

# POINTS OF VIEW

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## THE SUBSTITUTION MOTIF IN SHAKESPEARE

**S. Viswanathan**

In a general sense, all drama, the dramatic imagination and theatrical representation, builds on the principle of substitution, and that at several levels. The actors substitute for characters, the *dramatis personae* and it is the author's words which serve as the utterances of the figures of the drama. In Shakespeare and Elizabethan drama, thanks to the prevalence of the conventions of disguise and the 'boy-actress', another layer of substitution forms itself. Over and above this, Shakespeare uses substitution as the basis of several theatrico-dramatic devices which he often invokes the aid of. Among these are wooing by proxy, the bed-trick in *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well*, and the use of lookalike dummy kings (men who are made to resemble the king) in the battlefield such as the one whom Douglas kills and imagines that he has killed King Henry IV. The double substitution in *A Winter's Tale* of statue and person raises an intriguing irony, the question which is a substitute for which. In fact, in the invoking of the devices of substitution in many cases Shakespeare the dramatist creates piquant effects.

Aside from such uses of the devices of substitution, Shakespeare well exploits the thematic and dramatic suggestive possibilities of a kind of substitution in several of the plays, using it as an ideational communication. This latter is in a way fraught with greater meaningfulness than the devices of substitution. But the two are by no means exclusive, substitution as device and suggestion. The two coexist and combine mutually gaining significance in many cases.

Now we may turn to look at some examples of these two categories of substitution. Perhaps there is little need at this hour of day in Shakespeare studies for another examination of disguise as substitution, nor of the 'boy-actress' from this angle. Similarly in the early comedies there are several occurrences of identical twins. One member of the pair is mistaken for the other, and thus the mistake contributing to the intrigue of comedy do occur. But these are not perhaps to be taken as substitution. However, in some cases, these conventions come to the overlaid by certain further layers of

substitution to interesting effect. A few such examples are well worth considering certain instances of proxy-wooing (to use the phrase as a label) are examples.

Proxy in wooing and courtship entails replacement or substitution for the nonce at least. While Valentine has his faith in the friendship of Proteus, Proteus is so taken away by Silvia that fickle-mindedly he dislodges Julia from his heart to entertain Silvia in it, but all this in vain. The substitution brings about further complication of the plot when Portia arrives in the Venetian court trying. Antonis to plead for him, she is the 'young lawyer' standing in for the lawyer who was appear on Antonis's behalf. Perhaps the substitute did much better than the originally stated lawyer, who knows. The wooing of Rosalind now in the guise of a young shepherd by Orlando is a strange case, if there was any such. Rosalind, as she herself says in the play 'can do strange things' indeed. The script for the courtship is set by Rosalind herself. Orlando, who has been making his love addresses in verses he hangs on trees, has this actual human figure to whom he could make them. The shepherd 'youth is a proxy for his Rosalind, as he might think, whereas it is actually Rosalind herself. She lures Orlando into the game, offering to cure him of his love melancholy through the practice. Intriguing exchanges and queries and ripostes ensure at 'love' meeting after 'love' meeting. The exchanges become an exposition of several complexities of love and love-relationship, in effect.

If the shepherd youth to whom Orlando pays courtship, in an at once mock and real wooing, turns out as his real, much longed for Rosalind, in *Twelfth Night* Olivia's apparently destined to be futile love prattle to Viola, now disguised as the young man Cesario, as though it were a comedic miracle, finds fruition in her encountering the identical sibling young man Sebastian whom Olivia the countess instantly marries in the very chapel set up by her to mourn her father's death, and ends her vow of celibacy when in the finale of *Twelfth Night* both Viola as Cesario and Sebastian now husband to Olivia appear together onstage and Duke Orsino and Olivia among others gaze at the phenomenon of two identical 'young men', Orsino immediately transfer his, love making it real, not a fancy, to Viola

and Olivia marvels within herself about the wonderful resolution of her problem of love, finding her Cesario, married to her as Sebastian. No wonder she calls it 'a natural perspective'.

Shakespeare brings into play the 'bed-trick', the substitution of one woman for another in a man's bed, in *All's Well* and *Measure for Measure*, the two plays close to each other in chronology. The ethics of such a replacement with a legitimacy attached to the 'practice' is implicitly justified in the two plays. It serves the two men earning right, and in the process to bring about the relief and resolution of the state of deprivation of deliberating jilted and neglected Mariana of the moated grange in *Measure for Measure* and Diana (tell-tale name especially in the particular context of the bed-trick) in *All's Well*.

But it is in *Measure for Measure* that Shakespeare would seem to deploy the idea of substitution as a pervasive suggestive force. It may almost be viewed as the principle of the play. It operates at several interesting levels. Substitution as overt, stage action and substitution as oblique suggestion rub shoulders with each other and at times intermingle to telling, though subtle, effect. The play with an overt substitution, the Duke installing the strict disciplinarian Angelo as his substitute and investing him with all the ducal authority and powers so that Angelo might through his rigid enforcement of laws punishing those who deviate from morals and thus bring about a much-needed moral cleansing. Angelo substitutes at least once his deputy Escalus to hear a case that comes up before him. When the novice-nun Isabella pleads mercy and pardon for her brother from death sentence he faces in prison for having got with child his lady love Juliet, Angelo feels a sudden surge of his instinct overtaking him and as though in that fit proposes a sexual bargain with Isabella and promises that Isabella's coming abed with him would make him yield to her plea and pardon her brother. Her brother's head would be saved in return for her maidenhead just as in the original punishment Claudio would lose his head by hanging for stealing Juliet's maidenhead.

But the irony that Shakespeare inverts the idea of head for head changing places with each other with should not be missed.

Angelo in the fit of sexual frenzy strikes what he thinks is a bargain with Isabella. But when he has spent a night with his own neglected betrothed whom he is led to mistake for Isabella in the darkness of the night he has no scruples in breaking the bargain and orders the keeper of the prison to go ahead and carry out Claudio's execution and bring the victim's head to him as evidence. The bed-trick is basically substitution. On the ideational level in both the plays where the bed-trick occurs it suggests a pattern of maidenhead for maidenhead, and in *Measure for Measure* it suggests maidenhead for head barter. The keeper of the prison on the word of the Friar-Duke refrains from carrying out Claudio's execution, and has to play a head-trick. Barnardine a notorious offender awaiting execution overpowers himself with drinks and sleeping away the pressure his condition escapes being led away by simply sulking in his cell. But to the keeper the head of a prisoner who had just then died of a fever is to hand to show to Angelo, a substitution for Claudio's head. The severed head was one of the stock properties of the Elizabethan stage, as Henslowe's list of items of wardrobe and properties of his company indicates. Shakespeare uses it in some plays.

The frequency and in a fashion centrality of substitution in the play may make us wonder whether the somewhat prismatic suggestion which the title *Measure for Measure* carries; images from the scriptural one include the idea of substitution balancing of one thing with another in right measure. It may be noted that the Folio title carries a comma between the first 'measure' and the second one, as it reads '*Measure, for Measure*', the comma suggests a rhetorical pause and a balancing of the first and the second.

Over and above several such substitutions in the play, it makes us wonder whether Shakespeare lets the central figure of the Duke, as both Friar-Duke and Duke *in propria persona* be *his* substitute as playwright. It is the Duke who as though he were the surrogate playwright sets the plot, assigns roles and also stage manages the show from start to finish. It is similar to, but more pronounced than, what the dramatist seems to do in *Othello*, making Iago within the play a sort of surrogate playwright. The two plays are near contemporary with each other. There would seem to be about three ways in which

the motif of substitution manifests itself in *Hamlet*. First, Hamlet's disgust with the insufferably bad choice of a substitute for her husband the elder King Hamlet, close on the heels of his death by murder, in his brother Claudio ('Hyperion to a satyr'), a viral revulsion on Hamlet's part which is the driving force of the play. Secondly, there is Hamlet's uncanny substitution in the play of the Mousetrap of the Killer of the king as the King's nephew, substitution for his brother as it was in the all too real life course of events in Hamlet's world. Thirdly, towards the end of the play, there is the crucial instance of Hamlet's substitution of a letter he writes as though from the Danish king asking that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern be put to immediate death on arrival in England, a substitution of the two in place of Hamlet himself, a substitution that saved Hamlet but sent his two 'friends' to their deaths.

It would appear as though what reviles Hamlet is not so much his mother remarrying as her accepting, in his view, Claudius a most unsuitable, unworthy and ill-matched replacement, and that too so hurriedly and thoughtlessly. This disgust had filled his mind and rankles in his inner being, as though felt physically. His first soliloquy spoken when he is yet to hear of the ghost of his father and to encounter it, makes it clear. It is in such a state of mind that he receives the Ghost's revelation and command. His revulsion against his mother's action spills over to Ophelia, the woman he has to do with. No wonder that the major thrust of his commands to his mother when he meets her in her chamber is the laying bare of the horrid substitution she has, according to him, been guilty of. He speaks, in his own word, 'daggers' to her. That is the factor behind his calling his mother the 'wretched queen' in his dying moments.

Hamlet as the author of the play within the play, the Mousetrap deliberately substitutes 'nephew' for 'brother' perhaps with two ends in view, it is perhaps a little or not so little game of the cat with the rat, to make him momentarily assume that it is not a reference to his deeds, but part of old drama. But the idea of the nephew as killing the king would soon register with disastrous effect on Claudius's state of mind. Even as his sense of guilt and sin is

aroused, almost the same moment fear is kindled in his heart that Hamlet has come to know it all and his nephew would soon kill him in revenge. That is perhaps what shatters his cool. He cannot stand it any more, and leaves abruptly calling off the play. Also, even at that point he would have decided to pack Hamlet off to England, before Hamlet's killing of Polonius. And perhaps Hamlet had got scent of Claudius intention even before his meeting with his mother.

Hamlet's narration to Horatio of his adventure on board to the ship to England is a vivid and excited discourse. It might, some urge overtook Hamlet to search the pockets of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and come upon the letter of Claudius to the King of England. He made bold to carefully open the seal and took out the letter. The moment he has the revelation of what his fate in England is going to be he removes the letter and substitutes it with another which asks the English king for the two messengers to be put to death on arrival Hamlet has his father's royal seal which comes handy to seal the letter insignia. The substitution ensures that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern go to it, though Hamlet feels that their deaths are not near his conscience. It saves Hamlet; the sudden pirates' attack enables him to leave the ship and sail back to Denmark with the pirates. He has 'still much business appertains' to do in Denmark before the play ends.

To put oneself in another's socks is a common expression, used idiomatically in current English. But when Cloten in *Cymbeline* put on the clothes of Posthumus, stolen from Imogen's chamber, the perceptive among the spectators could have taken it as signaling certain meanings which we can recover through historicist effort. Clothes were an important metaphor, and in a context like this, it seems to have been considered, as the courtesy books of the time such as Elyot's *The Governor* indicate, if a man were to wear somebody else's dress, as a succeeding king would do his predecessor's, he should be really worthy of them in terms of his nobility and acts; otherwise, he cuts a sorry figure. Cloten's clumsy villainy shows up all the more as also the enormity of his sinful designs on Imogen whom he hopes to catch somewhere near Milford Haven and force her. But his encounter with Imogen's brothers whom Cloten could

not recognize proves his nemesis and he has his head cut off. What is more, this sorry attempt of Cloten to substitute himself in place of Posthumus in the affections of Imogen leads to his dead body still clothed in Posthumus' garments lying buried in the grave where the brothers and their foster father put Imogen's body, dressed as a male when Imogen had consumed the potion given by the court doctor to be used as a sort of tranquiliser. It leaves her in a stupor for the nonce. Imogen wakes up from her stupor, and in the process of coming into consciousness she sees a body in Posthumus's garments. In her half-awake, as it were, state she starts to cling and feeling with her hand the dress and the body from feet up to the head, in somewhat ridiculous fashion. She is nearly convinced that it is her Posthumus in his grave. By rather comic degrees, her hands and eye progress towards the neck of the body. At that point, she realizes that the head is missing. A scene like this is an example of how Shakespeare is able to call up in his later Jacobean plays simultaneous deliberate self-conscious theatricality and verisimilitude. If Imogen's leisurely groping indicates deliberate theatricality, the psychological appropriateness of Imogen's temporary dimming of awareness and sensation and some confusion of mind usually attendant upon a person just recovering from a stupor, a mark for us for subtle touch of verisimilitude, this.

In *A Winter's Tale*, Paulina manages to build up a strong make-believe that the actual Hermione kept living in secret by her for as long as sixteen years is a faithful, life-like statue of her made by a famous sculptor put on exhibition for the king, his new-found, long lost daughter Perdita, now married to Florizel now her betrothed and, also present on the scene. So Paulina at first leads them all to believe that queen Hermione *in propria persona* is a statuesque substitute. In a magical *tour de force*, she makes them believe so to start with. To telling dramatic effect of surprise and wonder, she brings about a *trompe l'oeil* of the work of art miraculously transforming itself into the natural real original person in flesh and blood. The statue walks down from its pedestal and starts speaking. It is as though the artifice miraculously becomes the real. This can almost be regarded as a synecdoche by way of encapsulation of the inter-

fusion by Shakespeare of artifice and reality, art and nature in the play as a whole. The apparent effect of wonder and miracle called up in the climatic statue episode would seem also to accord with such a requirement prescribed by Italian theorists of the genre of tragicomedy such as Guarini.

Another substitution is suggested in the course of Prospero's recounting to Miranda *The Tempest*. Prospero on account of his preoccupation with the study of his books in the art of magic and control over the spirits left the duties of the Dukedom of Milan in the charge of his brother Antonio, thus virtually making him a substitute Duke. But, as Prospero puts it, his brother was so inured to the ducal status that he came to take it as a fact that he, Antonio, was the Duke, not a substitute but the original. So in his villainous design he decided to be rid of the original Duke, Prospero and put him and along with him his very young child and daughter Miranda into exile, and so set him adrift on the high seas in a boat, which of course brings the duke to the island which they had occupied for long years with Miranda now a young woman and maid. It is a case of the stand-in getting bulled into the feeling and conviction within him, that he is the original, not a mere stand-in, a situation not uncommon in general.

The kinds of substitutions we have looked at in Shakespeare would show how Shakespeare employs it as a fruitful resource of drama, and, characteristically he exploits the idea with deftness, and force and subtlety at the same time. The motif serves Shakespeare as one of the many means he uses for generating and sustaining the energies of drama which keep it really going. It bears repetition at the close of this essay that Shakespeare uses substitution as a means of suggestion of dramatic significance as well as a spring of overt action.

## THE ART AND PRACTICE OF LITERARY CRITICISM

Leonard R. N. Ashley

We might remind ourselves that criticism is as inevitable as breathing, and that we should be none the worse for articulating for what passes in our minds when we read a book and feel an emotion about it, for criticizing our own minds in their work of criticism.

—T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919)

### Introduction

The age-old nature of and recent changes in literary criticism, examined from the perspective of an American but germane to readers of this journal in India may be instructive as Indian literary people struggle to write and write about writing from their special point of view. Today literary criticism is very personal. You will see I here to stress subjectivity. The clear statement of the subjective, which has always and inevitably present in criticism, even when objectivity has been attempted or pretended, has led to criticism being, like everything connected to the humanities, downgraded as unscientific, not rigorous. This is more marked today when science for many has replaced religion and the supposed objectivity of science has led to its getting the lion's share of attention and salaries and subventions. The subjective, even as it increases exponentially in the humanities, has come to be deemed less worthy if indeed of any practical use at all. But the subjective and the unique, such as the Indian perspective, are valuable in the humanities.

US universities, largely funded in research by large corporations and taxpayers investing in their offsprings' practical training for well-paying employment, now are paying more than twice as much to professors of accounting than professors of language and literature. What used to be taught in secretarial schools, by apprenticeship in trade schools, and so on has moved into colleges and universities where those with hands-on experience are thought to be the best teachers because they have what is called real-world experience. Schools of practical training in the likes of business

management, computer operation, number crunching, law, and medicine thrive. They pay off. The humanities do not pay off enough except, as in for instance the essay, in the pleasure of self-expression. The humanities may no longer claim to build character. Sun Tzu, Machiavelli, or Montaigne if read now may be read for business tips, not for moral improvement. When Americans speak admiringly of higher education in India it is invariable about the number of India's graduates in engineering and technology, not the humanities.

In the US students still spend more years to attain a doctorate in the humanities than (say) a JD, the former three-year bachelor of laws degree, now a doctorate. Many of our students are so weak in mathematics that they feel they cannot go for the better paid jobs waiting in engineering. We are constantly told how many engineers India graduates every year. In the humanities people study long and hard and, piling up huge debts, are finding it difficult to get a job in the underpaid world of teaching or anything else. You majored in what? Over their working lives graduates in the humanities will be honored less than (say) engineers and computer geeks—a word once derogatory, now a term of praise because of the money such people make—and will never become wealthy. Higher education in language and literature is frankly not a sound investment in a well-paid career these days. There are very few big salaries. Openings are few; those with comfortable tenure will not retire so that the peons who teach the majority of college courses can get position and better pay. The rewards, except the psychic ones which many dismiss, are very small for college teachers. Professor is a title which, a comedian who called himself Prof. Irwin Corey, *The World's Foremost Authority*, and who entertained by pompously speaking gibberish, is regarded as worth a guffaw.

Expectably, there has been some attempt by humanities professors and their students to make their work commercial. If you can research but write badly you can publish university press books and if you can read and write well you may get a decently paying job crafting advertising or speeches for business magnates or you can work at lesser pay as an editor or fact checker or proofreader

or journalist. In Academe the study of English has been made somewhat commercially viable. The English department, for example, has opted for Basic Skills, Communication, Creative Literature, Journalism, Remedial English, and other market-oriented specialties. Then there is the use of literature to study the soft sciences of psychology or sociology or political science and we have departments of the likes of American Culture, texts as pretexts chiefly. Also English courses may be required for "polish". A student is often required to interrupt training for a bit of compulsory antique education, if only because the successful business person may on occasion need a touch of familiarity with the classics.. (S)he may be called upon to recognize a reference to Hamlet. This, however, is a thin veneer. Even that, however, is becoming less necessary in a culture in which a suit and tie and a conservative haircut is no longer demanded, for if you can write computer programs, for instance, no one cares how you dress, or speak or write English.

### **Educational Background**

Despite the failure of primary and secondary education among the half of US students who do not drop out and go to college there is a minority that can read and write and some of them go professionally into higher education or even secondary education. If they arrived in college with inadequate high-school reading and writing skills they may have been brought up to college level by a series of remedial courses, taught expensively by professors who are not only ill prepared to teach the basics but would rather not do so. They hate the need to teach basic language courses. Those required courses are the bane of students as well. Students want only certification so they can get into law school or get an MBA if not so bright or medical school, dental school if not so bright, or business. Despite the fact that a great many of the most successful businessmen never went to college at all, a master's degree in business administration, skills once learned day to day in the marketplace, was for quite a while a qualification. It is less so lately. Now many MBAs cannot find work. Some secondary schools

pay more if a teacher has any kind of a master's degree, never asking if that in any specific way enhances classroom performance, but many janitors in high schools make more money than principals. Why not be a school superintendent, which is what we call a janitor?

The highest paid teachers ought to be the most important teachers, but who ever heard of a kindergarten or first-grade teacher being paid as well as even a college professor? Elementary school teachers, or at least the best of them, are grossly underpaid but they enjoy working with young, impressionable minds. The students in primary school are eager and apt to learn and teachers may well prefer to deal with them rather than with arrogant college students who, to use one of my favorite expressions, suffer from delusions of adequacy. After all, if they are in college they are college students, are they not, even if defined as "non-traditional," our jargon for "non-prepared". Our educational system has made students comfortable with being passed on without meeting standards. We call this "social promotion".

College teachers often have to face these somewhat recalcitrant pupils, teachers in the humanities often suffering the most. Many teachers drop out but some hang on. Most college professors could do better financially outside Academe. True, there are some celebrity professors even in the humanities enjoying high salaries, but how do their salaries compare with those of Ivy League law students starting on their first employment and lawyers' salaries when they have put in the same number of years since accreditation as the celebrity professors of history, language, literature, etc.? There are presidents of colleges and universities who are paid more than a million dollars a year. Not even a Nobel laureate professor is. Some sports coaches are. But of college presidents, how many of them were first eminent in Classics or History or Literature? Where does the majority of deans, provosts, and other administrators come from? Can you name a single critic of literature in well-paid positions like that? To come to the point here, there is little market for teaching literature or practicing literary criticism. It is chiefly a labor of love.

## Opinion

Those comments on education include both fact and opinion, my opinion. This article deals in a personal, conversational style. It has no footnotes, which used to be a sine qua non of anything published in an academic journal. What scholarly reader today checks each footnote for accuracy? Who bothers to ascertain that the quotation is not taken out of context? Who given a bibliography reads the sources listed? One reads something and subjectively decides on the question of the writer's authority, accepts or rejects the writer's opinions. This is a major problem for those who would write literary criticism.

Certainly opinion ought to be the result of assembling and considering facts in order to achieve some truth, some authority, but all authority is questioned now. Scholarly reading, of course, ought to be literary criticism of literary criticism, honest and thorough and useful to others although it can never be dispassionate or impersonal. It is hard to do. In literature novels are easiest to criticize and even to write because prose does not achieve the perfection of poetry. W. B. Yeats said you could tell when a line of poetry was finished the way you could tell when a box was shut, by an audible click. Novels do not demand that the writer finish them. Stendhal said one eventually just abandons them. When I was young all my friends were writing novels. Young people today are constructing screenplays in hopes of money or dashing off poetry in hopes of self-expression. Screenplays get out of the hands of those who write and think they have completed them into other hands that revise the so-called treatment and the team that may even depart from the supposedly finished shooting script. Poetry puts the writer more firmly in the driver's seat—and today you no longer have to rhyme. The age of Coleridge, that demanded the best words in the best order and insisted upon a reason "why it is thus, and not otherwise," is over.

Did you find that interesting? I call on the reader here to be a critic of every line and to interact with the text. I attempt to project a comradely rather than professorial personality because Ameri-

cans—have you noticed?—say “I feel” instead of “I think” and emotion always is always involved in persuasion, even in scholarship and writing about literature. I encourage you to talk back in your mind to the author, to weigh his evidence and opinion against your own. This is written by a professor emeritus. He authored it not for professional advancement, the reason almost all literary criticism is written in Academe, but because he believes he has something of interest to communicate to you. Make of it what you will. Later you can blog, tweet, or even talk to colleagues, friends, frenemies (a recent coinage) or what-have-you. You can test and refine and declare your own opinions. You can write literary criticism.

Once again, literary criticism is literature. So it demands literary criticism. So read and judge. I write so you may read easily but you may perhaps judge the style insufficiently dignified for literary criticism. I plead that in the world of judgment relegated to thumb up/thumb down this is at least more thoughtful and articulate. I ask you to consider what your expectations of literary criticism, in style and content, happen to be. I suggest you examine how you came to your beliefs. I urge you to come to conclusions of your own about what style to adopt as you practice the profession, whether gently or with the ax in hand so common in certain circles. Think not of Narayan (Gods, Demons & Others) retelling and praising the myths and legends of the Mahabhrata and the Ramayana but also of A. E. Housman attacking western scholars of classical scholars of our classics. You may think of acrimonious exchanges regarding Harold Bloom or the canon of Shakespeare or racism or sexism or many other points of difference fiercely debated today. Literary criticism which used to deal more in appreciation now often deals in deprecation. One hopes that all exchanges will be professionally courteous. That is more than good manners; it is good business. Good business dictates that you never make less money nor more enemies than necessary.

### **The Business**

The Academy is a business. It has no fewer cutthroats than

other businesses, and the profession is so hierarchical that there is unusually strong competition for rank. The entire enterprise of public education is democratic only insofar as it offers equal opportunity for talent to advance. As much as possible, public education, at bottom the preparation of better citizens with votes in a democracy, must encourage everyone to go as far as they can but it creates winners and losers or at least smaller and larger winners, invariably. Education is charged with perceiving differences between persons and increasing the advancement of knowledge and encouraging those with the greatest potential. Literary criticism is devoted to promoting the best over the mediocre or bad. That not only steers readers to the best and away from the time-wasting but gives writers hints for improvement (which they may or may not follow) and serves the profession's sometimes cruel sorting of sheep and goats. In the profession there are some who want to give people who share their biases an A, or people who try but do not succeed a B for effort, or people they disapprove of a failing grade. They do the same thing with literature on which they comment. They gave James Baldwin a B+ because he was black, or maybe because he wrote white English, although they may not have liked his politics or his sex life. They gave Allen Ginsberg an A- because he was a colorful character, like Poe (a B-) or Hemingway and Fitzgerald, higher but overrated. They gave Judith Butler and Derrida A+ because those critics said what other critics wanted to hear. They gave Thomas Pynchon an A for *Gravity's Rainbow* not because his was one of the great novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but because they could not understand it and were afraid of being judged as stupid. Similarly they have praised James Joyce for *Finnegans Wake*, which they do not and probably cannot read. (Indians could write about Joyce's effect on G. V. Dasani, to whom Anthony Burgess has given us only an intriguing introduction.) Obscurantism though not the Joycean is common in US literature. And we do not even have a Fielding or a Dickens. But I must get off this tack. Any teacher knows that any grade short of A is likely to be protested. That is one of the problems of the profession. At the same time teaching, and writing literary criticism, means taking responsibility—and having stand-

ards to support—giving grades, being “professional”.

### The Profession

Those of us associated or formerly associated with teaching call it not business but The Profession, somewhat the way that the movies call themselves The Industry. Teaching at all levels has become if not an industry then a business. Every industry or business or profession is shaped by the kind of participant it attracts. We must be frank about those who are in the business of literary history and criticism these days. The social data tell us a lot. At first literary critics in the English tradition tended to be gentlemen of means and leisure, superannuated clergymen, retired or wealthy lovers of books, rather antiquarian. They were men in easy chairs with a hobby. There were also journalists who wrote about books but these were usually well-off men who were socially well above Fleet Street and the American newspapers. They might sometimes be outsiders fascinated by the unusualness or the challenge of the foreign. One, for example, was an Englishman in India who investigated Sanskrit and came up with the explanation of Indo-European languages.

While the English might study Sanskrit intensively they were more cavalier about English. Their universities taught dead languages far sooner than they taught English. It was not until about a century ago that Oxbridge (the two ancient universities in a nation where old=better) appointed its first Professor of English Literature, Sir Arthur Quiller Couch. This was for the UK the beginning of the professional critic of English literature. America picked up the idea. It likewise picked up Churton Collins' merchants' institute lectures for the working class. Other influences on the US came from the German universities whose drawing away of serious American scholars in the 19<sup>th</sup> century prompted this nation to set up research universities on the German model. We also set up the Kindergarten and at the advanced level the close study of etymology. At first American professors were philologists who stressed language over literature, the classical languages, Greek, Latin, Hebrew, even Arabic.

The British and Americans for a long time thought that nobody who could read literature for himself (occasionally herself) required instruction in this matter. In the US there were from early on some few chairs in rhetoric and belles lettres.

Rhetoric had always been useful in US institutions of higher learning because they were from the beginning simply seminaries for the education of ministers of the church. Knowledge of rhetoric was essential for clerical business. So might be an ability to read the scriptures in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Seminaries still give more thorough if perhaps a bit more biased education in these classics than colleges and universities. Religious schools teach serious explication de texte, whether yeshivas, Christian colleges, Muslim medrassas, or whatever. Understandably each usually comes at literary criticism with its own prejudices and creeds and traditions.

Sir Arthur Quiller Couch the professor, to return to him as conversations do, was not a clergyman as most Oxbridge dons were. He was a distinguished writer and something of a critic because he was an omnivorous reader and a man of strong opinions. He also had a burning desire to get noticed. He more or less founded a business for people of his stripe although his tastes were catholic and the business today tends toward narrow specialists. He lectured and he wrote, prose of course. Today poets and novelists do not usually become literary critics and practically never do they hold the chairmanship of an English department. They are becoming more numerous on staff but they are almost invariably there either as big names for window dressing—on my faculty we had Mark Strand and Allen Ginsberg and John Ashberry—or because as smaller fry they cannot make a living out of their published works—we had dramatist Jack Gelber and novelist Susan Fromberg Schaffer.

Working writings may well be hired as teachers of writing. It is possible to hold laborers in the vineyard up as practical teachers because they get work into print and may even have the connections and be able to show others with talent and/or ambition how to accomplish that. As for themselves, if they are not receiving large royalties creative writing is often something, as they say, to fall back on, a second job. For most teachers actually writing anything

is a business sideline to get into and to get ahead in. It can be a ladder out of the lowest class. It can assist a climb up the middle class. H. L. Mencken was a prime example of the descendant of immigrants who achieved critical fame. Mencken was a largely self-taught man who never shed his rather blue-collar outlook and took more potshots at the “booboisie” than a gentleman would bother to do.

### **Making the Grade**

As for students, they usually want to be more creative in Creative Writing and to express themselves rather than learn to copy their teachers. Even painters these days do not prepare by copying the works of Old Masters; they buy a canvas and paints and start painting. If art schools do not like what they do, they quit more often than they adapt.

In schools they resent being graded. The college demographic of today is not the old world of the Gentleman’s C given to the spoiled or coddled sons of the wealthy or the plodding student of the theology headed for a comfortable job in a parish. The teachers and students of today are not what they used to be. You can argue that elitism has given way to broader opportunities, but the fact is that college education is not now for those who do not have to work for a living but for those who must prepare to do so. Education for the love of knowledge has been almost completely replaced by preparation for the world of work. Art for art’s sake has pretty much been swamped by courses in arts administration and performance, just as pure science has been by applied science and technology. Joe College and Jane College are studying hard in many US colleges to get ahead. Surfboard U, as we call the lackadaisical college of fraternities and sororities and sports and beach parties, is exceptional. Party College is rarer than Grindstone Grad School.

The staff is also different. A college president today must be outstanding not in scholarship but in fund raising, not in classical education or scientific achievement as much as in management and public relations with alumni/ae, foundations, and state agencies. (S)he has among other major priorities running businesses

such as technology’s outsourcing of research and development to colleges and the college’s investment in the profitable running of intercollegiate sports, now an industry. A department head deals chiefly in budgets and staffing. A dean is no longer the eldest, most senior, most distinguished member of the faculty but a good manager, and is preferably a woman, ideally a woman from some significant ethnic minority, so as to make clear the college’s new dedication to diversity and broader outreach. In the name of democracy quotas have been reintroduced into admissions; where once they kept out many Jews and Catholics and blacks and Amerindians, now they are used to recruit those, as well as gays and lesbians et al. All of these have their impact in new departments such as Judaic Studies and Women’s Studies, etc., and naturally research, writing, and criticism have increasingly been shaped by these new activists as well as by the Now Generation that stresses relevance, so that Zora Neale Hurston or Alice Walker are said to be “better than Shakespeare” because more Now.

Such factors as education, teachers and students and the impact on them of instruction rather than education, the impact of the educated, poorly or better educated, on society, and the place in society of the humanities and sciences and technology—all these shape the subjects and techniques and results of literary commentary. That always reflects the *Zeitgeist* as the Germans say and the *mentalité* as the French say, right now.

### **The Now**

Inevitably the Now is constantly changing and with it the canon of literature and the politics of literary criticism. Freud has faded, Theory has come (and is going), and activism has pretty much replaced the aesthetic in criticism. All this is speeded up, more cost-effective, examined in terms of the so-called bottom line. This is the outcome as in the accountants’ reports on profits and losses and it is part and parcel of a general scramble for financial results and immediate impact. Thus literary appreciation has given way to literary manipulation for advancement and often political agendas.

The feminists are more prominent these days when the majority of US undergraduates are female even though women are still not the larger part of the faculty. Women—there are few male feminists—are one of the, if not the, self-serving activist groups. The old-fashioned male clique of the entrenched and complaisant Old Boys' Network is crumbling, doomed as elitist in the era when it is assumed that everyone ought to get a college degree whether they are capable of earning one or not. We worry about retention more than standards. Most notably, teaching at all levels is returning to the historic US school marm mode, women's work. To the extent that, however much progress has grudgingly been made in sexual equality, women still have not escaped traditional second-class status in society, then to the same extent teaching as a profession and the humanities in particular, being a field in which women still are more prominent than they are in the branches of science and technology and commerce, will remain in the public mind less than first-class. In India the status of women may very particularly affect who writes, who criticizes, and how all literary matters are assessed to a somewhat similar extent the local Indian factors of educational expansion and financing.

In Britain even more than in the US the drive to make all higher education businesslike has led to extraordinary rises in tuition fees, more students and paying more, and grants and other subventions closely tied to utility and payoff. Why pay for the study of Sanskrit—or Spenser or Shelley, for that matter? Does your research in the humanities, does your literary criticism in the journals or in books that are lucky to sell several thousand copies, pay you or, more important, the state well? If not, why don't you get a decent job? Scribbling about scribblers, the taxpayers or their masters say, is not money making.

Into the modern world of making a living, and a culture of entitlement that says you ought to be paid at least a living wage whether you can earn one or not, have come a very large number of women who in the past would have been supported by working husbands and themselves working at the important but unpaid labor of running a household and bringing up children. Today women are

flooding into the general labor market. In fact many of them are paid better than the average man. In the search for a second household income, or with the husband among the millions unable to find employment, or on their own and less likely to have dropped out of school, women have taken mostly part-time but only occasionally tenured employment in Academe. They are changing the topics and the tenor of many things, including literary production and evaluation.

Perhaps caring women in the so-called Ivory Tower of the college campus, rather than in the wider arena of public life, in their teaching and administration will be able to do much better than us tweedy old men did. "Professional pipe-smokers" was what we were once called. Since my day there, to be personal, Princeton has admitted women to classes and to the faculty. Princeton's president is a distinguished female scientist. The last college at which I taught, for several decades, has this year appointed its first woman president. I detect a trend. It is most obvious in the stress in literary studies on women's interest, women writers, women critics. Women are turning literary criticism in America strongly in the direction of sex, female identity, equality, the gaze, etc., overall the destruction of misogyny, and with all that comes the repositioning in the literary canon of women writers both known and obscure, important and hitherto thought insignificant.

### **Gender, Content and Style**

The presence of women has skewed literary criticism toward matters of gender. Look how many scholarly articles and books take that approach. There are ever more papers on gender-related topics at conventions such as that of the Modern Language Association, now with mostly female officers and participants. This has assisted to redress the imbalance so long maintained by the Old Boys but it has likewise given the field far more attention to neglected women writers of both ancient and modern times, though current relevance is a new yardstick. It is difficult to see why we should care much for the devotional writings of Renaissance nuns or the diaries of long dead wives in the era of Now but feminists

have promoted Lady Worth of Urania along with Louise Labé and Ameilia Laniyer and others once barely unmentioned. As the Women's Movement picked up on the success of the Civil Rights Movement, so the Gay & Lesbian Caucus and other single-interest groups have entered the fray to alter the canon and the old standards, broadening inclusion to accommodate their personal interests, admittedly being more inclusive and rewriting history as the French annales have done, writing history to include the little people. Women and so-called ethnics have also been in the vanguard of political correctness. All these forces have impacted (new verb) literary criticism's concerns, targets, approaches, and style. Something about style at this point, although correct political content is the usual basic interest of today's literary criticism.

### **Content and Style**

We used to say style and content, believing that the arts were about artistic technique rather than what subject that was, let us say, painted. A great painting could be of a pair of old boots, superbly rendered. Van Gogh put terrific emotion into that as well as painterly skill. Once we had historical and narrative and didactic art, message in visual art. Now we laud action painting, painting about paint, masters of stripes or polka dots or drips or splashes, and so on, and we are of a mind to despise the lapidary literary (too literary) style. There is something in this of fundamental American distrust of the eloquent and the calculated. "Decided, dared, and done". That is from Christopher Smart, almost forgotten because didactic rather than personal poetry is out of fashion, and religious devotion has given way to political action as a serious subject. Christopher Smart? Here previously there would be a reference but today the reader can always go online for any details. What (s)he gets in literary criticism is therefore chiefly if not so much information as one person's estimations.

My opinion is that Smart's art has been replaced to a large extent by the simply dared and done, off the top of the head and unrevised effusions perhaps best known in the work of Jack Kerouac.

Kerouac typed at furious speed and used a long roll of paper so that he would not have to pause to put paper into the machine, or deliberate.. "That's not writing," said Truman Capote, "that's typing". Many drafts in pencil before approaching the typewriter, Capote's regimen, is out of fashion. Type and SEND is our mantra (an overused new word) now. Literature now has adopted revised standards, not revised manuscripts.

Get it good, writing as rewriting, died when get it out came along. Americans in creative writing—actually all writing is creative to some extent—have needed editors, from Herman Melville to Stephen King. They seldom get them. (Condensed versions of ancient Indian classics would be suitable for modern readers.) Sloppy, self-indulgent fist-draft writing is common and commonly accepted. The days are over when an editor named Maxwell Perkins (you can google him) made a well constructed novel out of the pages that Tom Wolfe (the elder one of the name, you can google him) stood at the refrigerator as at a desk—he was very tall—and dashed off at speed and threw pages into cardboard boxes. But the computer assists one to turn out reams of copy. There are few editors and few self-editors these days. Self-publishing is making things worse. That's my view. You are entitled to your opinion. Or perhaps in the modern bellicose partisan way you believe you are entitled to yours but I am not entitled to mine. Anyway this brings us to politics. That has become the science of trouncing opponents or the art of what you can get away with as you play for power and prestige. In some countries politics, once defined as the art of the possible, has become the arena of the stalemate.

### **Politics**

A matter not of factional opinion but demonstrable fact is the politicization of the teaching and the history and criticism of literature. Politics govern. Class, which Paul Fussell and a handful of others are the only writers who decided, dared and wrote on this touchy subject, is always difficult to bring up in our allegedly classless society. But here goes, decided and dared.

