orientalist E.G. Browne rightly affirms:

There is hardly any soul, be it ever so barren, where it [mysticism] will not strike root, hardly any creed, however stern, however formal, round which it will not twine itself. It is, indeed, the eternal cry of the human soul for rest;... and so long as man is less than an angel and more than a beast, this cry will not for a moment fail to make itself heard. Wonderfully uniform, too, is its tenor: in all ages, in all countries, in all creeds, whether it come from the Brahmin age, the Greek philosopher, the Persian poet, or the Christian quietist, it is in essence an enunciation more or less clear, more or less eloquent, of the aspiration of the soul to cease altogether from self, and to be at one with God. (*A Year amongst the Persians* 136)

In India the ancient scriptures like the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Ramayana*, *Gita*, etc. are deeply concerned with mysticism — viz. the detailed discussion of God (the Immortal), soul, cosmos, man's place in the universe and so on and so forth. This is the reason why Sisir Kumar Ghose, one of the foremost scholars of mysticism in

the present times, asserts that mysticism — “a quest for a hidden truth or wisdom” (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* 786), a search for the supreme truth, goodness, beauty leading to the realisation of oneness/harmony in the entire cosmos and fathomless joy — is the very kernel of Indian life, while it is not so prominent, though certainly quite conspicuous, in Christianity, Islam, Judasism, etc. To quote his words: “Although mysticism has been the core of Hinduism and Buddhism, it has been little more than a minor stand and frequently a disturbing element in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam” (786). Not only the works of great sages, even the writings of many of the celebrated Indian poets since time immemorial — Ved Vyas, Sankaracharya, Kabir, Jayasi, Surdas, Tulsidas, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Jayashankar Prasad, Sumitranandan Pant, Mahadevi Verma, Ramkumar Verma and many others — are saturated with mysticism. But scarcely anyone of them (like their Western counterparts such as William Blake, Wordsworth, W.B. Yeats, Whitman, Emily Dickinson and others), with the exception of Jayashankar Prasad, has given adequate, careful consideration to mysticism and has given expression to his cogitations on it. A first-rate creative artist, original thinker, philosopher and historian, soaked in great Indian writings of all kinds, has given us a very cogent and incisive explication of this difficult-to-understand ‘ism’. Obviously, it will be interesting and useful to analyse and assess it, for he is both a perceptive theorist and a captivating practitioner of it, and hence a close study of it will enable us to have a better understanding of his poetry as well as of others’, both Indian and Western, marked by an unmistakable strain of mysticism.

Prasad, who wrote an insightful essay entitled “Rahasyavad” (Mysticism) at the mature age of about forty, initiates the discussion with the assertion that in poetry the imaginative perception of a kind of an extraordinary or spiritual experience forms the mainsream of mysticism. He does not agree with the common belief that the main source of mysticism is Sematic religious feeling, and therefore it is something foreign to India. However, he points out that in the country named Siam, the Jews, whose prophet was Musa, were, in principle, the devotees of God and considered man as the wor-

shipper and slave of Jehovah (the God of Jews). In Semitic religion, it is a crime and sin to compare man with God. That is why Christ declared himself the son of God only, but the worshippers of Jehovah (Jews) did not tolerate this relationship between man and God and hence crucified him. In the olden days, the Muslims, who were the followers of the Jews in this respect, did the same with Mansoor for saying ‘anlahak’, and Sarmad was beheaded. The opponents of the spirit of the Semitic religion, Christ, Mansoor and Sarmad, according to Prasad, were fully conversant with the Aryan monism (advaita).

Tracing the origin of Sufism, Prasad states that this sect of Muslim religion is that stream of thought which was born of the intermingling of the Arabs and the Sindhis. However, the full growth of the Sufi religion took place in the Aryan settlement of Iran in ancient age, but their manners and code of conduct are in consonance with Islam. In their *tauhida* (belief), the choice is of One, of all other Gods, rather than of complete monism. In fact, *tauhida* has no philosophical relationship with monism. In it wherever there is presence and awareness of the philosophical element, the essence of rebirth or soul, that is the adherence to Indian mysticism because in the *Shami* religions the idea of monism is not just rare but discardable as well.

Some people believe that the female slaves of God in the temples of Babylonia or Mesopotamia should be regarded as the fountainhead of religious love and from that began the admixture of religion and love and the so-called immorality of sexuality and amorousness in devotion. And this kind of love entered into Indian Vaishnavism through Christianity. But Prasad affirms that these people did not know that the impact of sex on religion and the origin of Creation was admitted in India as early as the Rigvedic age when it was said, “kamadastragrey samvarttadhi manso retah pratham yadasita.” Patently, this sex feeling (*kama*) is the old Vedic form of love and this term is much wider in meaning than love. Prasad opines that ever since we accepted *kama* (sex desire) as synonym of love or *ishqa*, the term ‘*kama*’ lost its true, deeper significance. Perhaps owing to the idealistic tendency of the rationalists, this word began to connote only man-woman relationship. But, as a matter of fact,

the word 'kama' is so wide in its implications as it assimilates in it all these meanings. This Vedic 'kama' was later on studied comprehensively in India and was developed into the form of devotional-erotic art (kamakala). This became a devotional system of the urge and predilection for beauty, joy and passion. Later on, in the twelfth century the illustrious Sufi Ibn Arabi also accepted its importance in his religious principles and stated: "Of the Gods man has conceived and worshipped, Ibu Arabi is of opinion that Desire (kama) is the greatest and most vital. It is the greatest of the universal forms of His self-expression" (Cited by Prasad in "Rahasayavad," *Kavya aur Kala tatha Anya Nibandh* 33).

The devadasi (female slaves of God) system is still existant in the South Indian temples, and centuries before Christianity, Charakya, in his monumental work *Arthashastra*, mentioned places in a town where the temples of Shiva, Skanda and Sarswati stood, and the Sarswati temple was usually the centre of seminars, music and other artistic activities. The female God-slaves used to live in the temples, but they would live there only to express, through art, the special ideas and feelings believed to be inherent in that particular God-idol. It was not improbable if they wer4ealso the worshippers of love. Prasad believes that prior to the Sufi Rabiya the South indian woman God-slave named Andal was doubtless the inventor of the music of love for Krishna. In fact, love for Krishna was the collective feeling of that temple, and Andal had the felt-experience of that. Historicaaly, it can be proved that Sufi religion, which grew in Persia, had the unmistakable impact of Kashmiri devotees. Thus, Prasad demonstrates that though the interchange of ideas is quite a natural process, yet it is absolutely erroneous to say that Indian mysticism was imported from Mesopotamia very much like some people's endeavour to prove the *Vedas* as Sumeriyan documents. Inevitably, Prasad draws the inference that the Saivas' monism/non-dualism and their harmonious, equable (samarasyavala) School of Mysticism, and the Vaishnavas' feeling of sweetness (madhuriyabhava) together with their mystery of love and the worship of eroticism as beauty, etc. had clearly their seeds in the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* in which the ancient Indian sages had discussed

and publicised them from time to time (33); in fact, these were the devotional methods of the Indian sages who were the creators of the above-mentioned immortal sciptures.

Prasad discerns the reason why mysticism has not been assigned due place in Indian stream of thought. Some critics strongly believe that if the path of blissful mysticism is included in the Indian tradition of imaginative and judicious judgement, the structure of idealism will get weaker. Therefore, they fear to admit that the reality of life is joy, and that man, knowingly or unknowingly, is ceaselessly in search of it. In the name of sound judgement(viveka), idealism has raised a barrier in the path of joy, and this restrains idealism from accepting mysticism as its own integral part. But the ancient Indian Aryans were infefatigably given to enjoyment, enthusiasm and recreation in all their activities, and even now the Aryans in other counties of the world, according to Prasad, have all this ingrained in their beings by birth. The old Indians had innately the passion for pleasure, joyful imagination and recreation. But today we feel that it is Semitic as we adopt it as a result of caste leanings and compulsions.

Prasad thinks that perhaps these critics have not paid adequate attention to the fact that at the beginning of the Vedic period in the very age of the worsip of Nature and multiple Gods when in accordance with "ekam sadvipra bahudha vadanti" (34) monotheism was evolving, at that very time spiritualism (atmavad) also blossomed and gained recognition. These two streams of thoughts had two different symbols: Varuna (God of water) of monotheism and Indra (the Head of Gods) of spiritualism. Varuna was the ideal of the rule of justice and discretion (viveka). Different from him, the most powerful God, Indra was the publicist and promulgator of spiritualism and hedonism. Varuna had to respiritual linquish the position of the presiding God in favour of Indra, and so under the influence of Indra's spiritualism saturated with hedonism (anandavada) the Aryans imbibed the philosophy of spiritual hedonism (anandavada). Thus, in the Vedic literature the portrayal of Indra and the fairies like Urvashi and others is in consonance with his hedonoistic attitude towards life. Despite their indulgence in the day-to-day external mechanical

activities, the Vedic Aryans felt the inner conflict between the utility of spiritualism and monism. However, the Aryans of the *Saptasindhu* region welcomed and embraced more the hedonistic view of life because they were the worshipper of self (*svatva*). In fact, the Indian Aryans, in comparison with the Aryans of Assyria and other places, welcomed hedonism in spirituality more. The Indian Aryans, under the impact of Indra, performed rituals and yajyas (yagya) with immense joy and enthusiasm. In short, the mainstream of Vedic religion had spiritualism inside it and hedonism outside it in its rituals and rites. However, some sects of ancient Indian Aryans established new philosophical schools founded on intellectualism and reason. Their successors known as Tirthankar propounded the philosophy of pessimism (dukhavada) in Magadha thousands of years before Christ on the basis of reason and intellectual analysis. This intellectualism, based on well-reasoned arguments, expressed the view that the world was full of sorrow and that the highest manliness lay in getting rid of sorrow and pain. Pessimism was the consequence of pain and sorrow. Intellection cum discretion attained such a height as it resorted to a particular way of life — all naked, drinking warm water and covering mouth with cloth. There were several groups of these Tirthankars who were opposed to Buddhism. These pessimists, who had no belief in spiritualism, were the worshippers of rationality and conscience (*chaityapujaka*). Apparently, this thinking mode, which begot pessimism, grew stronger getting strength from arguments based on reason and discretion. The sharp reaction against spiritualism was inevitable, and with the result in the later ages the philosophical unspiritualists (anatmavadi) were given to devotionalism, and thus rationalism developed into devotionalism (bhaktivada). Those, who did not have sufficient self-confidence, needed some kind of support. The need for an inspiring search — a stream of intellectualism and rationalism — grew into devotion to God based on ancient monism (ekeshvarvada). Thus these thinking people and their quest for support initiated the worship of new gods and goddesses and their superior powers. However, the emergence of hedonism in the mainstream of non-dualistic devotion had already taken place in a different manner which will be taken into

account a little later.

As stated above, in the mainstream of Vedic literature, the mechanical devotional activities were begun to be explained and commented upon spiritualistically, and in the age of varied philosophical schools the theory of spiritual hedonism (bliss/ananda) was quite popular even in philosophical-cum-religious texts known as *Aryanak* which succeeded the philosophical tradition called *shruti-parampara*. In the famous *Taittiriya-Upanishad*, there is a story that when the great sage Bhṛagu went to his father-teacher Varuna for spiritual learning, the father repeatedly asked him to practise penance (tapa) and when Bhṛagu could not get satisfaction even after undergoing repeated penance, he could attain satisfaction only from giving himself to hedonistic (ananda) theory. Thus, the celebrated Indian sages attached more importance to hedonism (joy/ananda) as compared to reason and science in their philosophical systems. Prasad cites the following extract from *Taittiriya-Upanishad* in this context:

The knowing Self is the soul of the thinking Self, but within it lives its complement and completion, the joyous Self. The Joyous Self grows up side by side with the knowing Self. Satisfied desire is its head, pleasure its right arm, contentment its left arm, joy its heart, Spirit its foundation. (36; *The Ten Principal Upanishads*, Put into English by Shree Purohit Swami and W.B. Yeats 71)

In the *Upanishads* bliss (ananda) consists of love and recreation (pramoda), and this was, indeed, essential for the bliss-theory of spiritual hedonism (anandavada). Inevitably, the Aryans of the main Vedic stream unmistakably propounded the philosophy of spiritual joy (Anandavada). No wonder *Mundaka-Upanishad* and *Katha-Upanishad* accentuate it (36). All this leads Prasad to infer that spiritual inner bliss cannot be attained through alternative ideas and arguments. No doubt, the learned ancient Aryas made adequate use of intellectualism and rationalism for scientific progress, mechanical activities and material achievements, but they were primarily and essentially the devotees of non-dualism and spiritual hedonism (anandavada), and were certainly above the mere scientific activi-

ties and rituals. Indeed, they were innately spiritualists. They discussed and argued incessantly and determinately in favour of non-dualism and soul. However, at that very time idealism, rationalism and intellectualism had also powerful bearing on the Indian psyche, and therefore the devotional techniques of those hedonists (seekers of joy) tended to become secretive and mysterious. Prasad cites from *Shvetashvatar-Upanishad* in support of his assertion (37). Their devotional methods are abundantly discussed in *Chhandogya* and other *Upanishads*. They were the propounders and practitioners of typical secretive devotional techniques. The Buddhist literature describes the devotional methods which were imitation of the *Upanishadic* sages, but the Buddhists were essentially rationalistic in their own unique way.

