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THE AESTHETICS AND TEMPER OF CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH DRAMA

Ranga Kapoor &
Kapil Kapoor

There have been three serious dramatic movements in the twentieth century--the high verse drama of T.S. Eliot variety, basically religious (sin and expiation), the expressionist drama of Tennesse Williams var iety, basically social, and the absurdist drama of Beckett, Pinter, Albee variety, basically existentialist. As the poetics of the absurdist drama departs most sharply from the given tradition of poetics, we will in this brief statement examine just that.

There is a mythology of the Absurd (in the narrative of modernity) --it is a response to an ideological/ philosophical crisis set loose by war, 'a paradigm on the FUTILITY of life.' Absurd meant 'OUT OF HARMONY': "...devoid of purpose... cut off from his religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless" (Martin Esslin, 1962). In a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien. Sisyphus, the prototype of an absurd hero, the epitome of futile labour, pointless existence, metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of human condition and inadequacy of the rational approach. Absurd is an attitude representative of the contemporary times; man's life is essentially without reasoning or purpose and that human beings cannot communicate.

The foundational world-view is Existentialism (Sartre), "a philosophical movement challenging essentialism and concentrating on the human situations," which reflects the crisis of the superficial optimistic world-view and belief in progressive development of society inherent in liberalism. Its features are the death of God, the invention of value, the problem of authenticity, the presence of anger, and nothingness as the basic category. He says that "man can no longer discover in God's will the appropriate values and principles for his life. Since he is free, and since there is no God, he must freely invent his own values,

goals and purposes." Above all, it is impossible to be certain about anything (cf. Beckett's work).

This produced a reaction to the CONSTRICTING traditions in the dramatic genre as inadequate, an "abandoning of the dramatic form and coherent dialogue, the futility of experience being conveyed by illogical and meaningless speeches and ultimately by complete silence." Banality and repetitiveness, actions... minimised, sometimes absolutely no action, reduction of costumes, even stage p roperties minimised are some of its other features.

Substantially, these plays have no story or plot to speak about, are often without recognisable characters, and the dialogue is as babblings in them. The omission of an explanation or a motivation for action appears to be deliberate, for there is a feeling of deep disillusionment, the draining away of the sense of meaning and purpose in life after the War. But, to apply a category from this reaction itself, the question of authenticity remains, whether it itself is not a hasty and insufficient understanding of life producing an aesthetics of doubtful value.

For the aesthetics and the temper of this drama, let us consider two plays, Albee's *The Zoo Story* and Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter*. The first one is an outsider's inability to establish genuine contact with a dog -- let alone any human being. It questions the American 'optimism,' the American way of life. It is an exploration of the force and the agony of human isolation--"a kind of parable... full of allusions, references and cadences from the Bible. The dog itself is Cereberus at the mouth of the underworld and Jerry is a kind of Jesus figure trying to storm the gates of hell." (Paulocei 1972 : 41) It illustrates the consequences of apathy and human indifference and is a criticism of complacency and hypocrisy. It is also seem/n as a revolt of the bohemian, that documents the emotional isolation of the social exile. *The Dumb Waiter,* on the other hand, has no perceptible intellectual content at all. Its drama is very interior. The glimpse of two hired killers is told not merely without heightened prose but in the lowest common denominator of human speech -- in dialogue in which every phrase is drawn almost straight from

life at a level of intellectual vacancy which seems the death of drama; but it is handled with a sure command of such pause and repetition that it evokes simultaneously the laughter of contemptuous recognition and a shiver of dread. As within ourselves, on the one hand open abysses of bottomless inanity, on the other loom the fearful crags of an irrational, implacable cruelty. It is a bizarre and claustrophobic exploration of the lower depths. The characters are less well educated, less intelligent, less well balanced, and less self-confident members of a society.

This literature is governed by a new aesthetics of post-modernity. While the classical Greek drama and its descendents engaged with cosmological and ontological concerns, the high drama of Europe, the drama of humanism concerned itself both anthropological and interpersonal displaying great faith in man and his high destiny. This modern drama, as against that which is in the high tradition, shifts its concern to the existential condition of the individual both in terms of the interpersonal and the social. In its selection and treatment of this theme, it manifests an aesthetics informed by a definite philosophy of man and his condition.

What is this aesthetics? By examining these compositions in the given (classical) poetics, we can understand its terms and also evaluate it.

THE ZOO STORY

We will first examine *The Zoo Story* in the petronymic framework of Aristotle's *Poetics* to identify its poetics and aesthetics. We examine in terms of Aristotle's following 9 categories: goal, means for realizing the goal, plot/story, action, mode (of representation), medium, type of tragedy/play, effect (conditions of), and structure and formal parts.

The goal of drama in the given theory is *catharsis*, that is purging or purification of emotion (negative) for restoring a healthy mind, for achieving mental health. This goal has come to be looked upon with scepticism--it is seen as an evasion. This therapeutic goal is alien to this drama/kind of literature, which is in fact an affliction--you could start reading/seeing these plays

by being at peace and then lose it. That is called eliminating complacency. How is this goal, the therapeutic goal to be achieved? What is the ailment that has to be corrected? Pity and fear are not to be exercised and the drama evokes these for the characters it portrays. But in this drama, it is disgust and horror that are evoked. We are not grieved when Jerry dies. We do not grieve at all for the fate of all these people Jerry is associated with, all those unhappy people. The effect their misery has had on them only disgusts us.

THROUGH (PLOT/STORY)

In the given theory the desired emotions can be evoked 'through a representation of noble family history' (p.86),[1] so that we are afraid that if this can happen to these people, it may happen to us as well--and thus the fear. And the characters must be 'good' with 'a certain moral purpose in what he says or reveals' (pp.55, 56) particularly if 'the baseness is not required by the story' (56). Thirdly the story would show that something is happening or has happened against the given law (social or moral).

This assumes the existence of a law independent of the character (s), and also assumes the obligation of an individual to adhere to this law which is outside himself and it also suggests that there is some connection between such 'moral' characters and the 'family'. Now this structure which is the basis of a stable society is totally absent in this modern drama. In the society depicted in these plays there is no law outside the individual. The individual has obligation only to himself (has to have the obligation?). The ethical imperative--'moral', right or wrong--is completely absent.

CHARACTERS

The characters are less than ordinary, have no family and are psychologically abnormal. They are not 'good'--show no awareness of any moral purpose. Next the plot, says Aristotle, involves 'a change in fortune', involving complication, discovery and denouement. But these plays are static--they portray a given state, a fallen state and give no explanation. Here is no 'fortune',

so no change of fortune.

ACTION

The action in Aristotle's theory is expected to have incidents illustrative of the characters and plot, and spectacle, both being important values for drama as theatre. Both incidents and spectacle are absent in this drama. The incidents are very minor and generally recalled and the spectacle is non-existent. In fact, the locale is generally a non-descript house or a public place and the time is afternoon and the session is summer. The best of time and a public place for the worst sort of character and his private horrors. This is the exact opposite of high drama.

MODE

In the given theory idealised character and action are represented in accordance with the third of Aristotle's three modes of representation. Here too the mode is the third--'ought to be— only the 'ought' is reversed and we end up with exaggerated characters--caricatures.

TYPE OF TRAGEDY

This play is a "tragedy" in the sense that Jerry dies/kills himself/ is murdered at the end though it does not have a tragic effect. Regardless, it is a tragedy not of character of suffering but of circumstance (both for Jerry and Peter). There is no real suffering--merited or unwanted. And there is nothing out of ordinary in the characters. What about the effect? A play in the given theory should yield 'tragic pleasure' which depends on pity and fear produced by a deed done between friends, family or enemies. There must be 'undeserved misfortune' and a shift from 'happiness to misery' not due to 'depravity' but due to 'some great error on his part' (p.51).

Now it is the facelessness of the exponents that characterises this drama--they are not of a (any or noble) family and are neither friends nor enemies. The event is completely unmotivated by human relationships which makes it motiveless.

But there is an element of classical poetics here. Peter suffers on account of an 'error'--not getting away, allowing Jerry to intrude on him. But if he is hypnotized, is he in error? But

that'd make Jerry a villain. Is he a villain?

EFFECT

There is, in fact, no tragic pleasure in this drama. There is a general less of faith and a sense of fear produced by helplessness before circumstances. For tragic pleasure, we have to be moved deeply--we are not.

FORMAL STRUCTURE PARTS

There is no formal structure rooted in the plot in these plays. We have one-scene, one act play here, and 17 scene play, 'Live Like Pigs' by Arden.

ASSESSMENT (THE NEW AESTHETICS)

There is a shift from 'doing' and 'happening' to 'being' in this drama. This is an important ontological shift to the being consequent upon what happens or is done to the characters. The Greek drama encompassed both action and the resulting state;--witness Sophocles' *Oedepus*--but that is what constitutes its greatness.

This modern drama is not total and is unsatisfactory in that we can't make out why a person is what he is. But there has to be a cause or a chain of causes. It is skipped, one feels, because an acknowledgement of the existence of a cause would falsify the philosophy of meaninglessness. This is an intellectual lacunae--contradiction.

Also, human life is seen as mean and not sublime as in the Greek tragedy or grand as in the Shakespearean tragedy. There is no fall recounted--man is presented in a fallen state, devoid of nobility or goodness or any positive sentiment. There is no divinity in him--that is the anti-climax. Action is a series of interior cognitions. Mind becomes the stage--and particularly a mind that is not lucid. Recall or memory is the dominant epistemology. They talk of things that have been that the burden.

The goal is to just alert you or make you aware--not purging, not purification, not increasing your wisdom (learning) and certainly not delight. The effect is to bring about a state of depression in the auditor, to subdue him. If it were performed on the stage,

a large audience would pay to be made unhappy and tense and unclean!

So the given theory, the classical theory does not explain the aesthetics of this kind of drama, which is seen as a 'revolution.' Chiefly because, the mode of representation has shifted from overt action and incident to an enactment of the mental states and because it is not sublime (in character, thought or language). This could be treated as a failure of the classical theory. Secondly, is the view of human nature and life and its purpose, implicit in this drama, the correct or valid view? Notice that the notion of 'a fallen state' brought about by 'circumstance' is noted in the pagan (Greek) concept of 'destiny' (malevolent gods) and the Christian concept of sin (leading to fall of man). Though there is 'revolt' against the Greek and the Christian Tradition, their assumptions continue to underpin the philosophy of this drama. And this makes the absence of the ethical imperative stand out as illogical and as an omission because ultimately the narrative leads to the need for one, and because to deny the existence of a moral sense is to falsify the human nature. This is another intellectual flaw of this drama; ultimately, it can not, does not appeal to our reason either.

THE INDIAN VIEW AND THEORY

Let us put this intellectual content in the Indian perspective. Dominant Indian philosophy delinks man from a 'personal God,' points an autonomous *dharma* (independent of whether there is a God or not) and makes *dharma* an object of man's worldly efforts--as first of the four *purusarthas* (four ends of life—*dharma, artha, kama, moksa*). Man is not a special creation of God and he is not at the centre of the universe. As an ordinary being, and one endowed with a thinking faculty (*prajna, buddhi*), he has to, and can, find his own *moksa* in this very life. This is complemented by the powerful *karma* theory which makes him alone responsible for his actions and for what he is--the onus cannot be shifted on to society, or God or some other external agency. The third important theory is the *Samkhya* theory of *trigunatamaka prakriti*, which provides a framework of evalu-

ation independent of ethics. It lays down the possibilities of perfection, the mean and the degradation of everyone, everything and gives everyone room for judging his or her efforts.