There are many factors but permit an emphasis on feminism. Female students and faculty of literature come from a different class of society than the old and almost to a man (or woman) have not had the classical elitist education. (We'll get to that later here.) They may be weak in grammar and spelling even in graduate school but today computers may help correct them and if strong in opinion people may become stronger as computers connect and encourage communities of interest. Computers also tempt people to rely on the Internet rather than the archives and other old ways of research. Critics are far less belles lettres than their predecessors. On that they seek no correction. The new is good and the old is bad. That goes for persons, places, and things.

College entrants come with less rigorous education. They declare more fanatic aims. Cruel oppression and an increased culture of scarcity have made them into political activists. The Old Boys as well as forces outside Academe are responsible for much of that result. Most members of the younger generation of literary critics are revolutionaries, and revolution you know or should know does not guarantee any essential change in the system; the old top goes to the bottom and the old bottom goes to the top. The formerly oppressed become the new oppressors. Tyranny and class war remain sometimes exacerbated by the newly found freedom of the formerly subjugated. Here is political correctness again, like affirmative action a sound idea that got out of hand. The new and importantly feminine faculty is dedicated to gender equality and, first and foremost, women's rights. When something is first and foremost, where is equality? Pause and reflect, then move on to a major matter of modern literary criticism, women's studies.

### **Women's Studies**

Studies of literature by and for women ought always to have had the place it merits in general studies. Women ought fairly to be admitted to the conversation and the canon. Instead, as the New Girls began to battle the Old Boys, Women's Studies set up its own classes, sometimes banning males from attendance as females

used to be banned. That was a mistake but you can see the reasons. Women's Studies should be no more exclusive than, for example, Middle Eastern Studies or Italian-American Studies. Where I used to teach the local politics established such enclaves but there were no Jewish or non-Italian-Americans in the ethnic feel-good classrooms. Indeed it was strongly argued that if you were of the so-called wrong sex or wrong ethnic origin you should not be permitted to teach or write on Their subjects. They had not got around to saying that you could not teach Proust unless you were gay, or Shakespeare, who wrote plays to be played by and seen by and read by male, if you were female. Prejudice is always selective.

Women in the mainstream could teach anything but males could not teach Women's Studies any more than whites could teach Black Studies. (Does India have similar restrictions regarding, say, Hindus and Muslims, or language competitions in your multiethnic and many tongued vast nation?) To add to the difficulties, US enclaves set up their own rules and standards and were able to escape having to compete on the famous level playing ground. A playing ground is for games, and games have losers as well as winners. The academic Great Game is all about turf, clout, appointments, promotions, and tenure. Academe's politics are especially nasty. One wit has said the fights are so vicious because the rewards are so small. When my college set up Women's Studies I joked that next we would have Men's Studies. Those actually came into being in some places, though never at my college. What we ended up with was an academic nation with certain equivalents of Native American reservations. These were sovereign, outside the national law, sacrosanct territories where minorities were in charge. What should have enriched the general became exclusive enclaves.

The enclaves had their own laws, their own chiefs, and their own languages to speak, essentially, only to their own people. No casinos like Native Americans. (I am a native American but not a Native American, born here but not of Amerindian extraction. The language is getting confused.) In an age of globalization we saw the creation of new ghettos. In an age of greater democratization we saw that they had, to use one of their own silly terms, privileged

themselves. They discarded Leavis' Great Tradition. They lost connection with the literary heritage, which always was like everything historical both good and bad. They declared a politics of No and a philosophy (the American for notion) of Now. They lost the female's superior grip on reality and practicality and responsibility that long ago developed because the female has to bear the baby.

Men make similar errors. Jan Kott tried to sell us Shakespeare as "our contemporary". Nonsense, unless you define contemporary in a new way. If you could meet him, and even his fellows left us practically nothing to assist us to see him in the flesh, you would be shocked at how much the historical Shakespeare differs from us. Consider his belief in the divine right of kings, his attitude toward the way daughters ought blindly to obey fathers, and a great deal more, including his expressed distaste for democracy. He was not even a Protestant in the modern way. His father and mother naturally retained much of the Roman Catholicism that dominated the world before The Reformation. Shakespeare's own contemporaries, Catholic or Protestant, would not recognize The Bard of the following centuries.

But criticism remakes as it revalues. Shakespeare has remained a writer "not for an age, but for all time" by being remade generation after generation in the light of each succeeding generation's values, Shakespeare would scarcely recognize himself. All such lasting writers are so remade, though maybe none so much as he, which is why Shakespeare speaks to us better than any other writer. He had a firm grip on universals. His style charms some and baffles others. They want to say to Shakespeare what his brother William said to Henry James, "Spit it out!" (Henry James offers a good example of the single-sentence critique: "Lord of the troubled speech and single eye," as someone said who did not like his work, but how else does one handle the minutiae of psychologizing?) We stick with Shakespeare because of his deathless characters, the way they stick with the verbosity of Dickens and the stuffy prose of Conan Doyle. Think of the way that Tarzan is known in every civilized country and language despite Edgar Rice Burroughs having been very clumsy with words. Who in Indian literature has created

the deathless characters, and how? Tell us.

It has been suggested that Shakespeare's sister, if he had had one, would have been as talented as he if only she had she been given the opportunities he found or made for himself. It has also been said that although there never was a female Shakespeare, or any female author anywhere nearly that good, women are by nature more sensitive than men and actually better at language learning and language subtlety than men. Today's women, no longer called girls, have developed a grownup understanding of the political facts of life. That has affected, as I say, their literary criticism and also has shaped a lot of what has been written by heterosexual men and lesbians and gays. All sexes bring themselves to their work. Sexual politics is a major factor in Indian life and literature as well and vast changes are taking place in yerms of old castes as well.

Educators used to be said to bring dedication to their work but today commitment better fits. There is a new excitement in literary criticism, more dissension. People of whatever sexual orientation teach and write about political content but all seem nowadays less passionate about literary style. They appear to be more concerned with social issues and denouncing opponents. They obviously are fascinated with society, not literature. Literature is certainly shaped not only by imagination but also by social realities and it has a power to change society but it is also an art and so aesthetics enter in. However colored by gender, literature at best must be for what Joyce called Everybuddy. "Sing Me a Song of Social Significance" if you will but sing it melodiously, with feeling, and with personal interpretation, aware of your gifts and your range and your audience.

### Style

We tend to care too much about the psychology and biography of the writer and not enough about the style, l'homme même (the man himself, the omission of consideration of the female author is remarkable). We should never ignore the architectonics and the word choice for sound and resonances, for motivation and meaning

and power to move and inspire and delight. The current critical style is less appreciative than boring or argumentative. It offers explication but it suffers from a fully explicable, if not forgivable, adoption of highly unfortunate and awkward and inexact prose riddled with jargon and unbalanced by activism. Poetry has largely become prose scattered over the page, sometimes indecipherable. ("It must be profound because I couldn't make any sense of it at all.") Prose has become sloppy, jerrybuilt of prefabricated pieces. It is art in clay, not marble. Literature is seldom now what Ezra Pound, a great poet squashed because of bad politics, wanted: "news that remains news".

This degeneration of literature, a term now used to describe anything printed, such as advertising copy or publicity handouts, seems to derive partly from bad teaching and political propaganda at all levels. There precision, concision, and straightforward communication have been lost because drills in so-called enriched and often polysyllabic vocabulary did a lot of damage to communication. Grammar was badly taught. The decline also derives from inept education courses which, as I have written elsewhere, "start with little and spend most of the time reviewing". If you have little to say, you may elaborate. If you want to appear more scientific you create ponderous terminology. If you have not thought things through—and how many of today's teachers of literature have had even one course in logic?—or if you are neither confident nor brave you put "things" in exculpatory quotation marks. Have you noticed how many quotation marks appear in modern criticism that do not embrace actual quotations? This evasiveness causes scientists to ridicule and dismiss us. It makes humanists try to puzzle out what is actually being asserted, if anything. Some egomaniacs or if you like experimental writers, have specialized in being so inventive as to be essentially unreadable. Some avant-garde critics enjoy being able to penetrate obscure style and to lord it over those who cannot. That is the nadir of literary criticism now that the simpleminded "I liked it" is banned.

Moreover, a great deal of not really great modern literature shows we are too often not only preaching to the choir but trying to

communicate, if at all, solely to some smallish in-group. Sociology has given us news about in-groups and out-groups and that is more useful than a lot of things that that semi-science has imposed upon literature and criticism. In-groups explain why even university press books are frequently deplorable. They are supposed to be peer reviewed. They are said to have copy editors but they are seldom or never are vetted by non-specialists because they are directed at specialists only. They are sold in small numbers chiefly to reference libraries. That is taken to give license to be unreadable, not only by the famous General Reader but also by a lot of professionals as well.

I have been reviewing books on *The Renaissance* for Bibliothèque d'Huanisme et Renaissance in a chronique thrice annually for decades and try to be as considerate as possible because my review may be the sole printed notice these specialists ever receive. The worst offenders I simply neglect to mention. The pseuds are not sued. My loyal readers learn to read between my lines, a literary criticism trick. If literary criticism is brashly unkind the reviewer may gain adherents, though not among authors skewered. I say avoid the cheap-shot wisecracks of the likes of Dorothy Parker. If you cannot be kind at least be specific and stay calm. If literary criticism is not more widely derided it is because it is seldom read except by accepting cliques. These knitting circles do not pay even as much attention to general readership as the journalistic criticism of commercial books and movies. Much literary criticism does not even risk a simply up or down judgment but waffles about ambiguity ambiguously. It does not, take a position as literary criticism always should. If criticism does not drive one to read or re-read the work discussed, if it does not assert and impose standards, it is worthless.

In many graduate schools and even some undergraduate classes the lecturers are putting the emphasis on criticism rather than the reading of the work itself. Lecturers are so called because in early days they had a book out of which they read finished prose, when the students had no books. Later on, lecturers carefully composed informative and impressive addresses which they read

to classes and then collected in a book. Now the lecturers often extemporize and conduct class discussions with students who might as well have no books because they do not read them. Examinations too often test what the lecturers have said and what the critics have written rather than what the students have read well enough to form defensible opinions. Reform Indian education.

### At School

From high school on, if not earlier, students are hard pressed for time. In the US they may turn to CliffNotes and similar cribs rather than the assigned texts. They see the movie rather than read the book if there is a film treatment—and no movie is a book. The school year is crammed full of classes and extracurricular activities. It is hectic. It drives many to pacifying drugs and some to suicide. For none is there ample time for sober reflection. The American school year is shorter than school years abroad because early agrarian America gave pupils time off to go home and help with the farm and the harvest. That is senseless now. Even a summer off today cannot provide a student with a job that used to be enough to pay the year's tuition costs and living costs and the staggering cost of textbooks, though textbooks online may help in the future. Overworked teachers take the vacations to recover, not to conduct research. In overcrowded classrooms they are engaging in Gore Vidal calls bookchat on the basis of too little reading by the students—and often by the harried teachers themselves.

Though US schools cost more per pupil than is the case in other nations the general results are far inferior. The public schools which were to united and equalize the citizenry are in a parlous state, exacerbated by the flight by those who can afford it to expensive private education. The US refuses to extend the school year despite the fact that overseas students go to class many more days than American students do. We refuse to adopt national standards and national tests. We have most of the Top 20 research universities of the world but the rest of our ponderous educational establishment is a shambles. Legislators, educators, teachers' unions

and parents share the blame. It is not the students' fault that they are not well prepared and move through the system nonetheless. There is education for all, whether they can benefit from it or not. There is regularly promotion willy-nilly. We legislate No Student Left Behind. But some students simply cannot cope academically beyond their personal limits however long you work with and on them. They should be allowed to quit school and take up some apprenticeship. Or they should be placed in technical schools, where they may learn plumbing or automotive repair or some other useful trade which may pay them better in the long run than college graduates or college professors. There are hurdles not to be run around or crept under. When it comes time to jump the hurdles there are no national curricula on which to test and hordes of students in need of remediation.

Self-appointed experts are hired. Many are very effective at what they do. The idea is by hook or cook at any cost to get students into preferred schools, through the SAT or the Graduate Record Examination, The goal is approached not by handing out reading lists and tutoring after the student has read the texts but by providing exam tips and instructing the desperate how to get by without having absorbed original texts. The students are far too likely prepared to enter our world in which a classic is defined as a book you must be prepared to lie and say you have read.

It's a catastrophe. Where it is not pitifully a waste of money it is good but too expensive. New York City has a number of pre-college institutions that charge as much as US \$ 40,000 per year. The wealthy pay huge sums for pre-Kindergarten tuition. When America finally has jobs for those who are not so wealthy they do not need to work a great many people will be quite unable to fill the kinds of jobs offered that will enable them to make a decent wage. The fiscal mess will be cleared up well before the educational disaster.

What is needed, in the US or India or anywhere else, is a work force educated sufficiently to take well paying employment in the new information age, not on assembly lines (robots are smarter, cheaper, better) nor solid grounding in classical education (often

called frills). Today book learning is not sufficient practical education for modern life. It promises too much and delivers too little and at an unacceptable cost to taxpayers and citizens' lives. What is needed is efficient individual thinking for everybody with for those who actually want and can afford the so-called frills the wisdom of the ancients. All this on education is not irrelevant to literary criticism because (a) there ought to be more of it in our education and (b) our education as it stands ill equips us to write or read sound literary criticism.

We produce college graduates who could not qualify to graduate from high school in Japan, Finland, or many other countries. How are we ever going to produce first-rate literary critics or any other serious thinkers when colleges start with the admission of so-called non-traditional students, which is to say unprepared students? Meanwhile our broke nation, the world's largest debtor, is pouring money it cannot afford into an educational system that in large measure does not work for most Americans. At the same time we have a think top layer of extraordinarily good institutions of higher learning and some truly distinguished prep schools. Those at the highest levels marvelously educate our own brightest young people and those who flock here from abroad. They get wonderful educations in the US because they attend the superior institutions. Then most of the well educated foreigners, trained at our expense, go back to their native countries to compete with America, in India, in China, and elsewhere. Students from India in the US have slightly decreased lately as opportunities at home have broadened. The Times of India recently set the number at 104,000 as against 123,000 from China. The Economic Times and similar publications have at the same time noted that reduced tuition costs have persuaded many Americans not only to seek expert medical treatment in India but to study there (slightly over a 44% increase lately according to the International Institute of Education) but of course Americans studying Indian literature a great deal of which is in native languages are at a disadvantage compared with Indian students who speak and read English studying and writing about literature in English. Few foreign students could function in Indian educational institutions with

a foreigner's command of Hindi or one of the native languages recognized by the Constitution of 1949 (Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Panjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Sindhi, Sanskrit, and Urdu). There are other languages in use with a million or more speakers today, of which Bhojupuri, Maithili, and Santali are just a few. Incidentally, oral literature in both major and minor languages ought to be transcribed and studied and translated and critically examined. Modern dialect literature is likewise important. English experts on Sanskrit tend to be expert in the ancient, not the modern, but in all the modern non-English literature of India there is rich material which could be made known to and respected by readers of English, both within and outside the Indian union.

It is for Indians to write in English more criticism of all varieties of Indian literature and it is that which this article hopes to encourage in Points of View. Of particular interest might be both traditional legend and folktales, only part of which has been translated, and recent poetry, drama, and realistic novels, not just the classics. Indian scholars should produce new anthologies in English of select poems, short stories, folktales essays, etc., from the various native languages to celebrate the heritage and diversity of your nation's literature, each selection with a page or so of background and critical comment. Popular might be a dictionary of Indian English slang and also a selection of some heroic tales from the ancient classics. We should like to see, for example, a complete series of anthologies of folktales, one from each of the languages of India and a new collection of animal fables from the Panchatantra which, like the plays of Kalidasa, have been the sources of a certain amount of western literature.

### **Classical Education**

This article has been long but we need a bit more on education, wherever it may be conducted, as it shapes literary criticism. Classical education worked for the good of the individual and the state. It traditionally was not given to the majority of the population but

only the elite. It taught the trivium and the quadrivium. If you do not know what those were, go online or even to a library. We have many superb libraries and many quite adequate ones, threatened now in the cyber age. Find out about classical education, based on the reading and debating (literary criticism) of respected texts. Today criticism of those ancient documents is in the hands of very few. Students if they want to read the great books in Greek and Latin — Arabic does not seem to count—do not have to command the original languages. All the important classical corpus is available in translation. The great ideas are accessible to anyone who can read and many texts have been recorded so even the illiterate can be read to.

College students in many curricula are still compelled to take a taste of classics if only in rushed surveys similar to the Beowulf to Virginia Woolf race to which many of us in English literature were once subjected. If it's an early Tuesday it must be Plato. If two sessions are on The Canterbury Tales you can have at brief encounter with Chaucer in Modern English. Unfortunately that way you get chiefly the ideas, not the art. Chaucer stole the stories. It was the way he dressed his medieval didacticism that was important. Shakespeare stole all but one of his plots—or we have not yet found his source and the German Quellen hunting is out of fashion—but it was, and this is what literary criticism chiefly addresses, how he said it that matters.

Today few so-called experts in English literature even for the doctorate have to master Old English for Beowulf or Middle English for Chaucer. To do my personal specialty (Renaissance) one needs all that for serious research. The feminists who can, often because of the national origins, deal with Renaissance female authors in (say) French or Italian have an advantage. Foreign languages are too poorly and too expensively taught in US colleges—Berlitz or Rosetta Stone or a year abroad is a better investment—and some colleges are discontinuing some or all foreign language courses. But even those who manage French or Italian do not seem to know that the most learned ladies of The Renaissance often wrote in the European scholarly standard of the era, Latin, not the vernacular.

Latin was in a way the world wide web of the day. How many Renaissance writers in Women's Studies can read Neo-Latin? Those books by women of long ago are not classical and the Latin scholars still around do not bother with them. They prefer to read classical male Latinists, even Manilius, and Neo-Latin, even paralyzingly dull but historically significant theological tomes. The point here is that the complete picture of Renaissance scholarship needs to be known but critics are not working on the whole picture, not even those with gender axes to grind. Education in the west began importantly with grammar schools. They taught Latin grammar. For centuries all educated people could read and write Latin, and did. So did some talented women who could not get admitted to schools but were privately educated, in Latin.

Meanwhile English became more extensively spoken and richer and more flexible. Some Shakespeare specialists may not know Elizabethan English and so drift into the easy stuff, like Shakespeare on Film. Some others do theater history but lack German for research. But it is essential. US colleges are cutting our courses in German. Schlegel and Ulrici and many others delved into Shakespeare with ganz organisiert Teutonic thoroughness in the 19th century. Germans are still at it. Without a reading knowledge of German many researches are incomplete.

Perhaps online you can get rough translations. Good enough? The Internet has changed much. What good are the stupendous bibliographies now online if scholars cannot or do not read many or most of the foreign language contributions of times past? No wonder that the useful articles in PMLA that always began with a summary of past scholarship on the new article's specific topic are no longer seen. I always used to read first the introductory, positioning scholarship summary, second the new writer's conclusions, and only then if it seemed worthwhile the entire article. Lately I find little of interest in PMLA. I think of a faux Johnsonianism: "That is a publication, Sir, which it is superfluous to praise and dangerous to consult". It is amazingly difficult to keep up with the plethora of publications that our publish-or-perish Academe has entrenched. Most of us are entirely too busy elsewhere for PMLA. On top of that, we are all

getting so specialized that any issue of PMLA has far too little in which any given specialist is interested. It is too what I call *nouveau niche*.

### Specialization

Many literary critics have tried to solve the problems of both the lack of languages and the rat race of keeping up by specializing in their own national literature and of that only the fairly recent material. That is the only literary criticism they will attempt. They have abandoned, for instance, Spenser for the latest popular novelist, dramatist, or (less often, because poetry has grown so impenetrable) poet. But one cannot know the full effect without knowing the cause, the present without the past. Goethe says that anyone who does not know the last 3000 years is “living hand to mouth”. “History is bunk,” said Henry Ford. Too many modern literary critics, scandalously in regard to American literature, agree. They know little at all besides their comfy little corner of Right Now or their special and minor old interest such as Sarah Lee Jowett. They toy with popular culture without a background in history, the past that is “not even past”. History is rejected as gone and done with, folklore traditions are most often unknown, and Yankees write about the Deep South, which, as William Faulkner said, you cannot understand unless you were born there.

Do not want to be stuck with writing about where you came from? Want to try German reception theory out of recent periodicals even though that method cannot produce important context? Maybe you can get away with that slackness if you speak of Anne Rice. But how important is she, and how much does she deserve or, better, how much does she actually need close critical attention? Critics of science fiction who lack a sound grounding in science are out on a limb, and challenged by experts, and God help the psychobiographers who have no formal training in psychology. They are all one with the “Just Do It” school and the Americans who if asked “Can you play the violin?” reply “Don’ know. Never tried”. They must be counted, and rejected, among the artists who believe

ambition is quite enough, just go and buy paints and a pre-stretched canvas and become a painter, no studies in anatomical or other drawing, no grasp of perspective or color-grinding or color-mixing, no apprenticeship meticulously copying the masters, just a fast modern masterpiece by the untutored, which in American means authentic and sincere.

Are you trained? Did you ever have a course or courses in writing literary criticism per se from someone who from personal experience and boning up on the history knew its secrets and exactly how and where to get your effort published once you finished it? Were you put to read a great deal of the masters, if feminists will permit the word, of the art, the people who produced and theorized? Did anyone teach you how Edmund Wilson (our leading US literary critic thus far) learned to do what he did? Or did you just hear some lectures and hand in some assignments that were never carefully analyzed for you, simply graded? Did you just jump on the deep end, like PhDs in literature in general who with no real experience enter a college classroom and start teaching with not even the modicum of pedagogical training without which one cannot get a job in elementary or secondary schools? Are you a trained literary critic or just someone who writes literary criticism? Read that question again. True, one can learn on the job but that is hard on readers, even if you have a flair. Easy writing makes for hard reading. Read journals in your field, write, rewrite, and send out queries and MSS.

### So You Want to be a Literary Critic

Literary criticism is an art. It is to be learned by reading the best of the genre and under expert supervision acquiring the techniques. It demands more than simply reading something and forming a pat opinion. God help you if you pick up a modern masterpiece of American literature—it’s American, I’m American, I can do this—and you find it is experimental, baffling, or that for (say) this novel you need to know some physics. Of course for British writers you need to know not American but British English, and British society. For drama you need to know the precise sociodynamics of the

play's time and place as well as the mysteries of acting and staging. For criticism of the cinema, perhaps our most influential American literature, if you are going to be incisive you need to understand the American character. You cannot neglect Toqueville, still the most insightful writer about that, but there are many others, most of whom write very clumsily indeed but you have to get through them. If you as an Indian understand the Indian character, you write about it, and help the rest of us to understand,

Maybe you can be a movie critic. To be a movie critic and not just a flack working with studio publicity handouts and confining yourself to catchy ways of phrasing that might just get you quoted in advertisement, you must read Pauline Kael and many other knowledgeable, perceptive, and readable critics of film. There are few outlets for the good stuff along these lines. What is there about Bollywood? All popular periodicals appear to be headed toward becoming People. To be a good film critic you must understand all the main ins and outs of movie and merchandizing, acting, directing, cinematography, the special art of screenwriting, writing with light in a visual as well as language medium, and more. Movie criticism may be the most noticed and at the same time the least appreciated, the most demanding of all literary criticism. It might, however, get your name in the paper or a shot at a TV program. From Chorus Line: "I can do that!" Try your local newspaper, maybe working at first for free tickets to shows. Why blog when you can get into print?

Articles in learned journals even if you can place them (competition is ferocious, editors like work from established professionals, not first-timers, so it is hard to break in) won't do much for you. If you do get into print promotions committees do not award Brownie Points for articles the way they do for books. They sneer at online journals (the future). Besides, promotions may be frozen where you are. You may decide to press on regardless. Maybe with a pile of rejections and the occasional useful report on exactly why your piece was rejected you will break into print. At its best even movie criticism goes well beyond See It or Don't See It. There is a whole good book just on the shower scene in Sir Alfred Hitchcock's Psy-

cho. Could you write an entire and entrancing and erudite book on a single scene in a Jane Austen novel or even one in a detective novel by P. D. James? Is the world really yearning that? Could you perform what one poet called "the lemon squeezer" kind of thorough criticism on something small but interesting, or as large as the complete works of Henry James? Stick to the text and leave Henry's life out of it, for the critics today say "the author is dead". Analyze the text before you begin to estimate what happens to it in the mind of the reviser we call the reader. That's my theory.

Do you want to try Theory? With all your knowledge of Theory, can you write a well received piece yourself? Or are all Theory critics, as a famous Frenchman once wrote, more like dramatic critics whom he described as eunuchs who every night see the act performed and are utterly unable to do it themselves? The retreat into Theory, often with a capital letter these days, is a flight from the respect and attention the individual work of art deserves. Perhaps you ought to cease reading the spreaders of French diseases such as Theory, and not only because they write so badly, and concentrate not on conception or the act of giving birth but on the baby itself, its parentage, and its future.

### Conclusion

As ever, there is more to be said but there is a word limit, so the end nears. Revisiting what I have managed to say, I have revised to sound less like pontificating, but teachers pontificate, just as lawyers argue, physicians are hypochondriacs, and psychiatrists think most other people are weird. Professors profess to know. They are even used to captive audiences that at least pretend to listen. But good classroom teachers always listen. They realize that if you teach well you learn something. By listening you can get ideas that previously never occurred to you and by speaking and writing you discover you are communicating some things you did not know you thought. You welcome and entertain new opinions. You hope to change minds, even in articles on literary criticism.

You realize, of course, that non-intellectuals (and many intellectuals, too) resist anything new. Their minds are already furnished if only with futons and orange-box side tables. If you offer them a free great big couch they may not want it because accepting it may necessitate throwing out or rearranging some of their mind's familiar furniture. You see why people fight novelty and cling to convictions. They look for the news on TV, and they get most of the news from TV or online in bites rather than from reading or even conversing these days, and when they do not hear their prejudices echoed they change the channel. They hate to change their minds. It makes them uneasy.

This opinionated article hopes to engage you and persuade you to reorder your beliefs. Readers must be bullied or cajoled or tricked into that, if you can do it. Today they demand constant entertainment if they are to stay tuned in. Literary critics have to enjoy the work and the responsibility and the thrill of changing people's minds, or even on occasion a battle or the blood sport of revenge. Snarky is in now, but nastiness is less common than in the polemics of early religious and literary wars or in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Lake Poets and Byron were damned in the Edinburgh Review and Macaulay wrote a magisterial diatribe against Barrère, a "Jacobin carrion". Wit sometimes seasons criticism. One still cannot help liking the wit of Eugene Field who said of an actor in the role of Claudius in Hamlet that "he played the King all evening as if he were afraid somebody was about to play the ace" or Goodman Ace who stabbed I am a Camera to the heart with "No Leica".

If you do not know that a Leica is an expensive camera, or if you lack some other cultural knowledge, you often will miss a point. That is why, though culture bound though I must be, I have here written about the US chiefly but I end, because of the readership of this journal, with a call to the students of literature in India to adopt what they can and adapt what they must. I know you must cope with the state of education and the history of culture and the political situation where you are and I invite you to become better critics of literature by concentrating on your own rich heritage and choosing topics of wider interest which you can explain to us in other cul-

tures, whether the Indian works you select to address are in our shared English or translated by you from one of the native languages and made available to us in the lingua franca that is English. You have so many literary treasures you could share with us—and we need your literary criticism to make them accessible to us. Only you can do this.

May I suggest that, while I do not by any means underrate all the scholarship about British and American literature that has come out of India, that you devote yourself more and more to writing for us foreigners criticism and explanation of the Indian canon of literature both historical and modern, classic and popular. I would be delighted to read—and I would be just one of many—an informed and insightful examination from India not of Shakespeare on Film, for instance, but Shakespeare as staged in India and, better still, a penetrating analysis of the incredible success of Bollywood, at home and abroad, which is one kind of literature you may not have thought of approaching as a serious literary scholar.

Generally speaking, work with what you know best, make the local more widely understood, the ancient past a mentor of the present, the national a larger part of the international world of words, and do not ignore radio and television and cinema or popular novels or even ephemera. Set yourself up as an expert on something you love and persuade us to share your pleasure in it. Do not get embroiled in academic fads and fancies. Try to be fair and balanced and always civil as well as outspoken and avoid literary wars, avoid showing off with no larger purpose, avoid references the reader will not pick up or explain them, and accept the work you examine or what it is and not what you yourself would have written if you had the inclination and the time, or the talent.

Do not, as writers in the early days of the New York Review of Books became notorious for doing, take a text as a pretext for expressing your political views. There is plenty of need for political writing but there is also a need to write about literary art as art, not agitprop. Write about the work as powerful and not the author as personality, and do not—to get back to the New York Review of Books and a famous piece by Mary McCarthy—do please attack

the job expected. I much preferred reading the reviewer's style to reading the book Ms. McCarthy was supposedly reviewing but in fact she scarcely addressed the book at all and gave vent to her indignation about a war we happened to be unsuccessfully conducting back then. Her comments belonged in a journal of political opinion, not a book review journal. Literary criticism ought to be about literary art.

If I strayed from literature to discuss politics and education it was only to stress the importance of both of them to the reading and writing of literature, and (I may add) that literature affects both politics and education. I am encouraging you to write about literature in and of India. Bring us the Indian understanding of Sanskrit and Urdu and Tamil and Hindi other old poetry and the even less familiar (to us) modern poets such as Faiz and Natali and Samar Sen and those writing today in native languages and English. Bring to us modern writers less known to us in the west than Anita Desai and Salman Rushdie. Amritjot Singh et al.'s guide to Indian Literature in English covers only 1827 – 1979, and there were magnificent works of all sorts very much earlier than that and much more much more recently, so look at the vast canon, from religious epics and devotional poetry to philosophy and folklore, from drama and film to popular fiction of daily life and all the rest and write critiques and appreciations. Introduce examples of the literary heritage, evaluate it, equip and persuade us to enjoy its achievements. Do it with close attention to individual works as insiders rather than as surveys by outsiders such as R. K. C. Forman and John M. Koller. You have many important writers we westerners know little or nothing about. Who is the Tagore, whom K. K. Sharma explained for us years ago, of today? We are anxious to hear. Who is writing about India best, right now and in India, far less familiar to us than Narayan, and why should we read them? What, to use Edmund Wilson's phrase, "classics and commercials" do foreigners need to know more about, to enrich our lives and contribute to international understanding as they explain your culture to ours?

If you are good tempered and on point you have the best chance to change minds if minds are open to change, prepared to listen and

understand. Do not browbeat but do not pussyfoot either. Be bold and sufficiently entertaining as well as informed and informative. Be clear in likes and dislikes and almost always stating reasons works best. Be definite but open minded. In spite of all the subjective advice here that really was my intention. As for the usual Works Cited, for once there are none. I contend that approach is not unscholarly but eminently reasonable. You, you in India, know far better than any American or other westerner what literary works best present India of the past and present. Just frame comment for foreign eyes. You yourselves are the authorities. Write literary criticism for us out of your special knowledge.

## CULTURE AND LITERATURE IN A GLO(B/C)ALISED WORLD

Susheel Kumar Sharma

Globalization is not as new a phenomenon for Indians as is made out to be by the economists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Anthropologists, sociologists and geographers tell us that human beings have migrated from one geographical location to another and so have their ideas. The Vedic Prayer: *krinvanto vishvam aryam (Rig Veda IX.63.5; Tr. "Let the entire world be cultured")* and *yatra vishvam bhavati ek nidam (Yajurveda, XXXII.8; Tr. "Where the world a solitary abode")* indicate Indians' wish to treat the whole world as one single family. This is not to be treated as a proposition for holding only one idea to be valid and good for all and therefore making it prevail. Rather, it imbibes the idea that the people at different levels of society, state, country and world may stay and live together holding different viewpoints and worldviews. Besides respecting their mutual differences they look after each other's needs and interests as in a family different members do and explore the truth. In the *Atharva Veda (bhumi sukta)*, the Rishi is delighted in proclaiming himself to be the son of the mother Earth: *mata bhumi putro aham prithviah (XII.1.12)*. The *Sukta* further hails the earth for giving shelter to numerous faiths: *jana vibhrati bahudha vivacasam nana dharmanam prithvi yathoksam. (XII.1.45 Tr. "The earth that holds people of manifold varied speech, of different customs, according to their habitations")* Similarly, the Vedic idea of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* (Tr. "The entire world constitutes a family") provides ample space not only to the human beings but also to the animals, birds, plants, minerals and other organisms in the ecosystem as it is enshrined in the idea that everything is just the manifestation of God and has one pervading soul (*atma*). As in a unit family everything and everybody becomes a part of the family similarly in this world everything and everybody belongs to one family. The entire *œloka* containing this wish condemns all sorts of discrimination. It reads: *ayaA bandhurayaA nçti gaGanâ laghucçtasâm| udâracaritanâm tu*

*vasudhaiva kutumbakam ||71|| (Maha Upanishad VI.71) (Tr. "Discrimination saying 'this one is a relative; this other one is a stranger' is for the mean-minded. For those who're known as magnanimous, the entire world constitutes but a family.")* This idea cuts across time and geographical location as is evident from the *Panchatantra*, the *Hitopadesha* and the Tamil Sangam literature. The idea is not just about peace and harmony among the societies in the world, but also about a truth that somehow the whole world has to live together like a family. This is the reason why Hindus think that any power in the world, big or small cannot have its own way, disregarding others.

A sustainable and holistic development paradigm emerges if this idea of the world-brotherhood is accepted. According to N Radhakrishnan, Gandhian vision of holistic development and respect for all forms of life emerges from this philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*; similarly nonviolent conflict resolution embedded in the acceptance of nonviolence both as a creed and strategy is an extension of this ancient Indian concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. (N Radhakrishnan, "Gandhi in the Globalised Context", <http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/Radhakrishnan.htm>) On the other hand there are those who consider their respective religion to be superior to the rest's and therefore reject pluralism. They firmly hold that they are obliged to take on a 'cosmic battle' against evil. Modern globalization is a by-product of this thinking. They believe that globalization is the panacea for the evil called "religious" and other forms of pluralism and by imposing the global process of secularization fundamentalism can be countered. Samuel Huntington's thesis on the clash of civilizations (<http://edvardas.home.mruni.eu/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/huntington.pdf>) is also rooted in this idea. The result of this thinking on one hand has led to the destabilising of the entire Arab peninsula on the other this thinking has created pockets of economic disparities by bringing the concentration of wealth into a few hands. This has led to frustration among large sections of global society. The linguist turned political activist Chomsky has written a great deal about it. (<http://www.chomsky.info/interviews/2006——.htm>). Simi-

larly British author David Icke talks of a global agenda being pursued by a few powerful business families in the form of the Origin, History, Symbolism, Secret Societies, Big Brother Surveillance, Manipulation of Wars, Politics, Business, Banking, and Media, Mind Control, Religion etc. Icke suggests that they use “Problem-Reaction-Solution technique” in most of the cases to exercise their control. Icke’s books also reveal how a hidden hand is behind world-changing events like the attacks of 9/11 and the manufactured wars in the Middle East and the consequent ‘War on Terror’. However, Icke’s main focus is on the concentration of wealth into a few hands and the techniques adopted by them to retain and increase their wealth (... *the truth shall set you free*, [http://exopoliticshongkong.com/uploads/And\\_the\\_truth\\_will\\_set\\_you\\_free\\_-\\_Icke.pdf](http://exopoliticshongkong.com/uploads/And_the_truth_will_set_you_free_-_Icke.pdf)). Some other people have also expressed their concerns on the issue but not as ferociously and as intensely as Icke has. Their main target and strategy has been to emphasise inclusiveness of more and more people in the process of globalization though without making much dent. The former American president Jimmy Carter, for example, observed: “Globalization, as defined by rich people like us, is a very nice thing... you are talking about the Internet, you are talking about cell phones, you are talking about computers. This doesn’t affect two-thirds of the people of the world.” ([http://ushistorysite.com/carter\\_quotes.php](http://ushistorysite.com/carter_quotes.php)) Similarly Kofi Annan, the Former Secretary General of the United Nations, said, “... we must ... ensure that the global market is embedded in broadly shared values and practices that reflect global social needs, and that all the world’s people share the benefits of globalization.” (<http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=717>)

In the prevalent days of ‘double speak’ the slogans like “the world is a global village”, “free flow of information”, “nothing is hidden”, “access to every piece of information” and the like are given on one hand to eulogise the impact of globalization and on the other whistle blowers like Julian Assange and Edward Joseph Snowden are made to run to save their lives. In such a scenario, ‘who’ is controlling ‘whom’ and ‘why’ becomes a valid and reasonable question. Assange claims that the purpose of his deconstructive activity

is simply “to bring important news and information to the public...” He claims, “One of [their] most important activities is to publish original source material alongside [their] news stories so readers and historians alike can see evidence of the truth.” (<http://wikileaks.org/About.html>) But when this deconstructive activity will be termed subversive is not decided on the basis of certain principles but on the basis of the interests of certain global groups. And therefore people like Assange and Snowden are hounded. The hounding is also done in case of dissenters in scientific matters. For example, Peter H. Duesberg (a professor of Molecular and Cell Biology at the University of California, Berkeley) and his group have been vilified as “a small group of pseudo-scientists.” Peter and some other scientists raised some interesting questions about AIDS and have declared the entire project a big hoax: “Despite enormous efforts, over 100,000 papers and over \$22 billion spent by the US taxpayers alone, the HIV-AIDS hypothesis has failed to produce any public health benefits, no vaccine, no effective drug, no prevention, no cure, not a single life saved. Is the science system to be blamed? Has science failed to reveal the truth about AIDS?” (<http://www.duesberg.com/books/pdbkluer.html>). Some people saw a conspiracy when they correlated Duesberg’s hypothesis to the propagated facts like “the black Africans bear the largest share of the AIDS burden” and “the drugs at a very high profit are sold by the whites”. As a result of this the President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, stopped the Western pharmaceutical multinational companies selling their expensive drugs there; consequently he was ousted from power. A trial of Thabo Mbeki for not preventing “about 171,000 HIV infections and 343,000 deaths ... between 1999 and 2007” (Nicoli Natrass, <http://afraf.oxfordjournals.org/content/107/427/157.abstract>) by following “the more sensible public health policies” may take place any day at the behest of the multiple vested interest groups backed by these companies.