After the age of *Shruties* and *Nigamas*, the successors of the *rishies* created *Agams* and persistently pursued the search of the treasure of spiritual bliss/hedonism. Prasad accentuates his belief that zeal (ullasa) is the very essence of hedonism (ananda), and this is why it could not be ignored in the devotional techniques. Both imagination and devotional techniques were progressing side by side; imagination would conceive, and devotion would give it practical shape. Thus, the believers in *Agamas* followed the hedonism of *Nigamas* both in ideas and activities. This non-dualistic (advaita) hedonism (ananda) was further strengthened by the commentators of *Agamas* like Kshemraja. Following the *Brahadaryanika Upanishad*, they, on the basis of equality (samata), engendered the sweet imagination of devotion (bhakti) and friendly love (mitra-pranaya). This early form of devotion was based on the background of non-dualism. This kind of devotion was meant to end discrimination, dualism and the difference between man and the Eternal. Of this type of devotion, Abhinavagupta, the illustrious teacher of Maheshwaracharya, has written very effectively (38). This new development of devotional love (premabhakti) in non-dualism was founded on *Taittiriya* and other *Upanishads*. And soon, along with it, developed clearly the intense feeling of beauty which is elaborately described in *Ashtavakragita* (39).

The followers of *Agams* kept intact (or continued to adhere to)

the ancient *ananda-marg* (spiritual hedonism) cum non-dualism in their mode of devotion (sadhana/dedication) and used to call it mystical school (rahasaya-sampradaya). No wonder in his introduction to *Shivasutramarshini*, Kshemraja speaks of it in considerable details (39). These believers copied *Shivasutras* from Mahadevagiri so that the school of mysticism might not get lost/disappear. As stated earlier, this philosophical school was non-dualistic. These persons accepted and adopted the sex-devotion as an instance in order to integrate spiritual hedonism (ananda) with the age-old devotional method of *pashupata-yoga*. For this, they sought the support of the *Upanishads*. In this connection, Prasad cites from *Brihadarayaka-Upanishad* (39).

True, in the light of these sacred texts, this non-dualistic devotion continued to grow with the adherents of mysticism. Obviously, they were not required either to run after the improbable idea founded on the belief of the world as an illusion or on the renunciation of the world on account of pessimism. The Saivas (the followers of Saivism) admitted the world as an integral part of the soul in the practical form of non-dualistic mysticism. Besides, they also conceived of simple, natural hedonism. In *Saundrya-lahri*, Sankaracharya puts all this very effectively (40). In these devotees (sadhakas), non-dualism (advaita) blossomed into the natural feeling of joy (ananda), and this is emphatically stated in *Anandalahari* (40). Also, Prasad cites a Kashmiri devotional poet (Bhakt-kavi), whose poetry forms a part of the collection *Sangraha Strotra*, to accentuate his point (40). These devotional poets' intense experience of the devotional joy (archanrasa) emanating from the pleasure of senses, is, in Prasad's considered opinion, soaked in hedonism.

According to *Spandashastra*, a work in the tradition of *Agamas*, spiritual hedonism (atmananda) is invariably present in every intense feeling and situation (40). And according to non-dualistic devotion (advaita sadhana), in all subjects, in all senses and their meanings, there does not exist anything like anti-good and anti-joy. Prasad quotes two lines from the ancient text to elucidate it (40).

While the intellectuals and rationalists get stupefied and baf-

fled in their path of seeking the One Eternal (Brahama) because they find mind ever wandering and uncontrollable, the devotees of joyous spirituality (anandavad) believe that mind, however mobile, cannot go anywhere but to the blissful Siva (the Good) who is omnipresent, inside and outside every mobile and immobile, static and dynamic existence (41).

These two unalloyed streams of discreet intellectuality and spiritual hedonism (ananda) resulted in two schools of thoughts respectively — viz. the unspiritual sorrowful Buddhistic Hinayan school given to the inevitability of action (karamavadi), and the mystical school steeped in spiritual hedonism (ananda). Soon within these two schools there emerged several mixed streams of thoughts. Deviating from unspirituality, a group of Buddhists, adhering to the authority of Buddha, became the follower of *mahayana*. After pure rationalism, it also began to embrace ritualistic worship and the imagination of gods. The coordination of the Buddhistic nihilism (shunyavada) — a sort of atheism — and the prevalent Vedic worship of many gods came to be known as the Mahayana school among the Aryans of that age. And like the Buddhists, the adherents of the vedic religion also made a successful attempt to bring about a similar kind of coordination, and this gave birth to the Puranic religion very much like the Buddhistic Mahayana. In that age of Puranic religion, according to Prasad, the most outstanding incarnation of rationalism, discretion and idealism was Sri Ramachandra, who was simply great in propriety, sense of honour and compassion for the suffering humanity. However, the greatest person of the Puranic period was Sri Krishna who was, and is even now believed to be, the complete incarnation of the Eternal, the admixture of the *Gita*-like rationalism of the highest order and the spiritualistic hedonism of the finest kind in the form of the amorous, frolic activities (Brajleela) in the Braj region in his early life and affluent, luxurious living at Dwarika in the later period of his earthly existence.

Prasad reiterates that Sri Krishna, who was unquestionably the best person of the Puranic period — the very embodiment of the Supreme Being —, was a wonderful synthesis of rationalism and hedonism. What differentiated him from Indra, the highest deity of

the Vedic age, was that in his worship there was always the absence of equitability and harmoniousness because it was primarily characterised by dualism, surrender and dedication. As such Prasad rightly opines that the worship of Krishna was inevitably marked by the anguish and pangs of separation in love rather than by the joys of union. And that was why this kind of mysticism, issuing from love, was more effective and remarkable because of the pain and anguish of separation in love.

Prasad correctly states that the philosophical form of the Puranic religion resulted in the theory of the illusory nature of all things except the Ultimate Being commonly known as the Vedanta theory. This Vedantic theory of *mayavada* was constituted of the mixture/mingling of the elements of the Buddhistic unspirituality and the Vedic spiritualism. This was the reason why considering the world as illusion and hence sorrowful, the One Eternal — the Blissful (*Sachidananda*) — was imagined and believed to be a reality beyond the world. This new creed also consisted of some traits of the Siva-dualism of the believers in the Universal Soul (visvatmavadi) — bliss and illusion were its contribution to the new creed. Though intellectualism (belief in reason, *budhivada*, like the belief in the *Agamas*, was regarded as ignorance, yet for the exposition of soul through reason the learned Godapad — the propounder of the theory of the world as illusion — told us the solution to control the mind in his famous work named *Mandookyakarika*. He not only preached the importance of the intense feeling of sorrow for abstaining from sexual and other physical pleasures, but also considered mental joy as mean and vulgar. Prasad quotes his words from *Mandookyakarika*: “nasvadayetsukham tatra nisssamgah pragya bhaveta (42). In fact, bliss was combined with truth and heart, but surely this was the consequence of knowledge, of the ambiguousness and indeterminateness of mind. The element of illusion was imparted a different nature. True, there was the predominance of intellectualism in all philosophical beliefs. However, the spiritualism as established in intellectual nihilism by the leading philosophical figures by virtue of their pedantry, was not unknown to their contemporaries and predecessors. In this context, Prasad quotes the well-known age-old

statement: “mayavadamasacaceasatra pracaceanna baudhameva hi” (42).

Tracing the birth of mysticism and its inborn nature, Prasad further states that along with *Mahayana* and *Puranic* religion, the devotees of Buddha were divided, with the result the Buddhists, fed up with nihilism, were absorbed in search of bliss (ananda). Most of these Buddhists joined the Krishna sect of dualistic devotion, while the rest of them became the followers of the *Agamas*. At that time there were mainly two streams of thoughts. The followers of one, attaching all importance to the soul, were in favour of leading the world from *idam* — the unconscious mind — to *aham* — the ego, the conscious mind —, and these were called the devotees of Siva and Saivism. Slightly different from these, there were those who were devoted to the practice of the immersion of non-dualistic soul into the waves of *shakti* (power), the female principle, and these were known as Shaktas — the worshippers of *Shakti*, the divine power of Siva personified as woman. The devotional system of that period was mostly used for the personal progress. The incantation system, which was prevalent on the mountain named Sriparvata and which was becoming popular among the Buddhists, attained culmination in the form of *Vajrayana* sect and then it entered the *Ahama* school of thought, and thereafter the non-spiritualistic Buddhists, in spite of discarding the soul, developed the highly mystical devotional practices as worshippers of numerous *Saktis* invented by them out of their belief in Vedic Ambika and other goddesses. What was most striking about them was the fact that they replaced Lord Buddha, religion, etc. by sex and liquor, and soon the idols of these were installed. All the streams of thoughts that were hinted or mentioned in the sacred verses (mantras) were given the forms of varied gods. Thus, the oblong worship-system became quite popular.

In the similar fashion, theism was canvassed and popularised in the Puranic religion. Sri Krishna was regarded as the incarnation of the Puranic Supreme Being (Puranapurush), the embodiment of sixteen accomplishments; he was the very acme of male beauty. Then, ways were devised to have the experience of the physical beauty of female form, as well as the feeling of beauty

(saundryabhavana). In this connection, Prasad refers to the ancient book on sound (svarashastra) named *Narapati-jayacharya*, which makes a very significant statement about the mind — the seat of perception (43). According to it, the perception of beauty is capable of revealing all the three worlds — earth, heaven and hades. What Prasad specially stresses is that in that period the worship of human beauty was used as a devotional technique to impart utmost strength and elation to human mind which was dominated by the image of beauty dependent on man and woman.

Furthermore, Prasad points out that the successors of the Buddhists too, feeling restless and perplexed because of their belief in nihilism (shunyavada), began to seek shelter in practising incantational techniques as is evident from *Aryamanjusrimulakalpa*. They also embraced the relevant devotional ways of the Saivas. In their quest for bliss, the Buddhist school of Yogacharya and of the practitioners of secret devotional techniques came in close contact with the followers of *Agamas*. Importantly, the philosophy of spiritual hedonism was triumphant over nihilism. But this affected the Saivas' universalism and delimited it by confining it to narrow individual ego. This narrow spiritualism was regarded as condemnable and incomplete egoism of the *Agamas*, but the Buddhists moulded that simple dualistic view of individual spiritualism for the purpose of making body very strong like *vajara* and acquiring freedom of materialistic possessions. The Buddhists were scientific in attitude; they were the worshippers of self-interest, very much like the modern Western people, who, in their dedication to science, are extreme worshippers of collective self-interest. The Nath community (the followers of the Saiva sect of Gorakhnath) of the followers of the *Agamas* was expert in *hatha-yoga* (“the form of yoga in which emphasis is laid on physical disciplines and exercises [including breath-control] to achieve withdrawal of the mind from external objects” [*The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*, ed. R.S. McGregor 1056]), and they made northern Sriparvat (Sri Mountain) the centre of it. Thereafter eighty-four sidhs (semi-divine beings or ascetics of great perception possessing supernatural faculties) came into being. Of course, the tradition of the above two sects was the same,

but they were basically different in a way: while the one, in spite of its belief in nihilism, strove to achieve union with Lord Siva the Eternal (niranjana); the other, even though given to theism, regarded nihilism as mere background. Taking all this into consideration, Prasad rightly asserts that mysticism continued to remain the central technique of devotion in all these varied schools of philosophy. Wherever there was worship together with outward show and ostentation, the non-dualism was the commanding source and force of mysticism inside the theory. Ever since the Vedic age, monism was the foundation of mystical perception in the worship of Indra. The tradition of mysticism in the Vedic age followed the sequence of thoughts as discussed above.

Prasad opines that the prayers of Indra in the forty eighth *sukta* of the tenth *mandal* of the *Rigveda* is doubtless inspired by egotistic and non-dualistic perception. In them the statements such as “bhvam vasunah purvyaspatiharam ghanani sam jayami shashvatah”, “ahamasim mahamaho”, etc. unmistakably embody the Vedic view of mysticism. Prasad is correct when he says that it is impossible to refer to all the mystical utterances of the Vedic era in an essay. But what he especially accentuates is that it is erroneous to believe that the agitated, apparently incoherent and confused utterances were first spoken by *Shami* prophets; in fact, the Vedic sages used to talk about the deep, secret matters in astonishingly symbolic language. Prasad illustrates his assertion by citing two extracts from sacred verses: “ajamekam lohitashuklakrasanamah” and “tamekanemi trivratam shodashantam shatardharamah”. The *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and *Agamas* are saturated with skilful practices of the mystical feeling of joy. The Vedic sages interpreted their most important, meaningful sacred word, ‘Om’, in the light of this also (44).