The Indian dramaturgy is based in these theories and develops its theory of paradigm states of being--*bhavas*--and taxonomises human experience and human congnitive universe in terms of these. The *rasa*, manifested eight or nine relatively durable states of being is the essence and meaning (*artha*) of everything--*ras i sah* says the *shruti*--and evocation or construction of these psychological states through appropriate objective correlatives--causal factors, physical manifestations and actions, etc. is the goal of drama. These psychological states include both 'good' and 'bad', both *sringara*, beauty, and *vibhatsa*, disgust, and so on, and, therefore, this theory which centres itself on a whole range of psychological states, emotions, if you please, as objects of representation and subordinates 'action' and 'incident' to a purely instrumental role is much better equipped to handle this drama of the absurd, which is essentially a psychological drama.

Once we understand the overall structure of Rasa theory as

Rasa

vibhava ————————→ Sthayi ←———————— Abhinaya

anubhava sãttvika bhava

We are able to analyse the aesthetic experience in these plays as a construct of--

1. The dominant *rasa* (*vibhatsa*, disgust)
2. Predominance of *klista rasas* (the unhappiness generating experiential states)
3. Absence of *aklista rasas*— (*sringara, karuna, hasya*)
4. The production of deviant states (*rasas*) by what Abhinavagupta calls the *tadabhasa* phenomenon.

(Thus elements of *rati* produce *vibhatsa* or element of *soka* produces *bhaya*, horror instead of *sringara* and *karuna* respectively).

5. As dominantly constituted by the *vacika abhinaya* (and therefore closer to naratives and poor as theatre). On account of these, the effect cherished by the idealists like Abhinavagupta--*sattvodreka prakasanands*--is not achieved. There is absence of the *sattvika guna--tamasika* predominates--so the human effort which should be directed towards accomplishment of *dharma* is not so directed and as such it fails to produce *jnana* and *ananda.* The ultimate goal of all human endeavour, including composition of litereture, is to achieve *ananda* from the *santa rasa.*

In this perspective, one can ask oneself (i) what is the states of people like Jerry and (2) whether literature should make them and this kind of narrative as the subject - matter of representation. The answer is that if Jerry is ill, he needs treatment (and not representation to universalise his ailment). *Sadharanikarana* may help us recognize the ailment in ourself, but there is no cure--this drama has no therapeutic goal. It won't help. And if Jerry is not ill, his experience if given literary representation would take away the *rta* of the people; so our culture decides that they are fit subjects not for literature but for *ayurveda* (texts of psychiatry)! That is a cultural specificity and explains why 'art-films' too fail with Indian audiences and for good reasons.

REFERENCES

[1]All page references are to Byford's edition of *Aristotle's Poetics*.

HAMLET: AN INTERPRETATION

H.C. Gupta

Dying Hamlet says to his confidant Horatio: "What a wounded name,\Things standing thus unknown shall live behind me." (Act V. sc. ii). A puzz!e all through his life, Hamlet became a riddle after his death, as he had died entombing his unspoken and unspeakable secret in his heart. Shakespeare's forcus of attention being the inscrutable human heart, a closer study of the text--i.e., Hamlet's thoughts and actions--is essential for understanding the riddle. The purpose of this article is twofold: one, to show that Hamlet, like other tragic heroes of Shakespeare, is heroic and active; and two, to prove that the other theme of son-mother relationship is, if not the primary one, no less important than the revenge-theme. There can be little doubt that Hamlet, to use T.S. Eliot's term, is an appropriate "objective correlative" of a person suffering from trauma.

A nursling of immortality, Hamlet of Shakespeare faces a heart-sickening, soul-corroding mental strife between his individual Self and social Self. Hamlet's ulcer bursts and oozes out his agony:

> So, oft it chances in particular men
> That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
> As in their birth, wherein they are not guilty
> (Since nature cannot choose his origin),
>
> ....
>
> ...; that these men,
> Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
> Being Nature's livery, or Fortune's star,
> His virtues else, be they as pure as grace,
> As infinite as man may undergo,
> Shall in the general censure take corruption
> From that particular fault: the dram of evil
> Doth all the noble substance often dout,
> To his own scandal. (Act I. sc.iv)

This exactly is his lot. Hamlet believes that he is the son of a false mother, and so he is life-long to suffer social disgrace for no fault of his. His soliloquy, with a slight modification [insertion of a comma after 'not'] expresses the play's dominating theme:

> "To be or not, to be--that is the question."

His being born of a characterless woman, which is beyond his control, has made the play even more intensely painful than *King*

Lear.

The play is an illuminating study of a humiliating and humiliation-breeding situation from the point of view of a person aspiring to be the "paragon of animals," but made quintessence of dust from birth. Beyond any doubt, that what is the second command of King Hamlet's Ghost is the first and foremost duty of Hamlet of Shakespeare's concept:

> If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not
> Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
> A couch for luxury, and damned incest.... (Act I. sc.v)

And that could be possible only if Gertrude ceased to be adulterate. When Hamlet realizes the terrible reality of his being, Gertrude ceases to be mother and turns into a woman, simply a breeding animal. She is for him "mistress," "madam," "queen," or "lady."

That Shakespeare has introduced a second theme is well-established by the text and accepted by critics and scholars.[3] Shakespeare has more than once spoken of "purposes." Not only does Horatio tell of "purposes mistook" telling Hamlet's tale after his death, Hamlet himself says to Laertes: "I am constant on my purposes." As such, the pith and marrow of the tragic action is the tale of exceptional suffering of an unnatural offspring--a prince. His heart has become a battlefield for his deep-seated soul-corroding feelings of disgust, repulsion, and abhorrence for a whole-heartedly loved mother. His personality and career are the result of a series of inter-related psychological and moral crises. Closely seen, his scathing outbursts, seemingly rash actions and indeliberate murders are but the frothy substance on the surface, stormy and volcanic eruptions of heart-rending aversion of a helpless, conscientious, virtuous, and loving son. The external conflict simply reflects his bleeding, agitated heart. And the crux of the problem lies in the fact that although the tragedy ends with the cousin's revenge against his uncle in keeping with the commands of the Ghost, his heart is not at all in it. Rather, it is in painfully avoiding it. Whetting the blunted thorns in the heart of a dearly-loved mother-turned-mistress is uppermost in his thoughts--as this alone could make him carry out the commandment of his father's Ghost. Seen in this light, Hamlet becomes a typical Shakespearean hero--a sacrificial

victim who eventually performs the heroic feat of killing Claudius as his final gesture. Made to fight an already lost battle, the heroic prince is rosolute on his life-mission. In his first soliloquy, he expresses his misery and decides his line of action. Letting go the alternative of self-defeating suicide, he stands up against a "sea of troubles and by opposing end them." Obviously, character is destiny in his case as well. The image that emerges of the hero precludes a number of inconsiderate attacks on unheroic, passive and irresolute Hamlet and other related misinterpretations.

Textual details leave no doubt that the emotional injury has left Hamlet transfixed with regard to the revenge motif of the conventional story. Almost all the characters in the play are aware of "settled something on his heart." The Bed Chamber Scene (Act III. sc.iv) is certainly decisive with regard to the standpoint taken here. The badly upset guilty Gartrude sends for Hamlet who, saying in an Aside "Were she ten times my mother !" meets her all alone for the first time. Then follows the following highly meaningful bits of dialogue:

Hamlet: You go not till I set you up a glass where you may see the inmost part of you.
Queen: O ! What a rash and bloody deed is this !
Hamlet: A bloody deed ! almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king and marry with his brother.
Queen: As kill a king !
Hamlet: Ay, lady, it was my word.

This makes it all clear that to Hamlet, for reasons better known to him and his creator, Gertrude is not an accomplice in his father's murder, but the murderer herself.

At the beginning of the play when he meets his mother for the first time, he gives a clue to the heavy weight on his heart.

Queen: Thou know'st 'tis common; all that live must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.
Hamlet: Ay, madam, 'tis common.
Queen: If it be,
Why seems it so particular with thee ?
Hamlet: Seems, madam ! Nay, it is: I know not "seems." (Act I. sc.ii)

Another discussion with his confidant in this very scene is equally full of telling implications:

Horatio: My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.

Hamlet: I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow-student,
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.
Horatio: Indeed, my lord, it follow'd hard upon.
Hamlet: Thrift, thrift, Horatio ! the funeral bak'd meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven
Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio !
My father, methinks I see my father. (Act I. sc.ii)

He lives broken-hearted ever since. In one soliloquy after another, the flood-tide of his agony shoots up from his bruised conscience. Whereas in the first soliloquy, he laments his woeful impasse, in his second soliloquy, he almost voices his secret out of his intense suffering:

And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmix'd with baser matter. Yes,by heaven !
O most pernicious woman !
O villain, villain, smiling damned villain. (Act I. sc.v)

Here it may be noted to establish our viewpoint that in Hamlet's order of priorities, "most pernicious woman" comes first and "smiling damned villain" next. Dying Hamlet, makes a moving appeal to his inmate Horatio "to report me and my cause aright\To the unsatisfied."

Thus, the theme "Frailty ! thy name is woman," that starts with the beginning of the play and ends with the end of the play, runs as a mighty current all through, and pushes the revenge theme aside. The hero, like other Shakespearean tragic heroes is obsessed: he is the son of a foul mother. When this obsession is on, he is full to the brim of the passion of hatred which drives out all other passions, including the passion of revenge. The hero tries his utmost to keep his wretchedness confined all to his heart, but it inundates in hysteric outbursts and irrational behaviour and actions. What Hamlet tells his mother is true to a word about himself:

....Mother, for love of grace,
Lay not this flattering unction to your soul,
That not your trespass but my madness speaks;
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
While rank corruption, mining all within
Infects unseen. (Act III. sc.iv)

Shakespeare is a master gamester as he convincingly plays one game in terms of another to make it all the more interesting: while

the false scent of the revenge motif leads us stray, his wonderful idea of entombing an open secret in the protagonist's heart has worked miracles in making the play puzzling and the hero's personality multi-faceted. The beauty and greatness of *Hamlet* lies in the fact that it has a Hamlet-like obsession for every interested reader to make his whole-hearted efforts towards explaining an unexplained and unexplainable mystery.

Unquestionably, then, Shakespeare has deployed all artistic forces at his command in making Hamlet play the role of an affectionate son vis-a-vis a wicked mother. Beyond any doubt, Shakespeare has used various remedial practices--psychological, philosophical, metaphysical, and ethical--for curing a tainted mind and an emotionally diseased person, brooding over sexual depravity. In the terminology of modern psychology, Hamlet represents, what has been termed "negative personality." Latest physiological and psychological research has made it clear that our conscious activities are governed by our subconscious and unconscious instincts and attitudes that determine our motives and thinking. And Hamlet at the very outset is an unwholesome person with a heart-ulcer and brain-tumour which he has repressed and not uprooted. With a strife on between his two selves, no wonder, he finds time "out of joint," and himself in prison. In this state of ingrained helplessness and highly inflamed conscience, his nerves are ever over-strung. Actually, he falls a prey to, what we may call, self-punishment mechanism. Carrying a nihilistic vision towards life and the world, nourishing dammed up agony and anxiety--the most formidable and disintegrating enemies of human personality--Hamlet so often becomes hysterical, swishes trouble and restlessness all around. Doing all sorts of impulsive acts and lost in emotional dither, like an expert psycho-analyst, he post-mortems his omissions and commissions. His overpowering obsession and guiltless guilt-ridden conscience make him commit suicide piecemeal till he breathes his last. What is astonishing is the fact that Shakespeare has made Hamlet perform his difficult role heroically with his harrowed-up soul and tension-tossed brain. His unidentified agony forces upon him a headlong rush into activities and self-communing.