One may argue that people like Icke, Assange, Snowden, Duesberg and Thabo Mbeki are irresponsible and they do not fall into the canon of literary activity nor do they claim any authentic study of globalization. I, therefore, turn to the International Forum

on Globalization (IFG) a San Francisco based educational alliance of sixty of the world's most prominent activists, scholars, economists, researchers and writers. It was established in response to increasing economic globalization, to "promote equitable, democratic, and ecologically sustainable economies." IFG publishes research detailing various aspects of the impact of global economic forces related to globalization. One may refer to the papers like "Searching for a Miracle" (2009) and "Outing the Oligarchy" (2010) and the report "Nuclear Roulette: The Case Against a 'Nuclear Renaissance'" (2011) to understand how globalization is hoodwinking the poor of the world and helping only a few powerful individuals or groups. *The International Forum on Globalization: Alternatives to Economic Globalization* (2002) presents "10 governing principles for new rules and institutions for the global economy, rules that will lead to more democratic and sustainable societies." It "elaborates key principles for sustainable societies and sketches policy perspectives for a de-globalized world order, for corporate accountability, for resource-light production patterns, and for fair trade relations." (Wolfgang Sachs, <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/our-planet-our-selves/book-review-alternatives-to-economic-globalization>) *International Forum on Globalization*, (Vandana Shiva along with Jerry Mander, Edward Goldsmith, Ralph Nader, et al.) has launched a global solidarity movement known as the alter-globalization movement. Vandana Shiva has argued for the wisdom of many traditional practices, as is evident from her interview (Ranchor Prime). Shiva suggests that a more sustainable and productive approach to agriculture can be achieved through reinstating a system of farming in India that is more centred on engaging women. (<http://likeawhisper.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/empoweringwomen.pdf>), She advocates against the prevalent "patriarchal logic of exclusion," claiming that a woman-focused system would change the current system in an extremely positive manner. Vandana's approach is in contrast to American model of Agriculture which has been popularised in India and elsewhere at the behest of the global agencies like UNO and FAO. Only a novice will believe that the so called modern alias scientific alias American model of agriculture does not pro-

mote the interests of a few multinational companies alias capital houses. The extent of the control of these powerful lobbies in controlling various subsidies and various plans mooted to help the "poor farmers" who have to embrace death to come out of their clutches can be felt by any agricultural economist. The "intellectual elites" also become a party to such decisions as they directly or indirectly are on the payrolls of these companies or benefit from them in some way or the other. Innocent looking Extension Centres of the Agriculture Universities act as the advertisement boards/agencies of these multinational houses whose wish to control the entire populace is apparent from their plan of producing and selling only the genetically modified seeds. Their strategy is very simple: increase the lust and greed; the rest will follow on its own.

It was basically against these two vices (lust and greed) that Gandhi opposed the Western Civilization in his *Hind Swaraj*. (<[http://www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/hind\\_swaraj.pdf](http://www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/hind_swaraj.pdf)>). We need to study Gandhi more closely to understand and appreciate the phenomena called globalization and glocalization, particularly in the Indian context. Gandhi himself was not opposed to any new or foreign idea as is evident from: "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I refuse to live in other people's houses as an interloper, a beggar or a slave." (*Young India*, 1-6-1921, p. 170, <http://www.mkgandhi.org/momgandhi/chap90.htm>).

One must not forget that Gandhi himself was a product of globalization. He was educated in London, started his political activities in South Africa, led Khilafat movement in India to support the Turkish Khalifa, was constantly in touch with so many British and American journalists and others and was greatly influenced by western figures such as Jesus, Tolstoy, Thoreau and Ruskin. Gandhi himself identifies globalization as an ancient phenomenon, whereby he claims that it was not a bigger threat to India as various races starting from the Greeks and Huns to the British had come to India and settled here. He believed that the mingling of cultures in India would not be a threat to India's dominant customs and culture.

However, he did identify that the establishment of a global society would carry certain dangers for a sovereign nation. For example, industrialisation and commercialisation of the economy will lead to class antagonism and environmental hazards. Gandhi was a great believer in the preservation of the ancient Indian culture and norms of society though he had understood Indian Civilization via West. He therefore was not against the West as such but opposed the values that the West stood for.

Globalization can also be studied in relation to Gandhian economics. For instance, through the Swadeshi Movement, Gandhi advocated for home spinning of cotton as a means of production and consumption for Indians. His rejection of western textile cloth and other factory/foreign products is tantamount to rejection of both globalization and glocalization as he does not want a centralised system of production and distribution. On the other hand, he backs a small and decentralised form of production/governance. Gandhi's thinking and the suggested action of planning has a moral dimension which is absent in the socialist/ communist protectionism and liberal Globalization. Thus, Gandhi holds an idealist view of economic globalization where village states would be self sufficient on most accounts but mutually dependent on some others. He neither supports machines nor industrialisation on which Globalization stands to gain. Toeing the Gandhian line of planning and development would require a great effort in redefining the existing parameters and finding out new ones. The existing parameters of growth are the borrowed ideas from the west, which Gandhi rejects as unwholesome. I believe this is a challenge less to our Govt and more to the intellectuals. For example, instead of measuring growth in terms of GDP, GNP, per capita income and more consumption goods one may have to measure growth in terms of GNH. A small nation like Bhutan has taken initiative in that direction because the intellectual class there is not as complacent and tardy as ours. R P Mishra puts forth the case of development in the Indian context: "Indian culture has a different concept of development called *mangalya*. It means a state in which man has no insurmountable problems and the natural, cultural and social environment in which he lives is conducive

to his overall welfare. *Mangalya* is not limited to an individual; it covers all those humans and other lives in and around the individual. It is collective welfare. It carries man towards a blissful life." ([http://ignca.nic.in/cd\\_05016.htm](http://ignca.nic.in/cd_05016.htm)).

A major part of Gandhi's criticism of industrialisation was geared towards preserving India's rich natural resources on moral grounds. With the progress of globalization the tendency to exploit every possible resource in the country to increase the GDP has also increased. As a result of which rapid deforestation is taking place and serious environmental hazards are faced not only by India but also by most of the developing countries. The corporate power undermines the efforts of the government at curbing environmental loss, as the American withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol and other such talks vividly depicts. Further, poor countries have to bear the brunt of the climate change all by themselves as is made out by Filipino Commissioner Naderev Saño in his speech at the 'COP18 Climate Talks':

Each destructive typhoon season costs us 2% of our GDP, and the reconstruction costs a further 2%, which means we lose nearly 5% of our economy every year to storms. We have received no climate finance to adapt or to prepare ourselves for typhoons and other extreme weather we are now experiencing. We have not seen any money from the rich countries to help us to adapt ... We cannot go on like this. It cannot be a way of life that we end up running always from storms ... . Climate change negotiations cannot be based on the way we currently measure progress. It is a clear sign of planetary and economic and environmental dysfunction ... The whole world, especially developing countries struggling to address poverty and achieve social and human development, confronts these same realities. ... (qtd. by John Vidal, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/08/typhoon-haiyan-rich-ignore-climate-change>)

If one considers oneself a 'trustee' of the wealth one has created and one is able to control one's lust and greed, as Gandhi wanted it to be, one can very easily control the damage to the

environment. Gandhi puts it very succinctly when he writes: “The earth has enough for everyone’s need, but not enough for everyone’s greed(<http://www.mk Gandhi.org/articles/sci.%20and%20spirituality.htm>). It shall not be out of place to quote Rabindranath Tagore to summarise Gandhi’s contribution to the issue: “We have for over a century been dragged by the prosperous West behind its chariot, choked by the dust, deafened by the noise, humbled by our own helplessness, and overwhelmed by the speed. We agreed to acknowledge that this chariot-drive was progress, and that progress was civilization. If we ever ventured to ask, ‘Progress towards what, and progress for whom,’ it was considered to be peculiarly and ridiculously oriental to entertain such doubts about the absoluteness of progress. Of late, a voice [Gandhi] has come to us bidding us to take count not only of the scientific perfection of the chariot but of the depth of the ditches lying across its path” (<http://www.swaraj.org/tagorecivilization.htm>).

It is also argued by some intellectuals that some modern day Indians are over-reacting to the whole issue though Indians themselves have enjoyed their share of globalization throughout the ages. For example, Nagendra Rao’s edited book *Globalization: Pre Modern India* presents theoretical arguments and empirical data regarding the process of globalization with reference to India. The contributors of the book assert that long before the colonial period in Indian history, Indians maintained commercial and cultural contact with the outside world, which continued to flourish even during the colonial period. In this way, the contributors have substantiated the thesis that pre modern India experienced the process of globalization and this helped in the spread of Indian culture in particularly South East Asia. Similarly, E Pococke in his book *India in Greece* (<http://archive.org/details/IndiaInGreece>) argues that Greece has been a colony of the Indians particularly because of the large scale migration after the Mahabharata war.

The example of the spread of Indian religion and culture in the South East regions of Asia in the ancient times and the spread of Hinduism in the West particularly in the US and Europe in the modern age are also cited to exemplify India’s share in globalization. Since

the late 19th century, a large number of Hindus have settled in eastern and southern Africa, Malaysia, the islands of the West Indies, the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean. A large number of them have adhered to their religion faithfully for several generations. Since World War II many Indians have also been settling in the United Kingdom, and North America. Although the earliest migrants were comparatively uneducated Hindus and Sikhs, many of the émigrés of the late 20th century are highly skilled and well-educated professionals. This has affected people on both the sides. A good number of Hindu migrants have also been converted to Christianity and Islam. Similarly a large number of Christians have also taken to Hindu ways though Hinduism does not believe, practice and preach proselytization.

If Buddhism spread to the South East countries around 250 BC a recent manifestation of the spread of Indian religious attitudes in the Western world may be attributed to the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) started by *Swami* Prabhupada (1896 –1977) in 1965. *Sankirtana* (devotional singing and dancing), performed on the streets of many cities in Europe and the US by young Christian or Jewish men and women wearing dhotis and saris can be seen. This is essentially a *bhakti* movement and the followers are initiated into vegetarian diet systems and to practice organic farming. Another contribution is that of Osho (1931 –1990) and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1918 –2008) who primarily taught meditation through different ways and techniques. Both of them followed a pattern established earlier by Vivekananda (1863-1902) and Paramahansa Yogananda (1893–1952), who emphasized to the Western audiences the nonsectarian and philosophical teachings of Hinduism and taught that meditation, yoga, and parts of the Vedantic texts were compatible with any religious tradition. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi not only presented Transcendental Meditation as a technique for improving one’s health and reducing stress but also founded Maharishi University of Management at Fairfield (USA) in 1971, based on the Vedic tradition of India as “a serious alternative to traditional schools.” (<http://www.mum.edu/about-MUM/inside-story/vision>) The University promotes sustainable living and Maharishi Vedic Science

consciousness based education. Vegetarian and organic food grown on the principles of Maharishi Vedic Organic Agriculture is provided in the dining halls of the University.

Of late there has also been an indubitable boom in Yoga Centres in the West. Many forms of Yoga have been popularised there by gurus such as B K S Iyengar, Bikram Choudhury, and Swami Ramdev. Divorced from its Indian religious and philosophical roots, it is now very common in fitness centres across the Northern America and elsewhere. The people who have taken to Hindu ways respect the animal and the plant world by taking to vegetarianism; they become more frugal in their habits by adapting to natural habitats and nature cure centres and therefore they are a lesser burden on the resources of the planet earth. In contrast to this the westerly inclined globalization turns people more burdensome on the existing resources on this planet and consequently turns them more violent.

In the early 21st century the Hindu Diaspora in the United States and the UK has greatly increased in a number of cities; wealthy Hindu communities have built large temples and endowed chairs in South Asian studies at the major universities there. The temples also serve as community centres and provide classes in classical Indian music and several forms of classical dances from India — particularly *Bharatanatyam*, *Kuchipudi*, and *Odishi*. Among the Indian Diaspora, these art forms, along with popular devotional songs (*bhajans*), are an important means of transmitting Hinduism to younger generations. But all this is aimed more at preserving their own cultural identities than to promote conversions. Likewise, Sikhs also keep on maintaining their Gurudwaras and keep on struggling to protect their identities at several places in the world.

Bollywood movies, almost all of which portray some form of Hindu culture, are extremely popular in many parts of the world. However, no authentic study of their influence on the indigenous cultures like the Arab world is available. Still it may safely be concluded that Hinduism/ Buddhism/ Indianism in several forms has been spread in different parts of the world at different times but no nation has ever accused Indians of coercing its population to accept Indian values. Similarly, one has to see if the spread of Indian

culture was in conformity with the universal laws/values or against them. If yes, it has to be termed not globalization but universalization.

In contrast to this, in 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> cent India the phenomenon of globalization is often described as “open economy”, “Global economy” and also “free market economy”. It is evident from the term and its usage that the entire emphasis is on the free flow of capital/money/wealth from one nation to another nation. In this description only money/business/economy is given importance. But there is no capital/money without the ideas associated with it. However, money generally flows from economically superior societies to the lower ones. And riding the money come the cultural ideas to change the ethos of a particular society. Thus, the culture of a place is changed without any external and forceful coercion. However, most of the sadhus/ intellectuals who have reached the western shore had gone there penniless; they had started attracting the westerners on the strength of their ideas. Osho’s case may be cited to prove that many of them became wealthier than many capital houses there. But most of the multinational companies grow their business in countries like India not because of any intrinsic value/ superiority but on account of the wealth that they carry with them which is used to lure people at various levels and sometimes even to destabilise the hostile parties/governments. In other words their business grows on unethical practices. Various concerns have been expressed against this sort of inequalities/unfair practices/coercion but without much impact (UN Report, [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Post\\_2015\\_UNTTreport.pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Post_2015_UNTTreport.pdf)).

Again, with a cue from energy systems it becomes clear that energy flows from higher levels to lower levels and not vice-versa until some device is used for the purpose. Similarly in a modern economy when free flow of money is not there some extra energy/force is required to push it from one economy to another. This force comes in the form of various laws and treaties – inter-national as well intra-national cutting across various parts and parties. International forums such as UNO, International Courts of Justice, World Bank, World Trade Organization and International Monetary Fund

monitor these treaties with a view to watch the flow of money or capital in one direction only. If something contrary starts taking place all these suddenly become very active to divert the route of this flow. Their activity is reflected in creating lobbies, providing various packages and also coercing the governments to bend and alter rules and laws and in their favour. The example of subsidies on agriculture and agricultural products may be cited to prove the point. (Devinder Sharma, "The WTO is Destroying Indian Farming", <http://www.hindustantimes.com/comment/columns/the-wto-is-destroying-indian-farming/article1-1137811.aspx>) However, the national leaders are not oblivious of this fact; they have faith in the trickle-down theory and believe that whatever little amount trickles down will help the people grow and will give a boost to the country's economy. Thus, again it is apparent that large quantities of money are siphoned by bigger economies while the small partners remain contented with smaller quantities. Whether their remaining contented with smaller quantities exemplifies the grip of the culture that teaches them not to be greedy or reflects their helplessness also remains to be studied.

Now let me turn my attention to 'Glocalization'; the word is a "combination of the words 'globalization' and 'localization' [and is] used to describe a product or service that is developed and distributed globally, but is also fashioned to accommodate the user or consumer in a local market." (<http://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/glocalization.asp>) Products or services that are effectively "glocalized" are, by definition, supposed to be of much greater interest to the end user. Glocalization is generally proposed as a solution to the perceived problems of globalization. Critics believe globalization causes conflict between an emerging worldwide system of values and regional autonomy, resulting in the destruction of local cultures while Glocalization seeks to mediate between global systems and local communities by ensuring that a globalized community would be stable and that local practices, laws, customs and beliefs would be respected. It, therefore, often involves tailoring products intended for international distribution to the tastes of local consumers. However, glocalization is not necessitated by an urge

to respect local communities rather it is a strategy of multi-national companies to do business as they have realised that one-size-fits-all versions of their products fail in many markets. McDonald's Corporation, for example, has restaurants in more than 100 different countries. Instead of offering an American-style menu, which is chiefly beef based, in India, where most residents do not eat beef, McDonald's claim to sell mostly chicken, mutton and vegetarian offerings. However charges are often levelled against what they practise and what they claim. The question still remains if the Indians need an International restaurant for providing them items like "alu-tikki" or "chicken-tikka" or "bhujia". When it comes to bigger items, one may look at automobile industry for examples of glocalization at work. A manufacturer like Mercedes-Benz or BMW offers many different engine offerings for their home market and the target markets. However, in most of the cases the third world markets are considered to be the dumping grounds for the rejected stuff of their home markets. For example, the foreign cars not conforming to Euro- I/II norms were dumped in the initial phase in Indian markets.

Likewise, MTV Networks broadcasts in more than 20 countries. Instead of offering the same programme in every one of those countries, the network tailors each channel to suit those countries' individual tastes and features regional and international musicians because everyone in the world doesn't like to listen to Liam Gallagher or Martha Stewart or Lady Gaga or to watch "Teen Moms" or "Punk'd" or "Laguna Beach". However, the fact remains that the music programmes on Doordarshan and MTV have different target audiences and different aims. For example, even a cursory look at the sets and the hairstyle, dress, the language (both verbal and non-verbal), and the presentation of the anchors on these channels will prove the point being made. However, the fact remains that with the help of satellite TV, immigrant audiences like Indians in the UK and the USA can even glocalize their living rooms by having access to *desi* channels like *Doordarshan*, *Astha*, *QTV* and the like. It is needless to mention that one sided flow of information on television is not always value-less. It carries some ethos. For example, beauty

pageants and fashion parades on FTV not only promote such events in India but also make the flaunting of (fe)male body culturally acceptable by changing its ethos and encouraging capitalist interests by legitimising lust and greed. Partying with ingredients like drugs, drinks, dancing (not classical but hip-hop style), gambling, kissing and others gets its social acceptance and legitimacy on account of such channels. Those who do not accept them are derided using terms like “confused desi”, “behanji”, “ganwar”, “dehati”, “Sitaji” and the like.

Even innocent looking channels like ‘Discovery’, ‘National Geographic’, ‘Animal Planet’ and ‘History’ propagate the American/western point of view about nature and different world events. The programmes on such channels also encourage one to be more self-centred to fulfil their “wish and ambition” and lay the foundation for demanding more and more personal freedom to pursue their individual agenda. All this is done in a very polished and persuasive language and displaying cultured, suave and sophisticated taste/manners. There is no other alternative in the globalised but unipolar world but to access and to depend on the information easily provided by the multinational channels and news agencies located in the capitalist countries. In such a scenario truth is the first casualty. For example, for a piece of information about even a neighbouring country like Burma, Indonesia and Nepal one (this includes Newspapers in English/regional languages and the news channels as well) has to depend on whatever is churned out by the English media based in the US. The hysteria that was created around the false charges of hoarding mass destructive weapons to attack Iraq despite UN resolutions against it highlights the role of the media controlled by the vested interests. The role and location of language thus is very important and also suspect in such circumstances.

In such a scenario what role is to be performed by the Universities/ Teachers? Some guidelines have been spelled out by the government regulatory agencies like AICTE, ICAR and UGC in the form of Teacher Appraisal forms and spelling out model curriculum. Similarly, by way of accreditation of universities and colleges an agency like NAAC also lays certain dos and don'ts. This is one

aspect of the whole plan to negotiate the autonomy of the institutions by the Govt. A university these days is considered to be more successful and modern if it has more number of tie-ups and partnerships with the foreign collaborators. A natural corollary is a demand for a foreign capital in the hither-to untouched educational sector. To complete the process of globalization ‘The Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill, 2010’ to allow foreign universities and colleges to start their campuses in India is already pending with the parliament. The day is not far when the huge and prime infrastructure owned by state/central universities/colleges will be sold for peanuts as has happened with many public sector companies which were handed over to the private players. The once derided Hindu growth rate is limping back as the targeted growth of 10-11% could not be achieved even once despite Govt selling almost all its assets.

The people with low self-esteem and colonial mind-set are likely to be the end losers in the era of globalization at least in terms of the loss of plurality and individuality; the loss of identity generally leads to alienation and frustration. To substantiate my thesis an example of text-books in engineering stream will be sufficient. Whatever text-books are taught in a civil engineering course in MIT are also prescribed in IIT, Mumbai and the same teaching material percolates, sometimes through their *desi* versions, via NIT's and other engineering colleges to distant places like Imphal. This ends up in having similar types of buildings from New York to Mumbai to Nagpur to Kolkata to Shillong and to Kohima. This sort of “development activity” in the form of globalised/Americanised concept of construction not only destroys the plurality in terms of the building materials, building styles, living patterns, local needs and the like but it also generates discontent and disparities of various sorts; nay the whole ecology of the area is affected. It creates related demands for items like electric gadgets and electricity to run them. The global politics of electricity can be equated to the politics of hunger in a developing society. When even a “global power like India” is arm twisted by bigger economies (= powers) on the issue of power generation the fate of smaller fries can easily be imagined.

The result of all this is that a third world country remains a third world despite all sorts of destruction of its culture and ecology—nay in most of the cases they are almost in debt trap. The easiest way in such a situation for a teacher is to adhere to the Govt diktats and remain a mute spectator/wage-earner to witness all this and in turn be an indirect party in causing frustration and discontent amongst the youths of this country. But that is not the job of an enlightened teacher/ intellectual. Therefore, they have to rise to the occasion and think beyond the ready-made solutions delved out to them by various agencies.

Since I am a student from literature stream and this Seminar is being organised by the Dept of English Literature I am supposed to talk about some literary books as well. Before coming to some authors proper, a bird's eye view of English Studies in India is necessary. It is a common knowledge that (i) a course in English Literature in India was offered to Indians as an alternative to indigenous studies in the British colonial period to suit the needs of the English rulers who did not know Indian languages, (ii) any literature course is basically meant and aimed at L<sub>1</sub> speakers/users and (iii) English even today is claimed to be L<sub>1</sub> only by a marginal number of people in this country. But the policy planners/makers/executives in this country forget these basics. So the courses like BA English (Lit. Hons.) and MA English (Literature) that should have been offered on a limited scale like any other course in a foreign language literature for L<sub>2</sub> or L<sub>3</sub> learners (like MA in Spanish, French etc) after independence are being offered on a mass scale. The teachers of English who are a vested party pursuing their pecuniary interests also keep on encouraging this expansion in collusion with other vested interest groups. They also keep on hoodwinking the society and the prospective students by (i) generally not specifying the objectives of a particular programme/course/paper or at best keeping them ambiguous and (ii) by offering a course in "English Literature" in the name of "English". The purpose of a University course in English Literature, as is apparent from the testing material, is not to make students proficient in English language, but "to refine their literary and cultural sensibility" through a literature which

they generally do not understand because of the poor grasp on the language. In other similarly situated countries like the Gulf/African countries where L<sub>1</sub> is not English but English Language is the requirement for historical, business, educational and other needs, the syllabi clearly specify the nomenclature and the achievable objectives; most of the courses in a PG programme in English aim at improving their English Language; generally the core courses from English Language constitute about half of the course work unlike the system in India. However, owing to historical positioning in India a course in English literature is offered as if it were a course in L<sub>1</sub> and also a historical necessity. However, the fact remains that the spread of English Literature even to remote and inaccessible places in India is not because of the intrinsic quality of the subject but because of certain language and opportunity politics. Globalization accentuates this politics.

One should not be oblivious of the fact that a secular course in English Literature was started in India at the initiative of Macaulay in order "to form ... a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Macaulay, [http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt\\_minute\\_education\\_1835.html](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html)) — a class to which the task of refining "the vernacular dialects of the country" has been left, besides that of enriching "those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature", and a class armed with degrees that are "fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population." This is a class "who [are] the interpreters between [the rulers] and the [billions] whom [they] govern." Macaulay deserves all praise for (i) expressing the colonial/global agenda in such unambiguous terms which perhaps could not have been articulated in a better way and (ii) being successful in achieving his objectives in a meticulous manner. No wonder the unchanged system continues to churn out such graduates even today because the planners have not taken bold initiatives to understand the needs of the independent nation/India and the big steps that are needed to fulfil those aspirations. To rub salt to the wounds books with religious agenda like *The Bible*, *The Faerie Queene*, *Paradise Lost*,

*Pilgrims Progress* and religious discourses of Newman form a part of the literary canon in almost every university syllabus in a secular India. Such/these books had formed an essential reading in the syllabus designed by a missionary Alexander Duff with an agenda to proselytize but many of them had been kept out of the syllabus designed for propagating Macaulay's secular agenda (Krishnaswamy 43). The result of all this is that most of the graduates from this discipline lead a schizophrenic life. The alienated graduates instead of becoming sources of help to their parents, society and culture become problem children who are not able to adjust themselves with everything and everybody around and therefore treat them with contempt. A good fictional example of such a character is Ogu in Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English, August*.

Teachers may choose a soft option of pretending to be helpless and may go on waiting for a moment when homogenization takes place. This approach not only reveals a complacent approach to the situation but also ignores several facts like people's attachments to their cultures, faiths, traditions, beliefs, food-habits, language and the like which become a source of a large scale discontent. Looking at the texts prescribed in Indian universities from the perspective of globalization one may very easily note that almost every reference/ text book in a course has been published by a multinational publisher based in some foreign land. Apparently the local authors/ critics/ publishers are no good; however some headway particularly in matters of text books has been made by glocal publications: Indian authors/editors and multinational publishers but not the other way round.

The situation is no better in the field of English Language studies either. One realises that English is a large scale export item from the UK if one looks at the volume of export from the UK. New academicians are roped in by various agencies like BBC, British Council and various ELT institutes as new avatars in the field to promote its export. The case of N S Prabhu and his Bangalore Project may be cited to exemplify the point. Books with communicative approach to materials, methods, grammar, technology and testing were dumped on a large scale in the third world countries. Those

who did not lap them up were ridiculed. Today no one talks of the Bangalore Project. On the authority of scholars like Beretta, N. Markee, Long and Crookes Alireza Ameri (<http://faculty-pavilion.eltzone.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/article.pdf>) concludes that the project did not deliver because it was formulated on wrong premises. The situation is something like celebrating the advent of new millennium in 2000 AD and then again in 2001 AD to cash on the event to make a fast buck by marketing consumer products.

In consumer markets advertisements play an important role; "beautiful" people are needed to lure "ugly" people to become like them so that some strain on their time and money could be put. One can easily understand as to why there was a sudden spurt of activities in finding out hidden beauty queens and label them as "Miss India", "Miss Asia Pacific", "Miss World", "Miss Universe", "Miss Galaxy" etc. with the advent of new economic policies in India in the nineties. Even those feminists who advocate the use of the title "Ms" in place of "Miss/Mrs" enthusiastically participate in such events and justify the organisers and the participants as a matter of the concerned women's choice and those who oppose them are branded as "right reactionary forces". Thus, the larger issue of maintaining human dignity by keeping the (fe)male bodies away from lustful male/female gaze and that of engaging a (fe)male body to further the capitalist intentions/profits by increasing "lust and greed" in a society and thereby promoting violence are side tracked. This analogy has been advanced to understand the phenomenon of the rise of the authors like V S Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Bharati Mukherji, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Khaled Hosseini and Aravinda Adiga. All these authors have been named randomly; they are being discussed here to understand the matrix of the capitalists and the authors; of course there is a lot to understand and also to disagree here.

All these and many other such authors have abandoned their native land (remember Scott's "My Native Land") at some point of time and have relocated themselves on their own in foreign lands not to become global but to seek greener pastures in a "better place"

– not the third world but the first world – not the south block but the capitalist world – mainly the US, though in some cases this could be via Canada or the UK or some other place. Their selection of the land also speaks a great deal about their commitment, priorities, perceptions and personal agenda. No wonder that the place of their location and the place of a multinationals' location are one and the same – the capitalist world. Both of them know that there is a burgeoning middle class in a highly populated India that has much free time to indulge in gossips (= light reading); that they have a purchasing capacity to buy costlier books in English (= to look more fashionable and modern); to brag of their sophisticated tastes (= British/ American mannerism); to keep themselves more up-to-date about books (= not to gain knowledge); that they detest to buy books in regional languages (= cheap, substandard and ghettoised writing); that they like to drop names to look more cultured (= remember Eliot's "... the women come and go/ Talking of Michelangelo"); consider culture and religion a matter of ridicule under the influence of Marx/Modernism (= intellectualism). This middle class in India, even at the cost of several losses and miseries likes to send their children to English medium schools where English and English mannerisms are taught to make their children more useful for the job market mainly in the form of multinational companies. Otherwise also in India people with higher education are given more respect. Keeping all this in mind plans are made to exploit this class and commissioned books are churned out to cater to the tastes of this new class of reading public.

It has been pointed out earlier that a beauty-queen/model is needed to market all kinds of products and this work can be carried out only by a native model. One can also note that a *desi* model is needed to do the marketing of not only the global products (e.g. "Loreal Hair Products" are marketed by Aishwarya Rai) but also the glocalised products (e.g. "Kaun Banega Carorepati" is advertised by Amitabh Bachchan) or even the local products ("Pataka Tea" is endorsed by Urmila Matondkar); a Naomi Campbell or a Caroline Winnberg or a Mayo Okawa or a Ngoli Onyeka Okafor is not needed for marketing in India. Similarly a L H Myers or a John Masters or

an E M Forster or a Rudyard Kipling or a M M Kaye or a Paul Scott will not be a proper choice to target the burgeoning Indian middle class market but somebody who is "Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Macaulay), somebody who is " 'a learned native' ... familiar with the poetry of Milton, the metaphysics of Locke, and the physics of Newton" (Macaulay); somebody who believes that he is "to educate a people who cannot ... be educated by means of their mother-tongue" (Macaulay); somebody who believes "the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of ... India contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are moreover so poor and rude" (Macaulay); somebody who believes "[English] stands pre-eminent even among the languages of the West. It abounds with works of imagination not inferior to the noblest ... with models of every species of eloquence, — with historical composition, which, considered merely as narratives, have seldom been surpassed, and which, considered as vehicles of ethical and political instruction, have never been equalled — with just and lively representations of human life and human nature, — with the most profound speculations on metaphysics, morals, government, jurisprudence, trade, — with full and correct information respecting every experimental science which tends to preserve the health, to increase the comfort, or to expand the intellect of man" (Macaulay) is needed to market the product. Pride verging on belligerence as finds reflection in the Minutes about his language comes to Macaulay, not only because of the pride he has in his nativity but also because of his coming from the class of the colonial masters out to debunk the ruled. This belligerence was also a part of the essential strategy of the East India Company – a powerful global business house. The products of English education gain this belligerence in inheritance.

The authors, who like Macaulay, believe in the superiority of the English Language and the white, Anglo-Saxon and perhaps Christian race come handy to the publisher and they form a good union and enter into a contract to fulfil each other's aspirations. The big amounts of advance royalty to such authors are given and publicised in the form of news-items (Nilanjana Roy, <http://>

[www.business-standard.com/article/beyond-business/the-golden-bait-113071201059\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/beyond-business/the-golden-bait-113071201059_1.html)). The book churned out by such an author is a sort of made-to-order product prepared for a particular market; the book/product is given publicity through various means of advertisements to attract different target groups: the pre-publication and post publication reviews of this book are arranged to target scholars and general reading public; the book is released with a great fanfare in the presence of “cultural connoisseurs”; meet the author programmes are arranged to attract “academicians and other intellectuals”; interviews of the author on media are held, which are unlike Karan Thapar’s hard hitting ‘Devil’s Advocate’, as one does not understand who tries to good humour whom in them; book reading sessions are organised like film music is released to rouse the curiosity of the general public/ prospective buyers. This commissioned book may therefore be equated to propaganda material which is another form of advertisement material aimed at still a new target market in the form of highly educated, professional, moneyed Indian middle class both at home and abroad (Indian Diaspora which has come into existence in contrast to the Diaspora in the form of “girmitia labour”). To cater to the needs of such a market an author is needed who understands the socio-cultural psyche of the middle class and also the nuances of culture of the Diaspora.

This recluse author comes handy to those who were on the lookout for him/her; (s)he already has abandoned his land; (s)he has learnt the ropes of English language and culture and (s)he thinks and feels like a white man besides being culturally sensitive to his/her former master. No one else could have understood the needs of Indian middle class in a better way than this author. Therefore, the question ‘who’ writes for ‘whom’ and ‘why’ needs to be probed deeper before appreciating such literature. However, the gullible young men and women from far and nook of the country, mainly from the lower middle class, looking for a career in English Literature (with their aspiration to make a faster buck and perhaps sick of their helplessness), are made to think that Indian writing in English has come a long way and Indian talent is ultimately being recognised by the west (colonial aspiration of wishing for a few words of apprecia-

tion from the masters = servility syndrome). They not only buy their books but also conduct research on tracing out “Indian sensibility” in such authors and do not stop till they have found it. After all they want their (Indian) affinity to be proved/ strengthened with these “fellow-native” authors. Since the subtle point being made here requires some elaboration an actual incident needs to be narrated to clarify the issue: some ‘B’ approached some ‘A’ and enquired from him if he knew Pranabda, the President of India. ‘A’ readily admitted that he knew him and gave out all the information that was needed of a well-read and up-to-date person with a good general knowledge to prove his assertion. ‘B’ was quite impressed and said, “I am convinced that you are quite close to Pranabda; kindly help me; I want my son to be transferred from J&K to Odisha; Pranabda being the Supreme commander of the forces can easily do it; a recommendation from you will help me and my son.” ‘A’ politely replied, “I know Pranabda but he does not know me.” The point that is made being out here is that it is not necessary for Pranabda to know either ‘A’ or ‘B’ but it is for ‘A’ and ‘B’. Similarly, it is not the necessity of the author to personally know a scholar back home but it is that of the scholar to know the author. But there is something more to it in case of the author/researcher relationship. ‘B’ is looking for greener pastures elsewhere and therefore takes inspiration from this “successful Indian author cum cousin” and glorifies him/her for mutual gratification.

Some of the Indian scholars mainly from the *muffasil* towns try to contact some of these authors to seek a personal interview for academic purposes. When no reply is received by them they seek some time for a written interview and propose to send a written questionnaire. When even that is not answered they presume that either their letter has not reached “the great author” or (s)he is on some International assignment or (s)he is busy reading and thinking for a new book. The author is imagined to be too busy even to acknowledge receipt of the communication. Little do these scholars realise that their effort is being spurned and they are being slighted by a person whom they revere as “great”. Not only are they snubbed but the entire nation is affronted by them as a worthless country.

That is why they had abandoned India and looked for greener pastures in the more prosperous lands. In such a situation, the theme and purpose of the commissioned book, imagined to be a literary piece about India, can very easily be guessed. Thus, to consider the commissioned book a piece of literary work only may be a grave mistake as it rather might be a part of the larger conspiracy to denigrate India, a former colony; a product to have a desired sale should have all the necessary ingredients needed for its marketing. Such things are not new as is apparent from the following observation of Gandhi: "We have become used to understanding from pre-British days, that the art (perfected by the British) of government includes the harnessing of the secret services of men learned, and reported to be honest and honourable for shadowing suspects and for writing up the virtues of the government of the day as if the certificate had come from disinterested quarters." ("Drain Inspector's Report" 540) In today's context one may read "government" along with "multinational companies."

Again, a person with a middle class aspiration and the colonial mindset wants to have some relationship with those of his country cousins who are successful in the first world. This explains why "a success story" like that of Piyush Bobby Jindal being elected to the post of Governor of Louisiana in the US made a news headline in India media. Bobby has Indian roots but he being an American is obliged to look and be an American to the core; if there is conflict between India and America, as an American, he is obliged to consider this country (India) which his parents had abandoned with contempt; he does not profess Hindu religion and has embraced Roman Catholic sect of Christianity to be more acceptable to the society he wanted to be associated with. But his success was glamorised on the Indian electronic media; for the whole day of his victory his given-up relatives were televised with questions like: "How do you feel to know that one of your relatives has become a Governor? Did he ring you up? When did you last receive his call?" The poor relative had to admit very softly, "There has been no contact with him for several years." Our young researchers and their innocent supervisors unknowingly behave like the over enthusiastic

reporter who is trying to find love in a place where it does not exist.

No model/advertiser however great (s)he may be go against the diktats of the manufacturer of a product to be advertised and sold. For example, can Amitabh Bachchan, generally described as the super hero of this millennium, having got his fees (his share in the market profits), dare to say that he has never used *Navratan tel* (a brand of hair oil which he advertises)? Is he hoodwinking his fans or advising them in all sincerity in the concerned advertisement? Like a model, an author has only a limited role to play in the globalized/glocalised market economy. Only a novice will believe that an author who has taken huge advances works for his own interests, presents his true feelings and remains oblivious of the publishers' interests. A publisher is there in the market not for the service of literature but to do business. Hector Tobar reports how Jonathan Cape Lessing's own publisher rejected one of her stealth novels saying it was "not commercially viable" and how similarly another publisher declined to publish her book "too depressing" to be successful though they became famous once they were published. (Hector Tobar, "Doris Lessing remembered: Provocative, blunt, unforgettable" <<http://www.latimes.com/books/jacketcopy/late-t-jc-doris-lessing-remembered-20131117,0,2096019.story#axzz3qHDHK9F6>>).