Prasad rejects out of hand some people’s view that Tulsi Sahab’s poetic utterances like “jin jana tina jana nahim” (i.e. those who claim to know the *One*, do not know Him) and such others were imported from the country named Siam (now called Thailand). Prasad convincingly proves that all such statements were based on, and were rather the re-creation or imitation of, the famous mystical sacred verse of *Kena-Upanishd*: “yasyamatam tasya matam yasya na veda

sah” (44). The holy verses of the *Veda (Shruti)* like “yadeveha tadamutra yadamutra tadanivaha” and many more clearly propound the theory of unity, oneness of the human body (*pinda*) and the universe (*brahmanda*), and it was this kind of unity which became the unflinching conviction of the saints who followed it strictly, and it became known as ‘saint’s opinion’.

Prasad refers to the view according to which a particular form of worship (*upasana*) in combination with action or religious observance (*karma*) remained purified by the stream of knowledge (*gyana*) and in it several chambers were not created with a view to meeting the worshipped (*aradhya*). But differing from this opinion, Prasad asserts that this mystical form of worship was not borrowed from any foreign land because the void of sky, which is mentioned in *Chhandogya-Upanishad*, has a direct relation with the nihilism (*shuniyavada*) of the Buddhists and the nihilistic background of the *Agamas*. All this, according to Prasad, goes to prove that Kabir’s nihilistic utterances cannot be said, in any way, to be the gifts from the country named Shyam; they have their origin in the sacred verses of the ancient Indian sages — in the holy verses of the *Upanishads* like “tam caedah brayuyardidamsimanah brahmapure dahram pundarikam vesam dahrosminnantarakasah” (Cited from *Chhandogya-Upanishad* by Prasad 44) and “padmakosa pratikasam hridayama capyadhomukhamh” in which the Eternal Soul’s seat is shown in the centre of the top-knot of hair, and His temple has been not taken from any foreign land. Prasad asserts that the *Agamas*, the ancient Indian holy texts, make a repeated mention of this kind of mystical perception, as is evident from the examples cited above.

The indivisible joy and love, as experienced by the dualistic worshippers of Sri Krishna, were invariably and automatically inalienable from separation and sorrow in love. The milkmaids’ anguish of separation in love as enunciated by the rational, devout *Vaishnavas* (the adherents of dualism), was bound to be close to sorrow because it was the love of a wife for her lover, other than her husband, and this is profusely and exquisitely presented in the *Bhagavata Purana*. Prasad demonstrates that in this kind of love, philosophically of ‘other’, ‘belonging to another’, is meant to discard

self, 'one's own'. No wonder this form of love is bound to be inseparable from pangs of separation according to the famous statement of *Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad*, "yatra hi dvaitamiva bhavati taditar itaram pasati" (45). However, after the *Agamas*, the Sidhs practised and kept intact the stream of mysticism in their simple, popular language which they called 'samdhya-bhasha', and they remained the staunch worshippers of simple, natural joy. Prasad quotes four lines from Naropa to illustrate it (45). Not only this, these Sidhs also propagated the belief in Siva as the very image of the greatest ascetic and sage. Apropos of this, Prasad cites four lines of Kandhappa (45). Importantly, these Sidhs were immersed in their own felt-experiences, and were far from indirect, implied experiences. To give an idea of the portrayal of this form of love, Prasad four lines of Sabrappa (45-46).

Prasad avers that this last stanza is in the musical mode known as *shabari ragini* (a modification [thought of as a feminine personification] of a major musical mode or raga) which is perhaps the earliest name of *asavari*, a musical *raga*. The Sidhs used music in their worship, which had its roots in the musical dance of Nataraja, Lord Siva. Prasad thinks that perhaps Baiju Bavra was one of the musicians in the Sidhas' tradition. These Sidhs had the experience of divine bliss (*brahmananda*). The noted Sidh Bhusuka is referred to by Prasad in this connection and the former's two poetic lines are quoted as an instance of this (46). These people, like Kabir, discarded the *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, and the *Agamas*. Perhaps, the later saints followed these Sidhas, and this is what Kandhappa says and does (46). In the *Agamas*, the worship of sexual desire (kama) was popular in the form of the worship of the God of sexual desire (Kameshwara) in quite a developed form (46).

However, the system of Buddhistic secret religious ceremonies behind instinctive, innate hedonism (sahajananda) at that time, as Prasad states, had become horrible and had crossed all the limits of rationalism, abandoning all restraints and propriety. Even the believers in an unqualified Absolute Being (nirguna) had to give importance to these early Hindu mystics who were instinctively given to hedonism. Kabir was the greatest poet in this tradition of mys-

ticism. He depends on Rama, the staunch believer in reason, and perhaps he, in expressions like "sadho sahajsamadhi bhali", repeats and reproduces the Sidhas' innately mystically feelings and perceptions which they learnt from the followers of the *Agamas* and other sacred texts. In Kabir's writings we clearly perceive the unmistakable impact of the poetry of the Sidhas. No doubt, he came under the Muslim influence, but more than Shami prophets he was close to the Vedic sages, Tirathanakars, Nathas and Sidhas. After Kabir, rather somewhat in his own time, the stream of mysticism, centred around Lord Krishna, came into being. In that very age, along with the reformatory mysticism (like that of Kabir) and the popular belief in *nirguna* (the unqualified Absolute Being) Rama, there was a clear discussion of Rama as the qualified Absolute Being (*saguna*). Prasad rightly asserts that in Hindi literature of that period mysticism was so prominent and puissant that even Tulsidas, the devotee of Rama as the divine incarnation of all virtues had to resort to suggestive mysticism in his inimitable epic, *Ramacharitamanasa*, and wrote "asa manasa manasa chakh chahi." However, it was not in Rama, but in Krishna, as Prasad rightly affirms, there was a remarkable admixture of hedonism (ananda) and reason, of love and beauty. No wonder the Braja poets (the poets of the Braja region of Mathura, Vrindavana, etc.) were devoted to spiritual hedonism indirectly by writing profusely about Radha-Krishna. Mira and Surdas created literature dealing with mysticism of love. Truly, the celebrated poets like Dev, Rasakhana, Ghanananda and several others were their followers. Representing this mystical tradition in her own way, Mira, Prasad says, ejaculated:

suli upar seja piya ki, kis vidhi milani hoya. (47)

This love in the form of waiting for the moments of meeting with the lover/loved, has always been inalienable from the sorrow of separation. The *ritikalina* poet (the poet of the later part of the medieval period in Hindi Literature) Dev also writes in the same vein:

haun hi braj Vrindavan mohi mei basat sada
jamuna taramg syam rang avlin ki I

cahu or sundar saghan van dhekhiyat,
 kunjan mei suniyat gunjan alin ki II
 bansivat-tat natnagar natata mo mei,
 rasa ke vilas ki madhur dhuni bina ki II
 bhar rahi bhanak banak tal tanan ki
 tanak tanak ta mei khanak churin ki II (47)

Commenting on this, Prasad observes that Dev could only become Vrandavana, and not Shyama (Krishna). Indeed, this mysticism was more immersed in the lovers' sorrow of separation (viraha). No doubt, some exponents of this kind of mysticism had also linked it with instinctive bliss (ananda), and had also endeavored to make it mystical by virtue of the sweetness and charm of love for person other than the spouse (extra-marital love, *parkiyaprema*), but because of its dualistic and rationalistic outward appearance this mystical love remained essentially literary in subject matter. The saints of the school of the Absolute Being without attributes (nirguna) had had the imaginative experience of love and sorrow of separation by presuming themselves as the bride of Rama. But in the tradition of the school of mysticism of the Siddhas, only Tumkaragiri, Rasalagiri and others continued the stream of spiritual hedonism (ananda) and non-dualism/monism (advaitata) in the popular, pure mystical poetry.

Prasad demonstrates that Sanskrit literature abounds in the imposition of consciousness on universally beautiful Nature. He holds that this mysticism of Nature or of the divine power of Siva personified as woman (Prakrati) is simply the imitation (anukarana) of "shariram tvama shambho" of *Anandalahari* by Sankaracharya. He points out that in Hindi literature of his own time this monistic, non-dualistic mysticism has begun to find exquisite expression, and this, in his view, is the natural growth of mysticism in literature. He explains the special, striking nature of this new form of mysticism by affirming that it is a remarkable attempt to harmonise ego, consciousness (ahama) with id, the unconscious state of mind through oblong felt experience (anubhuti), harmoniousness (samarasata) and natural beauty. Also, he thinks that anguish of separation, in consonance with the pain and suffering of the age, is an integral part

of it by becoming the means of affable union of the separated persons. Prasad ends his critical essay asserting that the stream of mysticism of his age (in the form of mystical strain in Chhayavadi [Romantic] poetry of his times) is indubitably India's own creation and precious possession, and is not lifted from any other country at all.

The foregoing analysis of Prasad's exposition of mysticism in the context of Indian literature clearly brings out the author's vast learning and comprehensive understanding of ancient Indian literature. His critical essay is well documented and is at the same time interspersed with his perceptive observations characterized by rare originality and depth which I have already highlighted in the text of the paper repeatedly and hence to focus on them here will only be tedious repetition. Prasad's knowledge of the nature and history of Indian culture, religion and literature is simply astonishing, and it is this which makes his critical piece invaluable. Notwithstanding the limitations of his times and circumstances, his familiarity with, and understanding of, several major religions and cultures of the world, and of Western thought and criticism deserve unreserved admiration. However, Prasad's study of mysticism suffers from some glaring weaknesses. In the first place, he does not define mysticism clearly as he does romanticism, realism, art and poetry. He just makes one brief statement about what mysticism is in poetry — viz. it is imaginative perception, some kind of spiritual experience — at the beginning of his essay, and does not explain and elaborate it at all. Also, he does not even touch the varied features and types of mysticism in Indian literature; he makes only few short passing remarks in this connection, and just makes casual references to Kabir, Mira, Surdas and Dev without touching his own poetry or the poetry of his eminent contemporaries like Mahadevi Verma, Pant, Nirala and others, let alone English, Urdu or Persian mystical poets. As a matter of fact, he seems to be concerned mainly with the origin and growth of mysticism in India; he looks at it only from the Indian historical perspective. The reason of this can be sought in his obsession with the intention to prove that mysticism in Indian literature is something essentially and completely

Indian and is not all borrowed from any other country as many people even in India believe; it is born and brought up in India without foreign influences. This, in fact, is the *raison de etre* of his critical piece. And the validity of his basic stand is vindicated by the renowned scholar of mysticism R.C. Zaehner who states that “the all-important mystical tradition developed in India” (“Introduction,” *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane* xi), and that Indian mysticism influenced the mystical streams of other nations such as Sufism: “... that purely monastic ideas in Sufism can be traced back to Abu Yazid of Bistam who appears to have been directly influenced by the Vedanta” (xv). In order to prove the veracity of his assertion that Indian mysticism is essentially original and has not developed under any foreign influence at all, Prasad dwells on the history of Indian culture and religion in great details, and this makes his study of the subject a little uninteresting and difficult. What I feel is that along with this, he should have given adequate consideration to the nature and forms of mysticism in Indian literature as well as in some other literatures like Persian, Urdu and English. Obviously, the sweep of his view of mysticism is quite narrow and his brilliant exposition of the subject is marred by it, to a great extent. But despite all these limitations and shortcomings, Prasad is, indeed, Prasad — out and out original and illuminating, and hence worth knowing and discussing. It is hard to differ from the insightful observations of the renowned Hindi critic Nanddulare Vajpaye in this connection: “Prasad’s concept of mysticism is not narrow, for his vision is comprehensively literary, and not communal. Wherever there is a stream of joy or rasa in poetry, that is the soul’s imaginative inspiration and that is ‘the extraordinary condition’ which is the mother, the creator of poetry, especially mystical poetry. All poetry that overflows with joy, sorrow is the cause of it, and not the aim of it. Thus all the cultured and civilized creations come under Prasad’s exposition of mysticism in literature” (“Introduction,” *Kavya aur Kala tatha Anya Nibandh* 11; translation into English mine).

Works Cited

- Browne, E.G. *A Year amongst the Persians*. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1950.
- Ghose, Sisir Kumar. “Mysticism.” *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Vol. 12. Chicago: Helen Hemingway Benton, 1980.
- Prasad, Jayashankar. *Kavya aur Kala tatha Anya Nibandh*. New Delhi: Diamond Pocket Book (Pvt. Ltd.), 1988.
- The Ten Principal Upanishads*. Put into English by Shree Purohit Swami and W.B. Yeats. Rupa Paperback; Calcutta, Allahabad, Bombay, Delhi: Rupa & Co., 1992.
- Vajpaye, Nanddulare. “Introduction.” *Kavya aur Kala tatha Anya Nibandh*.
- Zaehner, R.C. *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane*. London: Oxford University Press, 1957.