The explanation of ghosts and witches in Shakespeare's tragedies as the projection of the divided self of the character is more pertinent in case of Hamlet than that of other heroes. The Ghost in *Hamlet* simply speaks out his own deep-seated ideas. Significantly, the Ghost appears in Act I. sc.v whereas Hamlet is "a very much changed person" right from his very first appearance and utterance in the action in the play. The Ghost's leading Hamlet to a safe distance attests to yet another psychological truth: Hamlet cherishes the fond hope of keeping his open secret all to himself.

Reading between the lines that Shakespeare has given to the Ghost will help us a lot in our discussion, as that makes the very heart of the tragic action. During the first meeting of the hero and the Ghost, the equivocal direction given to Hamlet is: "Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast/..../The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen:/O Hamlet what a falling-off was there !" (Act I. sc.v) Now, the murder of brother by brother for the sake of his crown and wife is "unnatural," but the murder of her husband by his wife after years of married life for the sake of sexual gratification is cartainly most preposterous and "unnatural." The Ghost has confirmed Hamlet's suspicion. In his first command, Hamlet is to take revenge against his uncle. The Ghost then lays down the other duty:

> Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
> A couch for luxury and damned incest
> But, howsoever, thou pursuest this act,
> Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
> Against thy mother aught, leave her to heaven
> And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge
> To prick and sting her. (Act I. sc.v)

The crux of the problem is that Hamlet's mind is already tainted and in his mother's bosom there lodge no "thorns to prick and sting her." Justifiably enough, Hamlet could save the "royal bed of Denmark" from becoming "a couch for luxury and damned incest" not by killing his uncle, but by putting an edge to the blunted thorns so as to prick and sting Gertrude. And that is what he decides to do--or better, what part Shakespeare gives him to play primarily. As has been made clear in the beginning of this discussion, Hamlet feels convinced that the villain in this drama of life is his mother,

and his uncle has just played the second fiddle apropos her lewdness—she who has exchanged "a Hyperion for a satyr," "a mountain to feed on a moor." In Act III. sc.iv, to Gertrude's query, "Have you forgot me ?" Hamlet's answer is revealing:

> No, by the rood, not so;
> You are the queen, your husband's wife;
> And would--it were not so, "you are my mother." (Act III. sc.iv)

This cry comes from the core of Hamlet's heart. The very first address of Claudius touches Hamlet's sore and triggers off the tragic action: "But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son." Hamlet gets highly disturbed finding his secret made public, and this is sufficient to unhinge the Wittenberg scholar. In the response given in an Aside, Shakespeare sums up Hamlet's tragedy and career: "A little more than kin, a less than kind."--he is not Claudius' cousin and cannot pass for his son, "mole of nature" as he is to all intents and purposes. Claudius asks Hamlet to think on him "As of a father." And the guilty conscience, Gertrude plies that he should bear his father's death as something quite usual and normal course of a natural process, and he should stay with them and not go back to Wittenberg. Naturally, the self-reproachful son opens fire on the "madam," "lady," "queen," or "his father's brother's wife." She is "incestuous beast" and mother no more. His well-thought reply at last is: "I shall in all my hest obey you, madam." Hamlet's transformation surprises both Gertrude and Claudius, and puts them on pins and needles, as mad with deep-rooted intense abhorrence he is. Claudius wants to know "the head and source of all your son's distemper" from Gertrude. Her explanation for "my son's too much changed son" is to the point: "his father's death, and our hasty marriage." In his first soliloquy, Hamlet is abusive of her "most wicked speed." To make matters worse, he discovers Ophelia as decoy, to whom his advice is to go to a "nunnery" to avoid being "a breeder of sinners." Self-explanatory, he opens his heart to his beloved honestly in clear words in prose: "Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest: and yet I could accuse me of such thing that *it were better my mother had not borne me.* I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious; *with more offences at my back than I have thoughts to*

put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellow as I do crawling between heaven and earth" (Act III. sc.i). For him, she is another Gertrude in the making: "I have heard of your paintings, too, well enough. God has given you one face and you make yourselves another." (Act III. sc.i). Then his one time friend Guildenstern, playing in the hands of the queen, turn the oases in his heart into desert places. He makes a confession to his friend Guildenstern: "man delights me not, no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so" (Act II. sc. ii).

In the three other core scenes of the play--the Play Scene, the Bed Chamber Scene, and the seeming-irrelevant Churchyard Scene--as well, the son-mother relationship theme has assumed a dominating position. Hamlet arranges that Play Scene (Act III. sc.ii) to catch the conscience of his mother no less than that of his uncle. He turns down Gertrude's appeal to sit by her and intentionally chooses to sit at Ophelia's feet to observe her face closely and clearly. He poses a heart-searching query to Gertrude: "Madam, how did you like the play?" The queen stands exposed in her answer: "The lady doth protest too much." Hamlet has certainly succeeded in catching the queen's conscience.

The crisis comes when Gertrude in "most great affliction" sends Hamlet for parleying to her bed-chamber. Slow but steady, Hamlet pursues his aim, which he puts in unequivocal terms, addressing his mother, "leave wringing of your hands; sit you down/ And let me wring your heart" (Act III. sc.iv). Playing his winning game, Hamlet attacks with a master stroke. Gertrude at long last gives way and makes a motherly move. But she succumbs as her words show: "These words like daggers enter mine ears/No more, sweet Hamlet."

No sooner does the mother admit that the "wonderful son" has "cleft her heart in twain," Hamlet implores her lovingly to cast aside "the worser part of it,/And live the purer with the other half." He solicits her not to go to his uncle's bed that night and "monster custom" will come to her rescue: "Refrain tonight:/And that shall lend a kind of easiness/To the next abstinence." Hamlet, true to his word and intention, has been "cruel only to be kind." The son

in Hamlet can safely entrust his mother with his secret, asking her not to tell others that he was" not mad essentially but mad in craft." And the mother in Gertrude gives him full assurance.

The son and mother being reconciled, Hamlet wishes his mother "Good night." And departing, he wishes again: "Mother, good night. Good night, mother." Use of "mother" twice in one breath, instead of "madam" or Lady" and so on, is full of meaningful implications in this thesis of son-mother relationship theme. Again, leaving for England, he wishes farewell to his "mother" not Madam," or "queen." Seen as such, Shakespeare has outstandingly dovetailed the bond-breach-and-restoration theme in telling the old story in his own way.

Claudius, working under the instinct of fear, readily decides to despatch Hamlet to England, where he would have him killed. He has not only persuaded Laertes for a duel but also got his sword venomed. Also, to be rest assured of Hamlet's death, he himself prepares a cup of poisonous drink. This is to be noted that Claudius does not take the mother into confidence, plotting against her son's life. All through the bloody bouts the mother is very much worried about her son--she offers her napkin to Hamlet when he is bleeding. Motherly, she offers to wipe Hamlet's face, and dying discloses to him that Claudius has poisoned the cup prepared for him. All this is enough for attesting her transformation, and once his animus against her is gone, with unburdened conscience he with a tiger's leap pounces upon the damned villain. He not only stabs him with the same sword which he has venomed for ensuring his death, but also forces him to drink the wine with potion in it. In a word, to the readers' great relief, he has succeeded in carrying both the commands of his father's ghost. He has manly destroyed both the root and the fruit of sexual depravity, and saved "the royal bed of Danmark" from becoming "a couch for luxury and damned incest."

Thus Hamlet is neither unheroic, passive, nor dilatory. On the other hand, he is perhaps the most quick-witted, the most restlessly active, agile, and challenging of Shakespeare's heroes. We cannot blame him for not doing what he is quite unwilling and reluctant to do. Nor does his creator want him to take revenge on the villainous

accomplice of his mother. It is simply a question of deciding Hamlet's order of priorities that makes all the difference in our reading of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, in which the 'primum mobile' is Gertrude and the wretched pitiable lewd Claudius is her prey and accomplice. And Shakespeare means it literally, factually, truly, and absolutely. That first to die is the queen and that the incestuous, murderous, damned Claudius is made by Shakespeare to follow her removes even the shadow of doubt in this respect.

Hamlet wins all our admiration for repressing his ire and animus in the face of highly provoking situations. Seen in this light, Laertes and his rapid action and seeming-superfluous march of Fortinbras' forces justify their existence in the play. The old fable of revenge has assumed allegorical dimensions: Shakespeare shows by illustration that instinct is reliable but impulse is not. After the Play Scene, when his blunted purpose has been whetted, Hamlet could that very moment, as he says "drink hot blood/and do such bitter business as the day/Would quake to look on" (Act III. sc.ii). Not only does he spare him, but also resolves, before entering his mother's bed-chamber: "O heart, lose not thy nature, let not ever/The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom" (Act III. sc.ii). The firmness of his purpose makes him break but not go stray. No wonder he himself is taken aback; self-reproachful, he puts it thus:

> ... I do not know
> Why yet I live to say "This thing is to do,"
> Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means
> To do it. (Act IV. sc.iv)

Impulsive, instantaneous revenge would certainly have made Hamlet a "quintessence of dust."

We shall further look into Hamlet's behaviour in the light of modern psychological research, which tells us that the very fountain-head of a man's being is poisoned, if he fails to purge himself of a shock. Hamlet has tried to strangulate his trauma. In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare to all intents and purposes has taken up the study of a psychological case, that of a guiltless bastard. The ill-starred Hamlet hides "the mole of nature" in the Id, dresses up the Ego to safeguard the Super Ego against all odds[3]: how could he share his knowledge of the terrible reality even with his beloved Ophelia

or confidant Horatio ? Shakespeare has deftly composed the disintegrating integrated personality of Hamlet, placing him in one tense and trying situation after another in quick succession to show the soul-corroding and heart-gnawing disgrace. These testing situations, on the one hand, have enriched the hero's character and on the other hand, allowed Shakespeare all free entrance to the conscious, subconscious, and unconscious working of his mind—to make inroads to the dark yawning recesses of heart, brain, and conscience of a guiltless virtuous sufferer. Making astonishing use of artistic powers at his disposal, Shakespeare has x-rayed through Hamlet the conscientious, instinctive, and impulsive actions and reactions of a sensitive and sensible person.

To sum up, Hamlet has been portrayed from within with searching floodlight flashes and full focus on his instincts, unfathomable recesses of heart and conscience vis-a-vis blood-bond consciousness--the fountainhead of his motives, thought processes and archetypal behaviour. He is neither an enigma nor a fantasy. He is an imaginatively conceived experience-realized embodiment of psychological truth. That what is really surprising is Shakespeare's alchemy which has turned a melodramatic tale of revenge into a highly fruitful tragedy and rewarding study in human psyche by introducing in it the theme of son-mother relationship.