Therefore, the publisher is well within his rights to expect to get not a realistic book but to have a material to cater to the market needs by having all those ingredients as required and necessary to sell a book. In such a situation there is no question of the will of the author. No author can be given huge advances if his/her book does not sell well. Thus, it is very clear that the books by such authors become important not because of their intrinsic value but because of extraneous considerations—sometimes because of the advance amounts doled out to them and sometimes because of the "suspect awards". "The Nobel Prize is run by a self-perpetuated committee. They vote for themselves and get the world's publishing industry to jump to their tune. I know several people who have won, and you don't do anything else for a year but Nobel. They are always coming out with new torments for me. Downstairs there are 500 things I

have to sign for them.” (David L. Ulin, “Doris Lessing Reveled in Her Status as A Contrarian”<http://www.latimes.com/books/jacketcopy/la-et-jc-doris-lessing-appreciation-20131118,0,335755.story#axzz3qHDHK9F6>) Further, on getting the news of the award of Nobel Prize Doris-Lessing is said to have remarked: “Who are these people? They’re a bunch of bloody Swedes” Nigel Farandale, “Doris-Lessing-her-last-Telegraph-interview” <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10455494/Doris-Lessing-her-last-Telegraph-interview.html>).

It shall not be out of place to briefly refer to the discourse of films as well. A new genre of films has come to exist that may be described as Diaspora Films. Many of these films meant for the audience located in the west are aimed at presenting India as an exotic land and some ridicule Indian customs and ways. Such films are also are nominated for various prizes under various categories and tags. However, those produced for Indian audience back home have altogether a different tenor and ethos. There is no denying that it is mainly because of the technological exchange/collaboration with the west that the Indian film industry has boomed a great deal; but the development of technology is just a matter of time – some people get it early and some others a little late.

Now let me rivet my attention on some of the “major Indian writers in English” mentioned above one by one. The Indian writer has come a long way since the frank admittance of Raja Rao: “We cannot write like the English. We should not.” (v) But, Salman Rushdie in his book, *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing*, holds, “the ironic proposition that India’s best writing since independence may have been done in the language of the departed imperialists is simply too much for some folks to bear.” (viii) Times have changed and with it has the ethos; historical reality has given place to economic reality; gone are days to vociferate, “British, Quit India” (*angrezo bharat chhodo*); we now send official delegations in hordes to invite foreign capital and companies. Many of the “so called Indian” authors feel more at home in the foreign lands than in India; many of them stay in the first world of English; they visit India on short trips simply to collect their material for the books they are working on.

India baiting comes naturally to them because they neither try to understand India from Indian perspective nor are they worried about her problems. For them India is a saleable commodity therefore they use it/ its tag to achieve their goals. Therefore, it is not a matter of surprise if their fiction has been branded the fiction of India baiters. For example, Stephen Schiff writes about Naipaul: “... Naipaul didn’t mind baiting his enemies, sometimes outrageously. ... why a culture like mine or like the one in India, from which I come ancestrally ...” in his books like *India: A Million Mutinies*, *An Area of Darkness* and *India: A Wounded Civilization* About Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* Mujeebuddin Syed writes, “... after the India baiting of V. S. Naipaul and Nirad C. Chaudhuri, [*Midnight’s Children*] seemed to present, despite a certain cynicism about its own method, a newer and fresher picture of India and Indianness.” (Mujeebuddin Syed, “Midnight’s Children and its Indian Con-Texts”, <http://jcl.sagepub.com/content/29/2/95.extract>) “A newer and fresher picture of India and Indianness” in *Midnight’s Children* enraged Mrs Indira Gandhi so much that she sued Salman and his publisher and they had to tender an unconditional apology to her (Shahid Siddiqui, “Salman Rushdie and Freedom of Expression”, <http://www.milligazette.com/news/3184-salman-rushdie-and-freedom-of-expression-try-it-with-holocaust>). Mrs Gandhi was not alone to be irked by Salman but he has offended the Muslim community as well by misrepresenting Islam in his writings (Ismail Isa Patel, “Mis/Representations of Islam: Reading Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*”, (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/107049639/Mis-Representations-of-Islam-Reading-Salman-Rushdie-s-The-Satanic-Verses-By-Ismail-Isa-Patel-London-1998>)). This he has been doing perhaps to prove his secular credentials to the western world and become more acceptable to a largely Christian society.

Though Vikram Seth does not exactly fall into the category of India baiters yet his concerns are certainly not Indian. I would like to quote from my own review of *The Golden Gate*: “By giving its award for 1988 to *The Golden Gate*, the Sahitya Akademi has promoted a book which is totally alien to Indian culture in its theme and ethos, which has neither Indian characters nor Indian psyche nor even Indian locale. Can the experimentation or the mark of best

seller be the only criteria for the much coveted award? What kind of values does Sahitya Akademi want us to cherish by promoting such a book" ([http://www.academia.edu/306394/Vikram\\_Seth\\_The\\_Golden\\_Gate\\_Delhi\\_Oxford\\_University\\_Press\\_1989\\_pp\\_307\\_Rs\\_75](http://www.academia.edu/306394/Vikram_Seth_The_Golden_Gate_Delhi_Oxford_University_Press_1989_pp_307_Rs_75)).

Geeta Doctor has raised doubts about the greatness of Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things*: "Is it great literature? ... We do not ask for greatness of literature these days. We are quite relished with entertainment or better still seduction." (4) Charges of obscenity against the book were raised and a court case ran almost for a decade. The book is an interesting matrix of class segregation in the Marxist Kerala – two subjects dear to the capitalist class. It shall not be out of place to quote Arundhati Roy on India: "I don't even feel comfortable with this need to define our country. Because it's bigger than that! How can one define India? There is no one language, there is no one culture. There is no one religion, there is no one way of life. There is absolutely no way one could draw a line around it and say, "This is India" or, "This is what it means to be Indian." (Reena Jana) In questioning the idea of India Arundhati is echoing the colonial debate about this nation. Even today a sociologist like Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein believes that for having a national identity one religion, one culture, one language is necessary. Arundhati Roy does not seem to accept either Gandhi's or Nehru's notion of India.

Arundhati Roy readily accepted Booker prize but refused to accept much coveted national award from India's Academy of Letters (Sahitya Akademi) "in protest against the Indian Government toeing the US line by 'violently and ruthlessly pursuing policies of brutalisation of industrial workers, increasing militarisation and economic neo-liberalisation'." (Deccan Herald, *January 16, 2006* <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines06/0116-01.htm>) I do not know if Ms Roy is familiar with Jeanette Winterson (the author of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*) who maintains "This country [The UK] is so in thrall to America. We're such lapdogs to them and that will skew things with the judges" (Rosa Silverman, "Jeanette Winterson launches latest attack on new Man Booker Prize rules" [Culture and Literature in a Glo\(b/c\)alised World](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/booker-prize/10350567/Jeanette-</a></p>
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[Winterson-launches-latest-attack-on-new-Man-Booker-Prize-rules.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/booker-prize/10350567/Jeanette-Winterson-launches-latest-attack-on-new-Man-Booker-Prize-rules.html))).

I do not know if she has ever pondered over British industrial policy, military policy, and economic neo-liberalisation otherwise she would have realised that they are mere appendages to US policies; I doubt if she could ever dare to take on Tony Blair for ravaging Iraq or Margaret Thatcher's rejection of Argentine claims over Falkland islands (and a consequent war) but she has always been mudslinging Indian government – whether it is the issue of Narmada dam or Kashmir or terrorists protection or the attack on Indian parliament. Man Booker prize is run by a business house; only a novice believes that its economic/political interests are not kept in view while giving away an award. It is something like social welfare project of a multinational company which uses the opportunity to create a market for its products. I doubt if she has ever raised doubts about the credentials and business interests of the group that sponsors/backed Man Booker Prize which she so proudly flaunts; I do not know if she is familiar with John Pilger who dismisses the Booker as "only one award that represents the views of a clutch of mostly elite, London-centric, conservative-liberal judges". (Shobhan Saxena, Fact not Fiction, [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2008-10-19/special-report/27894026\\_1\\_new-india-balram-halwai-booker](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2008-10-19/special-report/27894026_1_new-india-balram-halwai-booker)) I wish to know her take on this prize or on Pilger. If Arundhati's intentions and acts are dubbed as "anti-Indian" in the back drop of the double standards she maintains it should not come as a surprise.

In her reply to Amanda Meer's "You consider yourself an American writer", Bharati Mukherji did some plain speaking about her past allegiance to India and newly found realities. The reply is so interesting that it needs to be quoted in full:

I totally consider myself an American writer, and that has been my big battle: to get to realize that my roots as a writer are no longer, if they ever were, among Indian writers, but that I am writing about the territory about the feelings, of a new kind of pioneer here in America. I'm the first among Asian immigrants to be making this distinction between immigrant writing and expatriate writing. Most Indian writers prior

to this, have still thought of themselves as Indians, and their literary inspiration, has come from India. India has been the source, and Whereas I'm saying, those are wonderful roots, home, but now my roots are here and my emotions are here in North America.

I'm not writing like a Richard Ford or a John Updike, that's not the only America. It has many pluralities. I'm writing about an American immigrant group who are undergoing many transformations within themselves. And who, by their very presence, are changing the country. America is not the America that, until recently, has come through in contemporary popular fiction. (<http://bombsite.com/issues/29/articles/1264>)

She had shown similar allegiance to Canada before migrating to the US. However, not every writer of her stature shows this sort of courage to do plain speaking. Her reply, in fact, has answered several questions about such writers and their writings.

Kiran Desai came to lime light because of the Betty Trask Prize from the British Society of Authors 1998 for her first novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. “[It] is an ironical novel satirizing Indian mentality. It openly makes fun of our sense of propriety and logic. The major satire of the novel is the Indian sense of religiosity.” (Shubha Tiwari, “A New Godman is Born”, <http://www.boloji.com/index.cfm?md=Content&sd=Articles&ArticleID=11748>) While describing the book the reviewers in *India Today* use all those ingredients that I have talked above to lure a prospective buyer, “... Hullabaloo could be a case of hype and hope rather than soul, but the phenomenal advances that Kiran has got (an estimated Rs. 50 lakh), an initial print run of 50,000 each in the US and UK, early excerpts in the New Yorker and in the Salman Rushdie-edited anthology, Vintage Book of Indian Writing, is a pointer that another little Indian girl is on the threshold of big things” (<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/kiran-desai-makes-a-much-hyped-debut-with-hullabaloo-in-the-guava-orchard/1/263623.html>).

The doctor turned author Khaled Hosseini is the son of an Afghan diplomat who sought asylum for himself and his family in

Northern California after the Russian intrusion into Afghanistan. He has had nearly a secular upbringing. (Bakhshian, “Interview by Sara Shereen Bakhshian”, <http://www.beliefnet.com/Entertainment/Movies/2007/12/The-Kite-Runner-Soars-Into-Theaters.aspx>) No wonder, his books have been written in the back drop of “Soviet Union invasion” and against the “regime of Taliban”. The charges of the anti-Muslim incitement against Khaled Hosseini have been lavished because his books have a tenor against Islam and he has a pro-American stance.

All these authors have been living in the US/ UK and have seen that society with close quarters but they generally do not write about it, unlike their British counterparts as Forster etc, though they can very well do that as well. Vikram Seth, for example, has written about American yuppies in his *The Golden Gate* in a meticulous manner. The novel deals with Californian psychology and awareness and “suggests intimate knowledge of Californian mores, from its bill boards and bumper stickers to personal ads and pet psychiatrists. *The Golden Gate* is filled with details about California that natives sometimes overlook because of excessive familiarity.” (qtd. by Susheel Sharma, *Ibid*) The book was successful by all means. But, most of the Indian expatriates, as a matter of fact, save not only their energy but also their ink to deride the native cultures. In these days of “Clash of Civilizations” who will be a better author-agent than Salman Rushdie or Khaled Hosseini to deride the Muslims and present an authentic picture of a Muslim society from a western perspective? The result in the form of *Satanic Verses* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is for everyone to see. Both these authors present Muslims as not only intolerant villains but also as uncultured people because a large number of the prospective readers at whom the book is aimed want them to be projected like this.

Mahatma Gandhi described Katherine Mayo's *Mother India* (1927) as “Drain Inspector's Report”. It shall not be out of place to quote what Mahatma Gandhi wrote:

This book is cleverly and powerfully written. The carefully chosen quotations give it the false appearance of a truthful book. But the impression it leaves on my mind is that it is

the report of a drain inspector sent out with the one purpose of opening and examining the drains of the country to be reported upon, or to give a graphic description of the stench exuded by the opened drains. If Miss Mayo had confessed that she had come to India merely to open out and examine the drains of India, there would perhaps be little to complain about her compilation. But she declared her abominable and patently wrong conclusion with a certain amount of triumph: 'the drains are India'. (Gandhi, "Drain Inspector's Report" 539-40)

Whatever Gandhi has said about Mayo's book is applicable to Adiga's *The White Tiger* as well. *The White Tiger* has won the coveted Man Booker Prize "... perhaps [because] the most drastic and bitter facts ... have impressed the judges, who have got a revealing inside into India. ... the book, as a whole, presents the crude, dark and naked facts about India, and that has added all the merits for the award...". (Khan 1) Similarly, Sudhir K. Arora charges Adiga of presenting an incomplete truth and calls the awarded prize "A Freakish Booker". "Even the head of the jury, Michel Portillio, [calls] it a work that shows the 'dark side of India - a new territory' ... for many of us, our worst fears have come true - the West is once again using our poverty to humiliate us." (Saxena). No wonder such books become instant best sellers (to recollect Mayo's *Mother India* was reprinted twelve times between May and December in 1927, the year of its first publication and thirty-three times between 1927 and 1931) and are also nominated for some prize or the other.

It is not that Indians do not want to discuss their problems or realities or that they do not take their criticism sportingly or that they do not want to improve their situation Indians or that they are status quoists. The Indians are by and large not averse to the criticism of their beliefs, faiths, thinking and practices. As a matter of fact, the authors in Indian languages have been very severely criticising various Indian ways. Who could be a greater critic of Indian religious and social practises than Kabir? Swami Dayananda was a bitter critic of Sanatan Hindu practices. Gandhi did not agree with so many practices of Hindus and suggested reform. Can a bitterer picture of

Indian reality be presented than what has been done by Prem Chand? Does Phanishwar Nath Renu not present a very grim and harsh picture of poverty in the Indian countryside? Does Qurratulain Haider not describe the sufferings of Muslim women in a belligerently male dominated and stingingly poverty stricken society? Who could satirise autocratic tendencies in Indian politics and bureaucracy in more acerbic terms than Shrilal Shukl? What is Dalit Literature if not a stringent criticism of caste/social hierarchies? The list of such authors from Indian literature in other languages can still be longer. These authors' writings have neither been considered offensive nor a charge of their being guided by pecuniary considerations or their working at the behest of some business house been lavished against them. It is so because of different treatment and the handling of the same subject matter at the hands of two persons: while one shows how to counter the reality called poverty the other showcases poverty to make it a saleable item. It is their motive and mind-set that critics raise their protest against. Poverty for Indians is not just an economic parameter it is also a way of life. "Willing acceptance of poverty" and "poverty in the midst of plenty" are the key concepts in the Gandhian economics which is inclusive of his ideas of Non-violence, Trusteeship, *Aparigraha* (Non-possession), *Swadeshi* (Use Locally Made Goods) and the like. Indians accept multiple pluralities in every walk of life. So it is the issue of contentment on the basis of acceptance not coercion. Rushdie does not seem to like the Indian delineation of the subject matter. It is partly because of this as well that he dismisses the writings in other languages than English. For further light on the issue let me turn to Gandhi again. Gandhi equates western education to false education. He does not like education to be given just for the sake of literacy. Gandhi asks: "Will you add an inch to his happiness [by giving this type of education]? Do you wish to make him discontented with his cottage or his lot? ... [This education] does not make men of us. It does not enable us to do our duty. ... Character- building has the first place in it. A building erected on [the foundation of the Indian ancient school system] foundation will last." (*Hind Swaraj* 82-84) We can replace "education" in the above Gandhian discourse by "writings of these authors".

None of the books of the authors mentioned above withstand the test on Gandhian parameters. I would again like to quote Gandhi for those who see English as a necessity in Globalization and who, therefore, would like to prescribe these authors for the sake of their English/style: "To give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave them. The foundation that Macaulay laid of education has enslaved us. ... It worth noting that, by receiving English education, we have enslaved the nation. Hypocrisy, tyranny, etc. have increased. English-knowing Indians have not hesitated to cheat and strike terror into the people." (*Hind Swaraj* 84-85) I wish all these authors to realise what they have been doing to India at the behest of the capitalist world, by becoming their agents knowingly or unknowingly. I wish they be more responsible and stop playing to the gallery of the globalised agenda and good sense prevails in them so that the true value of literature in reflecting *Vasudhaiv Kutumbkam* finds a reflection in their writings.

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## GENDER AND GENRE: E. B. BROWNING AS FEMINIST AND LITERARY THEORIST

Madhu D. Singh

In 1822, when Elizabeth Barrett Browning was only sixteen, she started writing an essay under the title “An Essay on Women” which she never finished but whose subject matter found its way into many of her other works. Undoubtedly, to E. B. Browning women’s issues were a lifelong concern that culminated in the publication of her magnum opus, *Aurora Leigh*, a story about woman as an artist. E. B. Browning was painfully aware of the absence of her literary grandmothers. In one of her letters she wrote:

England has had many learned women, not merely readers but writers of the learned languages in Elizabeth’s time and afterwards — women of deeper acquirements than are common now in the greater diffusion of letters; and yet where were the poetesses? The divine breath.... Why did it never pass, even in the lyrical form, over the lips of a woman? How strange! And can we deny that it was so? I look everywhere for grandmothers and see none. (*Letters* I 231-32)

Deprived of literary grandmothers, E. B. Browning herself energetically explored what it meant to be a woman poet writing in a male-dominated tradition in an age in which writing epics and philosophic and satiric poetry were considered exclusively male domains. In the traditional Victorian society, prose-novel was considered more suitable for female virtues of the heart. The Victorians found the writing of novels by women more acceptable than their attempts in the major poetic genres because novels did not require the knowledge of classical models which was barred to most women novelists; they could not aspire to be priestly or prophetic figures interpreting God and the world to their followers. The Victorian society also thought that the novel was less subjective than the prevalent lyric and confessional poetic form and therefore more congruent with the self-effacing role prescribed for Victorian women. It is significant to note here that it is precisely these features of the major

poetic modes, namely, the imitation of classical models (above all the epic), prophetic aspirations and confessional subjectivity which are unmistakably prominent in *Aurora Leigh*. Thus *Aurora Leigh* becomes a medium for E. B. Browning through which she challenges the male hegemony in the field of poetic genres. The eponymous heroine of this verse novel deplores the fact that poets should be categorized as men and women poets. She satirically refers to one Vincent Carrington’s letter in which he had complimented Aurora on having written a good book, despite being a woman! “Fear not, friend / we think here you have written a good book / And you, a woman!” (*Aurora Leigh* 495).

Incidentally, E. B. Browning too had to face such prejudiced comments from contemporary critics such as Edward Fitzgerald who had remarked: “A woman of great genius, I know but what is the upshot of it all? She & her sex had better mind the kitchen and their children, and perhaps the poor.” (Qtd in Rosalie Mander 100). Writing in such a prejudiced environment, E. B. Browning formulated a literary aesthetics of her own which resisted the domination of the male tradition, as has been noted by Helen Cooper:

To realize her aesthetics, E. B. Browning took the idea of excellence from, yet resisted the domination of the male poetic tradition. Increasingly she absorbed a woman’s culture: her letters are peppered with references to Hemans, Landon and other women poets, to Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot, George Sand, Mrs. Gaskell, Harriet Beecher Stowe, to Harriet Martineau and Margaret Fuller, and to the Young American sculptor Harriet Hosmer. She probes their work, their assessment of themselves, their strengths & weaknesses, creating for herself a network of support while systematically breaking through the limiting properties ascribed to women poets. (*Shakespeare’s Sisters* 68)

Her poem, “To George Sand: A Recognition”, contains a clear statement about the special nature of a woman’s voice writing of women’s concerns, “True genius, but true woman! / Dost deny the woman’s nature with a manly scorn / And break away the gauds and armlets worn / By weaker women in captivity... (363)? She seems

to recognize that if women generally are exploited and oppressed, then all women on the whole suffer. In her poems of 1844, there is a strongly evolving consciousness of herself as a woman poet and of her belief that the sole work of the poet is to represent the age, as her poem, "The Cry of Children", about child factory workers shows. She grew increasingly conscious that women writers should actively concern themselves with social conditions. In 1853 she wrote to Mrs. Jameson that if a woman writer shied away from writing on issues such as the issue of slavery, she had better use a pen no more: "...she had better subside into slavery and concubinage herself... and take no rank among thinkers and speakers." (*Letters* II 110-11). "A Curse for a Nation" confirms E. B. Browning's refusal to subside into slavery. Written for the abolitionist movement in America, the poem incurred the wrath of critics, disturbed by her interference in politics. In this poem she specifically repudiates her assigned role as a 'lady' who knows only how the heart melts and tears run down. She designates herself as a spokesperson for those less privileged women who weep and curse night and day, thereby defying patriarchy's segregation of ladies from working class women.

E. B. Browning's anger against critics who disavowed her right to step beyond the limits laid for 'lady poets' has been revealed in a discussion on Florence Nightingale. She said that she really honoured Florence Nightingale, still she felt that her role as a nurse was imperfect solution to the woman's question:

Every man is on his knees before ladies carrying lint, calling them angelic she's, whereas if they stir an inch as thinkers or artists from the beaten line (involving more good to general humanity than is involved in lint) the very same men would curse the impudence of the very same women and would stop there. For my own part...I acknowledge that I do not consider the best use to which we can put a gifted and accomplished woman is to make her hospital nurse. If it is, why then woe to us all who are artists! (189)

E. B. Browning's feminist aesthetics is seen in the way she subverts the homely and domestic ballad to condemn men's seduction and exploitation of women. In "Rhyme of Duchess May", she

shows how an orphaned girl betrothed by her guardian to some stranger when she was only twelve, refuses this marriage and chooses her own husband, thus refusing to be treated as a mere commodity. "Bianca among Nightingales" is a frank celebration of sexuality. Another poem, "Lord Walter's Wife", dealing with the theme of flirtatious innuendos of Lord Walter's friend, shocked the editor Thackeray so much that he refused to publish it, since it contained the account of unlawful passion felt by a man for a woman to which E. B. Browning replied that though she herself did not like coarse subjects but she was deeply convinced that the corruption of society requires not to shut doors and windows but light and air and "that it is exactly because pure and prosperous women choose to ignore vice, that miserable women suffer wrong by it everywhere." (*Letters* II 445).

In all her poems, right from the earliest to the last ones, E. B. Browning sought to delineate the complexity of female experience. She wrote powerfully about the institution of motherhood in patriarchy. In the "Cry of Children", she explains how hopeless it is for the child factory workers to cry to mothers, powerless to alleviate their sufferings: "Do we hear the children weeping, O my brother / Ere the sorrow comes with years / They are leaning their young heads against their mothers, / And that cannot stop their tears". (564) The capitalization of 'Father land' but not of 'mother' in this poem underlines the power structure of a patriarchal society. In another poem "Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" (229) she exposes the victimization of women.

So far as E. B. Browning as a literary theorist is concerned, though her 'dispersed meditations' on art and literature are scattered all through her poems, still the one poem in which she systematically propounds her literary aesthetics, is her magnum opus, *Aurora Leigh*, which has been called a handbook of literature and arts. It may justly be called a document of her poetic credo. The eponymous heroine of this novel is herself a poet. Naturally, she has many critical comments to offer regarding the role of a poet. She says that poets are "the only truth tellers now left to God /... the only teachers who instruct mankind" (387). For *Aurora*, poetry is not merely a vocation; it is her life. She says: "O life, O poetry/

Which means life in life! Cognizant of life / Beyond this blood-beat, passionate for truth / Beyond these senses! Poetry, my life" ( 387)!

In such remarks Aurora's close affinity with E. B. Browning can be noted. In fact, there is so much similarity between the views of E. B. Browning and those of Aurora Leigh that the latter can justly be considered an alter ego of E. B. Browning herself. In one of her letters to Robert Browning, she wrote: "I seem to live while I write — it is life for me. Why what is to live? Not to eat and drink and breathe ... but to feel the life down all the fibres of being passionately and joyfully. And thus one lives in compositions surely..." (*Letters*, I 142).

E. B. Browning was such an avid reader that by the time she was twelve she had read Milton, Shakespeare and Homer. The same passion for books is discernible in her heroine Aurora also. The hero of *Aurora Leigh* Romney Leigh is a philanthropist who values social service more than poetry. Moreover, he thinks that women poets cannot be at par with men-poets. But Aurora scoffs at this and remarks that great books must be judged not on the basis of the gender of their authors but on the touchstone of truth. If a book embodies truth, it will succeed definitely and outlive the poet's life: "Books succeed/ And lives fail", avers Aurora (497).

Aurora Leigh also satirises the superficial literature of her times. Since many authors were writing merely to earn a living, decline in the standards of art was inevitable: "What you do / For bread, will taste of common grain, not grapes", Aurora observes candidly (141). It was not the inner urge that inspired such authors, rather monetary considerations which dictated their pen. But for Aurora, "Art is a fiery chariot in which she journeys, though her singing robes be singed" (411). E. B. Browning also pleaded for single-minded devotion to art. In one of her letters to Browning, she wrote: "Art, you know, is a jealous God and demands the whole man .... or woman. I can not conceive of a sincere artist who is also a careless one" (*Letters*, I 21).

Aurora thinks that for the deteriorating standards in art, the public is equally responsible because it wants to read things that make an easy reading. This lack of discernment among general

public is also referred to in one of E. B. Browning also refers: "As for the Americans they have a 'zeal' without knowledge for poetry. There is more love for verse among them than among the English. But they suffer themselves to be led in their choice of poets by English critics of average discernment" (*Letters*, I 310). The question of what ought to be the themes of poetry has also been raised by E. B. Browning in her poem, "Dead Pan", wherein she says categorically: "What is true, and just and honest/ What is lovely, what is pure/ these are the themes for poet's uses/ Stirring nobler than the Muses" (306).

Another significant aspect of literature, discussed in *Aurora Leigh*, is whether the contemporary age, i.e. the Victorian age, is suited to epic writing or not. In one of her monologues, Aurora remarks that although the current opinion is against the epics, but every age has the potential for heroic poems. The following lines are indeed a milestone in the realm of poetics: "All actual heroes are essential men/ And all men possible heroes. Every age/ Heroic in proportions, double faced/ Looks backward and before... expects a morn/ And claims an epos". (450) Commenting on this revolutionary thinking of E. B. Browning, C. D. Lewis observes:

E. B. Browning's heroine Aurora Leigh declared of poets that their sole aim is to represent the age, their age, nor Charlemayne's and told them that they must not, any more than men of science, shrink from Nature's warts and blains. It was a revolutionary teaching a hundred years ago that the ugly, the seemingly unpoetic, can be material for poetry. (95)

Aurora is also against the tendency of rushing back to past ages for themes. She declares: "I do distrust the poet who discerns/ No character or glory in his times/ And trundles back his soul five hundred years" (451). E. B. Browning also realized fully that she was taking an altogether modern theme for the verse novel, *Aurora Leigh*. In one of her letters to Browning, she had expressed her intention to write a "... sort of novel poem, a poem as completely modern as "Lady Geraldine's Courtship", running into the midst of our conventions and rushing into drawing rooms and the like, where angels fear to tread and so meeting face to face and without mask,

the Humanity of the age and speaking the truth as I conceive of it, out plainly" (*Letters*, I 30-31). Aurora also scoffs at the poet who builds his poems on the bones of the knights and damsels. She says that the poet should base his poems on contemporary age: "... this live, throbbing age which spends more passion, more heroic heat between the mirrors of its drawing rooms than any past medi-eval age" (451). She calls her age "full veined heaving, double breasted Age, which is fit to mould the burning lava of a song" (451).

E. B. Browning's break from tradition is also seen in her handling of the epic genre. The traditional epic is steeped in past. It celebrates an event of national importance and was monologic in style, but in this novelized epic the world is that of present and the style is dialogized. Instead of invocation to a Muse, there is Aurora's invocation of herself at the beginning of Book V: "Aurora Leigh be humble. Shall I hope/ To speak my poems in mysterious tune/ With man and nature" (448)? Further, innovation in the treatment of epic lies in that the heroic exploits of a male protagonist are replaced by action within the mind of a female protagonist.

E. B. Browning makes many more innovations in *Aurora Leigh* such as her insistence on the soul of a poem rather than on its outward shape. Her heroine remarks: "Let me think/ Of forms less, and the external. Trust the spirit! As Sovran nature does, to make the form/ Keep up the fire/ And leave the generous flames to shape themselves" (451). She also pronounces the unities of Time and Place as absurd. According to her, it hardly makes a difference whether a play has five acts or fifteen. Abject slavery to rules and regulations is scoffed at by Aurora who pleads for more freedom, more experimentation in art. 'Eschew Serfdom' is her call to those who are absolute slaves to a dead tradition. This conviction about the necessity of new forms is reflected in one of E. B. Browning's letters also, "I am inclined to think that we want new forms - as well as thoughts. The old gods are dethroned..." (*Letters*, I 79). A true artist, according to Aurora, is one who does not allow event the best critic to step into his 'sunshine of free thought', neither does he write for cheap popularity. E. B. Browning also wrote in one of her letters expressing hope that she would not be thrown from the purpose "by

the casting of any Atlanta ball of speedy popularity" (*Letters*, I 14).

It is interesting to observe here that while comparing drama with epic, Aurora considers drama to be inferior to epic. It is not that she looks down upon drama as such but she thinks that a dramatist's fate is largely decided by the response of his audience. She hopes that a time might come when drama would no more remain enslaved to the exigencies of external aids such as boards, gas lights, prompters, costume, etc. Aurora also indulges in a stimulating monologue regarding the relative importance of the real and the ideal, the material and the spiritual in art. An artist, according to Aurora, has the piercing vision to look at the spiritual hidden behind the material. Art for him is not merely an imitation; rather, it is "the witness of what is/ Behind this show" (499). Several other issues such as the role of art as a catalyst, Art for Art's sake vs. Art for Life's sake, the theme of poetic vision and poetic inspiration and imperfection of communication have also been explored by E. B. Browning in her poems.

To end, E. B. Browning is one of the foremost feminist thinkers and literary theorists of her times, for women's issues remained a lifelong concern for her and she articulated them in her poetry. Her aesthetic thinking, while it is iconoclastic and innovative, has been shaped and moulded by her feministic sensibility and concerns.

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**WRATH AND LAUGHTER: DEMONIC  
APOCALYPSE IN W. B. YEATS'S  
"THE SECOND COMING"**

Ashu Vashisht

William Butler Yeats's "The Second Coming" gives a demonic, a highly ironic version of the last chapter of the Bible titled *Revelation* or "Revelation of John" also called as the "Book of Apocalypse". Saint John, one of the favorite disciples of Jesus Christ is living on the island of Patmos in the Pacific Ocean and he gets blessed with a vision in which Jesus conveys to John, God's message about the End of the World. Thus, the "Revelation" conveys a concretized imaginative expression about how God's wrath will destroy this world and the race of mankind. Obviously, the Revelation of John symbolizes the very antithesis of "Genesis", the opening section of the Bible in which it is narrated how God created this world in six days and rested on Sunday as the "Sabbath", the day of rest. Yeats's poem hinges around the third stage of the *Revelation (Bible, "Revelation")* where the turbulent and anarchic reign of the Antichrist, also called as the period of the "Great Tribulation", will be followed by the second coming of Christ signified by the "Armageddon", a cosmic warfare between Christ and Antichrist. This heavenly warfare shall result in the inauguration of the millennium, the "Messianic Kingdom". After the millennial rule of the Messiah is over, a gradual moral and physical degeneration of human nature will set in, characterized by the "Last loosening of Satan", the penultimate stage before the end of the world by fire, Yeats's immortal poem "The Second coming" climaxes with the concept that it is not Christ who is getting again born as the second coming in the biblical "Revelation", but it is the beast, in other words the devil, who reigns now supreme as the archetypal sources of all evil in the modern world. Thus, Yeats's poem becomes the poetic representation of modern man's slavish addiction to evil, violence and mindless and aimless pursuits.

The poem opens with seminal and profoundly symptomatic

lines, expressing present day human race as afflicted with moral and spiritual stasis:

Turing and turning in the widening gyre"  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world;  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and every where  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity

Needless to say, the poet's wrath and ironic laughter ring loud in these opening lines of the poem. The good, noble humans seem bereft of all faith, direction and purpose in their aims, goals and objectives, whereas the evil and profane ones are getting infused with zest, vigour and deconstructive bravado. It is in the second stanza of the poem, the concluding part, that Yeats's anger and displeasure, possibly fuelled by his Irish experience, fills the lines with apparent revulsion over the happenings in the 20<sup>th</sup> century especially the incidence of the First World War and the ascendancy of global military hawks and dictators like Adolf Hitler, Mussolini, etc. The concluding stanza opens with these memorable lines, spilling over with the imagery of demonic human, animal and mineral worlds:

Surely some revelation is at hand;  
Surely the second coming is at hand.  
The second coming! Hardly are these words out  
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi  
Troubles my sight: somewhere in the sands of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Red shadows of the indignant desert birds.

(Lines 9–17)

As literature of anxiety and grave apprehension, these lines simply reflect "the secular image of the last loosening of Satan.... whose protean face reflected the evil of the society he woos" (John R. May, *Toward a New Earth* 185). Yeats's anger, in these lines,

presents a revelation against the ravages of a scientific and technological society which glorifies itself on its progress. The poet's contemporary apocalyptic imagination, illustrative of modern apocalypse, attains a crescendo in the concluding lines of the poem when we get the picture of the beast advancing towards Bethlehem to get born, replacing the biblical second coming of Christ. It is not Jesus now who will be born in this world again, but the "Beast", the "Secular Satan", who is advancing on the holy city of Christ's birth. Demonic apocalypse rings loud and clear in the last five lines of the poem:

The darkness drops again; but now I know  
That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,  
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

"Twenty centuries of stony sleep" represent the first two thousand years after Christ's crucifixion: 2000 A.D. These days we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the "Beast" is already actively growling and baring its deadly fangs to saturate postmodern man's inner self with anarchic disruption and psychic aberration. Glaring examples are in front of us: the Afghanistan Taliban, happenings in Iraq in the post – Saddam Hussain era, capture and Killing of Osama Bin Laden global terrorism, incidents of horrendous rapes and murders, as that of "Nirbhaya" in December 2012, in a moving bus in Delhi, followed by repetitive rapes of girl children, killing and burning of wives by animalistic unfaithful husbands and what not. In our own country, India, the "Beast" seems to be constantly on the prowl, with rapes, murders, heists, etc; making news headlines. Biblical apocalypse, intermixed with philosophical apocalypse, makes the role-playing matrix in "The second coming". Not only does demonic imagery dominate the poem from the beginning to the end, but the entire poem becomes a symbolic versification of what Northrop Frye terms as "the world of the nightmare and the scapegoat.... The hell that man creates on earth" (*Anatomy of Criticism* 141-42), also categorized as "instruments of torture and monuments of folly" (143). Mankind itself has now become a "monument of folly", torturing itself with power – politics, nuclear deterrents, corruption, misgovernance

and above all unprecedented price – rise. What Yeats conveys in the line about the beast "slouching towards Bethlehem to be born", is the total domination of goodness and virtue, altruistic nobility, by the agent provocateurs of evil, and socio-cultural jugglery witnessed presently in the developed as well as the developing countries across the globe. The commingling of human and animal worlds by the poet, visible strongly in the line. "A shape with lion body and the head of a man", not only signifies modern man's proclivity toward animalistic deeds, but also the reality of "technology and the expansion of international transactions" (Erich Fromm, "The Present Human condition," 475), obviously supply of lethal weaponry by the advanced countries, of the world to the developing countries, particularly in South-East Asia. Though, when Yeats wrote the poem, the arms race among countries was not so threatening as it is now. Yet, the subtlety and the philosophical depth of the poem explain, interpret, and illustrate all present-day diseased politics, ecological pollution and war-mongering by jealous, fanatical and scheming hawks in bureaucracy, political and administrative actions and dealings. Yeats's "Beast" is man himself, forgotten by an inscrutable and indifferent creator. This homo-animalis has since become drunk and strongly equipped with "The greatest material power without the wisdom to use it" (Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* 321). That is why the poet in the very opening stanza talks about things falling apart and "Mere anarchy" being "lost upon the world". The "Worst" who are "full of passionate intensity", are none else but corrupt, self-seeking politicians, those in the highest echelons of power, who have since unleashed virtual mayhem in civil society by practicing satanic politics, unabashed money-power, not to mention sexual scandals, harassment of women at the work place, and what not. A look or gaze "as blank and pitiless as the sun", is Yeats's expression of twentieth-century man's total and irretrievable addiction to dehumanization and animalistic depredations.

To conclude, it can be said with conviction that "The Second Coming" as a poem becomes an anatomical and incisive representation of current realities across our world. Yeats assumes the role of a visionary prophet who through sheer creative and realistic

imagination talks about modern mankind living in a demonic mineral world, "a lunar world of stone, cement asphalt, glass, cast iron and steel" (322). One can say and justifiably so, that the "desert" in which the poet talks about "a vast image out of the" "Spiritus Mundi" and "A shape with lion body and the head of a man", is nothing else but this our current metropolitan world of Kafkan existence, a world "of stone cement, asphalt, glass, cast iron and steel." The sky-scrapers in metropolitan cities of the world, including our own country, bear ample and incontrovertible witness to this hard, unnerving fact.