“To Serve the Cause of the Universe”: An Interview with Susheel Kumar Sharma

Syed Ahmad Raza Abidi

Susheel Kumar Sharma has become a prominent signature in the present phase of Indian English poetry. One of the significant post-independence voices in Indian English Poetry, he expresses the aspirations and yearnings of the modern Indian intellect with lyrical pathos. His poetry is full of vital experiences of life, love and nature. Some of his poems have been published in Canada, France, Ireland, Scotland, the UK and the USA. His poems have been translated into Assamese, French, Hindi, Lithuanian, Serbian and Turkish languages. Susheel Kumar Sharma (b. 1962) teaches English at the University of Allahabad. His critical acumen and wide range of readings can be perceived from his research articles on litterateurs like Shakespeare, John Milton, Samuel Johnson, Bernard Shaw, W. B. Yeats, D. H. Lawrence, George Orwell, Miriam Waddington, Sandra Lunnon, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Rabindranath Tagore, Arun Joshi and Anurag Mathur and the reviews of several books for prestigious journals. His research books *The Theme of Temptation in Milton* and *Contemporary Indian English Novel* (in co-authorship with Prof. B.D. Sharma) have been received very well in academic circles. *From the Core Within*, the first collection of his verse, was warmly received in literary circles across the world and was widely reviewed. The reviews of *From the Core Within* have been collected and presented with a detailed Introduction under the title *Bricks and Bouquets* (Ed. Sanjeev Kumar, New Delhi: Creative Books, 2008, pp xxxii + 69, ISBN: 81-85231-32-X).

The second collection of Susheel's poems, *The Door is Half Open*, offers lively encounters with life and language. Fifty two poems of his latest collection are based on many themes like cultural, social, political and personal affairs. This anthology is a compilation of cherished memories treasured over the years in the innermost recess of a sensitive mind. The vision of the poet in this anthology is humanistic and his writing confirms his faith in the spiritual unity of the world. There are clear evidences of his being inspired by

Indian mythology, Hindu religion and culture. Deeply rooted deep in the Indian soil, his poems reflect not only the moods of a poet but also of the complex age of ours. All these poems are also reflections of his intellect, creative mind and sensitivity. *The Door is Half Open* could very well be seen as a poetic itinerary which culminates in the poet's realization of his poetic and spiritual self. This collection is appended with a detailed Glossary carrying explications of words and phrases not only in Sanskrit, arranged in alphabetical order, but also of Indian words like brahmin, Sangam, Varanasi etc. Syed Ahmad Raza Abidi (SARA) talks to Susheel Kumar Sharma (SKS) about his poems, ideas, latest collection of poems *The Door is Half Open* and Indian poetry scene. Excerpts from an interview:

SARA 1: What does “being creative” mean to you?

SKS 1: Creativity is an innate faculty in a person that one uses in order to cope up with one's environs. Needless to mention that even creatures other than human beings display this trait. This faculty can be developed to some extent by being sensitive to one's world. It is believed that if one is creative in one field one is bound to be creative in other fields as well. It is because of this faculty only that a person/ society/ civilization transforms from one domain to another. However, every creative product may not be accepted by all the members of a social group as a useful innovation.

SARA 2: What do you try to communicate with your poetry?

SKS 2: The primary function of language is to communicate an idea to the other person (present at the moment or in future). But whether this communication is taking place depends on many factors including the psychological state of the persons involved, educational background, common language, common knowledge, culture, time of interaction etc. The speaker/writer loses control over them once the words are finalised and let out. They become the property of the listener/reader. It is for them to decide the content and the meaning. As for me I am just trying to spread good sense through my writings.

SARA 3: What kind of creative patterns, routines or rituals do you have?

SKS 3: 1) It is for the discerning readers/critics to find out creative patterns and their kinds in my work.

2) My wife can better describe my daily routine. I can just say that I am a very poor time keeper — I generally get late in meeting all sorts of deadlines.

3) I have been brought up in a family where my grandmother, mother and aunts followed Sanatani Vaishnav Brahminical practices while my grandfather and father were the followers of Arya Samaj. So I have a curious upbringing. I too follow some of the rituals I have been initiated into by my family.

SARA 4: What's your favourite thing you've ever created?

SKS 4: I like to cook vegetarian food when I am alone at home.

SARA 5: What is your personal philosophy?

SKS 5: Try to understand the world as it is; books give only some insights; much of the observations are to be done by oneself. In Ayurveda it is believed that no two bodies are the same. I too believe that no two human beings are the same. I feel that each object on this earth (viz. human beings, animals, birds, plants, trees, and minerals), other planets and the stars around us are interconnected with invisible threads which are like telephonic wires carrying messages from one place to another. We need to feel their presence and decipher the messages delivered to us. Besides instead of blaming others and finding faults with others we should learn to be responsible for our actions/ words.

SARA 6: What are your strong themes?

SKS 6: I do not understand the phrase "strong themes". I have already mentioned above that my words are my words only till the time I have some control over them. Once they are in public domain I cannot exercise any control/power on/over them. They either make others happy or unhappy; they either move others or they do not. Words are not strong or soft but their impact is. Similarly themes are not strong or weak/soft but their impact is. Even a *sahridaya* (sensitive) reader reacts differently to a poem at different points of time or in going back to the text. One reading of a poem usually does not evoke proper emotions. We, therefore, need to go to a poet/ poem again and again to re-evaluate the work.

The readers have to decide the themes or the patters of the themes or the recurrence of themes or the strong themes or the weak themes. The same poem appeals to one reader but is not appreciated by another. Some readers find poverty a good theme but some others may find it ugly. So it is meaningless to describe any poem/ theme as strong or weak. Much will depend on the readers.

SARA 7: Do you use symbols in your poems?

SKS 7: Literary critics believe that the language of poetry is different from that of prose though no effort to specify the differences in these two is comprehensive enough. Symbols are one of the means to increase the density of the language of poetry. Like most other literary writers I too have used symbols in my poems consciously as well as unconsciously. Prof N S R Ayengar in his article on my poetry has drawn attention to it. For him in "*Mangoes ... the poet metonymically transfigures what a man's life should be.*" He has also drawn parallels to some symbols in Yeats' and my poems.

SARA 8: What does the title of your latest collection of poems The Door is Half Open signify?

SKS 8: I'll reiterate that the meaning of any word/phrase lies with the reader/listener. The title has been interpreted in various ways by the readers. For example, Ms Nata Miladinoviæ (The Enchanting Verses Literary Review, XVII(November 2012),pp17-34,ISSN0974-3057,<http://www.theenchantingverses.org/issue-xvii-november-2012.html>) has written about ten pages on the significance of the title and the symbolism attached to it. Others, who have commented on it and interpreted in altogether in a different light, are Prof S C Dubey (The International Journal of Culture, Literature and Criticism, VI (October 2012), pp.81-84, ISSN: 0976-1608), Ms Pragya Mishra (Literary Discourses, III 1(2012), pp. 337-342, ISSN: 0976 2036), Dr N K Das (Replica: A Modern Progressive English Poetry Quarterly, XVI, 1&2 (January –June 2013), pp. 104-108, ISSN: 2277-7520) and Dr Shubha Dwivedi (The Criterion: An International Journal in English, III, 4(December 2012), pp. 1 – 4, <http://www.the-criterion.com/V3/n4/Shubha.pdf>). I can just say that all these meanings that different readers, sitting hundreds of miles away from me

and from each other, have derived are acceptable for all of them have their valid reasons.

SARA 9: What are you trying to achieve when you write a long poem like "Ganga Mata- A Prayer"?

SKS 9: Poetry is not for "achieving" something in the same sense as one achieves a position or some honour or achieves something in some market. It is a communication with those who have a knack for a special type of language that a poet uses. It is not a coincidence that all civilizations in the world have grown near or on the banks of rivers. Very few rivers in India and abroad are perennial. How many countries can boast of a plain like the Gangetic plains? Therefore when a great visionary like Nehru lavishes praise on this river it is not for nothing. I have not been able to find another river whose water does not get spoiled even after years without any preservatives. Moreover my Hindu sensibility teaches me that no river is just a water body. So for me the river is more than that. But in the present day scenario where water is treated just as one of the resources, there is an unfortunate tendency of over-exploiting it. Moreover, in such a scenario we do not make a distinction between waters from different sources. The result of all this is awful on the environment and also on the people.

Ganga symbolises celebration of democratic spirit with self-discipline. Hinduism at its best can be understood on the banks of the river. The Ganges celebrates the democratic, pluralistic and philanthropic character of the Indian/Hindu society; she does not discriminate on the basis of one's class, social, political and economic status, caste, creed, educational background etc. Fairs like Kumbh Mela, Magh Mela, Kartik Mela and Sonapur Mela etc. are held on the banks of this river where even rich people come to live in penury on their own, leaving their families, riches, business, comforts and tension behind, not for a day or two but for a month or so. The people who come and stay there are sometimes more in number than the population of many countries of the world. Just imagine and compare the mental status of a modern tourist who is lured with all modern facilities and amenities to a particular destination and that of a pilgrim to Kumbh Mela where meagre facilities

are offered yet millions of people throng, stay and return to their homes with no complaints whatsoever. Kumbh Mela also highlights the concept of community living while maintaining the individuality of all the sects, groups and individuals; it also sheds light on our organising capacities as a social group; it involves tourism, business, science, discussions on the topics on this life and the life after, philosophy, rituals, belief in democratic plurality and what not.

Most of the people particularly those who have settled in cities, have taken to western education system and have no time to look at and ponder over their culture from their own perspective are oblivious of this aspect of religion and culture. They just have one notion that the ancient Indian culture binding all the people of this sub-continent is meant for the uneducated and backward-looking people. The poem "Ganga Mata - A Prayer" deals with some of these issues. The revered river deserves an epic to capture all the related issues and to convey the feelings of millions who venerate the river for multiple reasons. Whatever I have been able to do is just like a drop of water on the bank of the river. There are so many Sanskrit words/ phrases/ verses used in the poem (because of the limitations of the English language) to create the ethos of reverence one finds on the banks of the Ganga. A 'Glossary' has also been provided for those who find it difficult to understand the meaning and significance of such words. I suggest that an uninitiated reader should first go through the 'Glossary' and then come to the poem to get a better feel of the poem.

SARA 10: What is the motive of your poetry?

SKS 10: A feeling to communicate with those who feel like communicating with me; I try to bring their attention to certain observations that I feel are important but have largely gone unnoticed.

SARA 11: What is your opinion about the reviews of your English works, published in various journals?

SKS 11: I am grateful to all those who have cared to read my work, have shown interest in it, have taken the trouble of commenting on it and those editors and publishers who considered materials by/on me worth giving attention/ space to. I in fact felt encouraged by the reviews of my first book of poems *From the Core Within* (New Delhi:

Creative Books, 1999, ISBN: 81-85231-27-3). Who will believe that a first collection of poems by almost an unknown person can be reviewed by thirty odd reviewers in different corners of the world? The book, in fact, did attract so many. The same have been collected in a book form (*Bricks and Bouquets*, Ed. Sanjeev Kumar, New Delhi: Creative Books, 2008, ISBN: 81-85231-32-X) as well. All the reviewers have done a good job. Many of their remarks are opposite in nature and content but it is for the reviewers/critics to sort out the issues among themselves. I would like to reiterate here that unless an extensive and intensive criticism takes place good writers are not born. For producing good creative pieces good/intense critical activity is required.

SARA 12: How much of your poetry is appreciated through the medium of Internet?

SKS 12: I am rather new to the use of Internet but I think I have made a good use of this facility. Most of the poems in the collection were read by the readers on different websites as I was added to several poetry groups there. So many readers used to comment on my work and their comments helped me in improving many of my poems. I could feel the empathy of the readers. A dozen reviews of the book are there on different Websites and this number is going up constantly. All these reviewers have done a wonderful job.

SARA 13: Are you satisfied with contemporary trend of poetry in English in India?

SKS 13: This question cannot be answered in either 'Yes' or 'No' for the scene presents a complex web of the politics of institutions, languages, cultures, traditions, readers, publishing houses etc. Any attempt to answer such a question without referring to all these issues will not do justice to contemporary poetry.

SARA 14: Are you satisfied with the recent trend of criticism on Indian English poetry?

SKS 14: The present age is the age of fiction not of poetry. Naturally, more books are coming out on fiction than on poetry; so is the case with the theses being submitted to Indian universities. However, the best books of criticism on I P E (Indian poetry in English) are from the Western authors. Indians too are contributing their mite.

The criticism in English is not to be seen separately but it should be judged in the light of Indian criticism in other Indian languages. There is always a scope for improvement but this does not mean that the critics are not doing their best. The schools and trends in criticism also keep on changing along with time; for the obvious reasons most of these trends come from the English speaking Western world especially the UK and the USA. It is for the individuals to sharpen their wits, their arguments, their analogies and their reductions. How many critics in Indian languages can boast of being a Dryden, Eliot, Leavis or Richards in their language? But why should they be seen as setting the bench mark also deserves some attention.

SARA 15: What would you like to advise budding writers?

SKS 15: Keep your eyes and ears open to let fresh air and new ideas enter your minds.

SARA 16: Auden said, in his great elegy for Yeats, "Poetry makes nothing happen." Do you believe that? I think the rest of the poem goes on to refute it, but how do you respond to that line? Poetry obviously makes *something* happen, doesn't it?

SKS 16: If one hopes that poetry makes something happen as armies' actions do or an action of the police does or a communist revolution does one will surely be disappointed. Not only did Auden write, "poetry makes nothing happen" but in a similar vein Don Marquis also wrote, "Publishing a volume of verse is like dropping a rose petal down the Grand Canyon and waiting for an echo." But the fact remains that neither Auden nor Marquis gave up writing for they were also conscious of the fact that a poet "is scattered among a hundred cities" and that "The words of a dead man/ Are modified in the guts of the living." Shelley claims: "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (emphasis added). They remain unacknowledged because they censure some actions, some ideas, some thoughts, and even some persons while encourage some others without making any fuss unlike the legislators do in an Assembly.