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DESDEMONA AND SAKUNTALA : A STUDY IN COMPARISON

Tapati Lahiri

Both Desdemona and Sakuntala occupy the central points in the structural designing of the plays, and it is the gradual unfolding of their personalities which make the two plays organic in character. This study that seeks to explore the common ground between them is a pleasant discovery by comparison, chiefly because it reflects the destinies of the two innocent and suffering heroines like Desdemona and Sakuntala closely parallel, and yet sharply divergent in other ways. The main objective of the paper is to study how the distinctive similarities have been skilfully treated in the two respective plays, *Othello* and *Abhijnana Sakuntalam*. It is also proposed to evaluate, appreciate and distinguish the character of Desdemona, as compared with Sakuntala, although they belong to different social and cultural ethos. There are some very striking points of resemblance between Desdemona and Sakuntala, and the present paper is intended to enumerate them.

The first thing to note in this connection is that both are exceedingly beautiful women. Innocence, gentleness, modesty, sweetness and loving kindness are some of the outstanding features of their characters. To begin with Desdemona, we are introduced to

> A maiden never bold of spirits
> So still and quiet, that her motion
> Blush'd at herself (I. iii)[1]

Desdemona's 'movement of the soul,' softness of the mind, impulse and reticence are all emphasised in these lines. She is one of the most lovable among Shakespeare's women. Sakuntala, on the other hand, is an epitome of Indian womanhood. In Dusyanta's description of her beauty Sakuntala's gracefulness and tenderness are thus glanced at

> This lovely maiden in her dress of bark/seems all the lovelier. Even the meanest garb/Gives to true beauty fresh attractiveness.
>
> (I.Sc. A Forest)[2]

Dusyanta is so much enraptured by her beauty that he falls in love with Sakuntala.

We have notice in Desdemona a fundamental characteristic, which distinguishes her from Sakuntala. Desdemona is Brabantio's natural child. She lives with her father in Venice, a city full of its glamour. Brabantio himself holds a great social status, the senatorial in Venice. As a natural consequence of a city life, Desdemona's way of life is entirely different from that of Sakuntala in the holy hermitage- environment. Sakuntala, daughter of the Sage Visvamitra and the heavenly nymph Menaka, was abandoned by her parents in a forest. Kaṇva took her in his hermitage where she was brought up by him as her foster-father. Brought up in his hermitage, she imbibes the spirit of spiritual life.

In matters of love and marriage, women in the west can enjoy a greater liberty than women in the East. Moreover, Brabantio often invites Othello in his house and both father and daughter take much delight in listening to Othello's adventures of "flood and field." In the vivid description of his perilous adventures like moving accident from his just hair-breadth escape, Othello has noticed Desdemona's "affected shyness of husband-hunter and the naive sincerity of love-striken girl" as well. Othello says:

> She thank's me:
> And bade me, if I had a friend that lov'd her,
> I should but teach him how to tell my story.
> And that would woo her. (I. iii)

This is how both Desdemona and Othello passionately love each other:

> She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd,
> and I lov'd her that she did pity them. (Ibid.)

The love between Sakuntala and Dusyanta, on the other hand, grows somehow differently in a more thrilling and romantic way. Dusyanta falls in love with her at first sight. In the first meeting the bashful maiden does not even talk to Dusyanta, but simply 'looks' at him. She has felt for the first time such a strange feeling running through her veins. Her overflowing feelings. though hidden at the bottom of her heart, come to light and Dusyanta marries her in accordance with a system of marriage called "Gandharva Vivah." Kalidasa's clever artistry is seen in this design. With a stroke of confident art and skill he has displayed their love in the first three

acts with a step by step development. *The Abhijna-Sakuntalam* is a tragi-comedy with romantic elements upto Act IV. *Othello*, on the other hand, is a tragedy in which Shakespeare encapsulates their love within just 44 lines.

Brabantio, who is so conscious of his social status, does not accept his daughter's secret marriage with her fiance. The marriage may be undertaken to indicate the akinness to Sakuntala's "Gandharva Vivah." When Brabantio comes to know of it, he becomes completely mystified by his daughter's unworthy choice:

> To fall in love with what she fear'd to look on;
> It is a judgment maim'd and most imperfect
> That will confess perfection so could err
> Against all rules of nature. (I. ii)

Brabantio, unlike Kanva, cannot but accuse Othello of having seduced his daughter by foul charm and then he move the senate for redress. The Duke sends for Desdemona and she appears in the assembly and boldly answers:

> My noble father
> I do perceive here a divided duty
> ....
> I am hitherto your daughter: but here is my husband,
> And so much duty as my mother show'd
> To you, preferring you before her father. (I. iii)

She does not shrink before the august assembly from asserting her challenge

> That I may profess
> Due to the Moor, my lord. (Ibid)

Desdemona thus takes her fate into her own hand in the same way as Sakuntala does at the time of her marriage. The difference between their fathers lies in the fact that Kanva does not accuse at all Dusyanta and her of their "Gandherva Vivah"; rather he accepts his daughter's marriage happily.

The way irony of fate operates is also remarkable in both the dramas -- *Abhijnana Sakuntala* and *Othello*. As the plot develops, we find how Desdemona suffers death when she fails to produce the napkin, the ocular proof. The failure has made Othello more and more jealous which ultimately ends up with her death. In Act V. ii Othello's wrath wells up and he discloses that he has seen

his handkerchief in Cassio's hand. Without least hesitation he calls her 'infide', 'whore' and with many other abusive words but the innocent Desemona tries to convince her husband:

> I never gave it him; send for him hither
> Let him confess a truth. (V. ii)

But Othello has been completely overpowered by the conviction of his "honest Iago." His heart this time is turned to stone; his control breaks for a moment with "I will chop her into messes."

Desdemona has been killed by her jealous husband who once loved her so profoundly. Thus the loss of the handkerchief by accident plays an important role in her life. Similarly, Sakuntala faces a lot of unimaginable situations, especially when she, along with the ascetics, reaches the royal palace of her husband, and is openly discarded by the king. Sakuntala boldly and firmly unburdens herself to her husband:

> (Aloud) My revered husband--
> (Stops short) But no -- I dare not
> address thee by this title, since thou
> hast refused to acknowledge our union.
> Noble descendent of Pure. It is not
> worthy of thee to betray an innocent -
> minded girl, and disown her in such
> terms, after having so lately and so
> solemnly plighted thy vows to her
> in the hermitage. (V. Sc. A Room in the Palace)

This is how Sakuntala speaks to Dusyanta. Throughout she continues to remind him of their secret marriage. Lastly, she is about to show him his ring, the only ocular proof, which he had given her as a token of love at parting. But what an irony of fate: she cannot produce the ring as it has slipped off in the water of Sachitirtha. Sakuntala's failure to show the ring puts her in an altogether embarrassing situation.

Yet another point of resemblance which cannot escape our notice is the vituperative words that Brabantio has used against Desdemona:

> She has deceived her father, and may thee. (I. iii)

This is what Brabantio utters as a curse that justifies the success of Iago's evil machinations against Othello. Brabantio's curse serves the purpose of the intensity of Othello's mental state. But Durbasa's

curse, on the other hand, is brought out in the play with a different outlook on life, and this aspect must be considered. As a result of Durbasa's fatal curse, both Sakuntala and Dusyanta are separated. Unlike Shakespeare, Kalidasa wants to convey through the curse a message particularly to those who enter the married life. Marriage does not mean merely conjugal happiness. To quote from *Hindu Samskara*:

> Those, who marry for pleasure, are sorely disappointed. The essential difficulties of life are not given send-off under the wedding canopy but, as a matter of fact, they are invited. The conscious acceptance of responsibilities in life is to court suffering.[3]

If Sakuntala is judged from this point of view, her failure to respect Maharshi Durbasa cannot be overlooked. During her separation from her husband, she acquires wisdom, serenity and understanding through years of suffering and austerity. We see into her Sakuntala as a woman of maturity and ineffable spiritual grace. It is perhaps for that purpose that Kalidasa has introduced a curse in the play not merely as a dramatic device but as an integral part without which the character of Sakuntala would have been incomplete. Thus the episode of Durbasa's curse sounds as a warning and an appeal. Now, coming to the point of Brabantio's curse, on the other hand, we mark a different thing. When Iago reminds Othello of Brabantio's curse

> She did deceive her father, marrying you .... (III. iii)

its effect holds in the jealous mind of Othello. He instantly agrees with Iago and believes in "And so she did." Herein lies a presentiment of the eventual catastrophe in the drama. Here Shakespeare's intentions appear to be to aggravate the tragedy by making us feel how lonely Othello is in mental agony simply because he is a tragic hero. Desdemona's death contributes to what is more pathetic than tragic in the play.

In conclusion, the question can be raised here: Why did Desdemona meet her bitter fate in her helplessness while we had already seen her straight and bold answer to the Duke and her father in the Assembly? The answer is that she played the role of the wife of the tragic hero. Shakespeare delineated her character with all her feminine sensibilities. Comparatively seen, Desdemona is more

sentimental, more sympathetic and at the same time more childlike innocent than Sakuntala.

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DR. JOHNSON'S DEBUNKING OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

S.D. Sharma

Dr. Johnson, the literary dictator of the Transition Period in English Literature, has not spared even the greatest English writer, Shakespeare, from his adverse, often damaging criticism, which is largely stepped in his strong biases and capricious intellectual fads. If he finds a poetic representation of *general nature* in Shakespeare's plays as great merit, he also finds an absolute paucity of true representation of life in them as a glaring defect. If Shakespeare appears to him a great poet of nature, his treatment of the supernatural is obviously obnoxious. Shakespeare's rendering of native colour is perfectly English, but his long narratives are certainly boring to Johnson. In fact, Johnson finds Shakespeare's speeches and passions unwieldy, display of pity and terror frigid, his histories neither perfect tragedies nor complete comedies, his sense of dramatic unity unconvincing; his purpose of poetic imitation misleading, and his plots, in a word, wholly borrowed from other sources.

Dr. Johnson finds Shakespeare's plays lacking in moral values, for he seems to have sacrificed virtue to convenience, which is a wholesome annoyance to anyone who treats literature as exclusively subservient to moral ends. Johnson, being an avowed champion of moral causes, has wholesomely debunked Shakespeare on this ground. Johnson finds Shakespeare's sense of chronology defective and erroneous, for he felt free to alter even historical facts to suit his treatment like Sir Sidney. Moreover, the plots thus constructed even after taking liberties with history are loosely constructed. There are abrupt ends and there is no touch of organic quality in them. Shakespeare's comic jest is gross, tragic performance bad, distinction of time and place misleading, and also there is a conspicuous lack of heroes. This is not the entire list of faults Johnson finds in Shakespeare's plays. Johnson has taken a very strong exception to the typical Shakespearean style of letting the dignified characters play very ignoble roles, unwanted mingling of comic and tragic,

divisions of serious and ludicrous contrary to the rules of criticism, lofty passions interrupted, inacurate bifurcation of plays, and only one mode of composition.

However, Johnson's debunking of Shakespeare is not totally one-sided. He has many good things to say in Shakespeare's favour. For instance, he finds in Shakespeare's dramas a representation of general nature, a highly convincing portrayal of nature, practical and domestic wisdom, sentiments of real life, wide range of learning, and, above all, a true native colour of English life. Moreover, Johnson is proud of Shakespeare and his literary output, for he regards him as an exact surveyor of the whole world, a great creative genius, and a great master of language. For this, Johnson has used a comparative method of criticism, but of late his verdicts on Shakespeare are not taken as wholly correct and unbiased. Johnson's criticism in the *Prefaces* he wrote to the plays of Shakespeare tilts more to the negative than to the positive side, which is irking to many admirers of Shakespeare. However, to understand his point of view in its proper perspective, let us first discuss what he actually says against Shakespeare.