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## APOSTASY AND TRIBULATION: JOHN UPDIKE'S SOCIOLOGICAL VISION IN HIS MAJOR NOVELS

K. B. Razdan

Postmodern American novelist who have written their works during the last four decades of the previous century (1960's to 1990's), have largely focused upon what Ihab Hassan Characterizes as "ethos of mass society" ("Pattern of Fictional Experience" 13), a kind of society which encroaches upon the lives of humans with a kind of demonic aggression. Barbaric frenzy and Alexandrian Virtuosity constitute the extremes, not the alternatives the postmodernist American writer negotiates, be the writer a novelist, a poet or a dramatist. John Updike who died few years back, is one such writer who has earned a special niche among late modern and postmodern American writers, especially the novelists. Born in 1932 in Pennsylvania in the United States, Updike started his writing career as an author by working as a reporter for the New Yorker from 1955 to 1957 before publishing his first novel *The Poorhouse Fair* (1959). Succeeding novels followed fairly quickly: the Rabbit Trilogy: *Rabbit, Run* (1960), *Rabbit Redux* (1971) and *Rabbit is Rich* (1981), the last work of the trilogy earning Updike the Pulitzer Prize. Eventually, the Rabbit series got culminated as a Tetrology with the publication of *Rabbit At Rest* (1990). Besides the rabbit novels, Updike wrote such novels as *The Centaur* (1963), combining realism and mythology in heterodiegetic manner. *Of the farm* (1965) reflects tensions between a man's mother and his second wife. *The Couples* (1968) and *The Witches of Eastwick* (1982) become works symbolizing the incidence of secular Satans let loose in contemporary society to create havoc and mayhem. The depiction of women characters in Updike's novels reflects a demonic imbalance, a diseased and perverted ethos in the man-woman relationship, the cardinal relationship upon which the sociological health of any given society or culture depends. This crucial relationship undergoes a debased and demonic destabilization, resulting in the disintegration of the family as an

important sociological construct.

In all Updike's works, mentioned in the preceding lines, what the reader encounters is a fractured, deconstructive and diseased prism of society and culture, a broken mirror reflecting the diseased energies of mankind. The most important sociological institution: the Institution of Marriage is portrayed by Updike as disintegrating and practically non-existent. Updike's "lethal" weaponry in the form of plot, theme, characterization and imagery, right from his first work *The Poorhouse Fair* (1959) to *Rabbit At Rest* (1990), creates a highly dystopian scenario in which human relationships are portrayed as sterile, demonic, and even satanic. After all why is it so? The answer is not far to seek: Updike knew that modern man, especially postmodern men and women, have become virtual automatons, living husks with perverted and distorted psyches. A virtual unending vista of horror is what the novels become. Moral apostasy and marital dismemberment become the determining norms in the fictional cosmos of Updike's novels. For instance, Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom, a former high school basketball star, the quintessential postmodernist American hero, personifies in the inner world of his mind and spirit, a contemporary Odysseus whose quest for self- fulfillment remains an inconclusive open- ended exercise. Angstrom's spiritual quest for meaning and purpose in life takes a sterile form in his going away from his wife, Janice, besides indulging in adulterous liaisons with pretty influential women. This kind of futile and dehumanizing resistance culminates in his return to the family, only to get climaxed with the tragic drowning of the heroine's infant daughter. Angstrom even lives with a prostitute, Ruth, whom he finally abandons when his wife goes into labor with their second child. Now, Mrs Rabbit, too, has an extra-marital affair of her choice only to justify her action under the premise of individual freedom and self-realization. The entire Rabbit Tetralogy virtually embodies an apocalyptic scenario of a debased, degenerative society in which men and women display themselves as inherently weak and vacillating humans who can anytime go haywire and contribute further to the diseased energies of mankind, a recurrent phenomenon in postmodern American novel.

In *The Centaur* (1963), Updike becomes a fabulator who mixes contemporaneity and antiquity, myth and reality, only to depict man's longing to encounter his Creator (God). The central protagonist George Caldwell, and his son Peter Caldwell, both act as narrators. In fact, in *The Centaur*, Updike resorts to different narrative techniques and points of view only to reflect 20<sup>th</sup> century man's spiritual and meta-physical dilemmas. Updike, by adopting metadiegetic technique of narration, merges the Greek myth of Chiron with the narrative of Coldwell's story. Updike effectively dramatizes modern man's desperate and relentless struggle to negotiate his religious dilemmas amidst the "turbulence" of a "stormy sea", which is nothing else but the present-day mass society, a "half welfare and half garrison society" (Patricia Waugh, *Postmodernism* 49) in which man himself becomes consumed like the various products he produces and consumes. George Coldwell's desperate attempt to seek death as the final escape and salvation, a release from an agonizing and torturing existence, gets highlighted as a Sisyphian task riddled with absurdity and futility. As an infallible symbol of modern man, George Coldwell feels traumatized by cancer, decaying teeth, grocery bills. Zimmerman, a high school principal, personifies within himself the Greek super-god Zeus to Coldwell's Chiron. Thus, Updike succeeds in portraying the original Greek myth in a metafictional and fabulatory manner.

*Couples* (1968) and *The Witches of Eastwick* (1984), followed by *Roger's Version* (1986) and *S* (1988), become works cumulatively depicting the crucial man-woman relationship as effete, crumbling, suffused with a decomposing and nauseating sociological ambience. *Couples* embodies man's defeatist quest for happiness through sexual pursuits. Here, sex becomes the so-called "Liberating and rejuvenating" exercise, primarily through marital infidelity in the form of no-holds-barred adultery. The institution of the family is torn to smithereens through the portrayal of ten middle-class American suburban couples. The polymorphous form of promiscuity, lasciviousness and lewdness is weaved into the very texture of the novel's narrative with the arresting finesse of a master writer. These ten couples look confused, lost, without any purpose and direction

in their respective lives just mere husks, living corpses, acting out their individual roles as demonic automatons. By excessive indulgence in sex, these couples believe they can give some meaning and purpose to their individual and collective-lives. With their meaningless lives, these debased couples form a virtual devil's discotheque in which husbands and wives get exchanged like dress-pieces or luxury goods. What could be more repellent and obnoxious to behold. The family gets totally deconstructed, in facts ruthlessly dismembered. Perhaps, Updike wants to convey the harsh but true reality of marital disillusionment and boredom.

Satanic pursuit of horrendous sexual acts forms the thematic crux in *The Witches of Eastwick* (1984). The novel's fictional locale is the seaside city of Eastwick on Rhode Island. The narrative hinges upon the satanic and apostatic acts and doings, mainly sexual, of three demonic women: Alexandra, Jane and Sukie. Together, these three women represent the carnival of sexual Satanism by divorcing their husbands, thereby investing themselves with unlimited freedom and the licence to do anything that captivates their fancy. Alexandra, Jane, and Sukie sleep with married men, frown upon and despise the institution of marriage and make a mincemeat of their respective family lives. Updike makes these women protagonists as infallible temptresses, out and out committed seductresses, whose only job is to ensnare men and "gobble" them as detestable odious vermin. In *The Witches of Eastwick*, Updike's sociological vision becomes excessively repellent and the portrayal of socio-cultural dismemberment attains new disturbing heights. All the same these three satanic women meet their match in a dark hypnotic magnus of a man named Darryl Van Horne. This secular Satan enters the lives of the three "witches" and as a committed postmodern sociological "wizard" mesmerizes Alexandra, Jane, and Sukie. Horne's evil paraphernalia totally enslave the three women protagonists, making them virtual slaves of this man. The children of these women get utterly neglected and the "witches" discard their former lovers for the pleasure of Van Horne. Ironically, after the departure of Horne, the women after undergoing great suffering and beastly exploitation attain liberation through pain and the narrative climaxes on a note

of regeneration. Updike's faith in the possibility of renewal in human life is quite visible here. Renewal is the biblical message in the *Revelation* and human existence has to regenerate itself from total disaster through systematic renewals.

Anarchic disruption and psychic aberration abound in *Roger's Version* (1986) and *S* (1988). The former novel reflects a prodigious learning in ancient and modern theology, physics, computer technology in tune with present-day technological advancement. The narrative in *Roger's Version* revolves around Robert Lambert, a cynical professor of theology at Harvard, his second wife Esther and their only child Richie. The spoke in the wheel is Dale, a student and expert in computers who wants to prove the existence of God. Dale has an affair with Roger's wife Esther when the latter helps him to have a grant to finance the young student's project about the proof regarding the existence of God. Verna, Roger's niece is a bed-hopper, perfectly in consonance with Updike's fictional men and women who go on changing their sexual affiliations at the drop of a hat. The narrative climaxes on a note of hope and renewal, everything turns hunky-dory. The seemingly happy ending is tinged with irony.

*S* highlights the freedom of women to pursue their carnal, lascivious and lewd goals as perfect *haetas*, simply to gratify their emotional ends. The novel centres around Sarah Worth, an eccentric woman who has deserted her successful New England doctor husband after years of "respectable bondage and socially sanctioned frivolity". The novel's structure is epistolary. Sarah goes to an ashram in Arizona, ruled by guru called "Arhat", a virtual charlatan who preaches and propagates the primacy of ex over ego and everything else. *S* also highlights the relationship of a mother with her daughter. Through her letters Sarah reveals herself as a caring and loving mother, an exercise in parental concern. Many things are shared with the daughter. In the end, Updike's protagonist whom "Arhat" renames "Kundalini", the serpent of female energy dormant at the base of the spinal column, runs away from the ashram to a Caribbean Island. On this Island Sarah contemplates the lessons she has learned including her experiences with her husband. The irony

heightens when Sarah, in spite of the freedom she gains, still longs for her husband Charles and feels jealous on learning that he is going to marry Midge, her most trusted friend. S like other Updike novels again highlights an inherent disintegration of man-woman relationship, the fracture and fission in the family and the institution of marriage.

Thus, the cumulative essence of Updike's sociological-cum-socio-cultural vision gravitates around a fictional cosmos in which humans became the ironic refection of the legendary Greek musician Orpheus, who sings on a "lyre without strings" (Ihab Hassan, *Dismemberment of Orpheus: Towards the Making of Postmodern Literature* 27). The orphic myth, here, rings loud: to "blend word and flesh into the dance of existence" (29). Updike himself becomes in his novels a contemporary Orpheus who "carries the music of universal harmony and eternal response" on the strings of his "lyre", which is nothing else but the author's own evaluation and depiction of the society he lived in.

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## MATRIARCHAL LINEAGE IN GLORIA NAYLOR'S *MAMA DAY*

Richa Shrivastava &  
Rashmi Gaur

First published by Ticknor and Fields of United States, *Mama Day* (1988) is the third novel of Gloria Naylor. It confirmed her status as one of the leading authors of the African-American women's fiction in renaissance period. This novel, along with her othe novels like *The Women of Brewster Place*, *Linden Hills*, *Bailey's Café* and *The Men of Brewster Place* has definitely put her in the category of Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and Zora Neal Hurston. Recurrent themes in these novels are oppression of women, social stereotypes of gender, and the construction of femininity/masculinity. Her novels showcase the quintessence of women bonding and mothering of different generations. *Mama Day* is also a confluence of past, present and future; narrating a story in flashback, a story which takes up the matriarchal lineage in a remote island Willow Springs, as a significant fact of the African-American experience. Besides, *Mama Day* takes up the mystical aspects of African-American experience which are normally associated with hoodoo and cult practices.

The fictional narrative of *Mama Day* authenticates the folk-lore that matriarchal construction had been the earliest social formation of human beings. The interweaving of the life stories of women characters in different novels renders a particular continuity to Naylor's fiction. Willa Prescott Nedeed of *Linden Hills* and Ophelia Day, nick named Cocoa, belong to the ancestral lineage of *Mama Day*. The novel is geographically confined to the Georgia sea island of Willow Springs. It is located on the periphery which highlights the possibilities of isolated societal patterns being depicted from a perspective of valorization. The liminality of the location is highlighted in the novel several times.

The mythical presence of Sapphira Wade is central to the matriarchal lineage depicted in *Mama Day*. In the opinion of Maxine Lavon Montgomery, this legend "paves the way for infinite discurs-

sive possibility” (Montgomery 52). Amy K. Levin has remarked that such portraits depict “a positive model of maternity or female leadership” as well as “a trace of magic or the supernatural” (Levin 71). The inhabitants of Willow Springs believed that Sapphira was a conjurer, “She could walk through a lightning storm without being touched: grab a bolt of lightning in the palm of her hand: use the heat of lightning to start the kindling going under her medicine pot: depending upon which of us takes a mind to her” (*Mama Day* 3). The main characters of the novel revere this ancestor who had arrived in Georgia Island as slaves. Sapphira Wade was the slave woman of Bascombe Wade as the bill of her sale proclaims, of pure African stock, “limbs and teeth sound”, sold at the age of twenty, “inflicted with sullenness” and a “bilious nature” as the conditions of her sale tell us. In many ways she reminds us of Luwana Packerville, the slave narrator in *Linden Hills* (1985) who had narrated the theme of women oppression on the margins of her copy of the Bible. Similarly Sapphira Wade also had to put up with exploitation. Though she is revered almost as a divinity by the posterity, in her lifetime she was treated as any other domestic black female slave – with merciless brutality. It is tempting at this stage to draw a comparison of *Mama Day* with Morrison’s novels *Beloved* and *Mercy*. These novels take up the insightful human features of the slavery system through powerful women characters. Victims of their masters’ whims and aware of the total absence of any escape-routes, these women characters still wish their children to be somehow free, making motherhood to be a dominant trope. *Beloved* takes up these themes from the perspective of Sethe, a mother and a slave in ‘Sweet Home’, a farm in Kentucky who comes to realize that definitions belong to definers. Determined to protect her children from a future which will unfold only as a repetition of her traumatic past, she tries to kill her children instead of surrendering them when she sees the School-master and the Sheriff approaching the house:

“...when she saw them coming and ecognized the school teacher’s hat, she heard wings. Little hummingbirds stuck their needle beaks right through her headcloth into her hair and beat their wings. And if she thought anything, it was No.

No. Nonono. Simple. She just flew. Collected every bit of life she had made, all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful, and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out, away, over there. Outside this place, where they would be safe” (*Beloved* 200).

In *Mercy* Florens’s mother had to cast her daughter off to save her from a repeat destiny of commoditized exploitation. All these three novels hauntingly capture the emotional wreckage of those mothers who abandon their children to strangers, attempt to kill them or kill their masters and commit suicide. They do it out of love, a helpless love; and a hope, pale and faint, yet still a hope. These acts cannot be judged from the standards of white liberated motherhood. Morrison and Naylor journey back into the past to re-inscript the history. These multifaceted fictional narratives of enslavement foreground the emotional complexities of the silenced or the repressed history of the early days of a country.

Bascombe Wade had put Sapphira to heavy menial labor. During plantation days female workers were considered to be more beneficial than either free or slave male workers. Black women were required not only to work as hard as any other male slave, but they could also be physically exploited and treated as milking cows. Angela Y. Davis states in *Women, Race & Class* that several Black women were inwardly “broken and destroyed, yet the majority survived” (Davis 11). Those women who could overcome the destruction of their hopes in order to survive the brutality of slavery had to acquire the qualities “considered taboo by the nineteenth century ideology of womanhood” (*Ibid.*). Sapphira Wade is a perfect example of such women. She has seven sons and poisons/kills her Norwegian master after the land is deeded to her. She is viewed with a sense of awe as the Great Mother because of her strength and ruthlessness; and lives permanently in the memory of her descendants, “... a slave woman who *took* her freedom in 1823. Left behind seven sons and a dead master as she walked down the main road, candle held high to light her way to the east bluff over the ocean” (*Mama Day* 111). The inhabitants of the Willow Spring do not celebrate Christmas, rather they celebrate the “old 18 & 23 night” each year, singing half-re-

membered ancient songs, raise their candles facing east and exchange gifts, particularly offering tokens of their respect to the current matriarch for her magical abilities to protect and nurture them. Significantly Sapphira's descendants discard the name of her owner: instead of "Wade" they prefer to opt for "Day", a name she had chosen for her children. Although she has seven sons, soon the male line dwindles and the family is kept together by women. If Sapphira Wade was the first Great Mother, Mama Day or Miranda Day is the contemporary one. People believe that Mama Day is over hundred years and is the true heir of Sapphira Wade. It is believed that she could raise lightening storms and could watch secrets in her dream to ward off difficult situations and evil circumstances. She is the great – aunt of Cocoa Day, the third generation woman and the central character of the novel. Cocoa or Ophelia is the last surviving Day. In Mama Day's opinion she has inherited several traits of Sapphira:

Me and Abigail, we take after the sons, Miranda thinks. The earth men who formed the line of Days, hard and dark brown. But *the* Baby Girl brings back the great, grand Mother. We ain't seen 18 & 23 black from that time till now. The black that can soak up all the light in the universe, can even swallow the sun.... it's only an ancient mother of pure black that one day spits out this kinda gold ("Toni Morrison: A Conversation" 48)

Cocoa has preferred to move to Manhattan rather than stay in the old Willow Springs. She acts as a bridge between two worlds: those of African-American mystification and Western rationalization. Though she gains a different polish and accent, she is unable to completely desert her past cultural heritage. Her marriage to George represents the chequered racial history of African-Americans. Brought up in an orphanage, he has grown to become an independent businessman with a scientific training and temperament. He is aware that while Cocoa had not only a family but also a history, he could not even claim to have a real last name. He is an anti-thesis to the world represented by Mama Day and is almost successful in drawing Cocoa away from her roots. His continuous

refusal to visit the Willow Spring represents and reinforces the differences which are inherently present in these two parallel worlds. His presence is almost like an intrusion as Amy Levin remarks, "The intrusion of a strong male in the matriarchal community of the coastal island immediately disrupts its order; the fact that this male is an engineer who scoffs at magic and folk medicine heightens the disruption" (Levin 80). George was brought up in an orphanage where the boys were taught that only the present has potential. He has led a practical life. When he leaves Wallace P. Andrews, his orphanage, George feels that he can rely only on himself and the present, "... I had what I could see: my head and my two hands, and I had each day to do something with them. Each day, that's how I took it - each moment sometimes, when the going got really rough" (*Mama Day* 27). This practical approach served him well in New York, but his inability to accept what was not rational, made him an easy scapegoat in Willow Springs. His life in New York is planned, established and effort-oriented. Cocoa, on the other hand, has been caressed by her grand-mother Abigail and great-aunt Miranda Day. 'Before she met George, Cocoa identified persons of different ethnic groups by the food(s) associated with that group, a mode of reference offensive to George' (Wilson 88). George persuaded Cocoa with his ideology to change her observation about New York City. After a few weeks of their engagement, Cocoa becomes more liberated in her perceptions of gender stereotypes. Cocoa thinks that their relationship is perfect even though she does not like George's obsession about watching football games.

Cocoa's perception of tasks related with household chores showcases Naylor's approach towards the gendered division of tasks, even though it is given a racist tinge. Whereas George does take his chores seriously, Cocoa resents them:

"Ophelia, this looks like goulash."

"Because that's what it is."

"It was your turn to cook."

"I cooked."

"No. I cooked pot roast last night. And you took the leftovers, threw tomato sauce on it, and gave it back to me." (*Mama*

Day 144)

George takes his “housework as ritual enactment” (Rabuzzi 96). But as Montgomery has commented, “The home is not a neutral space” (Montgomery, 67). Naylor has depicted the racial aspects related with cooking and other household chores. *Mama Day* and Abigail work on a quilt to be given as a wedding present to Cocoa. Quilting is an art form that traditionally has enabled black women to reconstruct their family history. During the days of slavery it gave an opportunity to black women to work away from an oppressive environment. Quilting has become a metaphor for recreating the collective bonding and creative legacy of African women and has been used suggestively by several African-American writers. In *Mama Day* also it can be interpreted as an attempt to bind Cocoa to her maternal home, through various pieces and scraps of previous generations. Prepared with tireless attentiveness, the quilt is deeply embedded in the collective unconscious of the family. *Mama Day* speaks out similar sentiments while working on the quilt, “[t]his’ll be passed on to my great-grandnieces and nephews when it’s time for them to marry. And since I won’t be around to defend myself, I don’t want them thinking I was a lazy old somebody who couldn’t make a decent double-ring quilt” (*Mama Day* 136). Montgomery has suggested that the rift between George and Cocoa about the placement of the quilt suggests their ideological differences. Women also cook for weeks to prepare for the Candle Walk. “Far from being mundane or burdensome, women’s work takes on spiritual dimensions, allowing black women to transcend imposed notions of female place” (Montgomery 64). Despite the spiritual dimensions of the work associated with household chores, we find that the racist aspects of work, as well as what work means for black women have been taken up in the novel. The feminist notion that “work liberates women” is not necessarily true. The work done by colored women does not necessarily help them to overcome racist and sexist biases. Bell Hooks has remarked in this context:

Among many poorer Americans, liberation means the freedom of a mother finally to quit her job – to live the life of a capitalist stay – at – home as it were. Of course work for her

has meant scrubbing floors or scouring toilets or sewing endless buttons on discount smocks, and has more to do with self – preservation than self – realization. Even the most debasing sort of menial labor can, it is true, be perceived as an escape from the pointed dilemmas of leisure – providing it is not compulsory. To be able to work and to have to work are two very different matters (Hooks 96, 97).

Whereas the condition of black women suggests that compulsory work should not be equated with liberation, the portrayal of George brings forth the fact that the racist reservations still continue. Sheila Radford Hill in her book *Further to Fly: Black Women and the Politics of Empowerment* (2000), describes the impact of political economy on black people. In 1980s, some blacks, obtained the effects of positive fiscal conditions, and were able to derive some benefits from the economic boom. The reduced unemployment led to high-paid jobs for some blacks also. George represents this category. Naylor has manifested the vainness of White world to control the Black world. Black women and White women are distinguished on the basis of the color of their skins as far as employment opportunities are concerned. Black women are acquired for blue collared jobs, whereas White women are required for white collared jobs. Cocoa is hurt by the subtle racist nuisances while job-hunting in New York. She feels that employment would be easier in New York City, if the employers have specified “Blacks” and “Whites” in their advertisement.

Another aspect which imparts a suggestive depth to *Mama Day* is Naylor’s suggestive use of language. For different characters and milieus she has used different linguistic rhythms which impart an evocative depth to her description. The Island dialect identifies Cocoa’s feminine gender presenting her as an upholder of vigor of Willow Springs, whereas modern English represents George’s masculine gender in the novel. The use of different language tones bestows independent identity and characteristics to her characters. Rachel Hass mentions in this context:

Language identifies people with their own particular history. Naylor uses the island dialect and modern English to place

her novel on Willow Springs or in New York in doing so she brings separate worlds onto the same page without explanation or translation, and demands co – existence of the past with the present (Hass 23).

Cocoa has migrated from Willow Springs to New York for job and further education. Her migration bears traces of the Harlem Renaissance. Barbara Christian has quoted Zora Neale Hurston's *Dust Tracks on the Road* (1942) in her essay "Images of Women in Afro – American Literature: From Stereotype to Character (1975)" to scrutinize the situation of Blacks in Harlem Renaissance, "There is no single face in nature, because every eye that looks upon it, sees it from its own angle so every man's spice box seasons his own food" (Christian 8). Barbara Christian describes how during that particular decade a large number of blacks had migrated from rural south to cities like New York. Harlem, the *mecca* of the black world, had emerged out of this great migration. Black women found that even after their migration, their substantial importance had remained the same. They only appeared in new apparels. In olden times they were housekeepers, cooks and cotton pickers, in the new era they emerged as domestic maids, garment factory workers and prostitutes – 'they became the hard bottom of the labor market' (Christian 8). Cocoa's struggles to establish herself financially and socially in New York can be taken as representative of her race.

Cocoa's final come back to Willow Spring reasserts the continuity of the matrilineal society of the island. Miranda ruthlessly decides to sacrifice George to keep this legacy intact. Miranda is described as a "spirit in the woods" (*Mama Day* 79) whose walking stick is a magic wand. "A wave over a patch of zinnias and the scarlet petals take flight... Winged marigolds follow them into the air ... A thump of the stick: morning glories start to sing" (*Mama Day* 152). *Mama Day* has her attunement to natural resources. She is the healing magician matriarch in the island. The other magician vamp is Ruby. 'That the roots she's working may have got Junior Lee to the altar for her, but Ruby being so much older than him, she'll be dead before he finds his way into all of that. Or him having the reputation of being far less than ambitious; he'll tire out on the

wedding night just trying to roll up her gown' (*Mama Day* 134). Ruby is suspicious about Cocoa and is jealous of her happy marriage. Ruby's marriage with young Hazel Junior Lee is unsuccessful. She calls Cocoa at her home to braid her hair and rubs poison on her scalp. 'Yeah, Junior Lee was a trial to her – and it's time she was judge and the jury. A soft hypnotic voice with firm fingers massaging that warm solution into my scalp' (*Mama Day* 246). Ruby almost kills Cocoa by her "hoodoo" practices. Ruby has been depicted as a villainous character who represents the angry frustrated aspects of womanhood. *Mama Day* herself is a bit fearful of her magical spells. Cocoa suffers an unsightly illness which causes her deep physical and mental distress. She begins to hallucinate and watches her ancestors in her nightmares and listens to their voices. She begins to trust that worms have overrun her body and are devouring her from the inside. It is the calming pat of her grandmother's hands that alone can repel the parasites from devouring her, "The heavy trembling of Abigail's hands as she brings the cup to her lips is enough alone to make Miranda kill Ruby" (*Mama Day* 264). Miranda is spending some time in the old mansion and is unable to look at the symptoms immediately. Abigail tries to nurse her initially. It is only when Cocoa's conditions worsen that she decides to call her elder sister. George watches helplessly. He is unable to take Cocoa to a doctor as the bridge - their only connection to the world outside – has been washed away. He devotes her whole energies to the repair of the bridge, "You were sick and I was totally helpless. It was a feeling that I hated .... If there was a boat or even a raft, I would have taken it alone to get you help ...." (*Mama Day* 260, 263). The storm has cut down George's possibilities of seeking help from a "real" doctor and he has to depend on the resources of *Mama Day* while trying to repair the damage at the bridge. He is unable to understand what these two old women try to convey to him. He is also absolutely not a part of their world. They don't have the words to explain to tell him what is going on and also decide not to share anything of their world with him (*Mama Day* 267). Miranda acts out vengeance on Ruby for poisoning Cocoa by smattering a metallic powder around Ruby's house and bringing lightning to it twice in

quick succession. Mama Day devotes herself to nurse Cocoa back to health. She cuts her hair, applies charcoal paste for relief in her head, and massages grayish herbal paste into her scalp. "It's like feeding her when she was a baby, propping up her chin, prying open her lips with the tip of the spoon" (*Mama Day* 265). Finally the solution of Cocoa's recovery is reflected in the eyes of Mama Day. She finally understands that in order to save Cocoa they will have to surrender George. Some critics have viewed the final scenes of the novel as Mama Day's attempts to get a worthy successor. Mama Day sends George to the old chicken coop with the family stick and ledger, as if he is carrying a part of the family with him. The walking stick and the ledger represent the rational and the male sides of the family, whereas the chicken coop is at once rural and female. George has to go to the northwest corner of the coop and bring back whatever he finds there, "There was row after row of yellow eyes, glinting at me from all sides. The northwest corner of the coop" (*Mama Day* 300). The huge red hen Clarissa which has occupied the corner attacks George fiercely to protect her nest. George does not find anything in the nest and then the realization dawns upon him that Mama Day wants him to relinquish his hold on Cocoa:

I went through the coop like a mad man, slamming the cane into feathery bodies, wooden posts, straw nests – it was all the same. The air was choked with feathers. The noise was deafening. The cane broke. I grabbed up the ledger and kept going until I got a stitch in my side. That finally made me stop. I looked at it all and began to laugh. A tight, airless laughter that got no further than my chest as I sank into the middle of the floor .... There was nothing that old woman could do with a pair of empty hands.... I looked around me again and kept laughing until it started to hurt". (*Mama Day* 301)

George has a weak heart. His struggle with chickens and his fury affects him and his heart gives out. He dies attempting to reach Mama Day and hoping to save Cocoa. Mama Day puts George's life into sacrifice. The remedies and healing could work only after the death of George, as he had been an important character in Cocoa's

life. Finally George dies; he sacrifices his life so Cocoa could recover from illness and to lead a long life. Mama Day proves herself victorious by saving her grand – niece, Ophelia (Cocoa) from Ruby's hatred and jealousy. Cocoa George sacrifices his life, so Cocoa could lead her life. After the sacrificial death of George, Cocoa remarries someone else. She gives birth to her two sons. Cocoa names her second son 'George' in remembrance of her first husband George. In this way, she pays homage for her undying love towards George, her former husband. Mama Day sacrifices George to bring Cocoa to life again and hopes that the matriarchal order would continue in Willow Spring, "... The greatest Miranda is staring past her dried herbs, past the birth of Hope and Grace, past the mother who ended her life in The Sound, on to the Mother who began the Days" (*Mama Day* 262). "She smells the bloods from the broken hearts of men who they cursed for not letting them go" (*Mama Day* 263). In such textual depictions Naylor has used the technique of magic realism. The positive attitude of the Black traditions in *Mama Day* is attunement with God as 'natural healers' and their negative attitude as 'black magical practitioners of Hoodoo' is inspired from the imaginary land that is Willow Springs. In this land magical realism and mystical practices co-exist. Jane Elizabeth Dougherty, in an essay for *Novels for Students* states, "Willow Springs truly does have its "own laws and codes of behavior," honoring no "main side" laws, and maintaining a sense that the dead remain with the living and that the living must honor the connections with the dead and among themselves.

*Mama Day* displays that women are strong enough to retain the culture intrinsic in their life patterns. The endeavors of Day family to instruct the descendents of their family affirm their generational oneness with their matriarch ancestor Sapphira Wade. Their belief is to continue matriarchal lineage so that their future generation must thrive. Larry R. Andrews in her essay "Black Sisterhood in Naylor's Fiction" affirms the life connections between Ophelia as the power inherited by her from Mirinda by the knowledge of her foremothers (Andrews 301).

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## ANITA DESAI'S *THE ZIGZAG WAY*: THE TEXT-INTERTEXT RHIZOME

Chetna Gupta

.... with its wheels within wheels, rhythms and counterpoints, this shape is partly to be admired for its own sake.

— Robert Scholes

*The Zigzag Way* (2004) marks a significant departure from Desai's earlier works. The title itself reflects a typical postmodernist typology of construction and coinage, a purely innovative expression directly related to the very narrative matrix of the novel. The author coins the title *The Zigzag Way* as her revelation about "a sense of pleasure in form", as a "characteristic of fabulation" (Scholes 2). Consequently, the lives, actions, choices and preferences of the chief personages in the novel bear close proximity to this innovative title, especially the manner in which the mind-sets of the chief protagonist operate. The words "The Zigzag Way" in the title become a diagnostic, linguistic paradigm reflecting the crux of the novel's narrative, characterization and overall theme. Unlike the earlier novels of Desai, the feminist stance in this work does not concentrate upon one single female figure, but gets sequestered among these female characters appearing in three different parts of the novel. As an innovative departure from the preceding works of the author, the epicentric protagonistic situation, instead, devolves upon Eric Jennings, a Mexican and a miner by profession, who has settled in England. It is Eric who also functions as a narrator in all the four parts of the novel and functions as a cohesive and cohering entity because of one's obsessive concern which he entertains in his mind, which is to unravel the previous history of his family ancestors who lived and died in Mexico. Eric's narrative also becomes dyschronic as he in flashback reveals to the reader his association, during his college days, with Emily, also known as Em, who eventually disappears from the scene and ostensibly deserts Eric in favour of some other guy. The retrospective rewinding of the narrative on the part of Eric takes place on the second part.

Interestingly enough, Anita Desai diffuses the feminine identity in the novel in the form of four different female personages, all of whom are somehow related to Eric. Out of these women characters, it is Eric's dead grandmother, Betty Jennings, who dominates the narrative à la the ghost of Hamlet's father in Shakespeare's famous tragedy *Hamlet*. Thus, Betty Jennings, in absentia, functions as a directing and motivating character whose awe-inspiring aura functions as a big shadow looming over the minds of the central characters who fully participate in the novel's action. Eric regularly visits the grave of his dead grandmother, Betty Jennings, whose spirit comes out and in a dream sequence tells her grandson about the family past of the Jennings, especially Eric's grandfather and his own father and mother.

The narrative in *The Zigzag Way* is divided into four parts, each one having Eric as the fulcrum, the nucleus around whom all the essential details of the situation are narrated. Eric Jennings is a typical postmodernist hero who connects his curiosity with a tendency in postmodernism "with a pervasive nostalgia" (Waugh 191). It is the nostalgia which produces "the desire to fragment, the impossible yearning for the lost object of desire..." (192). Because of these very issues, Eric in a typical esoteric fashion learns from his dead grandmother, buried in Mexico city, about his own parents and some other important events connected with the family past.

It is quite obvious that the narrative in *The Zigzag Way*, emanating from within the consciousness of Eric, verges on the borders of fantasy, reverie and dream. Consequently, Eric narrative qualifies as a lucid fantasy as it "presents the persuasive establishment and development of impossibility, an arbitrary construct of the mind with all under the control of logic and rhetoric (Attebery 1). Eric's overwhelming and irresistible urge to unravel the mysteries and hitherto become possible only when Eric succeeds in holding a revelatory communion with Betty Jennings. The very fact of Betty Jennings coming from beyond the grave to grant hidden knowledge to her grandson puts the role-playing nucleus in the narrative as an intrinsic component and pattern of supernatural fictional experience. Eric's productive rendezvous with his dead grandmother automati-

cally qualifies as an ontology of the new or a “politics of innovation, death enters the very languages by which we try to understand change” (Hassan, *The Culture of Postmodernism* 4). The Eric-Betty Jennings family combination constitutes in the novel a double—edged syntagm, a typical postmodernist literary renovation-cum-innovation. Betty Jennings also serves as an anchor-person in the fictional present of the novel having all along a close rapport with her grandson, Eric. Unlike the earlier novels, *The Zigzag Way* does not portray the patriarchal domination of a woman, vis-a-vis the Indian society and culture, but as a complete turn around. No longer do we witness weak, helpless, *ironic* females helplessly caught in the web of marital disharmony and male domination. Contrary to this, Desai portrays women as innovative, experimenting females, virtual Metafictional Female Adam paying back their male counterparts in their own coin.

As a dyschronic fiction, *The zigzag Way* abjures conventional novelistic requirements of plot, characterization and imagery. Instead, all the three parts of the novel fuse into one narrative rhizome which confirms to “Intention and fulfillment, a dream and fact” (Hassan, “The Pattern of Fictional Experience” 328). Eric’s Mexican city pilgrimage of personal revelation horrifies as a chaotic, disorderly gratuitous action, a kind of demonic intrusion with obsessive motives. Eric’s picaresque foray from England to Mexico also brings him to Dona Vera, a grand dame surrounded by acolytes and snappy pug dogs:

... Dona Vera is connected - through marriage - to a prominent family whose share in the mining industry is well known but it is the first time, as far as we know, that she has spoken of it in public. (Desai, *The Zigzag Way* 35)

Eric learns from Dona Vera that the workers working deep down among the intricate tunnels and pathways of the minds have the wounds of their minds as zigzag symbols. In Dona Vera’s library Eric learns from the books and gains a kind of mystical experience which transport him into the realms of fantasy. At the grave of his dead grandmother Betty Jennings, Eric has spiritual rendezvous besides experiencing the uncanny or the marvelous. He is a man

like us, inhabiting a real world, but it is his mind’s insatiable thirst which takes him to Mexico, thereby “suddenly confronted by the inexplicable” (Todorov 26).

The two archetypal females in *The Zigzag Way*, Betty Jennings and Dona Vera, symbolize in themselves as the two extreme polarities of an existential encounter that Eric experiences. No wonder the eerie, bizarre, fantastic gets embellished with intrusions of pure fantasy. The personage of Betty Jennings becomes awesome and totally dominates the climactic scene in the narrative. It happens when this dead grand dame reveals certain illuminating facts to Eric about his parents. Herself floating in the weightless void of metaphysics, Betty Jennings assumes a role of a Oracle as she informs Eric about everything he wanted to know vis-a-vis his family past.

Eric’s uncanny and nearly bizarre, psychoanalytical experience in Mexico percolates his consciousness and his mind with the real and the living as well as with the supernatural and the life-hereafter. Coming from beyond the grave to commune with Eric the language of Betty Jennings metaphorically becomes the language of silence as she does not materialize physically but all along dominates Eric’s consciousness vis-a-vis his family-past. The ‘silence’ of Betty Jennings turns Eric’s “consciousness upon itself, altering the modes of its awareness...” (Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* 13). Whatever Eric learns from his grandmother confirms the fact that his forefathers lived a tapestry of zigzag, chequered existential ways and lives, a sort of mystical labyrinths. The human and the mineral world of apocalyptic and demonic imagery commingle herein the form of problematic tunnels and dungeons. The Eric-Betty combination of the grandson and the grandmother in terms of archetypal criticism comes to the reader as the hybridized admixture of the society, “Held together by the molecular tension of the egos” (Frye 147). Such a formulation is displayed by Eric’s loyalty to his grandmother, Betty Jennings, who, throughout the novel’s narrative, remains the supernatural titan, dwarfing Eric’s own individuality.

Cumulatively, the identities of Eric Jennings and his grand-

mother Betty Jennings symbolize a comprehension of human life in which fulfilment is both individual as well as social. Eric and Betty in themselves fuse the picaresque and the spiritual worlds in contemporary apocalyptic symbolism. The same fact can be defined as “The Turning of literal act into play” (147). Fact gets released into imagination and the guiding spirit of the novelistic text circumambulates a sense of extreme dread:

But now that he was following the trail of his own history, tunneling his way back into his ancestry, and the history of his ancestors, he felt for the first time the urgency - and the terror - of knowing. An urgency, and a terror, he could have shared at last with Em. (*The Zigzag Way* 97)

After Betty Jennings, the grand dame Dona Vera occupies the second spot in the novel's thematic importance. Though Betty Jennings dominates the living and the dead in Eric's family, all things related to the grand dame Dona Vera get lucidly narrated and deliberately magnified as symbolic hyperboles. Dona Vera flaunts an abnormal appearance. Eric watches her attired impressively in Kimono, that conceals different layers of non-grey flannel. Such a dress signifies an abnormal personality that stamps upon the minds of the viewers a permanent awesome-cum-exotic-cum-romantic effect. In this context, we are reminded of Rider Haggards' immortal heroine She, who, as an immortal feminine personality, plays the role of the central protagonist with finesse. The identity of woman in *She* and that of Betty Jennings and Dona Vera in *The Zigzag Way* project the female identity as intensely self-reflexive. The kind of brilliant and penetrative portraiture that we witness in the case of She is again reflected by the manner in which Anita Desai diffuses the female self in *The Zigzag Way*.