Poetry appeals to sensitive souls (*sahridaya* readers) through words which affect their minds and souls/ hearts. All religions tell us about the importance of words: *The Bible* says: "In the beginning

was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1); Bhartrihari equates word with Brahma (*Shabda Brahma*); Prophet Mohammed was commanded by Gabriel three times in the cave of Hira to “*qara’a*” or read (words). Poetry has been defined as “the best words in the best order.” So poetry is a manifestation of God in some way. That is why both God and the poet have been called creators/seers. Poetry naturally makes something happen but its domain and its ways are different.

SARA 17: Dr. Johnson said, “There are some things that are fit for inclusion in poetry and others which are not”. What do you consider?

SKS 17: All this comes under the broad rubric of purpose of literature. There has been a long debate on the issue in the east as well as the west. The guiding principles in Oriental Aesthetics are there in the word, *sahitya* itself (in contrast to literature). While anything written can be called literature in English, in Sanskrit anything written will not form literature unless it is characterised by *sat* (true/ essence/ of the highest value) and *hit* (interests). Accordingly some scenes are not fit for depiction on the stage. Nay, a poet has also been instructed to lead his life in a particular way to compose good poetry. However, every comment of the critics however serious (s)he might have been, has not been taken seriously by practising poets. Is there a topic on which poems have not been written? The quality and the genre of poetry could be different— it is altogether a different issue but the fact remains that poets have not left any area/ topic unexplored.

SARA 18: What do you think of generations, schools, and movements?

SKS 18: As an Indian I have been taught to respect the elder generations and bless the younger ones. I have learnt so many good things in different schools of life; I am grateful to the schools and the teachers there; whatever I have not been able to learn there is not their fault but mine; any movement is a proof of one’s being alive and kicking, vivacious. If a poet has some respect today it is because of the great works of the earlier generations.

“Schools/ Movements of poetry” sounds like trade unions. Still

they are the essential parts of the history of any literature. Perhaps because of the necessity of communication some persons having common interests come together; out of respect to one person they elect a leader who becomes a spokesperson and leader of the group; and after his/ her death it is all over. This is what one notices in the history of any school of poetry/ art. Once the group comes into existence a lot of politics around the interests of the group also begins. Without these groups other poets will not come into existence so their importance cannot be undermined. One may take a cue from science and technology to understand this phenomenon – could we have had the present day jets without having the first prototype aeroplane which appears to be a very crude model today?

SARA 19: Why are most of the Indian poets in English like Neruda?

SKS 19: I do not think you can prove your point. Most of them are neither like Neruda nor do they write like him nor even profess him to be their guru.

SARA 20: I had Jorge Heine’s article “Pablo Neruda, poet of the people” which appeared in *The Hindu* on Thursday, July 15, 2004 in mind when I said so.

SKS 20: I had some anthologies like V.K. Gokak’s *The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Poetry (1828-1965)*, Arvind Krishna Mehrotra’s *The Oxford India Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets*, Saleem Peeradina’s *Contemporary Indian Poetry in English*, Vinay Dharwadker and Ramanujan’s *The Oxford Anthology of Modern Indian Poetry*, Eunice De Souza’s *Nine Indian Women Poets: An Anthology*, Vilas Sarang’s *Indian English Poetry since 1950: An Anthology*, Salman Rushdie’s *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing*, Sudeep Sen’s *The HarperCollins Book of English Poetry* and Jeet Thayil’s *60 Indian Poets in mind*. Even history books of Indian writings in English like K R S Iyengar’s *Indian Writing in English*, M K Naik’s *A History of Indian English Literature and its sequel*, Naik and Narayan’s *Indian English Literature 1980-2000: A Critical Survey* and Arvind Krishna Mehrotra’s *An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English* do not allude to Neruda in the context of IPE even once.

In writing his article on Neruda, Jorge Heine was doing his duty

as the ambassador of Chile in India. Still he has nowhere even hinted that Indian poets in English read Neruda or write like him or have been influenced by him. He has referred to three Indian works: Chandrabali Singh's in Hindi, Priyadarsi Mukherji's in English and K. Satchidanandan's Malayalam. None of them is a poet in English to my knowledge and none of the works that Heine is citing falls in the category of IPE. All the referred to persons have leftist leanings – politically speaking. In India IPE survives because of its elite nature and bourgeois and colonial character. The Left and the IPE are opposite in nature as they serve two opposite interests and I do not see any meeting point for them. In India Neruda was popularised by Progressive Writers' Association (PWA) and its offshoot bodies for they had a common political ideology that stands up for the masses. I do not know if any Indian poet in English was ever even a member of PWA. Rather there are Indian writers/poets in English who profess that they are "apolitical" and so are their writings. One of the reasons for this sort of proclamation is to distance themselves from the left orientation. Most of them want recognition/Visa/free air-ticket from the US which becomes very difficult to get if the leanings towards the Left come to the fore even by chance. Even if one ignores the politics of free air-tickets their interests lie with the elites and the colonial mind-set. Perhaps they do not realise that that their proclamation of being "apolitical" is also a political statement.

SARA 21: Indian poets were once known for their fiery political verse and now?

SKS 21: Whatever you are saying does not apply to Indian poetry in English (IPE). The mainstream IPE has neither been revolutionary/fiery nor political in strain. In the modern period when Indian poets in indigenous/regional languages were writing political poetry, those writing in English could neither afford to do so nor could dare to do so because any political opposition would have meant a revolt against the ruler whose language they had appropriated. Can you name any Indian poet in English and cite his/her work that has been proscribed in India/British India for being revolutionary? Most of them as a matter of fact were imitating their "mentors and masters" and

were trying to please them to gain a favour. The trend has not disappeared even today rather it has been flowering. They represent "a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" — a class that Macaulay wanted to flourish.

I would also like to draw your attention to Macaulay's following observation: "No Hindu, who has received an English education, ever remains sincerely attached to his religion. Some continue to profess it as a matter of policy, but many profess themselves pure Deists and some embrace Christianity." What Macaulay is reporting can also be corroborated by the biographies of the Indian poets/writers in English. The pioneers in IPE/IWE such as Sake Dean Mahomet, Henry Derozio, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Aru Dutt, Toru Dutt (and the trend continues upto Jayant Mahapatra) were all Christian converts; they abandoned or tried to abandon India to settle in Europe. On the other hand the example of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee is there who wrote his first book, *Rajmohan's Wife* in English but soon switched over his mother tongue Bengali and produced a revolutionary book like *Anandamatha*. It is also given out that the songs in *Gitanjali* were translated (and edited by Yeats) keeping in mind the Christian hymns (some songs have also entered into Christian prayer book). Some disturbing conclusions come to light if one explores the facts on this aspect in all seriousness. India baiting is a major theme in Indian Writing in English including IPE. Those who stand up for the cause of India/Indian masses are bashed up mercilessly for voicing Indian concerns for it is taken as an insult to "His/Her Excellency/Majesty" by his/her self-appointed representatives. The so-called representatives pretend to be sophisticated, cultured, thorough bred, educated gentlemen/ladies but do not hesitate to use invectives and abusive language against the Nativists for the latter voice the concerns of a large number of people by sympathising with the indigenous language and literature and the ethos they embody. You see the language, tenor and content of Arvind Mehrotra's review of Rashmi Sadana's *English Heart*, *Hindi Heartland* in *Biblio* (May - June 2012, <http://www.biblio-india.org/archives/12/MJ12/tocMJ12.asp?mp=MJ12#akm>) if you do not be-

lieve me.

SARA 22: I was actually referring to Shaleen Singh's 'O P Bhatnagar - A Poet of Political Awakening' (<http://ezinearticles.com/?O-P-Bhatnagar—A-Poet-of-Political-Awakening&id=232922>)

SKS 22: Political poetry is different from political references in a poet. Neruda, for example, was a political poet and so was Faiz. But Indian poets like Ghalib, Tulsi, Maithili Sharan Gupt and Nirala were not political poets though one finds plenty of political references in them. How many Indian poets in English have written against War in Afghanistan/ Iran/ Iraq/ Kuwait? Or even during the days of Kargil War regional poetry was crying foul against War/ the arch rival Pakistan. What were the concerns of Indian poetry in English in such times? One can refer to websites like <http://voiceseducation.org/content/india> and <http://poetsagainsthewar.org/> to verify the veracity of what I am saying — there is none from the mainstream IPE and from the fringe of IPE only a few find a place in them though there are hundreds from other countries.

SARA 23: Wordsworth defined poetry as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.” Whereas T.S. Eliot went against the emotions and exclaimed “Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotions”. What is the best way? Should a poet be subjective or objective?

SKS 23: One can be objective even while effusing emotions in plenty. This, for example, happens when one writes poetry about a great common good/emotion like patriotism. There is no set formula for writing good poetry. It is also certainly not necessary that what is considered good today will always be adjudged to be good. One should therefore take a route that leads to the higher values that lead to sublimation and talk about those emotions/passions that cut across time and space.

SARA 24: In this dismal world, haunted by 'blood dimmed' tide of chaotic disorder, what is the significance of literature?

SKS 24: When nothing gives pleasure, hope and light one can turn to poetry. Poetry is the last recluse of the downtrodden, dark, marginalised, voiceless, speechless, and the weakest of the weak.

The 'Blues' that the Afro-American maids used to sing contain their sorrow, agony, anguish and concern for future. They perhaps survived in those troubled times by giving a voice to their pent up emotions. “When you ain't got no money, you got the blues. When you ain't got no money to pay your house rent, you still got the blues. A lot of peoples holler about 'I don't like no blues,' but when you ain't got no money, and can't pay your house rent and can't buy you no food, you damn sure got the blues. If you ain't got no money you got the blues, because you're thinking evil. That's right. Any time you're thinking evil, you're thinking about the blues.” (Howlin' Wolf). One can replace 'Blues' by 'poetry' in the above to understand the significance of poetry/literature.

SARA 25: According to some scholars, literature is a social document. It is influenced by contemporary social, political, historical and religious deals. Whereas another group of critics is of the belief that literature should have no propaganda. They believe in 'art for art's sake' theory. What is the best path?

SKS 25: No person in this world can live in isolation and independent of other human beings as they are gregarious in nature. The human society has been organised in such a way that each of us is dependent on others. It has been operating almost on barter system in some way. So if one person is shirking from doing something for others (s)he is taking something from others without giving anything in turn. To me “art is for art's sake” means that one is ready to take a lot from the society but is not ready to discharge one's duty/ responsibilities towards other fellow beings.

A good piece of literature is neither a moral tale nor even a social/historical record or even pure art devoid of human interest. It is a curious mix of all these ingredients. No good piece of literature can be propaganda. The works of Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Chekhov and Gorky are wonderful pieces of art. Similarly a good work like Orwell's *Nineteen Eight-Four* has been used by both Western and Eastern blocs as a critical commentary on the other.

SARA 26: How did your interest in poetry writing develop? Did you take formal classes or join related groups?

SKS 26: Kindly see my earlier interview entitled 'T. S. Chandra

Mouli in Conversation with Susheel Kumar Sharma' at www.cartyspoetryjournal.com/Issue_09/CPJ-IX.pdf as I do not have anything more to add to what I have already said earlier in this connection.

SARA 27: What do you consider to be your main successes so far?

SKS 27: It is not my success but the contribution of others: I mean *Bricks and Bouquets* (Ed. Sanjeev Kumar, New Delhi: Creative Books, 2008, pp xxxii + 69, ISBN: 81-85231-32-X) – a collection of reviews of my first collection of poems. I am not aware of any other such book on the first collection of any poet. Prof O P Mathur, Former Professor and Head, Dept of English, BHU, Varanasi congratulated me on the publication of that book and he said he was wonderstruck at that type of book as he had not come across any of the sort; it was unique in several ways.

SARA 28: Can you describe the time when you first realised that creating was something you absolutely had to do?

SKS 28: There were several moments when I had to leave my bed and had to take up pen and paper to jot down the ideas. But I do not seem to have kept a track of the same.

SARA 29: Have there been particular books, paintings or films which have influenced your work?

SKS 29: There must be some. T S Eliot says that a poet has to acquire a tradition with a sense of discrimination. A poet who writes in a language other than one's mother tongue has to operate at two levels and imbibe the traits from two traditions and in the process sometimes also has to face a dilemma as Krishna must have felt in having two mothers: one biological and the other adopted.

Freud and other critics like Frazer, Carl Jung, Northrop Frye, and Leslie Fiedler have proved that all the myths are already there in the great repository in our mind. So no poet can operate in a void. Still I'll advise the young readers to pay heed to Lawrence's advice, "Trust the tale not the teller" for all accounts of being influenced by someone are the pieces of fiction as most of them are reconstructions from a faded past.

SARA 30: The writing of poetry must be giving you a great satisfaction in your life, isn't it?

SKS 30: Yes, it has. It has given me name and fame and some money also.