One of the defects in Shakespeare's plays is that virtue has been sacrificed to convenience.[1] In fact, Shakespeare wants to please his readers more than to instruct by pleasing. Thus, he seems to have written his plays without any moral purpose. No doubt, it is true that from his plays, a system of social duty may be evolved; nevertheless, it is equally true that his precepts and axioms drop casually from him. He makes no just distribution of good and evil, nor is he always prepared to distinguish between the virtuous and the wicked. He carries his own person and also his chief characters rather nonchalantly through the right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them without any concern to either. His indifference at this juncture is irking, and his conspicuous silence at this stage appears intriguing.[2]

Johnson debunks Shakespeare's loose construction of plot.[3] His plays seem to have lacked a beginning, a middle and an end. He has omitted opportunities to instruct and delight[7] which his story seems to force upon him. He candidly rejects those exhibitions,

which would be more affecting, for the sake of those which are easier. Quite specifically, the end of his plays has been knotted down with a careless design. When he sees himself near the end of his work and hopes to be rewarded for that, he cuts short the labour to grab the profit. He therefore remits his efforts where he should most vigorously exert himself. His catastrophe is, therefore, improbably produced or imperfectly represented.[5]

Shakespeare does not keep up any distinction of time and place.[6] He gives to one age or nation, without scruple, the customs, institutions, and opinions of another, at the expense not only of likelihood but of possibility. He has violated even chronology. Like Sidney, he neglects the distinction of time or place. As Sidney in *Arcadia* has confounded the pastoral with the feudal times, the days of innocence, quiet and security, with those of turbulence, violence and adventure, likewise, Shakespeare has not provided proper care to time and place. He seems to have neglected Aristotle's age-old dictum of the unity of place, time and action.

Shakespeare has further failed, to a great extent, in his comic scenes,[7] for jest of his comic characters is gross and their pleasantry is licentious. Neither his gentleman nor his ladies have much delicacy nor sufficiently distinguished from his clowns by any appearance of refined manners. He has not represented his age seriously, and his representation is not highly convincing and real. His tragic presentation in his tragedies is not commensurate with his labour.[8] Then, his diction is heavy and replete with pomp and wearisomeness; it also suffers from circumlocution. Besides, his narration in dramatic poetry is tedious and heavy.[9]

Shakespeare's declamations are poor and boring. Like the ancients, he is not the master of "amplification of befitting opportunities." Consequently, his long speeches suffer from original force, and his treatment of lofty passions and sentiments is not very much creditable. The equality of words to things is very often neglected. Johnson does not hold a very high opinion of Shakespeare's spectacle of terror and pity in his tragedies.[10] Moreover, Shakespeare seems to have been infatuated by the excessive use of quibbles. A quibble, poor and barren, as it is, gives

him such a delight that he is content to purchase it by sacrificing reason, propriety and truth. Furthermore, Shakespeare's histories are neither tragedies nor comedies. Though in his histories no literary unity is wanted in the strictest sense of the term, yet from the point of view of sudden change of actions, apt incidents, and consistent characters, they certainly demand for accurate re-examination.[11]

Shakespeare, being a wonderful poet of Nature, has tried to practise unity of action, but he has not maintained it with "a beginning, a middle, and an end." One event is connected with another, and the conclusion follows by easy consequence. Though there are cases when Shakespeare has not followed even unity of action, yet the general system makes gradual advances and, on account of it, the end of the play becomes the end of expectation.[12] Shakespeare has no proper regard for unity of time and place. The unities of time and place are necessary for a drama in order to make it credible. Johnson has quoted many examples to illustrate how Shakespeare has violated the unities of time and place in his plays. He also argues that some critics believe that even without the unities of time and place, a creditable movement in drama can be produced. But Johnson refutes it saying that in such a presentation of life and its various realities, there remains a lack of truth and sincerity.[13] Shakespeare's system or method of imitation is not highly convincing. Consequently, we agitate while reading the history of *Henry V* and such other imitations.[14]

There is no authentic reason as to why Shakespeare neglected unities. Whether he neglected them out of his own accord or he did not know them is a disputable issue. Voltaire had already criticised Shakespeare for his neglect of the unities. One can hardly tolerate anyone of Shakespeare's dramas staged in Venice and another or a part even of the same play in Cyprus.[15] Shakespeare even neglected various trends, customs and traditions of his contemporary society. Moreover, he borrowed from all popular stories or fables. For instance, the story of *As You Like It* is supposed to have been copied from Chaucer's, *Gamelyn*. Old Mr. Cibber remembered the tale of *Hamlet* in plain English prose, which

the critics have now to see in *Saxo Grammaticus*. Shakespeare borrowed materials for his English histories from English chronicles and English ballads. He dramatised some of *Plutarch's Lives* into his plays when they had been translated by North.

Shakespeare has not been able to portrary real love; his treatment of love and of some grave aspects of life is obviously romantic and unreal. Love is a universal instinct, but its treatment in Shakespeare is improbable.[16] Probability is violated and life is misrepresented, the language is depraved, and things have been put in an exaggerated way. Shakespeare has not given a real and honest presentation of delicate passions of his characters. In his plays, the characters are ample and general, and they do not give a very elaborate commentary on life. Moreover, Shakespeare has no heroes. His scenes are occupied only by men who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion. In other dramatists, one can notice discriminating qualities of characters. A specified category of character is maintained by others by "hyperbolical or aggravated characters, by fabulous and unexampled excellence or depravity, as the writer of barbarous romances invigorate the reader by a giant and a dwarf."[17] The supernatural atmosphere has not been maintained effectively in Shakespeare's plays; there is a hotch-potch of both heavenly and earthly things in the name of supernatural in his plays. He has further failed in co-ordinating between the supernatural and the earthly. In fact, he has approximated the remote and has familiarized the wonderful. The event which he represents will not happen, but if it were possible, the effects would probably be such as he has assigned. Though it is a credit to Shakespeare that his dramas are the mirror of life, he allows his imagination in following the phantoms which other writers raise before him.

Many critics have raised the controversy about the actual and dignified personages of Shakespeare. For instance, Dennis and Rymer thinks his Romans not sufficiently Roman, and Voltaire censures his kings as not completely royal. Dennis is offended that Menenius, a senator of Rome, should play the buffoon. Voltaire

thinks that decency has been violated when the Danish usurper is represented as a drunkard. His story requires Romans or kings, but he thinks only of men. He is inclined to show a usurper and murderer not only odious but despicable. He, therefore, adds drunkenness to his other qualities, knowing that kings love wine like other men and that wine exerts its natural power upon kings. Johnson does not approve of this scheme and he, therefore, concludes: "These are the petty cavils of petty minds, a poet overlooks the casual distinction of country and condition, as a painter, satisfied with the figure neglects the drapery."[18]

Shakespeare has mingled comic and tragic scenes in his plays. This mingling, according to Johnson, is a very serious flaw in his plays because it makes them, in rigorous and critical sense, neither tragedies nor comedies. They are but compositions of a distinct kind exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination.[19] Johnson further opines that no Greek or Roman poet had attempted this kind of mingling of comic and tragic. They wrote either pure Comedy or pure Tragedy in order to give a clear cut idea of good and evil--the two permanent forces on the earth.[20] Almost all the plays of Shakespeare are divided between serious and ludicrous characters, and in the successive evolutions of the design, sometimes produce seriousness and sorrow and sometimes levity and laughter. Johnson holds that in the absence of their being either pure comedy or pure tragedy, Shakespeare's plays do not convey any forceful instruction. With the change of comic and tragic scenes, the corresponding comic and tragic passions are interrupted in their progress. The proper weightage of the actual events is not maintained, with the result that the reader feels like being drabbled into the quagmire of uncertain flow of feelings.[21] An abrupt change of passions is not worthy of providing any genuine pleasure to the reader, and hence Shakespeare's plays are deficient in preserving the intensity of passions.

Johnson believes that those who have divided Shakespeare's plays into comedies, histories and tragedies have not endeavoured

sincerely to distinguish the three kinds with any exact or definite idea. An action which ends happily to the principal persons, however serious or despicable it may be in intermediate incidents, in their opinion, constituted a comedy. Tragedy was not in those times a poem of more general dignity or elevation than comedy; it required only a calamitous conclusion. History was a series of actions independent of each other, and without any tendency to introduce or regulate the conclusions. Considering from all these points of view, in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra,* one can trace the lack of unity of action.[22] In his *Richard II,* all the ingredients of a good history are not conveniently traceable. So the division of his plays is not convincing.

Shakespeare wrote comedies and tragedies, but he could not find any of his predecessors to write on the same line and in the same fashion or technique as he did. He indulged in his natural disposition and, according to Rhymer, this led him to Comedy. As regards tragedy, he could write them with great toil and study. In tragedy, he is always "struggling after some occasion to be comic," but in comedy he "seems to repose, or to luxuriate." In his comedies, he has surpassed all expectations and desires. His comedy "pleases by the thoughts and the language, and his tragedy for the greater part by incident and action. His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct."[23] The force of his comic scenes has suffered little from the changes made by a century and a half in manners and in words. His characters in comedies have achieved immortality, but his characters in tragedies seem to be failing when put to actual realities of life.

Dr. Johnson has pointed out many merits as well as demerits in Shakespeare's plays, and has traced such points of literary merit as remained undecided till then by the critics. He does not rely on the conventional view of Shakespeare's plays and does not believe in his traditional reputation. Further, he says that in order to come to a specific conclusion with regard to the actual praise and reputation of Shakespeare, we should apply comparative method. Antiquity or long standing greatness or the conventional view of the popularity of Shakespeare should be tested by comparing him

with other great poets and authors. We have to do it without any prejudice or bias. He opines that as among the works of nature no man can properly call a river deep or a mountain high without the knowledge of many mountains and many rivers, so in the productions of genius nothing can be styled excellent till it has been compared with other works of the same kind. Johnson regards that the judgments made on Shakespeare in a particular age do not mean holding truth for all ages. Human judgments are not always infallible. Many verdicts continue as a result of prejudice or fashion. However, Shakespeare has been regarded as the greatest genius by his countrymen. Johnson regards Shakespeare as the best poet of nature. Shakespeare, as a matter of fact, holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of life. His characters represent the general nature of all men of all countries. "His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world."[24] They are the genuine progeny of common humanity such as the world will always supply; they embody general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated and the whole system of life is continued in motion. There is practical domestic wisdom in the characters of Shakespeare. Since his characters have unfathomed worldly knowledge, they never lack practical domestical prudence and foresightedness. Their wide range of knowledge is praiseworthy. As in Euripides, one can trace enough of moral and ethical preachings, likewise in Shakespeare one can trace a remarkable collection of a system of civil and economical prudence. Shakespeare was a born genius. He found English stage in a state of utmost disorder. He gave a decided improvement to it. By then neither character nor dialogue was understood. He may be truly said to have introduced them amongst the English authors. Johnson regards Shakespeare as matchless in the field of true depiction of the native colour of English life. No other author has ever done so. Other writers borrow their characters from preceding writers and diversify them only by the accidental appendages of present manners; the dress is a little varied, but the body is the same. Shakespeare has matter and form both of his own, "of his own genius."[25]