Another manifestation of female authenticity, cast in the mould of postmodernist deculture, is given in the narrative through the character of Emily, also known as Em. Emily is a personification of the decreptive female self an erstwhile friend of Eric. Emily has been his ex-girl friend during their college days but later on she deserts him to 'grave' on 'greener pastures'. Emily, too, possesses an inquisitive and researching mind, and that is what takes her to

Mexico and she succeeds in making Eric accompanying her. Eric also willingly gives company to Emily with the catalytic confidence that Mexico would yield some additional impetus and energy and a soaring self-confidence. The Eric-Emily gender equation unfortunately gets lopsided as the woman displays a high modicum of self-reflexive feminine aggression. Emily has well planned agenda to execute Mexico, and her interests clash with those of Eric. The choices and preferences of Eric-Emily become totally discordant and incompatible, as the scenes and sights are of no interest to Em. These only attract Eric. The following lines clearly describe and reflect the fractured compatibility that could have been the soul of their joint experience; in these lines the author demonstrates the Eric-Emily initial Camaraderie as well as the fractured disinterestedness of their joint experience is also reflected:

Outside, he was faced with light that struck more whitely, electrically than he had ever seen on to a spectrum of colour unknown in Boston, Massachusetts—flat-roofed houses with pink and orange and violet walls, pea-green taxis and leaf-green buses. When they reached the hotel where the tranquilizing effect of plashing water in marble fountains was cancelled by the shrieking of birds of bright plumage in tall cages, he had to he down, he felt the blood racing in his veins too fast. Ern did not appear concerned. (24)

It becomes quite obvious that the Emily-Eric combination is not just mutually antithetical; as a matter of fact, even their individual identities evolve in totally diverse directions, as do their minds and psyches. One of the basic causes of this discordance between the two could be the 'Otherness' of Eric's family. It is his 'Otherness' that befuddles and baffles Emily, perhaps aggravated by the fact that Eric comes from fishermen stock:

Em, who came from a solid phalanx of doctors, dentists, optometrists and surgeons in Philadelphia and its environs, so that his own choice of a medical profession seemed not only logical but inevitable, never could find such a link between the Eric she knew and his family which war effectively, his mother's side of it. (15)

Instead of getting involved in the vicissitudes of his research work, Eric gets more attracted toward the enjoyment of creative music. He also has his private quest, viz. to trace his family's history in the ghost town of Sierra Madre. Consequently, the narrative leap-frogs to furnish the spectacle of Eric's family ancestors and their community. It is in this context that the reader is made to come face to face with Dona Vera, the queen Of the Sierra. This grand dame displays respectful awe regarding any reference to the past history. Dona Vera propels the purpose of tourist interest as the 'Living-culture':

It is a living cult-ure, you see. I have guests in my hacienda that can prove to you its exis-tence. Their way of life ex-ists. That is my purpose, Seior, to keep it a-live. Post-Columbian Mex-ico. (57)

Eric learns that Dona Vera is the Austrian wife of a mining baron whose family usurped the land of the miners and made them slaves. Eric feels encouraged to tell Dona Vera about his own private quest:

You see, my grandfather came out to Mexico to work for a mining company. He was Cornish, from a mining family and you see, the mines in Cornwall failed. ... because I recognised the name you mentioned in your lecture in Medico city, the one I attended, I told you I attended. That's when I heard that you run this centre for studies of this area, so I thought I'd come here to see what I could find out. I heard your family too had a connection to the mines. (55)

Dona Vera becomes personification of the Postmodernist feminism, for she entertains radically altered ways and notions about contemporary culture, understood as well as experienced. Both Emily and Dona Vera become individualistic females with aggressive identities imbued with a firm sense of authority and awareness. Interestingly, Dona Vera opines that Eric has been misguided and misinformed about her relationship with the miners and her own contribution to their welfare. Eventually, she explodes in vehement protest:

The word exploded with a clay of thunder... Eric, hiding his own hands between his knees, wondered if he should flee but

she continued imperviously. 'If it is mines you are interested in, then it is not to me you should come. (56)

The effective 'Otherness' of Dona Vera and Emily makes these women possess feminine mystique, further embellished by Dona Vera's gravitating interest in artists, intellectuals and other creative personalities. Language becomes a feminine metaphor to connote an exceptional female identity, especially in the person of Dona Vera. As focused personages, both Emily and Dona Vera get enlightened by the very essence of modernity. Both of them have well discernible objectives in their minds. Eric's obsessive fascination and engagement with his ancestral past keeps him constantly interacting with Dona Vera and her life, her childhood memories.

The infusion of the supernatural into *The Zigzag Way* is meant to make it a stylistic-cum-thematic palimpsest. Even Eric's dead grandmother, Betty Jennings, becomes an enigma of literary change, a supernatural and bizarre episteme. She becomes the extraordinary signifier, the idiolect of human indeterminacy. It can even be said that the Betty Jennings-Eric combination becomes an infallible specimen of the brilliant juxtaposition of the supernatural and the pastoral iridescences. Eric's climactic meeting with the grandmother Betty Jennings in the graveyard gets encapsulated with what can be termed as universal edifice of subjectivity. Eric sees Betty among the tombs in the graveyard as a young lady who, phoenix-like, seems to have arisen from her grave, assumingly her youthful visage as a young lady. The dialogue Eric holds with his grandmother, Betty Jennings, symbolizes a highly self-reflexive portraiture of a powerful and dominating dead woman's ghost from her youth.

Interestingly enough, Betty mistakes Eric as Paul (Eric's father), her son, and even when Eric points out the mistake Betty goes on talking about Paul. Appearing the garb of her youthful days, Betty looks akin to a blooming, fragrant and exotic flower. The young Betty is seen by Eric "holding a small branch of grey leaves and pale flowers and to his amazement waved to him"(175). As a typical postmodern text, *The Zigzag Way* poses a question: which world is this? The language in which Betty speaks to her grandson Eric may have a feminist slant to it, yet as the language of 'silence'

Betty's communication expresses as well as opposes, educates and manipulates. An itinerant paradox fills the Betty-Eric encounter. Even in her spooky, supernatural form, Betty Jennings asserts her freedom as a free woman, narrating her story according to her own desire, her gender and above all her own perceptions of freedom.

Betty Jennings and Dona Vera, the two most powerful feminine personages in *The Zigzag Way* (one dead and the other living) constitute along with Emily the pyramid of the feminist self. The postmodernist stratagem of detotalized-totalization is applied by Desai in this novel as an instrument of innovation and renovation, creation and re-creation, and something fully represented by the roles of characters like Eric, Betty Jennings and Dona Vera. But it is in the abnormal happenings and events connected with the participation of Betty Jennings who comes from beyond the living world to hold a supernatural dialogue with her grandson. Betty's conversation with Eric aptly represents "the languages of the self" (Waugh 208). Besides this, the narrative climax, which represents the Betty Jennings Eric combination, comes as a thematic-cum-structural juxtaposition with the dead self of Betty "as a cognitive principle in the anonymous flow of speech, displaying continually the present..." (Hassan, *The Culture of Postmodernism* 4). Finally, it can be said that *The Zigzag Way* presents to the reader a pattern of fiction which is neither tragic nor comic. Eric, the hero, becomes "a child of ironies, a mediator of polar claims" (4).

Desai handling of the narrative further heightens the novelistic pattern of presentation, and "diffuses insight and fractures the whole truth" (Hassan, "The Pattern of Fictional Experience" 330). Eric's Mexican jaunt in true picaresque style provides him the freedom of action, yet, as an anticlimax, *The Zigzag way* eventually qualifies as "a parody of man's quest for fulfillment" (330).

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## THE BLENDING OF COMPASSION AND SATIRE IN NAIPAUL'S *THE MIDDLE PASSAGE* : A REINTERPRETATION

Santosh Kumar Singh

The book records his impressions of colonial society in the West Indies and South America. Naipaul unfolds the picture with irony and pity in this book.

— Vasant S. Patel, *V.S. Naipaul's India* 26-7.

The writings of Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul are charged with a feeling of rootlessness or insecurity which he has expressed in a satiric or sardonic manner. He displays his distaste not only for the traditional Hindu way of life followed by his ancestors but also for the slave society of Trinidad which remained under British rule till 1962. Like Marco Polo, Defoe, Hakluyt, Amerigo, Vespucci and many other European sailors and sojourners, he seeks delight in travelling and writing accounts of it, often with a touch of satire. He has travelled across the Caribbean islands, India, Iran, Pakistan, Africa, America, Argentina, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Deep South of America and showed grave concern and sympathy for the innocent sufferers there. However, disillusioned with his birth in the slave society and racial bias, and lack of his knowledge about England, he turned to taciturnity and could not bear with the life of a rootless individual craving for identity and recognition. Even in London he lived in bed-sitters, felt lonely and uncomfortable and wrote:

All mythical lands faded, and in the big city, I was confined to a smaller world than I had ever known. I became my flat, my desk, my name. (*The Times Literary Supplement* 1)

In *The Middle Passage*, Naipaul writes about his impressions of five societies— Trinidad, British Guiana, Surinam, Martinique and Jamaica. His comments are of enduring values, and the originality of his insights has made the book the centre of considerable controversy. Critics have put this travel-book in the category of those written by Lawrence, Greene and Pritchett on Italy, West Africa and Spain respectively. According to Vasant S. Patel, "*The Middle Pas-*

*sage* reveals the disillusioned analysis of the islands that went into Naipaul's early stories and novels" (*V. S Naipaul's India* 71). Naipaul chose to write novels usually about the Hindu community of Trinidad because he knew it more intimately than he did the English community of London. Apropos of this he remarks:

And I feel I know so little about England. I have met many people but I know them only in official attitudes – the drink, the interview, the meal. I have a few friends. But this gives me only a superficial knowledge of the country, and in order to write fiction it is necessary to know so much: we are not all brothers under the skin. ...I can never hope to know as much about people here as I do about Trinidad Indians, people I can place almost as soon as I see them. (*The Times Literary Supplement* 1)

Naipaul observes with compassion that the Trinidadian society is so far unformed. Ambitions of people are not uniform. The island is in a miserable condition in every domain of life. The class structure is so fluid that it is almost non-existent. There is a vague urge for responsibility. He points out:

Trinidad ... is a simple, colonial, philistine society. Education is desirable because it may lead to security, but any unnecessary acquaintance with books is frowned upon. The writer or the painter, unless he wins recognition overseas preferably in England, is mercilessly ridiculed. This is only slowly changing. Respectability and class still mean very little. Money means a good deal more, and the only non-financial achievements, which are recognized are those connected with sport and music, for these reasons Trinidadians are more recognizably 'characters' than people in England. (1)

Between the Indians and the blacks too there exists an antipathy. The blacks have a deep contempt for all that is not white, their values being those of imperialism at its worst. The Indians despise the blacks for not being Indian. Such a society understandably has no inner values. It merely copies its way of life from the Western consumer society, "B" films, and cheap American magazines. Dazzled by the glamour of luxuries, it admires only "success" of

those who make money and those who are good cricketers. It assumes that every person of eminence is crooked. Those in politics speak of nation and nationalism, but no one is willing to surrender the privileges or even the separateness of the group. Trinidadians are generally ordinary people with no special traits, nor do they attempt to be someone in particular. He writes:

Only a man's eccentricities can get him attention. It might also be that in a society without traditions, without patterns, every man finds it easier "to be himself". Whatever the reason, this determination of people to be themselves, to cherish their eccentricities, to reveal themselves at once, makes them easy material for the writer. (1)

Naipaul observes that in the West Indian islands, slavery has created only grossness. Men are drinking too much. It is a society without standards and noble aspirations. It is nurtured by greed and cruelty. He claims that the middle-class Indian has rejected his race. To Naipaul, the region seems to be in danger of 'protest' leaders who are stirring up hatred and ill-will and ignoring the real problems of the new nations in a state of poverty and racial appeals. Naipaul's literary involvement is apparently with the Indian community, but his intellectual bent too is toward Western mode of thought. His own problem, as well as that of an Indian torn between Indian and Western metropolitan values, is mirrored in the neurosis which he so vividly portrays in the travel book as gripping the society in Trinidad — a society frantically trying to identify itself with the consumer societies of England and America and to play down its provincialism.

Naipaul recalls his encounter with an old Indian living in squalor in a remote Negro village, Coronie, in Surinam. He depicts his plight in a bit sarcastic manner with a view to making him conscious of his rights in a civilized world. However, his helplessness is worth noticing:

A derelict man in a derelict land; a man discovering himself, with surprise and resignation, lost in a landscape which had never ceased to be unreal because of the sense of an enforced and always temporary residence; the slaves kidnapped

from one continent and abandoned on the unprofitable plantations of another, from which there could never more be escape. I was glad to leave Coronie, for... it held the full desolation that came to those who made the middle passage. (*The Middle Passage* 189-90)

Naipaul displays grand critical evaluation of men, manners, objects and developments of the West Indies. He examines both sarcastically and compassionately the European explorations and colonial exploitations of the West Indies, the destruction of the American society and the bringing together of peoples from three continents. *The Middle Passage* registers his apparently brilliant observations as they hold the key to an explanation of the central theme of such novels as are marked by "...humour and humanity, irony and even satire, the mingling of realism and fantasy, the adroit manipulation of the serious and absurd and the capacity of uncanny observation" (Permanand Kumar, *The Glory and the Good* 267). Naipaul holds that achievements and creations contribute to the building of history and on this front West Indies is lagging behind the colonizers' countries. He observes: "History is built around achievement and creation; and nothing was created in the West Indies" (*The Middle Passage* 29).

Naipaul attempts to depict the plight of the Negroes and East Indians and finds that tourism is a new kind of slavery which continues to degrade the populace, keeping it a materialistic immigrant society without substance. For him, the West Indian society is valueless and chaotic. The process of the transfer of population from ancestral lands to an alien one has proved most futile because it has not enriched the land or the people. On the other hand, it has emasculated old cultural values and precluded the creation of anything local to substitute them. The West Indies lacks noble aspects or natural graces of life. Real people with peculiar quality or identity of their own do not exist there. He calls these societies "manufactured societies, labour camps, creations of empire" (V. S. Naipaul, "Power to the Caribbean People" 32-3).

Naipaul points out that Christianity has done the greatest damage to the Negroes; it has deprived them of their social values by

glorifying the ideals of white civilization which is not really a civilization as it is in Europe, but is a sort of behaviour practised and upheld by the lower-class white people recently risen to eminence by accumulating wealth. But the Indians, who initially worked as indentured labourers in the West Indies and who form about half of the population, are still peasants mentally. They are spiritually static, reduced to rites without philosophy and set in a materialistic, colonial society. Evidently the colonial society of the West Indies is built on slavery, exploitation, and the crassest of materialism, with no political or cultural identity. David Ormerod aptly states:

Against this indistinct and dissolving background, the characters try to seize upon something to give permanence and to arrest flux. ("In a Derelict Land: The Novels of V. S. Naipaul" 163-64)

The name 'Middle Passage' is symbolic of that original journey which was the beginning of a slavery and which Naipaul sees existing in spirit. It is also symbolic of the West Indies today in the transitional middle stage between the culture which her people lost and the new sense of the cultural identity which they have not yet gained. Like Thomas Mann's Isaraelites, they are seen to be in a transitional land, pitching their tents between the houses of their fathers and the real Egypt, unanchored souls wavering in spirit and without a secret doctrine. They are like the Britons under Roman rule, a feature of enslavement. On the one hand, Naipaul notices with compassion what was destroyed in the West Indies; on the other he ridicules the East Indian who joins the West Indian in his quest for whiteness. At the same time he holds in contempt even the carnival which is a symbol of the oneness of the West Indians of all races. He looks upon the West Indies as a rubbish heap, but fails to understand why people are attuned to the rubbish heap. Such an understanding requires not brutality and subtlety, which he points out as the special gifts of the satirist, but the entirely different talents of tenderness and sympathy. Naipaul prefers the Christ-like compassionate vision of a Chekhov or a Dickens to the sardonic vision of a Swift or a Pope. He is a satirist of a subtle sort. Here it is pertinent to quote George Lamming's remarks about his first

three novels:

His books can't move beyond a castrated satire; and although satire may be a useful element in fiction, no important work comparable to Selvon's can rest safely on satire alone. When such a writer is a colonial, ashamed of his cultural background and striving like mad to prove himself through promotion to the peaks of a 'superior' culture whose values are gravely in doubts, then satire, like the charge of philistinism, is for me nothing more than a refuge for a writer who wishes to be taken seriously. (*The Pleasures of Exile* 12)

Naipaul writes about the expatriate's search for identity in an alien environment. However, he feels that a West Indian novelist's situation is very precarious, and hence he affirms:

Living in a borrowed culture, the West Indian more than most, needs writers to tell him who he is and where he stands. (*The Middle Passage* 73)

Arunodaya Mukherjee comments on the state of Naipaul under such circumstances:

Naipaul's fate was similar to that of other expatriate European writers like Hemingway, Pound and, of course, Conrad all of whom had left their provincial town and settled in some metropolis of their choice. ("V. S. Naipaul's Craftsmanship" 181)

Apparently, Naipaul is disgusted at the sorry sight of an expatriate writer. In the later half of the twentieth century he observed that books about racial discrimination were very popular as they gave a certain sadistic pleasure to their readers by candidly dramatizing the conflict between the oppressors and the oppressed. But for an Indian from an easygoing, multi-racial society, it was impossible to write about racial oppression. Nevertheless, he believed and asserted:

Improvement begins with the recognition of difference; it begins with the direct vision and the compassion of a Chekhov or a Dickens.... To create the classless society, you do not deny class differences. (V. S. Naipaul, "What's Wrong with Being a Snob" 18)

Naipaul preferred to follow Dickens in matters of employing satire because Dickens' novels of social criticism have a heartfelt compassion and a rare candour. A casual satirist in his early novels, Dickens, in his later novels, suggests a way out of the morass. In a similar manner, Naipaul's novels seem to be progressing along the same path. He seems to be nearing towards the writers of personal vision like D. H. Lawrence, Graham Greene, Steinbeck, Evelyn Waugh and others. Naipaul's stance, in the end, appears to be that of the traditional satirist. This, in spite of his insistence, shows that he is an ironist rather than a satirist. His argument is that satire requires "a tremendous impulse of optimism" which he does not feel. But a satirist like Jonathan Swift need not be optimistic. He maintains that irony is an effective weapon in the hands of a satirist. He really has no hope of improving the society by holding up its shortcomings to ridicule. But the impact of his works is the same as that of the works of Dryden, Pope and Swift.

Naipaul believes that satire should be employed with a feeling of compassion and not with bitterness. He has often disapproved of the notion that he should be called as a satirist:

I am not a satirist. Satire comes out of tremendous optimism. One simply does not indulge in satire while one is awaiting death.. Satire is a type of anger; irony and comedy, I think, come out of a sense of acceptance. ("An Interview with Derek Walcott" 5)

In one of his later essays, Naipaul expresses his desire to write a true satire which requires Christ-like vision:

True satire grows out of the largest vision... that all-embracing Christ-like vision. ... today sights are set lower, satire is compounded of anger, which exalts what they seek to diminish. ("The Documentary Hersey" 108)

Even in *The Mimic Men*, we come across a significant comment from Naipaul:

I wish to avoid satire. ... it is that his situation satirises itself, turns satire inside out, takes satire to a point where it touches pathos if not tragedy. (*The Mimic Men* 208-9)

Naipaul's work aims at social comment and criticism. He views

the act of literary creation as being deeply involved with the desire to furnish a critique of social phenomenon. In his view,

The novelist works towards conclusions of which he is often unaware; and it is better that he should. To analyze and decide before writing would rob the writer of the excitement which supports him during his solitude, and would be the opposite of my method as a novelist. I also felt it as a danger that, having factually analysed the society as far as I was able, I would be unable afterwards to think of it in terms of fiction and that in anything that I might write, I would be concerned only to prove a point. (*The Middle Passage* 5)

Little wonder Naipaul employs mild satire to expose the idiosyncracies of the colonized people, but he does not deem it fit always to take help of satire or irony to serve his purpose. He believes that Irony exposes the difference between appearance and reality in human affairs, while satire ridicules the foibles and follies of people with a view to reforming them in accordance with an obvious or implied social norm:

The insecure wish to be heroically portrayed, irony and satire, which might help more, are not acceptable.... The Trinidadian expects his novels, like his advertisements, to have a detergent purpose. (69)

Apparently, Naipaul runs away from the sordid reality of West Indian experience by taking refuge in satiric laughter based on his assumption of the superiority of English culture over the West Indian culture. Lamming can see little rise in a society whose history is one of underprivilege. Naipaul's satiric approach is a combination of subtlety and brutality. He is in favour of "a little blows every now and then." What makes the brutality bearable, and desirable, is precisely that it seems to be that of a real and suffering person "with real problems and responsibilities and affections", and has nothing of the partisan about it. If he satirises the futility of the West Indian in most of his novels and travel books, he also satirises the pettiness and drabness of English life. However, he realizes:

It is not easy to write about the West Indian middle class. The most exquisite gifts of irony and perhaps malice would

be required to keep the characters from slipping into an unremarkable mid-Atlantic whiteness. They would have to be treated as real people with real problems and responsibilities and affections — and this has been done but they would also have to be treated as people whose lives have been corrupted by a fantasy.... Whether an honest exploration of this class will ever be attempted is doubtful. The gifts required of subtlety and brutality, can grow only out of a mature literature; and there can be advance towards this only when writers cease to think about letting down their sides. (69)

In his satiric presentation of characters, therefore, Naipaul really allows himself to show a sympathetic understanding of their weaknesses. He sets his characters at a distance and invites a detached response from the reader. The cold detachment with which he presents human foibles is a measure of the brutality of his wit and at times makes the reading of his work like a clinical exercise. Yet he has the ability to convey sympathy while being satiric.

Whether set in the West Indies or Trinidad or England, Naipaul's novels are satiric demonstrations of individual and social limitations. The social condition that he represents in this novel is shoddy and limiting. It offers little more than an absurd or ridiculous existence of people. Time and again, Naipaul seems frustrated with the functioning of the power-hungry people as well as with the ambitions of the innocent societies. But ultimately he comes to realize that success is the reward of trickery, vulgar materialism, self-delusion or the values of the colonial 'monkey-game'. For the individual, rebellion or non-acquiescence proves a largely futile exercise. He is far from seeing through the wicked tricks of those in power. As an expatriate writer, he is aware of his limitations. As such he employs satire blended with compassion to avoid any kind of controversy.

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## JAYASHANKAR PRASAD'S THEORY OF POETRY AND ART

K. K. Sharma

Though a many-faceted literary genius — a poet, a dramatist, a fictionist and a critic all rolled in one, Prasad was certainly not as versatile an artist as Rabindranath Tagore, for he was not a painter, a musician or a sculptor at all like his illustrious contemporary. But by virtue of his unique insight, he could comprehend and interpret the essence of every art form and the main plank of art as a whole. Obviously, it is not surprising that he could write a perceptive and brilliant critical essay on poetry and art entitled “Kavya aur Kala” (“Poetry and Art”). He places ‘Poetry’ before ‘Art’ in the title of his critical piece because he completely disagrees with the Western view of placing poetry under music or below any other art form, and demonstrates convincingly, with the help of age-old Indian thinking on this subject, that poetry is not subservient to, or part of, any form of art. The present article is an attempt to analyse and assess dispassionately Prasad's cogitations on poetry and art which are doubtless relevant to any discussion of art and poetry in any age in any country.

Prasad begins the discussion on poetry and art with the remark that the contemporary outlook on literary criticism in Hindi appears to be undergoing a drastic change, for the ancient Indian literary critics were working in a world somewhat different from that of the modern Indian critics. Prasad states that the all-pervasive, dominant influence of the Western style of analysis on his contemporaries' knowledge-related experiences is quite perceptible, though at the same time in these critical interpretations there is also clearly visible the insistence and emphasis on Indianness as a reaction. The result is that owing to this mixed attitude, our own thinking in this regard, according to Prasad, has plunged into the mire of chaos. Apparently, the first thing to be considered in the discussion of poetry now is the classification of it, and for that, perhaps following the celebrated German thinker Hegel, poetry is placed and classified

under art. This approach to poetry is the development of that conventional interpretative German philosophical style which came into being as a result of the constant impact of the Greek thought and perception of beauty on the West. Prasad thinks that before examining this issue, what is necessary is to see whether or not there is any definite Indian original source of this particular kind of perception of beauty.

Prasad admits that knowledge and perception of beauty are universal phenomena, the centres of which have varied entities in accordance with region, period, conditions and culture in particular. Like the astronomical light-centres, there might be interrelationship between them for the purpose of splendour just as the same light takes/assumes different entities in the brightness of the Venus and in the blueness of the Saturn for acquiring the awareness and perception of beauty.

Prasad points out that the continuous consideration of beauty under certain Geographical conditions for a long period of time creates a special type of taste, and that very taste becomes the measure of the perception of beauty, and this shapes our racial thoughts and community feelings, making them significant and dear to us. Importantly, this enables us to show our way of living and collective expression in a particular culture. However, this culture is not opposed to the belief in the importance of the world as a unit (cultural, or otherwise), for it is always used to impart excellence and development to the restricted mental states and feelings in the early stage of religion in the society. In regions without temples, churches and mosques, culture, after well-establishing itself, creates an outward existence of the perception of beauty. Prasad opines that culture has an inborn relationship with collective consciousness, mental decency and feelings. The amazing influence of this is clearly visible on religions. Little wonder the Irani Khalifas' inherent love for knowledge and beauty was on account of their innate culture, which popularized the monotheism of the desert by embellishing it with a sense of beauty and spread it upto Spain and Egypt. As a result, the modern European perception of beauty could not remain untouched and uninfluenced by it. Thus, culture is the outcome of the

people's inborn, incessant desire to develop the perception of beauty.

Naturally, Prasad opines that in the discussion of literature, it is relevant, rather essential, to investigate Indian culture in relation to perception of beauty. He cites a very interesting instance of the difference of taste regarding the perception of beauty: while drinking liquor, the Mughal Emperor Jehangir ordered to thrash a Kabbal (a singer of kabbali — a form of poetic recitation in accompaniment with instrumental music) for singing the great medieval poet Amir Khusro's stanza expressing the complaint of a woman against her faithless husband/lover, for the King misunderstood it to be against woman, and not man. Jehangir's indignation could cool down only when a learned Muslim (Maulana) explained him the true meaning of the composition, stating that Amir Khusro, being an Indian poet, wrote it in consonance with Indian cultural taste and attitude. Thus, Prasad maintains that the difference in taste is something essentially related to culture. Also, he points out that in Indian literature the description of man's sorrow of separation in love is somewhat rare or uncommon, while the portrayal of woman's anguish of separation in love can be seen in abundance. The reason of this, according to Prasad, is India's philosophical culture — viz. man is a completely detached and free being, whereas the female principle is an illusion (maya) that tries to wrap him in the veil of attachment and inclination, and hence woman has the inherent attribute of attachment. No wonder the philosophical remark, "neva stri na punanesha na chevayamah napumsakah", implies that in behaviour the Impersonal Ultimate Being (Brahma) is male, while Illusion (Maya) or the Illusory Creative Force is female. As such, woman, because of having inclination, is the manifestation of natural attachment, and is, therefore, presented as a petitioner in Indian philosophy, culture and literature.

Apparently, Indian literature cannot be examined correctly without taking into account the cultural taste of the land of its creation. Prasad, however, urges us to remember the fact that we perceive in Indian culture, as in any other culture of the world, the difference of taste with outward changes occurring automatically with the passage of time. The above-stated concept, Prasad feels, might

have evolved after *Mayavad* — the theory of the illusory nature of all things except the Ultimate Being — gained prominence, for the greatest Sanskrit poet Kalidas has vividly painted Rati's and Aja's sorrows due to their separation from their beloveds, and his inimitable work, *Meghadoot*, is an immortal classic centred upon the intense anguish and suffering of Yaksha on account of his parting with his beloved.

Prasad asserts that there are numerous instances of a large variety of Indian literary tastes predominantly shaped by the changing times. He laments that unfortunately nowadays it has become customary in India to say, without adequately examining, that such and such thing is not Indian or is opposed to Indian taste. He further lashes out at the learned literary critics for their attempts to prove that modern Hindi romanticism (Chhayavad) and mysticism (Rahasyavad) are of foreign origin, and that in modern Hindi poetry the delineation of the imposition of the conscious upon the unconscious has been borrowed from English literature; in a word, whatever new development is taking place in Hindi literature has foreign element in it. Thus, after seeing "God is love" in English, when they come across in Hindi the description of God as incarnation of love, they instantly declare it as translation from English. Prasad avers that they do not know about the famous Vedantic work, *Panchadashi*, which states this very fact, "ayamatama paramanandaha parapremaspadam yatah" (Prasad 21), and that the celebrated Anandavardhana wrote thousands of years before:

bhavanacaetanapapai caetanavacacaenanacaetana vata,

vyavaharyati yathesata sukaviih kavyae svatantrataya I (21)

Likewise, Hindi critics, according to Prasad, are making erroneous statements about the lack of originality in the Riti-works of the preceding age on account of their inadequate study of these works. Then, Prasad is unhappy to see people saying that there is an extremely lamentable neglect and dearth of tragic and realistic literature in India. He rejects these charges stating that these critics close their eyes while reading the two monumental Indian works, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. He opines that these attitudes of Hindi critics are due to our narrow-mindedness and ignorance.

An investigation into Indian poetics brings out the fact that in two ancient Indian cities two different kinds of examinations were held: poetry examination in Ujjain and examination of learning (shastra) in Patna (Patilaputra). In this way, knowledge was divided into two main parts. Poetry was included in knowledge, while arts were considered as inferior knowledge. The discussion of arts in *Kamasutra* indicates that together with music, painting and several kinds of fine arts, improvised versification was also an art-form, though it was meant for recreation and display of skill in argument and was regarded as an ordinary type of skill in literature.

Prasad points out that the Western connotation of the term 'art' is different from the Indian view of it. No wonder there is a striking difference between the cultural taste of the West and that of the East so far as the classification of art is concerned. Prasad holds that because of the prevalent system of education, the Indian thinking is greatly influenced by the West, and thus we are compelled to see our knowledge-related symbols in the Western light. But there is nothing strange about it, for no one can keep oneself untouched by, or aloof from, the thinking of other countries owing to the present-day means of exchange of ideas. This, according to Prasad, should make us return and adhere to our own established cultural taste, since our basic symbols of knowledge are not at all poor and feeble in any sense.

Hindi literary criticism begins with the discussion of art. Following Hegel, the inferiority and superiority of art-forms, according to it, are based on their tangibility/plasticity and intangibility/non-plasticity. Prasad thinks that this kind of division of art-forms is certainly easy, but its historic and scientific analysis is not as easy in relation to Hindi literature as it is in case of Western literature. The West has not only the chronological and systematic history of its aesthetics from Plato to the modern times, but also an undivided, uninterrupted and continuous cultural unity. On the contrary, Hindi literature does not have a continuous unity and harmony; it is interrupted time and again by dark periods in which antithetical cultures emerged and then disappeared, and this has doubtless distorted our aesthetic sensibility and its symbols.

Prasad, however, points to the different views in the West with regard to the classification of art. The ancient Greek philosopher Plato discusses poetry under music, but many modern thinkers consider poetry higher than the intangible music. According to this kind of division of, and attitude to, art, human perception of beauty can be divided into two categories on the basis of proportion and compatibility. The lower type of art is tangible and external, based on material and physical objects and things. In fact, that which is visual or can be seen is called tangible, plastic; architecture, sculpture and painting belong to this class of tangible arts, and have their respective sub-categories according to their varied, minute forms. On the other hand, music and poetry are intangible, non-plastic art-forms. Music is auditory, and poetry, in Prasad's view, is higher form of intangible art than music. Prasad opines that poetry is regarded as intangible because of our disposition and mental attitude based on the traditional belief in its immense importance, otherwise literature as art form can be considered as tangible as it is clearly visual because it is always in the form of alphabet. The Indian work called *Tantra* has elaborately studied the alphabet, and according to it, the ego or the self (aham) symbolizes the entire knowledge from the first letter (vowel) of Devanagari 'a' to the last one 'ha'. Prasad points out that all the perceptions, feelings, realisations and knowledge have their origin in the ego, the soul, and have their existence in the alphabet. As regards the alphabet, the early scripts of several ancient countries make it abundantly clear that it is, as a matter of fact, in the form of a picture. Naturally, Prasad argues that it will be erroneous to say that painting and literature have different entities. Therefore, he rightly infers that the importance of literature as art can not be assessed and established only on the basis of the tangibility and intangibility without indicating and taking into account other subtleties, characteristics and considerations (Prasad 23).

Perhaps Plato, in Prasad's opinion, might have put poetry within or under music owing to the belief in the importance of intangibility, non-plasticity in art. In Plato's view, poetry is a necessity for music. The Greek thinkers regarded the intangible music as something

internal and the tangible object as external, and this became the cornerstone of their attitude to art. Obviously, Prasad argues that this view of art is essentially materialistic and physical without the least tinge of spirituality as it has nothing to do with soul. This is the reason why Plato's disciple Aristotle considers art as imitation. Apparently, the Greeks did not think of the transcendental joy (bliss) embodied in art; they kept it reserved for discussion in pure philosophy only. As Kautilaya attaches all importance to social welfare and utility in Politics, so Plato accepts music and physical exercise as mainly useful knowledge for the health of the individual life; by relating music to heart and mind, and physical exercise to body, man is able to possess useful things for the journey of life.

In the modern age, the classification of art on the basis of the perception of beauty has assumed new dimensions. Importantly, according to its exponent Hegel, religion is higher than art, and philosophy still higher. This stream of thought propounds the theory that man experiences or has the realisation of the existence of God through the perception and comprehension of beauty, and thereafter he acquires the useful power of expressing it in religious precepts (dharmashastra), and then becomes united and one with it through pure philosophical reasoning.

Prasad feels that this can surely be a way of thinking, but the Indian view in this regard is not only different but also strikingly original and unprecedented. He cites from the *Upanishad*—“tadetatah satyamah mamtresau karmanai kavyo yanyapasayamstani tretayamah bahudha samtatani” — to demonstrate how in India since time immemorial the words ‘poet’ and ‘seer’ were regarded as synonyms. It was said, “rishiyam mantradrastara”, i.e. the seers or the poets of the sacred verses (mantras) could perceive, implying thereby that perception was the speciality of the poet. But because of the stupendous literature and sayings existing in the alphabet, poetry can certainly be not considered as purely intangible (amurta). Apropos of the tangible and the intangible, Prasad quotes from *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* : “dvevava brahmanao rupe murta caaivamurta ca matyra camrtyam ca” (Prasad 24). What is meant by it is that both the tangible (material) and the intangible (formless)

are the forms of the Impersonal Ultimate, and all other things are perishable and changeable. In this way, according to Indian thought, despite admitting the physical and material difference between the tangible and the intangible, both are believed to have form and appearance. Obviously, in India the perception of form is unique and different from the common, well-accepted notion of it all over the world. No wonder *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* states:

sa adityah kasimana pratisathita iti caksausaiti kasimannu  
caksauh pratisathaiti-miti rupesavati caksausa hi rupanai  
pasayati kasimannu rupanai pratisathataniti hradaya iti haovaca  
hi rupanai janati hridayae hrae va rupanai pratisathatani I (24)

This means that the sun, the mass of light, is situated in eyes, eyes in form, and the capability of perceiving form is in the heart. This, thus, imposes form on both the tangible and the intangible, for even the air and cosmos (antariksha), which are other than those comprehended through eyes, are imparted form by the heart. Considered from this standpoint, the two views regarding the perception of beauty as tangible and intangible are not of much importance. The fact is, as Prasad concludes determinately, that the perception of beauty cannot be possible unless the object has a form, an appearance. For the realisation of beauty, we feel constrained to create a symbol of our perception or sensitivity in order to give it a shape. Thus, according to Prasad, there is no sense in talking about the perception of intangible beauty.

The clearly visible, gradual and uninterrupted growth of the Greeks' conception of beauty probably paved the way for the Western viewpoint that human nature attains development systematically through its perception of beauty which slowly but steadily passes from the tangible and grossly outward appearance to the inner reality in all its subtleness. The mental endeavour to establish the importance of heaven and hell, and of the purity and significance of reality beyond and above the riddle of the world, is certainly saturated with the Christian religious culture. Consequently, this places the polluted and tangible world in the low category, while the intangible, inner reality and the heaven of pure God in the highest category beyond and above everything else.

The ancient Indian theory of Vedanta, the Impersonal Ultimate (brahmavad) of the *Upanishads* does not regard this tangible world as separate from the Impersonal Ultimate (Brahma) and hence low, vile and crude; as a matter of fact, the Vedanta theory presents the world as the embodiment of the Impersonal Ultimate (Brahma). Apropos of this, Prasad quotes the following two lines from *Mundaka Upanishad*:

brahmam vedamamratam purustatah brahma pasacaddak-  
sainamtasa-caottarena I  
aghasacaodharva ca prasratam brahmam vedam visavamidam  
varisatham II (25)

Then, Prasad states that the *Agamas* also consider *Shakti* (the female principle represented by Nature's power or force) as a part or half of Siva, the Impersonal Ultimate, and this is the true non-duality or monism in Indian philosophy. That is to say, man's body is the force, the principle creating the material world, and perhaps this philosophical view, in Prasad's opinion, is the cornerstone of the famous Indian philosophical idea of *ardhanarishvar* (the concept of Siva as half woman and half man). Perhaps, the urge to achieve the completeness of man's being and authority, according to Prasad, is the mother of the Indian theory of God's incarnation. This is the reason why the eminent Christian critic Hegel, in Prasad's view, made the famous statement: "The Hindu draws no distinction between what is sacred and profane" (25). This, indeed, is the Western philosophy's basic disagreement with the Indian thought. Small wonder the West, despite its apparently heavenly empire, is primarily materialistic, while India is out and out spiritual even in idol worship and all kinds of rituals. This also explains why the Greek-led Western aesthetics attaches all importance to the external, tangible, and tries to make it perfect or complete by confining itself to it. On the other hand, the Indian thought, being intellectual (*gyanatmaka*), rejects or eliminates the difference between the tangible and the intangible so as to forge the unification and oneness of the external and the internal, the exterior and the interior, the outward and the inward.