SARA 31: What projects are you working on right now?

SKS 31: Some publishers have asked me to submit my work to them. But I am much behind the scheduled deadlines.

SARA 32: Do you find yourself much in the company of other writers, of poets?

SKS 32: Oh yes. As a teacher I have to discuss a number of poets; as a reviewer I have to comment on so many's works; as a critic I have to discuss so many's merits. My wife also writes in Hindi so, you can understand it, I have to be on my toes every time.

SARA 33: Is there anything else you would rather have done than writing poetry? Because this is something, obviously, which takes up a great deal of one's private life, if one's going to succeed at it? Do you ever have any lingering regrets that you didn't do something else?

SKS 33: I earn my living not by poetry but by serving a university as a full time teacher. I feel that whatever duties are assigned to me by the university should be discharged very faithfully. I love teaching my students and guiding them from time to time. Naturally I have to prepare myself for that; this entails a lot of my time.

No, I have had no regrets – by the way, I am a teacher by choice. I feel my students, my colleagues, the University have given me more honour and respect than I deserve; similarly I feel there are many more poets and critics who deserve far more attention than my work has drawn. So there is no cause for dissatisfaction for me on these counts.

SARA 34: What's your immediate wish?

SKS 34: To serve the cause of the Universe by means of appreciating words and silences.

SARA 35: Thank you Dr. Sharma for this enlightening interview. It was indeed an engaging experience for me. Talking to you has been an honour and privilege. Best wishes for your future endeavours.

SKS 35: I also enjoyed talking to you. I feel honoured. Thank you very much.

BOOK REVIEWS

Susheel Kumar Sharma, *The Door Is Half Open*

(New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors, 2012),

pp. 141, Rs. 150.00/ \$ 10.00 / £ 15.00

K.G. Srivastava

Susheel Kumar Sharma is not an unfamiliar name in the contemporary Indian English Poetry for the lovers of that poetry have already had the fore-taste of his poetic talents through his collection of poems entitled *From the Core Within* (Delhi: Creative, 1999) which had received great acclaim in India and abroad. *The Door is Half Open* is his new venture in the field of poetry. It has 52 poems in all, some of which are quite longish – we can call them longer poems, reminding us of Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' and the 'Immortality Ode', as far as length is concerned. 'Gângâ Mâtâ - A Prayer', 'Poverty: Some Scenes' and 'Hope is the Last Thing to be Lost' are really longish pieces. Other poems are one page or one and a half pages long. But each poem is bound to make the reader think of them as the product of deep meditation.

Before one proceeds to review the Volume, one should make a working definition of poetry. Notwithstanding the numerous definitions of poetry, proposed by the theorists of poetry — Eastern as well as Western – poetry remains undefined, half-defined or narrowly defined. "Spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings", "best words in their best order", "criticism of life", "*rasâtmakam vâkyam*", "*ramaGîyârthâpratipadakah œabdah*", "*adocau úabdârthau saguGau analamk[ti puna% kvâpi*" – all are good in their own way but cannot cover all pieces which learned and tasteful readers call poems whose totality or whose abstract notion has been designated as poetry. I propose the following definition which, I think, can apply to any poem big or small: A poem is a talented individual's rhythmic response to any phenomenon in the world, committed subjectively or objectively to proper words in as charming a way as the individual is capable of. I am sure this definition will be found to be of great help in studying a lyric as well as epic, a tragic piece as well as a satiric or a

Susheel Kumar Sharma, *The Door Is Half Open*

167

comic one. Take up any poem in the world—big or small—in any language and the above definition will cover it up. A 'shera' in Urdu, a 'gâhâ' of Prāk[ita, a 'dohâ' of Hindi, a lyric of English, any narrative piece or even an epic – all will fit within the frame work specified herein. Even 'kchaGikâyen' will be covered by it.

Let us apply the above definition to the poems of *The Door is Half Open*. Each poem of the volume is Susheel Sharma's response to various phenomena of his experience. His method is subjective because he engages himself directly in giving expression to his response to the phenomenon concerned. So far as the question of the propriety of words is concerned, I find the poet grammatically correct in expressing himself. His words are well-chosen and most appropriate to the occasion; their expression is beyond question. Since he is an Indian poet from the Hindi belt, writing in English, his poems abound in Hindi and Sanskrit words and expressions. Words like Bhâgirathi, Janhvî, Tripathagâ and other synonyms of the Ganges give the Indian feel to the readers of his poems.

The first element in the definition of poetry, proposed above, is the 'talented individual's response'. The individual concerned here is Susheel Kumar Sharma, a Brahmin by birth and a staunch Hindu, a person with a philosophical bent of mind, a Milton scholar having the doctoral degree on that great poet of England; a person who is proud of the cultural heritage of India but sad at heart at the miserable state of affairs prevailing in it; a professor of English who knows a great deal about English and other European literatures. These various aspects of the poet will help a great deal in understanding and appreciating the poems of the volume under review. It is a fact that the poems do not reveal these facts of the poet's personality in a straightforward manner. The poems are not autobiographical pieces but the individuality of the poet can be discerned by getting at the man behind the book by paying careful and close attention to the text.

The second element of the definition is the manner: subjective or objective. To all intents and purposes, the poems collected here are 'subjective' in manner for the pronoun "I" is very much dominant. But it is a mistake to identify the "I" of the poems with the poet

invariably. 'I' is only a strategy. It is a persona invented by the poet to serve as a peg on which to hang his thoughts. For example, in the VI section of 'Poverty: Some Scenes' when the poet writes:

But, my son died

There in Uganda.

He was a brave captain

Of the peace-keeping force. (p. 39)

we cannot take the word "my" for Susheel Kumar Sharma who has had no son in the defence services of India, serving as a Captain in the peace-keeping force of the U.N.O. in Uganda. The poet has presented various images and forms of poverty in the various sections of the poem. In the section concerned (i.e. Section VI) he presents a picture of the poverty prevailing in the African country Uganda where Field Marshal Idi Amin had expelled all non-Ugandans, resulting in the misery of the expelled. The U. N. sent assistance for the suffering poor, impoverished by the dictator Idi Amin but the assistance itself became a bone of contention between the non-Ugandans and the Ugandans in the garb of the so-called anti-white measure of the dictator. The persona of the poem bewails the loss of the life of his son who as a Captain in the UN Forces was sent to Uganda to establish peace and order there. The loss of the son's life naturally, rendered the persona a poor and miserable soul, hardly deriving any consolation from the enlisting of his son's name in the obituary published by the U.N.

Each section of the poem opens before us a different vista of poverty which can assume innumerable forms. The poem, thus, constitutes the poet's reaction to the various forms of poverty besetting mankind today, including natural calamities and disasters – Katrina, tsunami, typhoon, hurricane and so on and so forth. Man must bear with them all with a sense of resignation. That is the only solution possible.

Thus from, the manner of expressing the reaction in the present volume readers should not take the "volume" as the autobiographical record of the poet's various experiences in the form of his responses to the phenomena concerned. Perhaps Sharma's poems exemplify what Aristotle had stated in the 9th chapter of his Poetics

regarding the birth of poetry: it begins with Particulars but ends in Universals. Each of the apparently subjective poems by Sharma in the present volume begins as the articulation of an individual/ particular reaction and ends up as a Universal in the form of a vision of life, true of all ages and all periods of time.

As regards the problem of rhythm, the poems of *The Door is Half Open* have adopted prose rhythm which is so suited to the communicative nature of the poems, a feature they share with the poetry of the 20th century movement called "High Modernism". The poems in the volume are in the nature of tête-à-tête with the reader and prose-rhythm is naturally the most natural rhythm suiting their temper. Technically, this rhythm is called Verse Libre and it was used by all the High Modernists like Eliot and his poetic guru Ezra Pound.

Now arises the question of the 'charming way'. In my view, 'poetic charm' is a very broad concept including all stylistic and technical devices poets have invented down the ages: gunas, alamkaras, vakrokties, auchityas, word plays, lexical dexterities of all description, sentence structures of all kinds, employed variously for various effects. The main source of poetic charm that strikes an attentive reader of the volume is its free and bold use of words of Indian origin, chiefly Sanskrit. I am not aware of any other poet using Sanskrit words, phrases and even full sentences on the scale we find in the present volume. And this is most evident in the opening poem 'Gangâ Mâtâ – A Prayer' where the poet has employed 43 synonyms of the Ganges along with a dozen verses culled from various Sanskrit stotras (hymns) written by Vyâs, Vâlmiki and Âdi Shankrâchârya. Some readers might find this profuse use of Sanskrit in poems written in English language quite irritating but I find the poet's manipulation of Sanskrit very enjoyable. The poet's experiment is laudable indeed. I believe that the individual named Susheel Kumar Sharma recites the original stotras on the Gangâ daily and has committed them to his memory. The subject being Gangâ and the poet being a learned Brahmin, I find it natural and spontaneous on the part of the poet to articulate his feelings in the language of the Rishis. I feel rather strongly that Susheel should

have provided the English translations of the Sanskrit verses on the pages on which they occur. The translations, given in the Glossary, are not easy to locate. Had these been given within brackets soon after the Sanskrit, the readers' enjoyment would have increased several folds. However, I congratulate the poet on his bold experiment which has made the poem thoroughly Indian. Since India is a country of varied cultural traditions, the poet has been very liberal in the choice of the words of Indian origin. Apart from Sanskrit words, there are dozens of Hindi, Urdu and Persian words used at will. Indeed these provide Indian colouring to the English medium that the poet has adopted for his purpose, making the entire volume thoroughly Indian English. Some of these words are: samosâ, thandai, maiyâ, malechhas (a corrupt form of mlechhas), kevrâ, idli, halwâ, ghât, gânjâ, bhâng, ârti etc.

The Door is Half Open is a wholesome work. It is laudable in all respects. I welcome it as a landmark in experimental poetry in the history of Indian Writing in English.

Deepika Srivastava, *M & M (Murmurs and Musings)*
(New Delhi: Sarup Book Publishers, 2012), pp. 105+12, Rs. 125.00

Syed Ahmad Raza Abidi

A fusion of more of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and less of Christina Rossetti, Deepika Srivastava is one of the enthusiastic poets of Indian Poetry in English. It seems she writes when the Muse inspires her. When a poetess' vision is clear her poetry becomes lucid and most sincere. This is what happens in *M & M (Murmurs and Musings)*. Deepika Srivastava is Professor and Head, Department of English and MEL, University of Allahabad. She published a debut collection of fifty poems *R & R (Recollections & Reminiscences)* which was much appreciated in literary circles. A sequel to it, *M & M (Murmurs and Musings)* has been divided into six sections, namely "Pabulum", "Cre de Coeur", "Frisson", "Almanac", "Subrosa" and "Errances", each dealing with the particular mode of expression. As the words spring straight from the core of the heart, they don't fail in making an instant mark over the mind and imagination of the reader. Most of the poems are subjective, but they are also characterized by objectivity and universal appeal.

The poems of Deepika Srivastava touch on varied facets of life. Some poems present her precision through innovative thoughts on common human traits and her interaction with various events, which is one or the other way influence life. The poetess has given voice to her intense feelings. In "Solitude" she writes:

Immersed in thought-processes,
I became an unapproachable recluse,
Warnings of it being a serious liability
Sadly fell on lumpish deaf ears.
As I matured in my own web, entrapped
Things have come to such a pass,
I cannot exist without my solitude.
My world revolves around my loneliness. (1-8)

Deepika's poems reveal skills, are careful and unforgettable. Poems are original, exhibiting artistic excellence. Her technical virtuosity is considerable. It is the vision and not mere circumstances that shapes her poems. In the poem "Virtue", she highlights the

relation between virtue and tactful behaviour:

Virtue and *savoir-faire* go together,
 One can't survive sans the other.
 Good conduct, an admired asset
 coupled with honesty and kindness.
 Matching accessories are intrinsic values
 Upheld by me since childhood. (1-6)

Confessional poetry is the poetry of the personal or "I." This style of writing emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s and is associated with poets such as Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and W.D. Snodgrass. Lowell's book *Life Studies* was a highly personal account of his life and familial ties, and had a significant impact on American poetry. Plath and Sexton were both students of Lowell and noted that his work influenced their own writing. The confessional poetry of the mid-twentieth century dealt with subject matter that previously had not been openly discussed in American poetry. Private experiences and feelings about death, trauma, depression and relationships were addressed in this type of poetry, often in an autobiographical manner. Sexton in particular was interested in the psychological aspect of poetry, having started writing at the suggestion of her therapist. The confessional poets were not merely recording their emotions on paper; craft and construction were extremely important to their work. While their treatment of the poetic self may have been groundbreaking and shocking to some readers, these poets maintained a high level of craftsmanship through their careful attention to and use of prosody. The confessional poets of the 1950s and 1960s pioneered a type of writing that forever changed the landscape of American poetry. The tradition of confessional poetry has been a major influence on generations of writers and continues to this day; Marie Howe and Sharon Olds are two contemporary poets whose writing largely draws upon their personal experience. Some poems of Deepika Srivastava are confessional in which she reveals her thoughts and emotions. These poems remind us of Sylvia Plath's poetry. Deepika states in "A Little Less":

My life, in strange ways
 Rotates around paradoxes

Of expectations, myriad bypasses,
 Untold agony, fuming passions.
 Rarely a miracle happens
 To consummate my happiness
 Satisfying with a little less
 Than what I *ab initio* deserve. (1-8)

The poetry of Deepika Srivastava is very thought provoking. The use of personal storytelling in her poetry allows it to resonate with all of us, without seeming at all elitist or strange. These stories are experiences that we can all share in and identify with by connecting them to our own individual stories. Isn't it even better though, if we endeavour to make our own confessions to the world? Deepika's poetry encourages us to do just that. Write what you know. By sharing what we feel and what we dream with others, we can expand our knowledge of ourselves. In the beautiful verses of "Reunion" she unlocks the door of her heart with the key of touching words.