Shakespeare is always alive to various vicissitudes of life. To

human beings, he could show all the mysterious aspects of life. Let alone animal life, even inanimate world is well served by him. His descriptions have specialities about them. Unlike traditional poets, he rejects any blind adherence to the past customs. Whether life or nature be his subject, he shows plainly what he has seen with his own eyes; he gives the image which he receives, not weakened or distorted by the intervention of any other mind. The ignorant feel his representations to be just, and the learned see that they are complete. He has immense creative power, and ranks with Homer in this regard. Dennis rightly says: "He seems to have been the very original of our English tragical harmony, that is, the harmony of blank verse, diversified often by dissyllable and trisyllable terminations. For the diversity distinguished from herioc harmony and by bringing it nearer to common use, he makes it more proper to gain attention and more fit for action and dialogue. Such verse we make when we are writing prose; we make such verse in common conversation."[26]

Lastly, Johnson gives a worthy place to Shakespeare as a master of language. Shakespeare uses such a language as is neither highly pedantic nor too vulgar. His style can never become obsolete and stale. Johnson views that those, who are very much polished in matters of language, are too much careful about catching "modish innovations"; the learned depart from the established forms of speech in the hope of making better. Still, those who want a decided distinction in this field forsake the vulgar, when the vulgar is right. But there is a conversation above grossness and below refinement, where propriety resides. Shakespeare seems to have gathered his comic dialogue around the degree where conversation is above grossness and below refinement. To quote Johnson's words: "He is, therefore, more agreeable to the ears of the present age than any other equally remote, and among his other excellences deserves to be studied as one of the original masters of our language."[27] In a word, Shakespeare is a massive intellect, a solid rock to guide and help others.[28]

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HAWTHORNE'S CONCEPT OF ART

Santosh Yadav

Nathaniel Hawthorne, one of the major American fictionists with five outstanding fictional works to his credit, belongs to the coterie of great novelists like Fielding, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, D.H. Lawrence and Joyce Cary who have given serious consideration to art in general and the novel in particular. But he has not put his views on art and fiction systematically in book form like E.M. Forster; they are contamed in the prefaces to his creative works, his letters, his notebooks--American, English, French and Italian--and in the direct statements made by the artists presented in his fictional writings. Collected and arranged coherently, they clearly embody his poetics of art and fiction. Obviously, it is not surprising if Martin Terrence, speaking of the prefaces to his fictional works, asserts: "The prefaces to his major romances contain what is, in effect, a theory of fiction on the supposition that art requires a domain of its own if it is to flourish."[1] Hawthorne's aesthetics consists of his concept of art and its relation with 'High Reality,' Beauty and Truth, the artist, the novel as romance, the novel and morality, etc. For want of space, the present paper will focus only on his idea of art and the artist.

In his view of art and the artist, Hawthorne was doubtless influenced by the Puritan tradition and the Transcendentalists, particularly the latter. In fact, when he began his literary career in eighteen thirties, almost the entire literature of New England was dominated by the Transcendentalists. His imagination was caught by the Transcendental thoughts as a result of his frequent discussions with his Transcendental friends like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, Amos Bronson Alcott, Sophia and Elizabeth Peabody. Hawthorne admits this fact in his *American Note-Books.* Also, he came in close contact with the Transcendental ideas when he chanced to live at George Ripley's Brook Farm for more than six months between April and November, 1841. In the biography of Hawthorne Randall Steward makes a clear mention of it.[2] Apropos of the impact of the Transcendentalists on Hawthorne's aesthetics, Marjorie J. Elder rightly observes: "Many of the concepts of Emerson, of other Transcendentalists, and of non-Transcendentalists who share some Transcendental beliefs are embodied in

Hawthorne's aesthetics."[3]

Now coming to Hawthrone's idea of art, he holds that a work of art ought to present truth, beauty and moral suggestively and meaningfully. No doubt it must embody beauty, but at the same time it must have the noble and lofty aim of delineating moral truths in order to elevate human soul. It is this fusion of moral truth and beauty which makes it delightful and sublime. In this connection, Hawthorne makes a very significant statement in the "Preface" to *The House of the Seven Gables:* "A high truth, indeed, fairly, finely, and skilfully wrought out, brightening at every step, and crowning the final development of a work of fiction, may add an artistic glory...."[4] Apparently, art, according to him, has two functions to perform: first, it creates beauty to arouse emotions in man; and secondly, it is an exposition of high or practical truth.

However, Hawthorne believes that the beauty and reality, delienated in art, should not be naked and bare. What he accentuates is that art must be clothed in mystery, in some sort of vagueness, and it is this which makes it glorious. Speaking of the significance of this element of mystery in art, he says: "This mist, which I have so often spoken of, sets it beyond the limits of actual sense, and makes it ideal.... If the mist were to be withdrawn, I believe the whole beauty... would go with it."[5] Thus, art, in Hawthorne's opinion, should not be concerned with just external beauty and facts, but must be inalienable from higher beauty and reality, i.e. spiritual enlightenment and universal truth. Naturally, the significant thing about a work of art is what it suggests, and not what it simply denotes. Hawthorne expresses his view in this context through Hilda, a very interesting character in *The Marble Faun:*

> Nobody, I think, ought to read poetry, or look at pictures or statues, who cannot find a great deal more in them than the poet or artist has actually expressed. Their highest merit is suggestiveness.[6]

What Hawthorne means to say is that art does not present simply external, surface reality, but explores and communicates the inner reality of life suggestively and not directly or plainly. Highlighting this aspect of Hawthorne's aesthetic philosophy, Stephen R. Portch aptly remarks: "Hawthorne believed that truth lies not in the external facts of appearances but beyond the facts in an inner reality."[7] In short, a work of art, according to Hawthorne, must embody ideal beauty, preach morals, and portray high truth or 'High Reality' so

as to impart to man delightful and ennobling emotional experience and spiritual enlightenment. Commenting on the essence and the basic ingredients of his concept of art, Frederick C. Crews affirms: "The final end of art, as Hawthorne saw it, is the enjoyment, the education and the elevation of man."[8]

Since Hawthorne, time and again, refers to and stresses the fact that one of the chief aims of art is to reveal 'High Reality,' i.e. inner truth, it is necessary to comprehend this term about which he has made numerous statements here and there and everywhere in his writings. He opines that 'High Reality' and 'Ideal Beauty' are synomyms. Apropos of this, he points out in "The Artist of the Beautiful" that the Reality is Beauty "which nature has proposed in all her creatures, but has never taken pains to realize."[9] He admits that he himself has been able to perceive this higher beauty in every object, living or non-living, in every person and natural phenomenon. But he believes that one can have the glimpse of this Reality or Beauty only when one makes use of one's inward eye, for it can not be seen through physical eyes. He brings out the clear-cut distinction between 'High Reality,' i.e., Ideal Beauty perceptible through inward eyes and the ordinary external reality or beauty grasped through senses in the following description of his experiences with regard to the beauty of his own daughter Una:

> It is transfiguration--a grace, delicacy, or ethereal fineness--which at once, in my secret soul, makes me give up all severe opinions that I may have begun to form about her. It is but to conclude that on these occasions we see her real soul. When she seems less lovely, we merely see something external.[10]

In fact, it is Hawthorne's unflinching belief that this kind of 'High Reality' or 'Ideal Beauty' can be comprehended only through the eyes of the mind, and not through physical senses. This is the reason why in "Rappaccini's Daughter," he writes: "There is something truer and more real than what we can see with the eyes and touch with the finger."[11] Apparently, he considers the Reality as a spiritual fact, and not a material one. His letters, written from time to time, contain several statements, expressing his conviction. For instance, in the letter written to Sophia on October 4, 1840, his following observation on life bears witness to it: "Indeed, we are but shadows--we are not endowed with real life, and all that seems more real about us is but the thinnest substance of a dream--till the heart is

touched."[12]

Echoing Emerson's idea that every natural phenomenon symbolises some spiritual fact, Hawthorne asserts that 'High Reality' is reflected in every earthly creature and thing as well as in every natural object. Kenyon, the artist-observer in *The Marble Faun,* is the mouthpiece of the novelist in this regard. In this novel, Kenyon and Donatello look at a valley with its lovely majestic landscape and its bald-peaked and forest-crowned mountains. The former is betwitched by the beauty of the scene and calls it a page of heaven and earth, spread wide open before mankind. The deep, soul-stirring impact of the scene on man is described by Kenyon in these words:

> Only begin to read it, and you will find it interpreting itself without the aid of words. It is a great mistake to try to put our best thoughts into human language. When we ascend into the higher regions of emotion and spiritual enjoyment, they are only expressible by such grand heiroglyphics as these around us.[13]

Hawthorne's Notebooks are interspersed with descriptions of the extraordinary beauty of scenes and situations which can be comprehended only through soul. For example, in an entry made on October 6, 1843 in his *American Note-Books,* he writes how the exceptional beauty of the natural scenery during his lonely walk to Walden Pond filled him with spiritual experience. An extract from it is cited below:

> I have seldom seen anything more beautiful than the cove on the border of which the huts are situated; and more I looked, the lovelier it grew. The trees overshadowed it deeply; but on one side there was some brilliant shrubbery which seemed to light up the whole picture with the effect of a sweet and melancholy smile. I felt as if spirits were there--or as if these shrubs had spiritual life.[14]

Though the world, human and natural, is saturated with 'High Reality' or 'Ideal Beauty,' yet we, according to Hawthorne, cannot comprehend or see it unless we heighten our spiritual awareness. That is why, at one place he jots down: "The trees reflected in the river--they are unconscious of a spiritual world so near them. So are we."[15] This brings us close to Hawthorne's firim belief in eternal beauty, truth or reality embodied even in the grosser objects of the universe. What is true of the natural objects is also true of human heart. Speaking of the presence of the eternal beauty and high reality or truth in every object of the world as well as in human heart,

Hawthorne says in his own characteristic manner:

> The human heart is to be allegorized as a cavern; at the entrance there is sunshine, and flowers growing about it. You step within, but a short distance, and begin to find yourself surrounded with a terrible gloom, and monsters of diverse kinds; it seems like Hell itself.... These are the depths of the heart, or of human nature, bright and peaceful; the gloom and terror may lie deep; but deeper still is the eternal beauty.[16]

In fact, this eternal beauty, manifested in the earthly and natural objects, is what Hawthorne means by 'High Reality' or eternal truth, which a work of art must explore and present.

Hawthorne attaches great importance to certain qualities in the artist for the creation of a great work of art. The primary aim of the artist should be to grasp, interpret and re-create 'High Reality,' i.e. the eternal or spiritual beauty and truth. For this, he is required to possess poetic insight. Explaining the nature and importance of poetic insight, Hawthorne remarks in *The House of the Seven Gables:* "What is called poetic insight is the gift of discerning, in this sphere of strangely mingled elements, the beauty and the majesty which are compelled to assume a garb so sordid."[17]

In Hawthorne's view, an artist must be endowed with the gift of perceiving the shadow of Reality in the actual objects of the world, for only the inner soul, and not even the mind, has the power to grasp the 'High Reality.' And unless the artist possesses this rare gift of perception, an original piece of art cannot be created. In this context, Hawthorne's following entry of September 2, 1842 in *American Note-Books* is invaluable: "An innate perception and reflection of truth give the only sort of originality that does not finally grow intolerable."[18] Thus, it is not surprising if he shows Kenyon, his artist-observer in *The Marble Faun,* possessing unique power of perception. This memorable character of Hawthorne is gifted with quick sensibility which enables him to perceive the reality clothed in the factual, external appearance of things and persons.