Prasad emphasizes the fact that according to the Western

thinkers, the distinction between the tangible and the intangible is the focal point of the discussion of the perception of beauty. But as the Western view is centred upon the inalienable relation of aesthetics with the intangible, it, being seized by weakness, is not able to express itself clearly. The cause of this is that the Western thinkers call the symbols of good feeling and knowledge as intangible, formless beauty, and these symbols attain beauty only when they are discussed from the angle of beauty. Inevitably, the Western aestheticians' imagination of good, of soul's welfare, remains unfulfilled.

Prasad rightly avers that the devotion to knowledge is meant to achieve truth, and that self-study is a sacrificial act (*yajya*) of the mind. Hence the old saying, "satyam cha svadhyayapravachane cha" which means that we should discover truth through the skilled exposition of self-study or self-acquired knowledge. In fact, man attains the truth, the real only through self-acquired knowledge and self-introspection, and all our mental activities are meant to attain the truth, which permeates all the natural objects of power and glory usually called transient and changeable. Some people can say that we should not expect truth from a poet, but we can certainly get instinctive sympathy (*sahridayata*) from him. However, truth, as Prasad asserts, is not confined to  $1+1=2$ ; truth is, indeed, vast and imposing, and we can perceive it as all pervasive only through instinctive sympathy. This truth has two attributes, good and beauty (*shreya* and *preya*). Therefore, the expression of truth in Indian literature is in two forms: poetry and books dealing with any kind of knowledge. While books of knowledge investigate and evaluate good authoritatively, secularly and interestingly, poetry is the coordination and synthesis of both good and beauty. Then, works of knowledge are the collection of principles practised in society, and utility is their limit. On the other hand, poetic literature is always engrossed in revealing the ever new secrets of soul's experiences, and soul is believed to be a living entity which can be felt and expressed through the letters or alphabet. Prasad cites the following words of *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* in support of his assertion: "ayamatma vanamayah pranamayah" (26).

After the above discussion, Prasad defines poetry as the soul's perception, its reflective activity (Prasad 26). He, then, explains the natural, basic three activities or powers of the soul: the power of reflection; the power of communicating, through speech or word, what reflection has comprehended or produced; and the lively, mysterious vital power which coordinates their functioning (26). Then, he states that the mind is both definite and ambiguous, and that ambiguity examines the idea or reflection. After arguing for and against, whatever concept is evolved is called the academic activity. But due to examination and analysis, the feelings and reflections, according to Prasad, lose much of their charm and beauty. The academic knowledge, thus acquired, can be called scientific because it is based on evaluative arguments and has consequential development (26).

Prasad holds that poetry as the soul's imaginative perception, its reflective activity has nothing to do with analysis, reasoning or science; it is a stream of creative knowledge which is embedded in Beauty saturated with Good. In other words, poetry as the soul's reflective activity finds expression in the form of letters (alphabet), is untouched by analytical arguments and rational considerations, is doubtless vital, and is permeated with the two basic attributes of Truth — viz. Good and Beauty (26).

Prasad opines that this is the reason why Indian literature has its origin in poetry, which is, indeed, a lovely vision of a seer poet. Prasad explains 'the soul's imaginative perception' as an extraordinary, uncommon state of the soul's reflective power which intuitively and recognises the highest truth, inalienable from good, in its essential beauty. Prasad says that any one might raise the question: what is the evidence that all the reflective perceptions of the mind or the soul are saturated with both good and beauty? It is for this reason that adjectives 'uncommon' and 'extraordinary' are used before the subject, 'soul's imaginative or reflective perception'. This 'uncommon state' pervades all collective experiences through the ages because truth or the highest knowledge is not an individual entity but an eternal consciousness or a perennial stream of vital knowledge, which continues to exist uninterruptedly even when the indi-

vidual local centres are extinct. Prasad holds that when reflected in the mirror of different cultures, it, like the rays of light, makes the vision of life beautiful and resplendent.

Prasad also tells us about useful knowledge, which is essentially different even from ancient Indian Vedic literature. This kind of knowledge of utility is born of the development of reflective thinking through variegated traditional arguments. Different from it, the morning prayer, hymn to destruction, etc. of the Vedic literature are, like most of the verses of the *Upanishads*, the expression of imaginative perceptions. This is what is meant, according to Prasad, by the scriptural expression, "tanme manah siva-samkalpamastu" (27).

Further, Prasad points out that in Indian aesthetics there is a reference to art as inferior kind of knowledge, which seems to mean that it is quite close to science. Its form takes it to definite rules or principles. Perhaps this is the reason why improvised verses written to complete a statement, a problem, etc., being governed by the rules of rhetoric and prosody, are put in the category of art as inferior kind of knowledge. Prasad emphasizes the Indian view that prosody (*chamdsashtra*) is the scientific knowledge of the professional poetic art. From philosophical and scientific points of view, architecture, sculpture and painting are crafts, and though everyone of them has different characteristics of its own, all the three belong to the same category called crafts. Prasad cites two old Indian texts to validate his statement. The first one is from *Mayamatamah*:

bhavanti sailipano loke caturdha sva sva karmabhih I

sathapitah sutragrahi ca vardhakistaksakastatha II (Prasad 27)

Regarding painting, he refers to *Shilparatna*, Chapter 16:

caitrabhasamiti khayatam purvah sailpavisrdeh I (27)

Thus, architecture, sculpture and painting are among the crafts.

Prasad refers to the ancient Indian critic Dandi, who asserts that musical dance (*nratyageet*), etc. are erotic forms of art: "nratyagita-pramutayah kalakamarthasamsaryah" (27), and these are sixty-four in number according to the old Indian treatises on sex and tantra. In *Kavyadarsha*, Dandi stresses that well-accepted theories of aesthetics ought not be ignored. That is to say, if any of these

arts is mentioned or used in poetry, it must be done in accordance with the laws of that art. This evidences that "poetry and art are different from each other, having different entities" (27). Interpreting and commenting on the Bharatanatyama, the learned Abhinavagupta states that it is a form of art in accompaniment with song and music. This is why he says that the singers and musicians are called artists.

The celebrated Indian critic Bhamah, while classifying poetry on the basis of subject-matter, speaks of four kinds of subject-matter, viz., the character of God, production, art and knowledge. What Bhamah means to say, according to Prasad, is that even the treatment of art-related subjects in poetry expands the latter's dimensions and scope. Undoubtedly, art is one of the subjects of poetry. Prasad is correct, for several great poems such as Keats's "To a Grecian Urn", "Ode to a Nightingale", etc. are about painting, sculpture, music and other art-forms.

Prasad demonstrates that Indian classification of art is entirely different from that of the West. He refers to the Western view which regards music as the best of all arts because it is very joyful and absorbing. But, in Prasad's opinion, it is purely and exclusively sonorous, and is an amorphous expression of felt experience or perception. Therefore, it is used in poetry as a vehicle because it is both useful and charming from the poetic viewpoint. Apparently, music, according to Prasad, is not equal to poetry; rather, it is subservient to it as it serves its purpose and hence is used functionally and purposively in poetry. In fact, music expresses the feelings only sonorously through sounds which are the form of speech or voice. The Indian sages have pointed out four kinds of speech, and apropos of this Prasad quotes two lines from the *Rigveda*:

catvari vakahparimita padani tani vidubrahirana ye manisainah I  
guhatrinai nihita-nenah gayamti, turiya vacam manusaya  
vadamti I (28)

These four types of speech are: para, pasyamti, madhyama and vekhai. While the first three are embedded in mystery and secret, the fourth one is spoken by human beings. In Indian scriptures para type of speech (vani) is the form of pure resonant sound, a power permeated by ego or self. Pasyamti is an unknown part of the

speaker and speaking, and has the conscious power of perception. Madhyama, despite being a part of the speaker and speaking, has its existence in between the philosophical seer and the scene. Acquiring clarity because of place, action and efforts, Vekhari grasps the pronunciations/sounds of the letters of an alphabet, and is predominantly visual and scenic.

Prasad makes a mention of *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* in which it is stated that vital power, life force, which controls all unknown things, is an unknown mystery: "yatikacacavijnatam pranasya tadahrupam pranao hravijnatah prana enam tadabhutvahvati" (28), and that is why it has an ever new and lasting existence. Nevertheless, whatever is known through it, is speech or language, and speech or language protects that knowledge by taking its form. Apropos of this, *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* says: "yatah kiccha vijnatam vacasatadrupam vagidha vijnata vagenam yadabhutvahvati" (28).

Prasad points out that for the purpose of investigation into the efforts related to knowledge, experimental method has been used in India. For the self-acquired, established knowledge, there are five senses through which it is felt and realised. According to the Indian theory of 'Aakashadah vayuha', sound, which is the special quality or property of the sky, is the origin of knowledge. Whatever we feel or experience, speech or voice is the form or body of it. The development of speech attains culmination and completion in the letters, and the inner and outer actions are necessary for the letters according to Indian philosophy. The inner action is the early mode of the business of the sky, and the business of the creation of the letters is called outer action. The expression through words or speech is the act of thinking or reflection, and is an effort to give vent to perceptions, feelings and experiences. That is why, it is said in the *Upanishadas* that speech or words are the original, basic means of expressing perceptions: "ya eko varnao bahuda sakti-yogatah varnaninekanni hitathao dadhati vicaeti cante visavamado sa devah sa no budhaya samyunktu" (28-9).

There are three forms of the organisation of letters in the classical Aryan literature: rakah, i.e. poetical; yaju, i.e. prosaic; and sama, i.e. musical. Prasad quotes from *Sarvadarshansamagraha*

— “vaidikasaca dvidhah pragitasaca/ tatra pragitah samani, apragitasaca dvidhah ceandobadhastadvi-laksanasaca I tatrprathma ricah dvitiya yajumsai” (29) — to affirm that this is the earliest pronunciation style of Aryan spoken or written language, and this is made audible (sharvya) for the sake of others, i.e. the listeners. Prasad states that by classifying poetry in this way in these early three categories, we are able to feel clearly its spiritual, original existence, and this very poetic speech or language, as has been already said above, is the original expression of the soul's perception, of man's truly felt inner experience.

Then Prasad points out that after the feelings are expressed through spoken or written words, an important activity begins to take place. The people, who live far from their men due to the compulsions of time and space, cannot have the pleasure of the spoken language because it is dependent on an individual. Therefore, an individual's expression of the soul's perception tries to expand itself in the form of collective expression, with the result it creates its external existence in the form of picture, characteristics, indications, suggestions, etc., which take the form of written language.

Reiterating that art is an inferior knowledge, Prasad says that art can be discussed yet in another way after studying the *Vedas* and other sacred texts. The Saiva texts speak of thirty-six elementary substances, and art is one of them. Art, knowledge, musical note or singing, destiny and time or death are regarded as the forms of the creative, omniscient, omnipresent and eternal powers of God. The expansion and contraction of this power occurs through human senses because of the power-contraction, and this very contracted form of these vast (vyapaka) powers is for human perception. No wonder art is said to be contracted, dutiful power. In support of this assertion, Prasad reproduces the learned Bhojraj's famous statement in *Tatvaprakasha*: vyamjjayati katrashaktm kaleti teneha kathita sa” (Prasad 29). Again, Prasad refers to the eminent scholar Kshemraja who expresses his idea of art in *Siva-sutra-vimarshini* in these words: “kalayati swaswa rupa veshen tattadah vastu parichkhinattiti kalavyaparrah.” The crux of the matter is that art expresses the self, the soul that is inherent in varied things and

persons.

Prasad observes that genius re-creates the soul (swa) in the expression of personal experience in three ways — viz. favourable, unfavourable and strange —, and these three kinds of symbolism are seen in the world of poetry. Favourable, i.e. it should be or let it be, is the multiplication of the known part of the soul. Unfavourable, i.e. it should not be or let it not be, is not close to heart because we have no knowledge of the unknown part of the soul. Strange means the inquisitive part or nature of the soul, i.e. that aspect of the soul about which we have not been able to know whether it is favourable or unfavourable to us. Prasad believes that the root of idealism, realism, individualism and several other literary 'isms' can be traced in these three types of symbolism.

Prasad gives due consideration to the relation of art with literature. When art is regarded as inferior knowledge in Indian philosophical treatises, then what is its place or importance for literature or personal experience? While seeking an answer to this question, we should keep in mind the fact that art does not have an existence of its own, independent of personal experience; but for expressing the felt experience, skill in the choice of words, metric forms, etc., are not of much importance. Expression, in Prasad's opinion, is the natural outcome of genius loaded with experience and perception, for a fine feeling or experience will invariably have a beautiful expression. True, the poet's perception results in expression and often the latter, i.e. expression, is the measure of the former, i.e. the artist's perception. Thus we may use the term 'art' to designate this inborn relationship between perception and expression, and those, who have a bias for art, may affirm that art has its existence in figures of speech (*alamkar*), striking expression (*vakrokti*), style (*riti*), subject-matter, etc. But Prasad differs from this view and holds that such beliefs are conditioned by the changing times; in fact, poetic genius at a particular time might have had a predilection for one type of skill in expression. Prasad points out that it has become customary in literature to consider this external mode of expression as art in poetry.

Prasad raises and examines a very pertinent question: Is there

the pre-eminence of deeply felt personal experience or of skilful forms and experiments in art? Giving a satisfactory answer to it, he states that the artist's very inspiration behind the original personal experience, being beautiful and imaginative, appears in a good and charming form. This form, being the result of skilful arrangement of words, is also undoubtedly beautiful. That which is contained in beautiful form is certainly pre-eminent or main. Prasad explains this by referring to the delineation of parental affection in the poetry of Surdas and Tulsidas. It is said that Tulsidas is inferior to Surdas in the depiction of parental affection. But Prasad opines that this should not lead us to infer that Tulsidas did not possess Surdas-like deftness in the arrangement of words and it was because of this that he could not deal with the parental affection comprehensively and effectively like Surdas. The fact is that Tulsidas's mastery over the expression of inner feelings in the metric form of sixteen short syllables is absolutely rare in the entire realm of Indian poetry. Then, the question arises: why could Tulsidas not express the parental feelings for Rama as effectively as Surdas could do with regard to Krishna? In Prasad's opinion, this is the evidence of the pre-eminence of personal feeling in poetry. In Surdas's portrayal of parental affection there is the intensity of original imaginative perception because of the predominance of that subject-matter. Sri Krishna's inspiration during the Mahabharata War is not as close and dear to Surdas as the child Krishna's playful, sportive activities in Vrindavan. On the other hand, Tulsidas has to deal with the parental affection for Rama in his epic for the sake of the sequence of the narrative. The actual, basic feeling in Tulsidas's heart is Rama's profoundly compassionate urge to protect his devotee against all odds — in a word, Rama's just divine power, and not the pure dualism of child Krishna as the purest form of individual soul, completely detached from good and evil. Prasad avers that a serious consideration of the two poets' skill in the choice and arrangement of words makes it clear that where there is the predominance of felt personal experience, the expression reaches perfection in its realm, and that very poetic form, which is characterised by the skill or speciality in morphology or the arrangement of words, could attain beauty. This

is the reason why expression, according to Prasad, is not of that vital, pervasive importance to the sensitive, sympathetic people (sahradya) as feeling or perception. He further affirms that the feeling of the mental image created by the poet in the hearts of the listeners, readers and spectators, cannot be called the expression of the sensitive, sympathetic people; this remains or becomes merely the sympathy of the poet's perception of the original object because it returns to its initial state due to the similarity of feeling. Hence Prasad concludes that the pervasiveness, the universality of poetry is the consequence of the soul's imaginative basic perception, and not of the poet's mere command of expression (31).

In conclusion, Prasad persuasively establishes that poetry is higher than art; it is not a part of it or a form of it as many think, but has an independent, significant entity of its own. While art is inferior knowledge, poetry is the highest mode of knowledge. It is superior to music or painting, for these two forms of fine arts are used in poetry as a means to achieve an end, though they certainly help to widen the frontiers of poetry. Prasad is close to great English poets such as Spenser<sup>1</sup> and Shelley<sup>2</sup> in this respect. Unlike many Western thinkers and creative artists like Croce, Lawrence and Joyce Cary, Prasad attaches utmost importance to perception, thought content or matter in poetry, and believes that expression or manner automatically takes an appropriate form in consonance with the subject matter to embody the latter most artistically and effectively. Then, Prasad, steeped in poetics and philosophy (both Indian and Western), convincingly demonstrates that poetry is intrinsically and by nature spiritual, and that no form of spirituality is above poetry. This, as the renowned Hindi critic Nanddulare Vajpaye asserts, is Prasad's most significant conviction in this context, and his astonishing originality lies in the fact that while deviating from the conventional critical approaches (Indian and Western) by interpreting things in his own unique way, he has not set aside the old traditional tools and idioms related to literary criticism and philosophy (Vajpaye 7). Obviously, most of his inferences are academically logical and sound, though these may not be universally acceptable.

**Notes**

1. Spenser, who doubtless influenced almost all the major English poets of the succeeding generations for centuries, was perhaps the first English poet to hold a very lofty concept of poetry as is evident from the following lines of his famous poem "The Ruins of Time":

For deeds do die as men, however nobly done,  
 And thoughts of men do as themselves decay:  
 But wise words taught in numbers for to run,  
 Recorded by the Muses, live for aye;  
 Ne may with storming showers be wash'd away,  
 Ne bitter-breathing winds with harmful blast,  
 Nor age, nor envy, shall them ever wast.

.....

.....

Then whose will with virtuous deeds assay  
 To mount to heaven, on Pegasus must ride,  
 And with sweet poets' verse be glorified.  
 (*The Poetical Works of Edmund Spense*, Vol. V 16-7)

2. Perhaps more than his illustrious predecessor Spenser, P. B. Shelley, the celebrated nineteenth-century English poet, accentuates the greatness and loftiness of poetry in his expository writings. In the brilliant but unfortunately unfinished work, *A Defence of Poetry*, Shelley defines poetry as "the expression of the imagination" (225). A poet comprehends the true, the beautiful and the good, and he invariably "participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one" (228). Obviously, a poem, according to Shelley, is "the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth" (231); it embodies wisdom mingled with pleasure; and it unveils the hidden beauty of the world and reveals the image of the divinity in man whose very existence is love inalienable from moral good. Naturally, poetry, in Shelley's view, is "the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds" (251), and it immortalizes "all that is best and most beautiful in the world"

(252). Inevitably, poetry is immortal and poets are prophets and "the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (255).

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## I. K. SHARMA: A POET OF PLACES AND PEOPLE

Asha Viswas

Like Eliot's Fisher King, Sharma sits "upon the shore fishing, with the arid plain" of reality behind him and shores his poetic "fragments" — concrete articulations of observations and experience. The experience is horizontal — human beings, rivers, mountains, places, birds and beasts all come within his compass. Though not born, yet brought up in Rajasthan since he was four, Sharma remains rooted to the soil. Jaipur, the city where he has lived almost all his life, runs in his blood stream and is part of his consciousness. It is the 'Hawa Mahal' of Jaipur that adorns the jacket of his collected poems. In a poem entitled "Hawa Mahal" the poet compares the palace structure to a poem:

You are a perfect poem in pink  
in five sensuous stanzas,  
gracefully drawn, precisely punctuated,  
each word of a line  
soft, gentle and light —  
rises rhythmically to a tune.

He does not stop here in his praise of the palace. He associates it with the five elements:

Each stanza has an element of its own:  
earth, fire, wind, water, or sky—  
all growing into one another.

In the last line of the poem this man-made structure turns into a "Standing Vision" of joyous poetry. What started as a sensuous poem in the first stanza acquires the elemental essence in the second stanza and ends up as a quasi-mystic beauty arousing poetic visions.

Just after a short distance of three poems we have another poem about Jaipur — "The Pink City". The poet calls it "a very unfortunate city". Though "Conceived as a red rose/ in the hot sands/ in the distant dream of a royal master", the city now presents mud scapes where man's mind is "chained by pigs and tied to them". The poet is sad for the present defilement of the city. Hence his

anger is directed against all those who "live here, and don't belong to it". Once they pay their taxes to the state government, they think they have acquired a license to turn the city into a virtual pigsty. The poet's anger is genuine and it shows his love and concern "for the red rose/ that has no thorn!"

Yet another poem of the first collection "*The Shifting Sand-dunes*" (1976) presents a visual of the sand dunes of Rajasthan. The concrete images give us the feel of the scene:

The dunes that were dead an hour back  
began to twitch and move  
like nomads in search of new homes;  
the whispering procession of sand  
made its slow, cold, encroachment  
upon the silent pits,  
the resting cattle shuffled,  
and the swirling sand sealed  
their half-heard voices forever  
in their own familiar yard.

The poet is fully conversant with the kinesis and stasis of the dunes of Rajasthan and understands the patois of the wind of his land.

In his second collection, *The Native Embers* (1986), the very second poem "Waiting for Rain" is about the long spells of drought and the resultant shortage of water in Rajasthan. At his back he still hears his mother's prayer to the rain god to send rain for her son, for the crop and for the dying cattle. He also hears the people, old and young, beating the temple gongs but their prayers remain unanswered. His childhood and boyhood were a yearning for rain:

Many summers folded into my heart,  
I stirred many a prayer,  
each day I parroted the question:  
what jewels raindrops are?  
Slowly I slid into brittle boyhood  
pining for liquid wealth,  
years soaked into a sponge of life,  
flicked my waterless health.

"May in Jaipur 1982" presents the plight of the poor farmers of

Rajasthan who depend on the vagaries of weather to make or mar their fortunes.

In “Vigilance” Sharma talks of the roads of Jaipur “where we may start from any point / and will come back to the main road/ its squires greeting us”. Sometimes one gets lost in its lanes, by-lanes and blind alleys but a little vigilance guides one back to one’s destination. In “Amber Palace” the poet feels sad at the dilapidated condition of this beautiful fort:

The floor sleeps broken in grief.  
The wind sobs in search of old inmates.  
Only bats love without date.  
And I see a beautiful sunset.

The neglected place has now acquired the softening beauty of a sunset. In the final section of the poem this palace, now almost ruined, is contrasted with the poor on the roadside:

children , like wingless birds,  
women fungus –like, and  
men unchiselled stones  
quietly store the music in veins  
to stir the silent heavens.

Amongst these structures of Rajasthan, its roads, rainless skies and the sand-dunes, the poet does not forget the Rajasthan’s poet Ganesh LalVyas. The poem “Ustad” is Sharma’s tribute to the noted poet who wrote soulful verses during the freedom movement and tried to awaken the slothful spirits of his people. Sharma compares his poetry to:

an Alaknanda cleaving adamantine rocks  
went roaring, through the toughest terrains;  
its fury, its force, direct and dirtless  
measured all that came in the way  
and hammered truth in the power springs.

In his third collection *Dharamsala and Other Poems* (1993) we have yet another poem “At KanakBrindavan” associated with Jaipur. The name “KanakBrindavan” was given to this valley by Raja Sawai Jai Singh, the founder of Jaipur. Perhaps he found some similarity between this place and Lord Krishna’s Vrindavan. It is an ancient

valley associated with the sacred “AswamedhaYagnas”. The music and chanting from the shrines of GovindDeoji and Natwarji make the ambience an enchanting one. From the gardens one can have glimpses of the JalMahal and the three forts of Nahargarh, Jaigarh and Amber. The Kadamba groves of the garden fill us with Krishna consciousness and its migratory birds seem to be talking to the flowers. Besides giving all these details, the poem also presents the contrast between the past and the present. While in the past the pilgrims came here on “ekkas” wearing coarse clothes and ‘pagaris’ and celebrated Teej and Gangaur festivals in the true spirit of their religion, now they come in car, or scooter or by bus:

They look askance at the stillness of the Lord  
dutifully they throw a coin or two at his feet  
and take a drop or two of holy water in exchange  
from the pundit at service.

Afterwards.Coca-cola.

The spirit is gone, only a ritual remains. The poet feels sad at the falling number of devotees:

The lake has shrunk to its ribs.  
The JalMahal looks pale.  
The 200 year old Kadamb tree, sad-eyed,  
tells a long tale  
and unmask many a grown-up weed.

This kaleidoscopic view of Jaipur and its terrain will remain incomplete if we did not find the camel, known metaphorically as the ship of the desert, in this landscape. In his fourth collection, *Camel, Cockroach and Captains* (1998) the very first poem shows a camel majestically rising to make “a statement of his presence.” The poet shows us “his long resilient neck .... in harmony with his rod-like legs.” He calls the camel “the epitome of stately pride”.

In his sixth collection *End to End* (2008) there is a poem “Wild Love”. Here Sharma commemorates the sacrifice of the Rajasthani women who tried to protect trees at the cost of their lives. In a short note the poet throws light on this old event — “on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of

Bhadon (August) in 1730 a few spirited women and children, led by Amrita Devi of Khejadli village in Jodhpur sacrificed their lives for protecting trees..." While clasping the trees, they cry:

Spare a thought  
for the gold of Thar.

Pause ere you head for me.

In my veins flows the fluid divine.

All these 363 women and children were axed by the king's men. The poem shows not only the courage of the women, but their awareness and care for the eco-system even as early as the third decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In "My City" (not included in the *Collected Poems*) Sharma again talks of the pollution of Jaipur and presents it as a zoo:

I live in the city where  
pigs clean the street,  
cows guide the traffic,  
bulls roam like Romeos,  
monkeys cross their beat.

The anger which we found in "The Pink City" is missing here. Instead, a sort of apathy pervades the poem.

In "Desert" (unpublished poem) the poet writes of the Rajasthan desert with genuine emotion, and compares it to an epic poem:

Desert is a grand epic briskly composed  
in free verse at night. Dunes  
are the irregular lines of its form.  
Their height depends upon the weight  
of emotion and intensity of feeling  
they hold within. They rise  
with the tempo of making.

Even in this poem the camel is not forgotten — "the hero of the epic is camel/ tall, handsome, fearless.

Sharma remembers to write on Bhanwari Devi (not in the *Collected Poems*), the folk-singer and nurse of Rajasthan, brutally murdered by the goons of some politicians whose lust increases along with their political ambitions. The poet feels that even  
my much maligned Ravana

was a million times pious, who carried  
aloft the lonely lady to his shore  
and lightly set her unharmed in a rich green floor.

He compares the politicians to the sons of Dushasan but there are no Krishnas around to save a woman from disgrace and no Jatayus "to tell the mystery tale".

All these fourteen poems establish Sharma as a representative poet of Rajasthan, specially of Jaipur. His book *Contemporary Rajasthani Poetry* (1979) and some of his translations from Rajasthani to English show his rootedness. But this love for his state does not make him a jingo and does not limit the range of his vision. He is a poet of places. In Book two, *The Native Embers* (1986) we have a beautiful poem on Khajuraho. Unlike the Judaic or western tradition, the ancient Hindu tradition does not associate sex with sin. Vatsyayan wrote the Kam Sutra and the ancient Sanskrit poets brought the sacred and the profane together. This sacralization of flesh is celebrated in the temples of Khajuraho. The erotic here is portrayed in its first aspect — love in enjoyment. Sharma, who avoids sex as a trope in his poetry, surrenders to the charm of "this tropical madness". The stone figures of gods and goddesses in their amorous act:

rise from low caverns to lofty summits  
from physics to metaphysics  
through their speechless alchemy .....

In Book three, *Dharamsala and Other Poems* (1993), we have three poems on Mountains. Two of these are on Dharamsala. The whole Kangra district is known as DevBhumi. In Dharamsala are the Dalai Lama temple, Jwalamukhi temple, Brajeshwari temple, KunalPathri temple, and the Chamunda temple. The Kangra fort is as old as the Mahabharata. Many famous battles were fought here, specially the one between Alexander and Porus. A few kilometers away from Dharamsalais the famous JyotilingamBaijnath. It is associated with the Pandavas who stayed and prayed here during their exile. Sharma praises the place for its quietude — "The savage din of Delhi dies at your unpolitical feet". In Dharamsala-2 he is impressed by the mountains and the trees:

The hooded Dholadhar stands straight and tall  
 like the Buddha —blessing earthlings below.  
 The trees stretch their arms, one above another,  
 to get his benediction.

In yet another poem “Water Thief” (not included in *Collected Poems*) another place just two kilometers away from Dharamsala, associated with an ancient legend, is described. In his note Sharma writes “Ten thousand years ago the king of Ajmer came to this place — collected all the water of the lake — a fight ensued between the king and the Naag... the master of the lake”.

The Ancient Bhagsunag temple of Lord Shiva, located in the scenic Bhagsu village, is associated with the ancient legend. According to this legend, the Snake God was drawn into a battle with king Bhagsu who stole the water from the Nagdallake for the thirsty people of his kingdom. Sharma recreates the legend. One reason for his interest in the ancient legend is the king who belonged to Ajmer, one of the desert towns of Rajasthan. The poet has this desert in his mind when he writes:

I am from the burning sands.  
 There we live on the whims of weather.  
 We grow tall or shrink in size  
 in tune with the mood of the sky.

And again:

It is the third thirsty year in my land,  
 stones at the bottom of wells,  
 of step-wells and streams  
 look piteously at us and cry.

No one else but a dweller of the desert could have felt the anguish of the king Bhagsu.

In “On Revisiting Shimla”, the poet feels sad at the present ecological plight of Shimla. Its once “photogenic” face has now got “pimples and measles”. The agents of this deterioration are the politicians:

Now you shine by crows and hawks  
 sitting in arbitrary chairs  
 making you overweight.

From Himachal he travels to “Bombay” in his fifth collection, *My Lady, Broom and Other Poems* (2004). He calls the Mumbaiwallas:

Fools of time  
 fighting for space,  
 live in vertical cages  
 with horizontal dreams.

To pursue their dreams, they spend thirty years in crowded trains. He calls Mumbai a city of “Sai, Sachin and Stocks” and a city of “speed, smoke and cinema”. In this city of “paints, plastics and parlours .... Only crows guard the island”. The whole poem shows the poet’s love for alliteration.

In his sixth collection *End to End* the poet pays a tribute to Chidambaram, a home to Annamalai University. Chidambaram, in Eastern Tamilnadu, is a place of pilgrimage. Its ancient Chidambaram temple is dedicated to the cosmic dancer “Natraj”. It houses both Shiva and Vishnu in the same complex. The poet does not describe the temple. What he recollects here is the warm welcome given to him at ASIA meet, perhaps at the university.

Besides all these places, both in Rajasthan and elsewhere, Sharma also seems to be interested in people. In the first group of his poems on people, we have the poor, down-trodden people. The portraits of such people are drawn and painted with great sympathy. “The Foundling”, “Eklavya” and “Address to a Lady”, from his second collection, show the choice of Sharma’s subjects. In the third poem the lives of the rich and the poor are contrasted. While the rich lady sits on the sofa between a Pomeranian dog and a baby, the poor women:

... with faces covered  
 rush with their dirty looking pots  
 .... and get both — water and abuse  
 ....their children unnumbered  
 stuffed with lethal hunger  
 play with broken toys and guns.

In Book three “GanguTeli” subtitled “Or the Discovery of India” is a poignant poem that makes Gangu the representative of all the poor people whose condition remains unchanged in all the ages. “for

ages he has pressed the seed for oil/ with a dream to oil his own wiry hair." When the countryside was developed and a railway line was laid, Gangu got nothing. Instead it "lapped up his hut with speed":

He only gathered embers for his breakfast,  
his broken family : clouds of smoke.

More development followed and this time a dam was constructed. The only thing that happened was the death of Gangu's only child — death by drowning. Since then Gangu has been living on the promises of the politicians. Each time a politician makes a promise, Gangu believes him. "the unfulfilled promises "Come and go , fitfully/ like the Saraswati at Sangam in Prayag". Gangu's dreams remain "like the interminable Saree of Dropadi". Though Gangu is dead, he is alive in every poor credulous man with a myriad dreams in his eyes.

In "Among the Handicapped", the poet's heart is filled with sympathy for the disabled children. He calls them "half written lines of a poem/ left behind by a God of pen". Born and brought up in the villages of India, victims of polio walk on haunches or on crutches and their pathetic plight slits the peace of the poet. In "Labour Pain" (Fifth Collection) we have like Gangu, another representative of the poor women, the house helps working in different houses. The persona of this poem compares her life with the rich city women living a glamorous life. But for her, no soothing balms are invented for her simmering brain and there is no one to listen to her sad tale:

Every month I count bank notes  
soiled by dainty hands,  
they match well with my sari  
with tears in its frame.

"Chowkidar" (not included in *Collected Poems*), depicts yet another representative of the lowly class, sometimes, even when there is no electricity, he tries valiantly to protect the sleep of the well to do people in winter nights. The poet calls him:

The mobile tower of hope and help,  
anonymous,.....  
curbs his comfort  
to give us unbroken sleep.

The last poem of the Sixth Collection is "The Terminator". The poet in his note says — " this much neglected hero of our society deserves our thanks/ praise for his patience , skill, endurance and performance". In our city too there lived such a man. Withdrawing the attention of the media, he quietly collected the unclaimed bodies and performed the funeral rites. Ironically, when he died last year, there was none to claim the body and to perform the last rites. Such people are the unsung heroes of our society. Sharma calls the terminator:

Self-reliant and self-possessed,  
the progeny of Raja Harishchandra  
is private to his private thoughts.  
Unparalysed in spirit he recites the holy numbers  
'Shivoham, Shivoham' with a telescopic eye.

In "Indian Farmer" (not included in *Collected Poems*) Sharma feels tortured by the poor farmer's "hung head beneath the load of debt .... / strapped and yoked/ like the castrated bullock/ to the cart of life". The portrait is realistic and the farmer gets full sympathy of the readers. Apart from these people, there is a second group of the rich and the affluent. Sharma reserves his satire and humor for this type. The very second poem of his first collection is "The Leader". Here, the poet talks of a political leader who gives a "loud call" to the masses telling them that the dawn of their dreams "is not far off". The masses that follow him soon realize that "he walks with his back towards them/ hides the rising sun". In a short poem of eight lines, the monosyllabic or disyllabic words hit the target. People realize that the leader himself is the wall between them and their dreams. The subtle tone shows the poet as a master of irony.

In the fourth poem of the first collection, "The Roundworms" the poet uses a personal case to hit against the general. The remedy that the doctor prescribes for roundworms "sitting members of my stomach/ well-fed, and each 25 centimetres long" can be used for the whole macro-cosmic body at the social, religious and political levels. The satire against the parasites of our system, though mild and a bit humorous, is effective.

"Seth Maganlal on the Train" (*Dharamsala and Other Poems*)

is a purely humorous pen picture of an individual but he too has his tribe and we come across such fellow travellers whenever we board a long distance train. There is no malice here against the man whose snoring “builds rhythm with the speeding train”. When he relieves his belly of the imprisoned winds, the poet uses an anagram of a Shakespearean line — “Uneasy lies the belly that bears the wind”.

In “Gopal” he hits at a milkman who represents the enormous huge tribe of all the men who supply milk from door to door. When he is found mixing water in the milk from a public tap, he promptly answers: “it is my processing centre,/ I make Fast Milk here”. How boldly this rampant corruption runs in our society is visible here!

In Book five, “The Clerk” is another corrupt type of our society. The way he takes graft from his victims is amazing. The poet addresses him “The master of maze/ and maker of grooves/ wears no sentiments”:

The monarch of files  
is a worldly animal  
who has shed  
years  
in the ashtray of his office.  
His pen knife cuts  
through the traffic of words  
as I pay ....

The well known greed of office clerks of India is brought to the surface in an oblique ironic way.

Besides the poor people who get ample sympathy from the poet and the rich and corrupt who are satirized, one finds a third group of people who find an important place in Sharma’s poetry. These are the poets from the past and those who were modern poets but died during these past years. In this list of poets one can also include the mythical figure of Narada, the eternal singer. The poet calls him “a gift of the muse, self-propelling/ from the other side of her mind”. This singer along with his Veena is always on the move, chanting the name of God, solving or creating riddles.

Next comesTulsidas:  
He made his heart the city of Ram

and He became the Truth of his life.  
In works he rewrote his new self  
and gave a text inspiring  
that did not fade from mind.  
It echoed in huts and havelis.

After Tulsidas, Sharma pays tribute to A. K. Ramanujan, MontriUmavijani( a poet from Thailand), Krishna Srinivas (a poet and editor of Poet, International monthly, Chennai), Ezekiel and NiranjanMohanty. In this list of eulogies he also includes G.S. Balaram Gupta (the editor of *The Journal of Indian Writing in English* who is still actively working). No other poet has paid his tribute to so many of his seniors. Besides these poets, the two great leaders who find their place in his poems are the Afghan leader Khan AbdulGaffar Khan and Swami DayanandSaraswati, a reformer from India.

Poetry is a web woven from threads of different colors. Sharma’s poetry too presents different shades of different colors. A critical apercu of all the shades of his poetry is not possible in a short article. In one of his poems “Dogfights” the poet talks of the dialectical opposition between his two selves—the Romantic self that wants to disobey all rules and regulations and wants to sing of love, youth and beauty. The other self is the realist who shuns imaginative flights. Sharma emerges as a humanist with ethical values who shuns violence, sex and all other unpleasant aspects of life. He satirizes but his satire is never bitter.

In all these volumes of his poetry, Sharma impresses the reader with his use of poetic language that is capable of articulating his experience. Besides rhymes and a coherent ordering of stanzas in most of the longer poems we also find a large sprinkling of rhetorical devices. He is fond of similes and alliterations. Along with the themes that move from poem to poem, the images also quiver from rivers to mountains, to dirty city streets cleaned by pigs. Each poem is a short journey that he takes from where he observes distinct characters belonging to different types. The social and political systems in which Sharma experiences reality form the ambience of his poems.