The misty eve reminded of him,
 With misty eyes I remembered him.
 Here in the undulating terrain,
 we shared togetherness in the wilderness,
 unmindful of gossip, probing eyes,
 Was not love pervading in the mountain air? (1-6)

Deepika's poems are firmly grounded in the mastery of craft. Her poetry is sensitive, all-inclusive, caring and passionate. One of the striking qualities of these poems is intense imagery. "Spritely Springtime" is a poem which is full of imagery, symbolism, metaphors and alliteration.

Spring has dispelled morbid winter,
 Heralding life after a dreary sabbatical,
 buried seeds break free from gestation,
 gambol gleefully, bursting forth germination.
 Where there was cloistral barrenness,
 Glossy greens sprout by the dozen,
 Wiping paleness by erotic softness. (1-7)

The poetess has used different and complex words in nearly all the poems. Her musings are stunningly erudite, allusive and aestheti-

cally magnificent. She has used some French words in this collection of poems. A 'Glossary' has also been provided for those who find it difficult to understand the meaning and significance of some words, which is highly appreciable.

Lucknow is the capital city of the state of Uttar Pradesh. This metro city is the administrative headquarters of Lucknow District and Lucknow Division. Lucknow has always been known as a multicultural city and flourished as a cultural and artistic capital of North India in the 18th and 19th centuries. Lucknow was one of the major centres of Indian rebellion of 1857, participated actively in India's Independence movement, and emerged as an important city of North India. Many of the cultural traits and customs peculiar to Lucknow have become living legends today. The credit for this goes to the secular and syncretic traditions of the Nawabs of Awadh, who took a keen interest in every walk of life, and encouraged the traditions to attain a rare degree of sophistication. The poetess expresses deep love for Lucknow, her second hometown, in the poem "Life in the Constantinople of the East". She has felt a strong innate desire to understand the mystery and glory behind the charm of culture of Lucknow. The interesting presentation of Lucknow in the poem helps the reader visualise and feel the lovable soothing atmosphere of a glorious time gone by:

A ravishing town, along the Gomti,
With minarets over monuments stately,
Strategically placed in avant garde Awadh,
gaining power after the Mughals left.
Capital of my home State,
endowed with majestic architectural gates,
Carrying legacies of regal Nawabs,
famed for Chikankari, Kakori Kababs,
reminiscent of the regime of Asaf-ud-Daula,
tehzeeb and nazakat its special of flavour. (1-10)

A small part of Lucknow's society still possesses much etiquette. This sublime cultural richness blends the cultures of two communities living side by side for centuries, sharing similar interests and speaking a common language. There is no denying the fact that

Lucknow is the abode of arts and 'Ganga-Jamuna' culture. This cosmopolitan city had given shelter to a captivating panorama of art and culture.

Lucknow, a miniature metro
hub of politics, culture, theatre,
Its manicured parks surpass imagination, (21 - 23)

It is an undeniable fact that the escalating advance of modern technology during the previous century has not only facilitated travel links and inter-communication between nations, but has effectively reduced this planet, in comparative terms, to little more than a global village. Deepika has spent many days in European cities. Her penchant for globe-trotting is succinctly reflected in peregrination section. The travelogue section of the collection is based on her foreign trips. In the poem "Bijou Brussels" she shares with us her experience of the visit to Belgium:

I chanced upon a drowsy capital,
Diadem of diminutive Belgium,
de rigueur to the European Union
in neighbourhood of France and Switzerland. (1-4)

"American Activism" is beautiful poem. In this poem she writes:

Towering gates of Harvard welcomed,
Eclectic, designed to be simple,
A blend of contemporary and bygone excellence,
Acclaimed to be numero uno of its kind. (13-16)

On the whole, this collection of poems has the freshness and gleam seen in well-lit earthen lamps floating down a holy river whose flickering flames create varying glimpses. The deep sensitivity Prof. Deepika Srivastava portrays in her poems reflects the depth of empathy she feels for humanity. The poems of *M & M (Murmurs and Musings)* are like shimmering pearls, being born from the core of the conscientious heart. Any sensitive mind will be moved by the aura of truth they exude. It is the poetess's sincerity and depth of emotion combined with a restrained use of imagery and over-all deceptive but penetrating simplicity of discourse, which draws the attention of readers and lifts the book from out of commonplace.

Syed Yusuf Ali, *The Enigma of Life*

(Aligarh: Muslim Educational Press, 2012), pp. 160, Rs. 100.00

Yusuf Amin

Syed Yusuf Ali's *The Enigma of Life* has two levels. It is a delightful and gripping story of both the ordinary and the marvelous aspect of every-day reality: complete and satisfying in itself. But its compelling over-all pattern, final appeal to religious faith and perennial metaphysical symbols constitute another level: the primordial fable of exile and a hard-won return, which in turn, is only the external dimension of Man's transcendental potential and its realization by epic effort. Just as the Body is supremely beautiful in itself but serves as the access to its ultimate spiritual basis, the Spirit too, despite totally transcending the body is the hidden source of Body's life. Similarly, the implicit parable of exile and return is responsible for a strange sense of meaning and reality in the explicit level of the novel.

At a time when authors are outdoing Kafka in distorting reality to prove literary genius, Syed Yusuf chooses to present every-day reality and its charm and meaning. He uses the marvelous too, but as science fiction, which being probable does not come at the price of our sense of the real. The de rigueur agnosticism of modern day literary aspirants is as decisively jettisoned in favour of religious faith and moral commitments; of course not like soviet-style propaganda but organically blended in the story. Vividness is joined to the convincingness arising from every-day reality body of the work, by deft interplay of close and long shots and more importantly, by description of the feelings of the protagonist along with the narration of external events.

The story clearly comes out as an organic whole, both in its development and as a final picture. All these unusual features are crowned by the exotic plot: the primordial fable of exile and a hard-won return, given the form of a novel for the first time by Ibn Nafis in 13th century Syria and Egypt and later by Daniel Defoe as 'Robinson Crusoe'. These are the things which impelled me to review 17 year old Syed Yusuf Ali's *The Enigma of Life* which was begun four years earlier when he was in Class IX.

The other striking thing to come across is the young author's absolute comfort with his child-like sensibility without the least attempts at contrived precocity, yet, the deepest sense of the seriousness and significance of his vision. He says in the Foreword: "I had never imagined that in a couple of years it would turn out to be a hundred-page story of countless imaginative threads, plucked delicately from the pockets of a young brain and woven together obliviously by the artful needle of childhood imagery..." (7). He goes on to say: "I always feel like whenever I am writing, I am an impotent slave working under the influence a higher power" (10).

The 11 year old protagonist, Imran lives with his parents and pet cat in a mountain cottage. His interactions with his universe and his religious faith and moral commitments are described with charming detail. Then he accidentally falls into a subterranean science fiction ghetto of modified humans, the Lempies, which despite mind-boggling comforts is bereft of all human meaning and joy. He is helped by a Lempy woman who tells him that she is actually a human, to attempt escape back to his idyllic mountain cottage. But it is the faith, resolve and striving of Imran that animates the nail-biting attempt at breaking away. This is the story in nut shell, meaningful and charming at its own level. But the metaphysical fable of Return is too strongly alive behind the story to be missed. The author, despite being an 'intrusive narrator' punctuating the story with religious and moral comments, does not give any explicit hint of it. It is possible that he may not be clearly conscious of it, as we sometimes understand the symbolic message of our dreams after decades. But, in addition to the starkly etched over-all pattern of the story which constitutes the 'body' of the metaphysical level of the novel, at least three strong supports do exist in the outer story itself: ultimate meaning - creation by religious faith; metaphysical symbols; the enlightening of the protagonist by a revealer. After the full setting in of the predicament, Imran soliloquizes:

"Oh Amma! I am missing you so much" said Imran more to himself than to anyone as there was no one present there. "I know it was none of our fault that we fell in the hole. I'll try my best to get out of this place and I know Allah will help me

in every step of mine. I just hope that both I as well as Snowy reach home in one piece. There must be a way to get out of this place I will try to find it until my last breath.” (97).

As for metaphysical symbols, the narrow passage to the subterranean world of the Lempies' world being in a cave is consistent with the perennial principle that different levels of Being are connected only through the central point which is coeval with Man's Heart which is universally symbolized by the Cave.

Just as Ibn Nafis's hero Kamil (and Robinson Crusoe too) is assisted to return to the human world by visitors to the island, Imran too is enlightened and assisted by Juveria, a Lempy who tells him that she is actually a human. Incidentally, the reviewer could not reconcile the negativity of Juveria with the unmistakable ethos of the novel (Revealers being most positive) and considers it to be a major flaw.

The story mainly 'happens' inside the consciousness of the protagonist, Imran: by constant description of his unfolding state of mind as it engages with external reality. However, unlike Joyce and Henry James it is not a disembodied consciousness but complemented by an independent and colourful external reality, like a baby in the mother's womb. Imran's consciousness is used not only to register his experiences but to amalgamate with what is happening to him, to become a part of the story in a very direct manner. The description of his feelings play an equal, sometimes even greater role than the description of external events in taking the story ahead. For instance, the suspense of the climax is created by describing external menace as well as Imran's feelings:

As Imran looked at the red dots that moved quickly towards them on the map, he thought as if death itself was looming towards him and Juveria. (146).

So, the author squarely belongs to the 'stream of consciousness' era but like classical 19th century writers uses the mirror of a familiar and full-blooded external reality with verve and control.

This rare and apparently paradoxical co-presence of the Ancient and the Modern keeps reappearing behind many other characteristics of the novel and the author. In fact that is how things

should be. 'The modern', comprised of changes in the form of some parts of 'the Ancient' can validly claim inclusion, even deletion of its precursor forms, but it has no right to demand the rejection of the unchanged major portion of 'the Ancient', much less the concoction of a 'Whole' by the generalization of the reformulated 'parts' – the Modern being nothing but some reformulated fragments of the Whole - and making it pass for the real Whole constituted by the Ancient, comprising both its unchanged major portion and the 'reformulated' fragments.

Returning to the novel: the positive offerings of modernity are embraced, eg. greater psychological focus but the draconian modern prejudice against the Ancient as such is implicitly ignored by adoption of the ancient realistic world-view where external and human phenomena are objective realities, human subjectivity is adequate to this reality's understanding, and this Reality is beautiful and good and ultimately divine: as indicated by the central position of religious faith and constantly recurring moral interjections in the novel.

If I am accused of reading too much into the teenaged author's novel I would appeal to the all pervading sway of relativism which stifles ancient certitudes even in the youngest minds attempting self-expression or brow-beats them into dissimulation. So, Syed Yusuf's transcendentalism must have been positively intuited with considerable force to make him go against fundamental fashions.

His artistic skills are also of a high caliber and quite astonishing in such a young person. For instance, he takes both close and long shots. On one hand he works as an exquisite miniaturist: "His mother was a short-statured lady who looked quite strict but was very kind-hearted. She had long brown hair and matching brown eyes which made her look generous...Her brown eyes matched perfectly with the bark of a neem tree."(p.13-14)But he also zooms out with perfect ease to give perspective to his protagonist's world:

He had taken his breakfast hurriedly and was now strolling outside....Far away, close to the horizon he saw a tiny figure of a man walking with more tiny specks scuttling around him. The man was unmistakably his father Rasheed and the tiny specks were his sheep, which he was taking for grazing.(15-16)

He uses the standard symbolism of window to connect the microcosm and the macrocosm: "There was a window just beside his bed which faced the steep valley beyond the hill. The scene from his room was marvelous and a dream for a tourist. Imran liked his room as much as he liked his house..."(p.15). Beginning with an external and internal description of the protagonist, and then bringing in his room and home (corresponding to the Principle) and the surrounding scene of mountain and valley (standing for Manifestation) connected by the window (Isthmus) into a grand unity (his being happy with both his home and world) is too uncannily complete and metaphysical to be dismissed as chance imagination or external borrowing. This too shows the metaphysical nature of the author's sensibility even though he may not be conscious of it.

A young beginner's work is usually brilliant in parts, the part having a small range and being creatable by external cobbling together. But average works usually lack a general contour which needs both true and powerful inspiration. Quite contrarily Syed Yusuf's work is perfect at the holistic level but riddled by quite a few inapt sentences. The former implies original and strong inspiration while the latter indicates virginity: choosing one's natural limitations over contriving and copying. The necessary connection between inspiration and unpretentiousness should also be appreciated. The Word incarnates only in the Virgin Lady (Peace be upon her) or the Unlettered Prophet (Peace be upon him). So, his quaint verbal choices and gangling syntaxes are no lesser signs of originality than overall perfection.