Besides perception, an artist also needs powerful imagination to create a genuine work of art, embodying eternal truth and beauty, for it is imagination, according to Hawthorne, which greatly helps the artist in having communion with the Eternal. He demonstrates his full faith in the indispensability of imagination for higher kind of life and art in his advice given to Sophia regarding the practice of spiritualism:

> What is so miserable as to lose the soul's true, though hidden, knowledge and consciousness of heaven, in the mist of an earth-born vision ?... If thou wouldst know that heaven is... then retire into the depths of thine own spirit, and thou wilt find it there among holy thoughts and feelings.... *Keep thy imagination sane--that is one of the truest conditions of communion with Heaven.*[19]

Hawthorne opines that an artist cannot create a work of art without inspiration which comes to him invisibly and works in its own unknowable manner, allowing little freedom to the artist. A piece of art evolves in its own way and takes its own course, often against the wishes and aims of the artist. An entry made on October 25, 1835 in *American Note-Books* fully evidences it: "A person to be writing a tale, and to find that it shapes itself against his intentions; that the characters act otherwise than he thought; that unforeseen events occur; and a catastrophe comes which he strives in vain to avert."[20] Hawthorne himself underwent this kind of experience when he was working on *The Marble Faun,* and he admitted to Fields about it by saying that the said novel "developed itself."[21] Hawthorne further demonstrates his conviction in "unseen inspiration" and the final creation of a work of art against the artist's intention through his character Kenyon, who is shown creating the bust of Donatello under the puissant influence of "unseen inspiration" working in its own free way without the control of the artist. Apropos of this, the novelist says:

> A skill and insight beyond his consciousness seemed occasionally to take up the task. The mystery, the miracle, of imbuing an inanimate substance with thought, feeling, and all the intangible attributes of the soul, appeared on the verge of being wrought... the true image of his friend was about to emerge from the fanciful material.... "whereby the artist's thought to improve the result" interfered with the design of his unseen spiritual assistant....[22]

The very beginning of the first inspiration, called by Hawthorne the "celestial germ," is the very essence of a work of art, and all the subsequent matters related to the development of it are subservient to it. Emphasizing the supreme significance of the first inspiration, which is the real inspiration of the artist for the creation of artistic work, Hawthorne writes in *The Marble Faun:* "There is an effuence of divinity in the first sketch; and there, if anywhere, you find the pure light of inspiration, which the subsequent toil of the artist serves to bring out in stronger lustre, indeed, but likewise adulterates it with what belongs to an inferior mood."[23] Thus, it is

after the working of the intuitive perception and imagination that the act of the pursuit and re-creation of beauty or 'High Reality' begins. Hawthorne explains it and illustrates it from his own experiences as artist, often recorded in his notebook entries. He would always immerse himself in the act of observation and contemplation in order to grasp the meaning of his initial inspiration. In this context what he writes in the introductory essay to *The Scarlet Letter* is worth-quoting:

> My eyes fastened themselves upon the old scarlet letter, and would not be turned aside. Certainly, there was some deep meaning in it, most worthy of interpretation, and which, as it were, streamed forth from the mystic symbol subtly communicating itself to my sensibilities, but evading the analysis of my mind.[24]

Since the "celestial germ" can be fully comprehended and developed into a work of art only with the help of considerable experience and contemplation, Hawthorne thinks that every initial idea must be noted down by the artist for future use. Like William Wordsworth, he believes that keen, thoughtful observation leads to the intuitive discovery of something new about life--i.e. the "celestial germ" of a work of art--and this idea or subject must be allowed to lie in the mind for some time for contemplation. It is only the process of contemplation after observation that helps the artist to develop the idea into an artistic creation. The following generalization of the narrator in *The Blithedale Romance* is very significant in this context: "By long brooding over our recollections, we subtilize them into something akin to imaginary stuff, and hardly capable of being distinguished from it."[25] In an indirect manner with utmost humility, Hawthorne expresses the same view in his notebook entry of July 21, 1855 in these words: "I am slow to feel--slow, I suppose, to comprehend: and, like the anaconda, I need to lubricate any object a great deal before I can swallow it and actually make it my own."[26]

In Hawthorne's opinion, the artist is seized with the "celestial germ" not only as a result of intuitive perception and active effort but also because Nature reveals itself to him. This is the reason why an artist's deliberate attempt to perceive and grasp the 'initial idea' is not always fruitful. But when the natural and external objects reveal their deep meaning to the mind's eye and the artist receives it passively, he is able to create a great work of art out of it. The

following extract from *The Marble Faun* fully brings out Hawthorne's belief in this regard:

> There is a singular effect oftentimes when, out of the midst of engrossing thought and deep absorption, we suddenly look up, and catch a glimpse of external objects. We seem at such moments to look farther and deeper into them than by any premeditated observation; it is as if they met our eyes alive, and with all their hidden meaning on the surface, but grew again inanimate and inscrutable the instant that they became aware of our glances.[27]

Nature cannot be commanded by man to lay bare her mystery and secrets about life, but he has to watch her patiently and attentively for it. In one of his notebook entries, made on May 10, 1856, Hawthorne asserts that Nature will never evince herself and any profound reality about the universe, if "you ask 'Nature ! unveil yourself.' " But on the other hand, "you must patiently bide her time; and, by and by, at some unforeseen moment, she will quietly and suddenly unveil herself, and, for a brief space, let you look right into the heart of her mystery."[28] Again, Hawthorne puts this belief in the mouth of Coverdale in *The Blithedale Romance*. The novelist's mouthpiece, i.e., Coverdale, expresses his experience and conviction thus: "It is very true that, sometimes, gazing casually around me, out of the midst of toil, I used to discern a richer picturesequeness in the visible scene of earth and sky."[29]

To sum up art explores and suggestively communicates 'High Reality,' which is synonymous with eternal beauty and truth, shadowed in earthly and natural objects. An artist is able to perceive and grasp Reality and Beauty with the help of his strong intuition, keen perception, and conscious pursuit. Endowed with divine inspiration and powerful imagination, he has the power to comprehend, interpret and communicate the shadowed Reality and Beauty and also Nature's revelations.

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CLASSICAL STRUCTURAL PATTERN IN GEORGE ELIOT'S CHARACTER PORTRAYAL WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO *MIDDLEMARCH*

Sandhya Misra

George Eliot's complex art of character portrayal has drawn wide applause. Critics have analysed her profound and subtle psychological probing into the psyche of her fictional personae, besides drawing their parallelism with actual persons she might have come in contact with. They have also studied the spiritual and ethical solidity or emptiness as well as the moral, mundane, intellectual and transcendental concerns of her characters. To this already adequate and varied studies on Eliot's art of character portrayal I wish to add another dimension, a structural one, which has hitherto escaped critical scrutiny. In the present paper an attempt has been made to show that sometime Eliot uses, unconsciously though, the structural pattern of classical tragedy in her delineation of some of her chief protagonists. The theoretical critical framework for this presentation has been taken from Francis Ferguson,[1] and the character chosen for analysis is Dorothea Brooke in Eliot's fictional masterpiece, *Middlemarch*.

Francis Ferguson has outlined this classical pattern in terms of three "P's."[2] These three "P's" are 'purpose,' 'passion' and 'perception.' 'Purpose' means the decision taken, the choice made, and the initial deed or a series of deeds performed by the protagonist. 'Passion' is the struggle and suffering undergone by the protagonist as a consequence of this 'purpose.' Suffering leads to the 'perception' of the truth. The element of the ignorance of truth in the choice made by the hero or the inadvertent step taken or deed done by him is implicit in Ferguson's concept of 'purpose.' 'Perception,' leading to the realization of the truth or the initial ignorance, brings in a sense of resignation or acceptance.

The initial step taken or choice made by a character or what Ferguson calls 'purpose' is also the starting point of a conflict which is a *sine qua non* of any tragic literary composition, be it drama or fiction. The conflict may be between one individual and another, or between an individual and some external forces or between two incompatible forces in the mind of the protagonist himself.[3] This

force is insurmountable, yet the character confronting it shows extraordinary resolution, determination, doggedness and perseverance in continuing his fight with it and in his refusal to compromise, yield, or surrender. This contains Ferguson's 'passion.' The concept of Ate' or destiny in Attic drama, with which the protagonist comes in conflict with, either consciously (though unaware of the ensuing consequences) or involuntarily, persisted throughout the ages in Western literature. Only sometimes the label of this force has undergone change. For example, this force was identified with Fortune in medieval literature, with the morally ordered universe in Elizabethan tragedies and with social or political systems, or with psychological forces like heredity or *libido* in 19th century and 20th century drama and fiction. The confrontation is bound to result in the defeat of the character concerned because the force is, by nature, invincible, insurmountable and almost invariably inscrutable. 'Perception,' which the concluding part of a drama or a novel contains, is the confronting character's realization and perception of the true nature of this force and his eventual reconciliation with and acceptance of it. To make Ferguson's theoretical framework more comprehensive we can add that there is always a gap between the protagonist's aspirations and his potential or ability to achieve them. His predicament is characterised by his ignorance of this reality about himself. This aspect has been emphasised by critics in their study of Ibsen's plays such as *Brand, The Master Builder* and *Rosmersholum.*[4]

If we approach George Eliot's *Middlemarch* with reference to the above briefly sketched theoretical framework, we can discern a parallelism between the basic structural pattern of tragic drama and *Middlemarch* in regard to charaeter portrayal. The most significant character who is modelled on this structural pattern is Dorothea Brooke.

Dorothea Brooke's tragedy results from her nourishing aspirations which her present potential and ability are inadequate to fulfil. Here we have the basic tragic pattern of an unbridgeable gap between aspiration and potential to achieve it. Dorothea harbours in her mind 'Therea complex,' i.e. a yearning to do good in the world. At the tender age of nineteen, Dorothea is full of noble aspirations and high ideals. The loftily idealistic and honest Dorothea is, in fact,

an exceptional and extraordinary girl, whose fate is cast in a commonplace world. Because of having a great zeal and ardour for lofty aspirations, she is always preoccupied with such searching questions as, "what can I do"?[5] "what could I do"?[6] and "what should I do?"[7] The contrast between 'can' and 'should' is a pointer to the direction in which her character is going to develop, i.e. based on the the gap between the incompatibility of ideal and the potential to realise it. She has developed a compulsive philanthropic obsession with a desire of improving the lot of mankind. For example, she plans projects to improve the living standards of the tenants of Sir Chettam's estate.