## NUANCES OF GENDERED EDUCATION AND SELFHOOD IN THE NOVELS OF MANJU KAPUR

Reena Chauhan &  
Rashmi Gaur

The role of education in the lives of men and women should be considered equally valuable and similar for the development of society. However, the access to higher education and professional career is normally considered to be a masculine domain. Education for women is still considered primarily as an enabling factor in taking care of their conventional roles. Dorothy Gies McGuigan in her article "To Be A Woman and A Scholar" has analyzed the life and travails of Elena Lucrezia Cornaro Piscopia, the first woman in the world to receive a doctoral degree in 1678 (McGuigan 169-70). She has talked of four fundamentals which a woman in the 17<sup>th</sup> century needed to pursue her academic ambitions; viz. a life uncluttered by familial demands, opportunities for basic literacy, financial support and a tough skin. It is interesting and overwhelming to note that even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century women writers have taken up similar tropes to narrate the constraints which a woman aspiring for higher education has to face in contemporary society.

Social preferences for particular types of education for girls and boys transmit the existing patriarchal practices in which women's personalities are groomed to take the charge of household responsibilities and men's personalities are groomed for shouldering economic responsibilities. These references are in consonance with conventional gendered stereotypes which project men as active, logical, strong and dynamic, suitable for public spheres; whereas these norms project women as passive, conservative and weak, associated with private domain. Thus conventional choices for women in the field of education and financial management prove to be disabling and constrictive. They are not only restricted from opting for certain subjects and professional streams, but are also obliquely encouraged to consider education within a feminine per-

spective only, that convinces them that the primary aim of their education is not self-actualization, but a means to ensure better management of households and married life. According to Millett,

The education of women was not thought of as a course of study beyond the threshold level of learning, a genteel polish its major achievement. And in most cases it was deliberately cynical in its emphasis upon "virtue" – a sugared word which meant obedience, servility, and a sexual inhibition perilously near to frigidity (Millett 74).

The present paper takes up five novels of Manju Kapur, namely *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2003), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2009), and *Custody* (2011), to analyze how in the arena of education and economics, women are exploited and oppressed by patriarchal norms. Women are considered to be suitable only for household activities, childbearing and childrearing, and the conventional emphasis on a particular type of education and career limits their options for attaining true self-hood. Secular education can help them overcome these constraints. Kapur's novels showcase the acceptance of education within a patriarchal set-up as a perpetuation of traditional roles, as well as a subdued awareness of the revolutionary possibilities of education among girls who are fearful in voicing their preference for what is so clearly a male prerogative. Further, Kapur's novels clearly state the conviction that higher education and economic independence support women to take independent decisions. Her novels also state that the lens of education and economic independence also helps to mitigate the threats of violence which women have to face in various relationships. This aspect is also commented on by several other critics also. Rachel Jewkes observes, "In many studies, high educational attainment of women was associated with low levels of violence" (Jewkes 1425).

Manju Kapur's first novel *Difficult Daughters* narrates the story of Virmati, the protagonist whose struggles for liberation is supported by her education. She is a young Panjabi girl from a conservative family, the eldest among eleven children of Kasturi and Suraj Prakash in Amritsar. From the early years of her youth, she has been overloaded with the burden of domestic and upbringing

responsibilities of her younger brothers and sisters. Despite it, she wants to pursue her studies, she is “so keen to study, *bap re*. First FA, then BA, then BT on top of that” (*Difficult Daughters* 5). She is very much influenced by her cousin Shakuntala, who is depicted as a qualified woman, a woman of substance, who holds the view that “here we are, fighting for the freedom of the nation, but women are still supposed to marry, and nothing else” (*Difficult Daughters* 17). Shakuntala is a post-graduate, an M.Sc. (Chemistry) pass woman whose responsibilities spread beyond the family. However she is looked down upon and taunted by her family because of her independent thinking. Shakuntala’s portrayal narrates how in a patriarchal society, a woman is respected and considered to be honourable only if she is limited to her roles of a wife and mother. The pre-independent society did not want that girls should get a distaste for domestic duties and nurturing roles on account of their exposure to education. *Difficult Daughters* explains how social expectations from girls and women are accountable for their exploitation and secondary status. Implicit in such attitudes is the conviction that a girls’ role is already fixed and defined. Such social constraints also often compel to view their daughters’ education with condensation. They find it to be an insignificant topic. In similar vein, Virmati’s education is also not a subject of attention for her parents. As “a child she had been sent, a ten-minute walking distance, to the Arya Kanya Mahavidyalaya” (*Difficult Daughters* 19). Over-burdened with domestic duties, Virmati fails her FA. Her mother chastises her to keep her priorities right, “Leave your studies if it is going to make you so bad-tempered with your family. You are forgetting what comes first” (*DD* 21). Such indoctrination traps the girls within the family framework and denies any active agency to them. This conversation shows that women are forced to fit in the family and domestic roles and are not allowed to think of their rights for education or economic freedom. Virmati also understands that even if higher education is the only means of liberation for her, her family will not be supportive of the idea. Goaded by the desire to achieve something, howsoever tenuous it could be, she “passed her FA with marks that were respectable enough for a girl. She now wanted to study further” (*Dif-*

*ficult Daughters* 45). Her parents finalize her marriage meanwhile without any consideration of her desires. Faced with the futility of options - “early marriage and no education” as well as “education versus marriage” (*Difficult Daughters* 41, 54), Virmati attempts to commit suicide. When her father asks the reason, she says, “I want to study. I’m not harming anybody by studying but how weak and fragile that statement sounded” (*Difficult Daughters* 59, 86). Kasturi, Virmati’s mother also holds those values and norms that compel a woman to believe that marriage and childbearing is the foremost obligation of a woman’s life. She is incapable of understanding the reason of her daughter’s action. She tries to convince her again and again for marriage by citing innumerable examples. “When I was your age’, continued Kasturi, ‘girls only left their house when they married. And beyond a certain age... *hai re*, beti! What is the need to do a job? A woman’s *shaan* is in her home... a woman without her own home and family is a woman without moorings. Marriage was acceptable to her family, but not independence” (*Difficult Daughters* 111, 115). Her family’s aggressive refusal to allow her to study further leads Virmati to Harish Chandra, a professor from England who not only expresses his vision towards woman’s education but also encourages Virmati for further study.

For him, too, studies are very important. It showed he really cared for women’s education ...who is responsible for this state of affairs? Society, which deems that their sons should be educated, but not their daughters. Once she had gained a proper education, she would be on her way to becoming one of the finest flowers of Hindu womanhood (*Difficult Daughters* 62, 103).

The family ultimately allows Virmati to go to Lahore for further studies. After completing her BT, Virmati is offered the position of the headmistress of *Pratibha Kanya Vidyalaya* in Nahan by the Prime Minister of Sirmaur. She joins this position and proves her potential. Even though Virmati proves her to be as capable as any man, her mother continues to blame her for bringing ill-repute to the family, stating that her “education has achieved is the destruction of my family” (*Difficult Daughters* 99). *Desirable Daughters* shows that

issues of social approval did not gel well with the pursuit of education as far as girls of the pre-independence era were concerned.

Based on post-independence era, Kapur's *A Married Woman* highlights the complex web of education and financial independence in the life of a married woman. The protagonist of the novel Astha yearns to acquire respect, freedom of expression, equality, as well as financial authority in her life. Various tropes of the novel reinforce the patriarchal view that education is ultimately an enhancement of opportunities in a marriage market and not in terms of individuality. Parents view girls' education as an option which enables them to hunt down a better match. Astha's parents also similarly view her education. The patriarchal educational norms train girls to be socially and economically dependent on men. Education too transmits the existing gender practices in which men "bear the burdens of the outside world and home is women's refuge" (*A Married Woman* 270). Kapur describes that Astha's parents though subscribe to this view, do not exactly share similar hopes. Astha's mother Sita believes that marriage is the only respectable option for girls. She echoes the sentiments of Beauvoir who maintains that "marriage is not only an honourable career and one less tiring than many others: it alone permits a woman to keep her social dignity intact" (Beauvoir 352). She prays everyday for a good husband for Astha.

In comparison we find that Astha's father is liberated and believes that his daughter must study to expand her mental horizon. He "believes in the new. He feels that his daughter's future lay in her own hands, and these hands were to be strengthened by the number of books that passed through them" (*A Married Woman* 2). Her father, a bureaucrat does not want his daughter to be like himself, dissatisfied and wasted. He preaches her to work hard to create her own opportunities, "You are so much potential, you draw, you paint, you read, you have a way with words, you do well academically, the maths is a little weak, but never mind, you must sit for the competitive exams. With a good job comes independence" (*A Married Woman* 4). Despite such liberated leanings, he is convinced that good future for his daughter lies in her getting a good

match. He says to his wife, "If she did well in her exams, she could perhaps sit for the IAS, and a good husband there. You met all kinds of people in the administrative services" (*A Married Woman* 3). Finally, they settle Astha's marriage with Hemant. Such descriptions reinforce the conviction that "middle-class girls are educated largely as a concession to a superficial social change" (Nabar 68).

Feminist critics have often commented on the inner vacancy women have to live with, in the absence of a true vocation. Astha also falls prey to it soon, "Within a few months and dullness began to taint Astha's new life. What was she to do while waiting for Hemant to come home?" (*A Married Woman* 46) In this situation, she is suggested to work. Her father advises her to join journalism but Hemant decides that she should take up a teaching job which is considered to be appropriate for a woman. According to the decision of her husband, she joins St Anthony School. However Astha soon realizes that Hemant does not respect her job. He mocks at her duties, "What is there in teaching? Hardly a serious job, you just go, talk to some children about poems and stories, organize a few clubs, and come back" (*A Married Woman* 68). Hemant also dislikes her friendship with Pipee who is associated with an NGO called *Ujjala*. Mockingly he says that Pipee uses this pretext to siphon off money from different sources, "... take money from here and there, and pretend they are working" (*A Married Woman* 224). Kapur exposes in the novel that socially privileged men devalue women's works and this tradition passes from men to men. The following lines clearly showcase this patriarchal attitude:

The home is regarded as the domain of the 'private' and the feminine while sites of paid work have coded masculine within the public sphere. Homes have been cast as the unpaid domain of mothers and children, connoting the secondary values of caring, love, tenderness and domesticity. In contrast, places of paid work have been regarded as the domain of men, connoting the primary values of toughness (either physically or mentally), hardness, comradeship and reality (qtd in Barker 293).

The socialization of gender within patriarchal educational pref-

erences assures that girls and women are groomed to accept the traditional care-taking roles as being naturally suited to them. This acceptance encourages them to accept their secondary status without questioning it. Different socialization processes of boys and girls are based in their sexuality which perceives any indication of assertiveness by women as disruptive. Such mind-set constricts women within their domestic space. The obstacles a woman has to face are immensely powerful and her gendered destiny has a strong pull over all her decisions. Whereas man is encouraged to move ahead in an unencumbering manner, a woman is bound by her domesticity. Terry Lovell in her article "Consuming Fiction" has commented on the separate worlds which are habited by men and women:

The differentiation under capitalism of two separate spheres, the public and the private, one masculine, the other feminine, was a prominent feature of the dominant symbolic order by the early nineteenth century in Britain. Feminists have rediscovered this division, and have explored the inner and outer landscapes of the private sphere, the home, within which bourgeois women were at least in theory confined (Lovell 149).

In *A Married Woman* Kapur portrays similar sentiments in the depiction of Astha's character. She is allowed to take up the teaching assignments as it is an activity which allows women an engagement without impinging on the blocks of leisure available to the men-folk. However any real involvement in her job is frowned upon. While in her school Astha is given the responsibility to organize a drama workshop for kids, she has an opportunity to interact with Aizaz Akhtar, the main inspiration behind the workshop, who encourages her to write a script on the issue of Ramjanama Bhoomi and Babri Masjid. Such activism is discouraged by her husband who advises her to keep her priorities clear, "Keep to what you know best, the home, children...All this doesn't suit you" (*A Married Woman* 116). Later on, he criticizes her for participating in the procession, "you seem to forget that your place as a decent family woman is in home, and not on the streets" (*A Married Woman* 172). Such denial of participation in public sphere to a woman has also been taken up by de Beauvoir in her seminal text *The Second Sex*:

It is outrageously paradoxical to deny woman all activity in public affairs, to shut her out of masculine careers, to asset her incapacity in all fields of effort, and then to entrust her the most delicate and most serious undertaking of all: the moulding of a human being. There are many women whom custom and tradition still deny the education, the culture, the responsibilities and activities that are the privilege of men. (Beauvoir 539)

Another aspect which has been taken up by Kapur is that women do not have any control over the money which has been earned by them. It is considered to be a possession of the men-folk. Astha does not only earn her salary as a teacher, she has also found a talent for painting and has sold some of her paintings at profitable prices. Hemant arranges a family trip to Goa and thinks of staying in a five-star hotel. When Astha questions him about the expenditure Hemant replies, "I have to go to Bombay to see a dealer, the children's tickets will cost half, yours in the only ticket we have to pay for. We will spend the money you earned for your painting" (*AMW* 163). Astha is astonished by his having taken a decision of spending her own money without consulting her. Despite it, her desire to purchase anything of her choice is not respected by Hemant. During the trip, she likes an antique silver box.

'Please, can I have that box?' she asked Hemant.

'You must be out of your mind,' said Hemant.

The tone, the refusal both hurt her. She was an earning woman. Why couldn't she have a say in how some of their money was spent? (*A Married Woman* 165)

Such narratives highlight the fact that the patriarchal culture associates men with unquestioned authority and independence, whereas women are considered to be dependent and expected to accept the authority. The tropes of the novel clearly indicate and indict the prevalent social norms regarding the educational and economic practices. Astha, the protagonist of the novel, strives to establish her own position in patriarchal society even though she is often pushed to acceptance.

Another novel of Kapur *Home* also delineates how gendered

perspectives in the sphere of education generate hindrances in women's independence. Through Nisha, protagonist of the novel, Kapur also shows that in comparison to boys parents often pay less attention to the education of girls. For Nisha's parents, her education is a negligible matter, "Months passed, Nisha close to six and was about to exhaust the possibilities of play school (*Home* 69). Her aunt Rupa and uncle Prem Nath, who do not have a child of their own, persuade her parents to allow them to look after Nisha's education. With their help she is able to get admission in the New Horizon Public School and also gradually learns some basics of running a business from home from her aunt Rupa. Kapur depicts how women are not encouraged to participate in financial discussions and their involvement in household discussions is also always considered to be secondary. The patriarchal society which is discussed in the novel represents the idea that for women intellectual pursuits are not exactly needed. Nisha is an intelligent girl who obtains "89 in Maths, Science 82, Hindi 86, Social Studies 90, English 87, Sanskrit 88" (*Home* 98). Still she is never praised. Her family does not motivate her to study further. On the other hand, his brother Raju, though not interested in studies at all, is goaded to study further. Raju remarks, "I hate studies, my brain dries up" (*Home* 121). Even within a household, gendered norms assign paid work to men and unpaid work to women. Feminist critics have often commented on the drudgery of women's repetitive chores and the absence of any financial gains out of these. These norms primarily restrict women's potential for pursuing higher education. Even if circumstances allow them to pursue it, they do not necessarily link it with an opportunity to self-actualize. Socialization patterns embedded in educational options socially permissible to girls, subtly push them to accepting conventional roles in preference to their careers. Glorification of feminine roles is also responsible for it. Several sociological researches have also supported this notion. The findings of Bergen and Williams can be cited in this context who conclude that unfortunately the held beliefs, the attributes, attitudes and strength of sex stereotypes have not changed (Bergen and Williams 413-23). Women are still expected to adjust to their familial demands and

surrender their careerist ambitions for adopting their nurturing roles as care-givers. Millett too emphasizes this aspect of women's education when she comments, "patriarchy permitted minimal literacy to women while higher education was closed to them, and even when allowed to study, "the kind and quality of education is not same for each sex" (42).

Nisha's family also wants to marry her as soon as possible. She is permitted to join the Durga Bai Girls College for English Honours when the family is unable to find a suitable *manglik* match for her. Even then she is told not to take it seriously, "Higher studies were just a time pass, it was not as though she was going to use her education. Working was out of the question, and marriage was around the corner" (*Home* 141). Further delay in her marriage and a skin allergy compels her family to allow her to open a boutique so that she is able to have some meaning in her life. Nisha also insists on having a vocation for herself, "I want to study fashion designing. Lots of girls do it...I have seen girls working in shops. Why should it be only Ajay, Vijay and Raju? There must be something I too can do" (*Home* 226, 267). Thus we see that gendered patterns of education and training perpetuate the biases against women. It would be appropriate to cite Rosabeth Kanter who in *Men and Women of the Corporation* says that "gender differences in organizational behavior are due to structure rather than to characteristics of women and men as individuals" (Kanter 291-92). She further argues that "gender enters the picture through organizational roles that "carry characteristic images of the kinds of people that should occupy them" (Kanter 250). The "masculine ethic" elevates the traits assumed to belong to men with educational advantages to necessities for effective organizations: a tough-minded approach to problems; analytic abilities to abstract and plan; a capacity to set aside personal, emotional considerations in the interests of task accomplishment; a cognitive superiority in problem-solving and decision making" (Acker and Houten 43).

Similar case is presented by Kapur in this novel. Nisha requests her family to allow her opportunities to prove her potential and talent, "Give me a chance to show you what I can do. I want

to do something of value" (*Home* 286). But she is preached by saying that, "once you are married, and in your own home, you can do what your in-laws think fit .... A daughter-in-law has to function in her married home.... You can do anything your husband permits" (*Home* 227). Her mother also remarks, "She is going to get married, why waste time and money in all this? Business is not an easy thing ... people know how to take advantage of a young girl" (*Home* 289, 90, 93). Millett has rightly pointed out, "Women's independence in economic life is viewed with distrust, prescriptive agencies of all kinds (religion, psychology, advertising etc) continuously admonish or even inveigh against [their] employment" (Millett 40-41). Francis argues that ways must be found "to 'see' gender beyond the body', i.e. identify gender as embedded in performed behaviour rather than sexed bodies" (qtd in Acker 413-14).

Once Nisha starts her boutique with a negligible financial support from her family she works hard to make it a success. During her struggle for establishing it successfully and later on when it is established, she carefully handles every aspect related with her venture. It shows that performance constructs a real identity for men and women which is above sex differences. As the novel explains, "Mummy, what have you done? Wailed Nisha. 'Even if he sleeps he never cuts less than five suits a day. I promised Gyan's twenty by day after, if he doesn't come, my reputation will be spoilt. Do you know how competitive the market is?" (*Home* 293). Nisha's "business was not to be run standing on the shoulders of others" (*Home* 292). However soon after her marriage Nisha surrenders her business and unquestioningly accepts the constricting life of a married woman in a traditional setting. She yields to the gender conditioning that the fulfillment of a woman's life lies in marriage and motherhood.

The depiction of the themes of education and financial independence are depicted in *The Immigrant* with modernist twists. Education is the means which allows Ananda to escape the drab reality of small town India, almost in a similar fashion it becomes a gateway for Nina also. The novel unfolds in a diasporic setting in which education and financial independence have more significant

connotations. The relationship issues are also taken up in the novel, Kapur mentions at one point in the novel, "These immigrants are always in two minds. Outwardly they adjust well. Educated and English speaking, they allow misleading assumptions about a heart that is divided" (*The Immigrant* 120). at the Indian Club in Canada, Ananda is amused at the situation of some Indian girls who can't speak English properly. As a result of such experiences, he feels satisfied that his sister has selected Nina as a bride who is a teacher of English Literature in Delhi and undoubtedly has a good command over English language. Such academic background becomes lucrative for a girl who has to settle in Canada after her marriage. Her linguistic capabilities would allow her to mix up in the new cultural moorings and maybe she would add to the family income also. Ananda's sister writes to him in one of her letters, "For the last nine years she has taught English at Miranda House; she spoke very knowledgeably of books, which will appeal to you. A career is important to her; you can decide later whether you want to be a double income family" (*The Immigrant* 55). Ananda is also happy to note that Nina can also speak French. Thus education is viewed primarily as an asset in the marriage market.

Another aspect which Kapur has depicted repeatedly in her novels is the inner loneliness experienced by women after their marriage. Her protagonists, who have been exposed to education, feel a strange vacancy after the initial euphoria is over. Within a few months of her marriage, Nina who has now migrated to Canada, suffers from monotony and a strange loneliness. She misses the structured pattern which his days had while she was teaching in India, "I miss a job - I miss doing things. Despite the discomfort of poor teaching facilities and the pain of stupid students, she had known the excitement of breaking into minds. That is entirely missing in her new life (*The Immigrant* 233, 91). Unable to comprehend the different requirements which she has to fulfill in order to work in a diaspora setting, Nina is irritated when Ananda is "quite categorical that she was not qualified" (*The Immigrant* 161), "Everything is very strange, she said in a rush. I used to be a teacher, in fact I taught for ten years before I came here. And now I do nothing.

I have not even been able to conceive. Am I locked into stereotypical expectations?" (*The Immigrant* 229). Unlike the protagonists of other novels taken up in this paper, Nina has experienced the fulfilling beauty of a purposeful life before her marriage. Thus she is sure of what she need in her life. Her experience of an independent work-life has imparted her a clarity of vision which is lacked by the other protagonists of Manju Kapur. She is also more conscious of the inequalities and injustices of patriarchal society. Nina requests Ananda, "I have to do something that ensures me a job I am suited for, where I won't take forever to qualify. I need to find my feet in this country. I can't walk on yours" (*The Immigrant* 213). But Ananda criticizes her, "Life is not a game. If you are so unsure, why go through all the trouble?" (*The Immigrant* 232). It is after some persuasion that Nina is able to join the Library School. "Library School assumed an excitement for Nina that she hadn't anticipated. Everybody was so nice and friendly. For the first time she had a sense of her own self, entirely separate from other people, autonomous, independent" (*The Immigrant* 249 261). Kapur portrays that education is extremely imperative if one wishes to be independent and successful. At one point she mentions in *Custody*, "Success didn't come just like that- there was a connection between upbringing and achievement" (*Custody* 171). Patriarchal society has not given women opportunities of opting for higher and professional education. Their upbringing exemplifies the stereotyped construction of femininity in which they are groomed merely for the roles of wives and mothers. As Rachel Bowlby has observed, "Higher education for women was dominated by a spurious use of sociology and anthropology to ensure girls got the message that their 'sex-role' as wives and mothers, and not their 'human' capacity to create and achieve in the working world, was the natural one" (Bowlby 62-63). Another character through whom this aspect of gender conditioning is portrayed is Ishita. Her arranged marriage with Suryakant puts several obstacles in her way to complete her B. Ed. As she was expected to devote completely to household chores. The women of "the family didn't work, daughters-in-law were obviously expected to devote themselves to home. What about her B. Ed., her desire to

be independent?" (*Custody* 53). Obtaining a professional degree sometimes becomes an impediment for women belonging to traditional milieu. Often the society perceives them as somewhat unfeminine as higher education makes them conscious of their rights. Patriarchal mind-set does not encourage a questioning mind. Upbringing in such a society forces women to accept marriage as the only destiny open to them. Ishita also accepts her marriage. However, her marriage does not offer her the required safety. Her broken marriage and the responsibility of a child compel Ishita to look for a job. In such cases economic independence becomes a compulsion and cannot be treated as a liberating factor, "If you are going to be a single parent, you will need more money. It is a lifelong responsibility. Now she had every intention of looking for a job as soon as she was able" (*Custody* 130). Ishita also feels the constraints of her situation and blames her parents for an early marriage, "I wanted to work, you got me married", but her mother responds, "At the time it seemed the right thing to do" (*Custody* 129). Kapur has boldly explained that women are allowed to access higher education as well as career only when there is a compulsion and their lives fall on the periphery of patriarchal social order ordained for a woman. Lack of preparedness for a career inhibits their prospects. Ishita looks for a teaching job in an educational institute. However, as she did not have any experience, college administration was reluctant to higher her. She ultimately joins as NGO, *Jeevan*, with the help of Mrs Hingorani. "To feel valued for the first time by the outside world. In July she was offered 2,000 monthly salary by Mrs Hingorani, her usefulness recognized, her position in the school entrenched" (*Custody* 136). Mrs Hingorani also motivates her to pursue her education saying that, "It will get you a job with more income, and that spells respect and independence" (*Custody* 178). Ishita decides to pursue MA in Social Work from the Institute of Social Welfare in Bombay. After qualifying the entrance test, she travelled to Bombay for the interview accompanied by her parents. She was nervous to face a group of five interviewers:

They looked at her CV, how had she been occupied between the years 1991 and 1995? Married, oh, she had been married.

No longer? What would happen if she married again? Why should they give her once precious seat if she had done nothing from 1991 to 1995 except be a wife? From the moment she had been born marriage had been the goal, and every choice reflected this (*Custody* 180).

Ishita's life foregrounds the patriarchal preferences for education and work as far as a woman is concerned. Transgression of traditional roles is frowned upon, making the rejection of stereotypical gendered roles and movement towards self-hood complicated. Patriarchal system enforces the sexual binaries and invests the male with the power that his physical masculinity does not automatically endow him with. It is not only the biological sex, but the culture which determines the gendered identities. Different and contradictory aims as far as education for girls and boys is concerned as well as the societal beliefs regarding their financial emancipation result in the economic marginalization of women. This aspect of gendered norms is exhibited in *Custody* not only through Ishita, but also through Shagun, who is the wife of Raman Kaushik - a sales manager in a multinational soft drink company. Shagun had aspired to be a model, but such leanings were not tolerated by her family.

... she had wanted to be a model, but her mother was strongly opposed to a career that would allow all kinds of lechery near her lovely daughter. 'Do what you like after you marry,' she said, but after marriage there had been a child. Then the claims of husband, family and friends made a career hard to justify, especially since money was not an issue. (*Custody* 11)

Societal choices governing women's career options are strictly limited. Certain professions are conventionally considered to be honorable which can be taken up by women if need be; whereas certain professions have a ring of disrespect around them. Modelling has been considered to be slightly disrespectful in traditional milieu and Shagun's family does not view it favorably. She is married at an early age and is not allowed to appear in any screen tests. By the time she is married and can think of accepting such offers she is considered to be too old to be acceptable in an industry which

routinely presents the commodification of feminine glamour. Sagun states, "She had got modelling offers that might have led to screen tests, but then she had married very young and there had been the inevitable children. Now she was too old to start in films. The women here earned a living by cooking and cleaning, while their daughters stayed at home also cooking and minding toddler siblings" (*Custody* 12). The norms which construct the femininity, also govern the norms which govern the arenas of family and work, marginalizing women economically. Women are groomed for accepting their natural roles as homemaker, childcare etc. that manufactures an economically and socially secondary status for them. Kapur depicts the importance of economic independence in imparting self-confidence and potential to take decisions to women. As shown in the novel, "At the brightness in her face, Mr Rajora wondered whether independence could go so far in making his daughter happy" (*Custody* 189). Like other gender theorists and women writers, Kapur believes that educational opportunities should be equally open and available to women also. It may be pertinent to cite Wollstonecraft at this point, who was among the earliest theorists to write in favor of such demands. She has remarked that the aim of perfect education is "to enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render it independent" (Wollstonecraft 31). Educational aims should not be perceived differently for boys and girls.

Kapur's novels have shown that in contemporary Indian society, particularly within the middle-class milieu, education of girls is still viewed through a gendered lens, constricting the options of their financial independence and curtailing their chances of attaining self-hood. The themes which have been taken up by Manju Kapur show how the positions of power and decision making are controlled by men and the participation of women is limited to the private spheres of home and family. Simultaneously she shows the impact of gendered social norms on the cognition and choices of women. Her novels also show the hesitation with which women approach their own financial independence and how men automatically take control of women's earnings. Kapur's novels exhibit the gendered notions which control and mould educational and careerist choices of

women, underscoring the idea that the abilities of women should not be assessed with a gendered perspective.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Susheel Kumar Sharma. *The Door Is Half Open.***

**New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors, 2012.**

**144 pp.**

**Syed Ahmad Raza Abidi**

*The Door Is Half Open* (2012) written by Dr Susheel Kumar Sharma is a delightful and fascinating collection covering a wide diversity of subjects and ideas. The poems of anthology don't profess to be carrying the baggage of any fashionable ideology, but they do seem to be anti-intellectual, anti-commercialisation, anti-communalism in the interest of humanity. Unburdened by the weight of rhyme and rhythm and shorn of the clinched poetic verbiage, the poems are capable of creating ripples in the staid and matter-of-fact of our times. The prominent themes as observed in his poems have contemporary as well as universal appeal. There are a number of poems on various subjects, which can be said to fill the picture of human pursuits. The anthology successfully reveals the poet's psyche and an undercurrent of seriousness running through on the one hand, and on the other, as literature inevitably is moving record of the social and cultural history. The first poem "Ganga Mata: A Prayer" grabs attention. The poet expresses his love and devotion for the river Ganga. The river Ganges or Ganga is perhaps the holiest river in any religion. Besides being a sacred river, Ganga is also worshiped as a deity in Hinduism and respectfully referred to as 'Gangaji' or 'Ganga Maiya' (Mother Ganga).

O Ganges!

The dweller in Lord Brahma's *kamandala*

The abider in Lord Vishnu's feet

The resider in Lord Shiva's locks  
The sojourner in the Hima-  
layas

The daughter of Sage Jahnu

The co-wife to Parvati and Lakshmi

The redeemer of Bhagiratha's race

The atoner of Sagar's progeny

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The mother of brave Bhishma

O *Ganga Maiya!*

Homage to thee.

Accept my obeisance

O *Punyakirti!*

(1-14)

The poet makes an attempt to come to grips with a world vitiated by anomalies and contradictions, hypocrisy and humbug, where principles and ideals have gone topsy-turvy and moral fabric has gone haywire, which a sensitive soul is unable to cope with. Dr. Sharma mantles different roles and dons different masks depending on the context of the poem. It reminds one of W.B. Yeats. The poet expresses his thought so vividly that he goes to the length of delineating the minutest details. Most of the times the poet is asking some ironical questions or making some sweeping statements. Every poem instigates us to search our soul or question our preconceived notions on truth, virtue and accepted social norms. Very adroitly the poet leaves the puzzle, knots, inconsistencies, ambiguities, and questions for the readers. The poet regards Varansi, a city fit for liberation. Varanasi, or Benaras, (also known as Kashi) is one of the oldest living cities in the world. Varanasi's prominence in Hindu mythology is virtually unrevealed. Mark Twain, the English author who was enthralled by the legend and sanctity of Benaras, once wrote : "Benaras is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend and looks twice as old as all of them put together" . According to the 'Vamana Purana', the Varuna and the Assi rivers originated from the body of the primordial person at the beginning of time itself. The tract of land lying between them is believed to be 'Varanasi', the holiest of all pilgrimages. The word 'Kashi' originated from the word 'Kas' which means to shine. Steeped in tradition and mythological legacy, Kashi is the 'original ground' created by Shiva and Parvati, upon which they stood at the beginning of time. Varanasi is the microcosm of Hinduism, a city of traditional classical culture, glorified by myth and legend and sanctified by religion, it has always attracted a large number of pilgrims and worshippers from time immemorial. To be in Varanasi is an experience in itself an experience in self-discover an eternal oneness of the body and soul. To every

visitor; Varanasi offers a breathtaking experience. Through the poem "Liberation at Varanasi", Susheel Kumar Sharma describes the feelings of pilgrims across the country.

I turn to you, O Varanasi,  
 In the moments of anxiety  
 When faith has been lost  
 And love not found  
 In the streets of London  
 And democracy has been strangled  
 On the pavements of Washington. (1-6)

The poet's existence in the mortal and sordid world seems to be full of inconsequential acts, futile memories and hopeless prospects. The deliberations of a conflicted mind find expression in the poem "Purgation".

The memory returns  
 Like Halley's Comet  
 Does after every seventy six years  
 To make me feel  
 That I've not grown an inch  
 Unlike the wild fire  
 That threatens to kill  
 An orangutang. (34-41)

The agonizing experience of living in a sordid universe is captured adequately through plurality of voices and variety of moods. Stuck deep into the mire the heart of the poet cries out for the purification of the soul:

A conch is rising from the lotus.  
 The conch is covered with  
 A design of a world.  
 The world is a jungle.  
 The jungle is burning.  
 Fire consumes sins.  
 Fire consumes virtues.  
 After Purgation  
 Nothing remains.

Brahma is revealed. (69-78)

The apparent autobiography of some poems are touching and moving. In "Vanity", the poet tells us about the strange and unique kind of desire of an old man who is weak and sick but does not want to die and wishes to live for some more years. Many poems in the anthology like "Strings", "Mediation", "Shattered Dreams" and "One Step Together" have been composed in subjective manner. The expansion of the poetic vision is clearly discernible as the poet struggles through the personal/public state of affairs. It is conveniently forgotten by many writers that how gifted a rhyme-master one can be but handling a non-native language for poetry is a super-human task by definition and since inception. The work has been careful on this count. This sincerity permeates the whole work and that I think is the most important quality of the book.

*The Door Is Half Open* is worth the reader's pains as it includes in its varied charms, valuable offering of insights to all sensible and sensitive humans. These poems are like shivering pearls, being born from the core of the poet's pure heart. The style, the content and beauty of Sharma's poems are very emulative. It is the poet's sincerity and depth of emotion combined with restrained use of imagery and over-all deceptive but penetrating simplicity of discourse, which draws the attention of a sensitive reader. Susheel Kumar Sharma's veracity lies in selection of themes and subject matter. Almost all the poems in this collection can broadly be divided into various heads: social, political, humanistic, personal and spiritual. A number of poems of the anthology entertain the reader with deep-seated emotional feelings of the poet on common human traits. The poet has played various notes of satire, pathos and other emotions in the gamut of poetical expression. Dr Sharma has been thoughtful enough of synergizing his collection into a balanced amalgam of poems dealing with both human sentiments and relationships as well as with larger issues which try to pose piercing questions to the collective conscience and wisdom of the society. By and large the book is suffused with love and pity for mankind expressed both directly and allegorically.

**H. C. Gupta. *Gupta's Companion to English.*****Delhi: Wisdom Publications, 2013. 527 pp.****Anurag Chauhan**

Written by a very experienced and scholarly teacher, Professor H. C. Gupta, *Gupta's Companion to English* is a book that every learner and lover of the English language would like to keep on his or her study table. This book is particularly useful for students living in small towns and villages, who get very little exposure to English or are unable to access good books for clearing their doubts. It is truly a book that can make English reach at the grass root level. The fact that this book now has come out in its third edition speaks of its immense popularity.

This book has four main parts; the various topics discussed have been divided within these. The present edition of the book has a supplement, too. The book starts with a section "Basics" which gives some basic facts and suggestions such as the difficult areas for Hindi speaking students, symbols of transcription, tips on consulting the dictionary and English learning, etc. which can be very helpful and reassuring for the student. It adopts the principles of functional grammar, yet Professor Gupta also understands well the problems of the non-native speakers of English. Accordingly, the book gives clear-cut explanations of grammatical items in Hindi too. A lot of the anxiety faced by a new learner will vanish upon seeing things explained in Hindi. The most problematic areas of grammar and translation have been covered well. Special emphasis has been given to confusing things. For example, there is a separate lesson on *be* as a main verb. The importance of translation is undeniable not only for its own sake per se, but also considering that the average learner has to use translation while learning a foreign language. The first part of the book, "Translation", therefore, presents a good starting point for the student. Another good point about this book is that Part I has sections on both active voice and passive voice sentences. This is very useful because students generally feel confused when they come across the passive voice, having learnt tenses only through active voice sentences. Part II of the book deals

exhaustively with grammar. The nuts and bolts of grammar are here. Starting with letters, uses of capital letter, spellings, etc. in the first section "Letters", it goes on to consider parts of speech, auxiliaries, etc. in Section Two, "Words", and then on to the third section entitled "Sentences" with detailed discussion of vital things like kinds of sentences, sequence of tenses, agreement, etc. It is interesting to see that even those grammatical items that are difficult to understand like infinitive, participle, clauses and transformation of sentences have been very well explained with examples, without adopting elaborate and convoluted language. The author has put a lot of useful things in Part III "Miscellaneous Items". A lot many useful things about the English language and composition can be found here. This section makes one feel like coming to learn the usage after learning the nitty gritty of translation and grammar in the earlier parts. Apart from things like word formation, proverbs and foreign words, it also examines things like certain forms of spoken English, body language, American English, comprehension, précis writing and abbreviations. The fourth part of the book concentrates on vocabulary, and has two mini dictionaries and others useful items. A special feature of the book is "Supplement" which is another very useful part of the book. "Grammar Capsule", one section of it, can prove to be indispensable for any student of grammar. Various terms of grammar have been clearly and lucidly defined here. Dr. Gupta has not overlooked the fact that the English language skills are tested at interviews. Accordingly, there is a special section on how to face interviews. The supplement also has a section on verbal distinction, explaining confusing words and their usage. The student can thus emerge out of the book ready with the skills required to face the world.

All the items in the book are well organized; each section not only complements the other sections but the items have been so systematically arranged that each part of the book builds up on the knowledge gained in the earlier parts, thus leading to a gradual and solid understanding. There are revision exercises throughout the book which should prove to be further helpful to the student in gaining a mastery over each topic covered.

A recent study says that one of the reasons why around 47% of Indian graduates are unemployable is because of the lack of command of the English language. Books like *Gupta's Companion to English* can be of great assistance in improving both the English skills and employability of students. Practically every area of English learning has been covered in this book. With 542 pages of substantial knowledge, this book can rival some of the best books for learning and improving English. At a price of Rs 250.00 this book is worth purchasing. The comprehensiveness and clarity of the book makes it useful and worth possessing by everyone, students, housewives, professionals or teachers.

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