There has always been a question mark on the synthetic ability of Fiction, unlike Poetry, hence, its suitability for metaphysical communication. Fiction being perforce discursive seems to be doomed to remain sedimented in the Contingent realm expressing only social and psychological reality but never rising to ultimate reality. But, Syed Yusuf's offering of a second-order, implicit 'overall pattern', sharing in poetry's synthetic character, seems to provide a means of expressing metaphysical vision through fiction too. His *Enigma of Life* also shows that not only Fantasies but everyday reality too can be used effectively for expressing metaphysical

vision. In addition to being useful for prosaic sensibilities, the everyday reality medium is safer too, as fantasizing may become infernal, whereas only the supernal expresses ultimate reality. This is a much greater danger in the present unanchored times as shown by the nauseous nature of most of the present day 'metaphysical' fiction, true vision always being blissful. However, it takes quite powerful vision and equally strong aesthetic sensibility to span heaven and earth; that could be why most metaphysical aspirants take off from fantastic space stations rather than the earth itself.

Vikram Chopra (Ed.), *Shakespeare: The Indian Icon* (New Delhi: The Readers Paradise, 2011), pp. xxvi+836, Rs. 1995.00

D.K. Pabby

To the best of this reviewer's information and knowledge, such a wide-ranging collection of articles by a galaxy of eminent scholars, as Vikram Chopra's *magnum opus Shakespeare: The Indian Icon*, has neither been attempted in India upto now, nor it is likely to happen in the near future. Broad in scope and comprehensive in coverage, this memorable volume offers a rich perspective of the gradual but deep assimilation of Shakespeare, into India's social, cultural and national ethos over the last two centuries. The book has been appropriately sub-titled 'A Collection of Indian Responses: Social-Cultural-Academic', as there is hardly any area of such responses that has escaped the editor's critical eye. Amazingly massive size of the volume testifies to the life-long dedication, perseverance and resilience of its editor Dr. Vikram Chopra who recently retired as Associate Professor of English from ARSD College, University of Delhi. 'Foreword' of this collection has been written by the eminent Shakespeare scholar Professor Jay L. Halio of the University of Delaware who very aptly calls it a "cornucopia of riches in Shakespeare Studies" and incorporates the views of some expatriate Britishers such as Felicity Kendal and Joy Michael who presented Shakespeare in films and dramatic presentations in India. A large number of photographs, paintings, relevant quotations from Shakespeare's plays, about Shakespeare and by many others have undoubtedly enhanced the beauty and grace of this well-produced volume.

One of the most valuable aspects of the *Indian Icon* is its editor's comprehensive and perceptive 'Introduction' of 56 pages written in a uniquely lucid style. It includes a plea for literature, a holistic view of Indian aesthetics and Shakespeare, Bleeding Hearts, Shakespeare and Bharata's *Natyashastra*, Shakespeare and 'Negative Capability', to mention only a few topics. Contents of the chapters to follow have also been briefly outlined. In addition to this, Vikram has penned a five-page 'Preface' wherein he raises the all-important question "Why Shakespeare" that Gerald M. Pinciss had asked in

his book with the same title. He provides a convincing answer in these words: "The universal delighter has helped man transcend all the barriers of age, time and space, and has orchestrated a communion of cultures from all continents and ushered them, even those with seemingly contrary approaches towards life, into a creative dialogue about the nature of man and his existence in the universe".

The articles in *Shakespeare: The Indian Icon* have been divided into five chapters. The first one titled 'The Panorama: A Few Gleanings' not only offers a glimpse of the influence of Shakespeare on Indian statesmen, writers and thinkers like Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo and some others, but can also be viewed as a tribute to the extraordinary reach of creative talent and cosmic vision of Shakespeare. The glowing but critical tribute includes among others from such great minds as Muhammad Iqbal, Mulk Raj Anand, Ram Bilas Sharma, Swami Ranganathananda, Umashankar Joshi, R.K. Narayan, Ebrahim Alkazi, L.M. Singhvi, C.N. Menon, Ashish Roy and Joy Michael. The second chapter titled 'Shakespeare's Evolution and Assimilation in the Cultural Milieu of India' has put together informative and significant details about a large number of dramatic and film production and other visual presentations of the bard's plays. In an important article, N.G. Choudhry explores the artistic and aesthetic world of Shakespeare as the 'visual melodies' in the form of Sir Asutosh's Boydell Collection of Shakespeare housed in an annexe of the National Library, Calcutta (now Kolkata) that contains some seventy two thousand books. The author shares with readers quite a few hitherto unknown aspects of Shakespeare that the 'exploration' revealed to him. The editor has put together at one place in this chapter comparative aesthetics assimilative of the experiences of reputed artists and theatre personalities such as Samita Basu, Alyque Padamsee, Birju Maharaj, Anuradha Kapur, Roysten Abel, Ranjit Kapur and several others. Significant contributions of Black Cow Company, National School of Drama and Akshara Theatre has also been highlighted. Third and fourth chapter titled 'Craft and Art' and 'Visions and Values' respectively begin with the editor's wonderful perceptions in the form of pictorial illustrations which go a long way in generating

and sustaining the readers' interest and cater to their aesthetic joy. Shakespeare's creative process, various literary techniques and devices, used by the bard in his plays, have been critically analysed by several eminent scholars in the third chapter. These include Balwant Gargi, Amal Allana, J.N. Kaushal, Keshav Malik, Prema Nandakumar, S. Vishwanathan, S. Nagarajan, and Ruth Vanita. These essays provide distinctive flavour to the existing scholars *vis-à-vis* the artistic, literary and theatrical traditions and their numerous variants in India. The fourth chapter aptly starts with some highly evocative photographs including that of the front page of February 17, 2003 issue of the '*India Today*' which is primarily dedicated to the Indian-American cosmonaut Kalpana Chawla who called herself 'a citizen of the Milky Way' who has been touchingly described by the editor as Shakespearean Daughter 'because of her deep concern for the humanity and about whom it has been rightly remarked in the caption "Some goals are so worthy it is glorious even to fail". This sets the proper tone for the articles included in this chapter. Distinguished scholars like A.A. Ansari, Visvanath Chatterjee, Sukanta Chaudhuri, Mulk Raj Chilana, Amaresh Datta, K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, R.K. Kaul, Sarup Singh, S.C. Sengupta, K.D. Sethna and many others while talking about the rich diversity of visions and values that emerge from Shakespeare's plays, also highlight the cosmic and holistic vision, and a secular outlook that permeate the bard's writings.

The last chapter 'Cross-Cultural Perceptions' truly celebrates and concludes the editor Vikram Chopra's liberal humanist approach that he has assimilated remarkably well as a serious student, admirer and scholar of Shakespeare. All the articles in this chapter follow the comparative framework and deeply enrich our understanding of the most versatile writer whose plays so effortlessly lend themselves to critical tools of Indian Poetics and Indian Aesthetics. Eminent scholars and academics such as R.W. Desai, V.Y. Kantak, Krishna Rayan, Mythili Kaul, Rajiva Verma, S. Anand, Tulsi Ram, S. Ramaswami, and C.D. Narasimhaiah have presented valuable insights that aptly project the universality of Shakespeare's thematic depth, cutting across the boundaries of different cultures and

nations. The articles by Shweta Khanna, Ragini Ramachandra, Vikram Chopra, Poonam Trivedi, K.N. Iyer, S.N.H. Jafri, C. Rajendran, Malati Ramaratnam, and S.R. Swaminathan have also contributed meaningfully to lend additional charm and beauty to the 'spectacular rainbow' of the bard's art and craft. The learned editor has appended pen portraits of some extraordinary scholars who are also passionate lovers of Shakespeare like the editor himself. The volume concludes very appropriately with pictorial illustrations of Buddha, Tagore along with his poem, three 'Icon' artists; and finally the highly evocative one captioned 'Divine Grace!'. Like several other commentators of *Shakespeare: The Indian Icon*, I firmly believe that this wide-ranging collection of Indian responses to Shakespeare, will soon acquire the much-deserved place of prestige among scholarly works on Shakespeare in India and abroad.

Ankur Betageri, *Bhog and Other Stories*
(Delhi: Pilli Books, 2010), pp. xii+108, Rs. 260.00

Alka Tyagi

Ankur Betageri's *Bhog and Other Stories* is a welcome collection of short narratives of a new kind from a young writer in English. Ankur's stories are different from the run-of-the-mill writing that has been happening in contemporary English fiction for some time now. While a large number of young people seem to have made a mark in novel writing and Bollywood seems only too eager to add its spicy ingredients and make a film out of these, some serious experiments in the form itself are still wanting.

The stories reflect deeper on our existential problems. The range however is remarkable as Ankur touches upon subjects of love, longing, poverty and frustrations of a city-dweller in a wide range of settings. 'Bhog' uses the background of the age-old ritual of 'Bhog' to portray the dignity of a common villager in the face of utter poverty. 'Some Love and Understanding' uses a conversation between friends to bring to the fore the frustrations of a young man with a philosophical bent of mind. 'Marku's Father' is a story about a very gentle boy caught up in his duty to obey his father and his awareness that his father is too cruel to deserve service and affection from him and his mother. He is not able to comprehend the real nature of his schizophrenic father who is very well behaved in the office and is very bad to him and his mother at home. Marku feels this dilemma until he witnesses a relative's death by heart attack. His maternal uncle, who was extremely noble and gentle and would never harm anyone, was found dead in his bed one fine morning. When he saw this, Marku realized that it is probably good to let out one's emotions of anger and distress rather than keep them suppressed in one's heart and die of a heart attack. In a child's innocent perspective, Marku at this stage rather feels relieved that his father lets his anger out on him and his mother and remains calm and joyous at the workplace.

In all the stories there is a psychoanalyst and a philosopher who is contemplating on human problems and is trying to find out solutions of some kind even if it means only a clearer understanding that is achieved by contemplation. In fact Ankur's protagonists are

often contemplative individuals who seem to feel some relief in the sheer light of understanding that dawns upon them at some point in the story. Some stories are written as allegories. 'The Armour', 'The Big Bicycle' and 'God's Flower' are some very moving allegorical tales. In 'God's Flower', Ankur conveys the fact of modern man's absolute insensitivity to his surroundings. Ironically he shows God as a character in the story who is helplessly watching from behind the big bush as after completing the work of creation, He too is caught up in a role.

One important factor that the stories successfully bring out is how increasing consumerism is responsible for making us numb as humans. We are neither able to love and nor are we able to understand love. In the story 'Malavika', the narrator aptly describes the psychology of today's youth who is caught up in 'more the money, merrier the life' culture and consequently feel frustrated after some merry-making. He says, "Like most people who have adjusted themselves to the dehumanizing conditions of the capitalistic system even you have lost the ability to love someone with all your heart; to accept someone with all your being. While a small portion of your brain shows a little love and sympathy, the rest of your brain becomes busy calculating like a businessman. You expend more energy in judging and assessing the ability of a person than in loving him. This madness goes so far that when you don't find anyone to judge, you start judging yourself."

Ankur, who has a degree in clinical psychology, has a very sharp grip on human mind and its entanglements. He is able to draw a very vivid picture of the problems that are eating up our peace in this modern world which has suddenly changed so much in such a little time that it has caught us up in strong, seemingly unbreakable bars of borrowed behavioral patterns which are informed by Western consumerist existence and are basically not our true nature. Besides, the stories have a narrative style that comprises an authentic voice of a young man who has grown up in these very times. The language is very much his own and often holds the reader in a joy that comes from constant recognition of more meaning in fewer words.

CONTRIBUTORS

S. Viswanathan is former Professor of English, University of Hyderabad.

Iffat Ara is Professor of English, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

Subodh Agarwal is former Head, Department of English, D.A.V. (P.G.) College, Dehra Dun (Uttarakhand).

Leonard R.N. Ashley is Professor *Emeritus* at Brooklyn College, New York.

Monika Gupta is Associate Professor, Department of English, H.N.B. Garhwal Central University, Srinagar (Garhwal), Uttarakhand.

K.B. Razdan is Professor of English, University of Jammu, Jammu.

Ashu Vashisht is Senior Lecturer in English, Government P.G. College, Kathua (Jammu).

Anuradha is Associate Professor of English, Arya P.G. College, Panipat.

R. Deepta is Reader in English, R.S. Vidyapeetha, Tirupati.

Sweety Bandopadhaya is Assistant Professor, Department of English (MMV), Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

K.K. Sharma is former Professor of English, University of Allahabad.

Syed Ahmad Raza Abidi is Research Scholar, Department of English, University of Allahabad.

K.G. Srivastava is former Prof & Head, Department of English & MEL, Dean (Arts) & Vice Chancellor, University of Allahabad.

Yusuf Amin is Professor of Pharmacology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

D.K. Pabby is former Principal, R.L.A. College, University of Delhi.

Alka Tyagi is Associate Professor of English, Dayal Singh College, University of Delhi.