To the young and immature Dorothea, her life seemed "nothing but a labyrinth of petty courses, a wall-in-maze of small paths that led no whither."[8] She is in search of a guiding star in her life, who can guide her through the ocean of ignorance. Dorothea's yearning for "some lofty conception of the world"[9] and her impetuosity in embracing whatever seems to her to have those aspects strikes a discordant resonance in her firm decision to marry the "great soul"[10] in Casaubon. She believes that "the really delightful marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of father and could teach you even Hebrew... if you wished it."[11] In Casaubon, she believed, there was something "beyond the shallows of ladies' school literature... here was a living Boussnet... here was a modern Augustine who united the glories of doctor and saint."[12] Her ever unquenching thirst tor knowledge magnifies the worth of Casaubon. She feels that Casaubon "thinks a whole world of which her thought is but a poor two-penny mirror. And his feelings, too, his whole experience--what a lake compared with my little pool."[13] Dorothea looks upon Casaubon as an epitome of perfection and as an ocean of knowledge. Dorothea intently hears, absorbs and retains what Casaubon says with "the eager interest of a fresh young nature to which every variety of experience is an epoch...."[14] The 'reverential gratitude' with which she looked up to her 'Boussuet' and 'Pascal' is the consequence of her own unquenchable thirst for knowledge which would enable her to "learn to see the truth by the same light as great men have seen it."[15] She thinks that the province of masculine knowledge would be a standing ground, a threshold from which all truth could be seen more clearly. She feels that her marital

alliance with Casaubon "would deliver her from her girlish subjection to her own ignorance and give her the freedom of voluntary submission to a guide who would take her along the grandest path."[16] The very thought of marrying Casaubon made her feel that her "whole soul was possessed by the fact that a fuller life was opening before her. She was a neophyte about to enter on a higher grade of initiation. She was going to have room for the energies which stirred uneasily under the dimness and pressure of her own ignorance and the petty peremptoriness of the world's habits."[17]

Eliot's use of the classical structural pattern of tragedy is amply evidenced here. The tragic protagonist, at Ferguson's state of 'purpose,' makes a choice or takes a decision after convincing or self-deceiving himself into believing in the validity of the choice based on exclusiveness, logical analysis, and firmness. This attitude of the protagonist makes him blind to and skeptical of all other possibilities. Marlowe's Faustus, Ibsen's Brand and Rosmer are the examples of this, which come to our minds readily.

In *Middlemarch* we see that Dorothea is so firm in her convictions that, despite the timely warnings of her uncle and other well wishers, she marries Casaubon who is seven and twenty years older than her. Her decision to marry him equally vexes her sister, and Mrs. Cadwallader who envisions Casaubon as "no better than a mummy"[18] and strongly feels that he is a "great bladder for dried pear to rattle in."[19] Finally, Casaubon with "one foot in the grave"[20] marries Doroteha. Thus because of her *hamartia*, which is excessive romanticism or unrealistic aspiration, she defies the practical sagacity and wisdom of her own people. Celia is provoked into a sisterly accusation at the short-sightedness of Dorothea. She says to her, "you always see what nobody else sees... yet you never see what is quite plain."[21] Dorothea sees people in the narrow world about her through rose-coloured glasses. She looks before her but does not consciously see what is there, for she insists upon seeing with her mind's eye what she has imaginatively constructed.

But it is not long that her 'purpose' gives birth to her 'passion.' Her 'passion' works out in her complicated nature of suffering. Her sensitive being comes to realize the existence of things as they are in relation to as they ought to be. She comes to the belated realization that "the large vistas and wide fresh air which she had dreamt of finding in her husband's mind were, in reality, only

anterooms and winding passages which seemed to lead no whither."[22] David Caroll has aptly observed that "her quixotic idealism is shattered on their honeymoon when Rome,... the Key to European civilization, simply becomes the backcloth to marital disappointment and disagreement."[23] It is here that she comes to perceive that Casaubon is a prig, an arid pedant and a wooden character, incapable of love and mutual understanding. Casaubon, too, is bitterly disappointed by his marital life, and seeks escape in malicious jealousy, aroused by his suspicion regarding Dorothea's relationship with his cousin Ladislaw. He provides in his will that if his wife, after widowhood, marries Ladislaw, she would lose right to his property. Thus the very pillar of faith on which the foundation of marriage is erected crumbles. However, Henry James has remarked that "the impression once given that Casaubon is a dilettante is never properly removed, and there is slender poetic justice in Dorothea's marrying a dilettante."[24] In the world of Eliot, character is desiny, hence Dorothea, who, despite all oppositions, made her own choice of Casaubon, must face the music. In fairness to Eliot's artistic integrity it can be argued that Dorothea's choice was made after careful and convincingly valid analysis of the causes of her decision. In such a situation the charge of poetic justice meted out to her is not wholly correct. When a resolution follows firm conviction, based on objective assessment of situation, howsoever subjectively rooted it may be, the pang of self-responsibility loses its retributive sting and is in consonance with a tragic perception when the painstakingly edifice of the desired fructification of an ideal falls through.

Dorothea, through undergoing suffering, does not only recognize the true worth of Casaubon, but also develops an altogether changed perceptive on her assessment of everything connected with Casaubon: "The very furniture in the room seemed to have shrunk since she saw it before.... The earlier heights where she expected to walk in full communion had become difficult to see even in her imagination."[25]

The first stirring of a pitying tenderness, at the revelation of the pedantry of Casaubon and the hollowness of his scholarly pursuits, brings out one of George Eliot's well known ruminations:

> We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves; Dorothea had early begun to emerge from that stupidity,

> but yet it has been easier to her to imagine how she would devote herself to Mr Casaubon, and become wise and strong in his strength and wisdom, than to conveive with that distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling—an idea wrought back to the directness of sense, like the solidity of objects--that he had an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference.[26]

In order to forget Casaubon, she indulged herself in working out diverse philanthropic projects. Even after Casaubon is dead, she does not recognize the needs of the flesh, and thus shows her attempt to transcend the reality of mundane living. But when she is confronted with Ladislaw's flirting with Rosamand, a sort of reversal takes place. She discovers her own attraction towards him. This newly awakened or belatedly realised feeling in confronting with Ferguson's theoretical point of view will now act as new 'purpose.' But this time the 'purpose' relates to a woman who is liberated from the cell of her ego and is transformed into a being for others' welfare and happiness. The stage of 'passion,' therefore, is brief and the conflict and struggle almost negligible. She rises above her selfish concerns and decides to save the life of the three—Ladislaw, Rosamand and her husband Lydgate. He succeeds eventually in her new resolve to "clutch my own pain and compel it to silence and think of those three." She now starts realizing the sufferings of others, and resolves to help them out.

It is relevant to point out that inspite of Casaubon's indifferent attitude she had remained faithful in her wifely devotions. She did pity her husband's "lonely labour," "ambition breathing hardly under the pressure of self distrust," his "goal receding and the sword of death visibly trembling over him."[27] It is only when Casaubon suspects the integrity of her character that her hurt ego is forced to assert itself. Through undergoing the misery and torture of broken-heartedness she has finally come to have a sense of relatedness with his other co-sufferers. Searching for meaning in life she comes to the realization: "what do we live for if it is not to make life less difficult to each other."[28] Dorothea "had waked to a new condition: she felt as if her soul had been liberated from its terrible conflict,"[29] and hence she indulges into the act of making life less difficult for others. While the personal sorrows get mingled with common miseries, Dorothea attains a humanitarian vision of where the microcosmic merges with the macrocosmic whole and

identifies its relatedness with the macrocosm. In this way Dorothea's Bildyngsroman, i.e. "the ritual of initiation into a higher form of being" is now complete.[30] Her realization of fellow feeling brings out not only a psychological but also a spiritual transformation. She could now identify herself with "the largeness of the world and the manifold workings of men to labour and endurance she was a part of that involuntary, palpitating life, and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator, nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining."[31] Thus we see that the shaping and development of Dorothea's personality and character are artistically manipulated by Eliot through the dramatic structural technique of 'purpose,' 'passion,' and 'perception,' discussed by Ferguson in his book referred to above.

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LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER AS A POETIC NOVEL

Kuhu Chanana

D.H. Lawrence is undeniably a great poet-novelist with a number of poetic novels to his credit. A poetic novel is not written in poetry or poetic prose nor is it the result of the special use of language or a clever manipulation of words; but what makes a novel poetic is the intensity of the writer's visual sense and his awareness of relationships below the conscious level. The subconscious mind, packed with unfamiliar emotions and thoughts, can best be depicted by poetry, and not by prose. Intensity of situation, moments of crisis, strange emotions, extensive use of symbols and images, highly imaginative scenes and situations, poetic description of natural scenes and their association with human mind, depth of feeling, intensely emotional and imaginative moods of characters, a deeply felt vivid atmosphere which Virginia Woolf calls "persuasive mood," etc. are the ingredients of the poetic novel. Since we clearly find these qualities at their best in the novels of D.H. Lawrence, he doubtless belongs to the class of celebrated poet-novelists like Emily Bronte, Meredith, Hardy and Virginia Woolf.

As Lawrence was a distinguished poet who wrote very good poetry throughout his remarkable literary career beginning in the first decade of the present century and ending with his untimely death in 1930, he could create outstanding poetic novels. Besides, he believes that the novel is very much like poetry in that it proceeds from the writer's inner urges spontaneously, and it is first and foremost an outcome of the passionate or deeply felt experiences. In a word, he opines that the novel, like poetry, is an unpremeditated expression of the writer's passionate experience first, and a deliberate exploration and analysis of the basic realities of human life afterwards. Apropos of this close affinity between the novel and poetry, Lawrence affirms:

> The novels and poems come unwatched out of one's pen. And then the absolute need one has for some sort of satisfactory mental attitude towards oneself and things in general makes one try to abstract some definite

> conclusions from one's experiences as a writer and as a man. The novels and poems are pure passionate experience. These 'pollyanalytics' are inferences made afterwards, from the experience.[1]

True, like Virginia Woolf, he, too, holds the view that the novel should be an amalgam of prose and poetry. To him, the novel is "the one bright book of life.... Which is more than poetry, philosophy, science or any other book...."[2] and life for him is a coin, which has both obverse and reverse. His extraordinary art consists in his surprising ability to illuminate both the sides simultaneously. The scope and variety of life he presents, his understanding and vivid portrayal of circumstances, his insight into the characters, and his power of investing ordinary events and things with singular significance make his works really poetic. Inevitably, his novels are, to quote the words of R.P. Draper, "fine web of poetry."[3]

It is now incontestable that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is one of his masterpieces, despite all the controversies pertaining to the delineation of a plethora of sexual details in it. As a poetic novel, too, it fully exhibits the poet-novelist's powers at their best. This is the reason why even Hobsbaum, who considers it his worst novel, accentuates the value of its poetic nature when he asserts: "... there is a ballad-like lyricism that carries the narrative over some of the awkward questions that could have been raised."[4] In a word, it is the final testimony of his innate poetic genius.

The lyrical intensity and spontaneity of the novel emanates from the very concept of the novel--i.e., tenderness in human relationships and the phallic consciousness as the central reality of life. It is a known fact that after *The Plumed Serpent,* Lawrence was fed up with the leader-follower relationship as the basic theme of his novels of the twenties; as a matter of fact, he found it boring and wrong. Naturally, he gave up his concern for leadership--mastery over men--and reverted to his fundamental belief that a satisfying, tender relationship between man and woman, and man and man is the simplest and surest way of achieving the state of "the spontaneous creative fullness of being." Since tenderness (the novel was initially named *Tenderness*), which is the hallmark of the narrative, is inalienable from the

phallic consciousness--the genuine and profound sex relationship--, the novel is replete with spontaneous ecstasy of tender and beautiful sexual rhythms. In this connection, the following words of Lawrence are very significant: "It is a nice and tender phallic novel--not a sex novel in the ordinary sense of the word.... I sincerely believe in restoring the other, the phallic consciousness into our lives: because it is the source of all real beauty, and all real gentleness. And those are the two things, tenderness and beauty, which will save us from horrors."[5]

This tender, beautiful and poetic phallic consciousness, which, according to Lawrence, is not only something really very deep but also "the root of poetry, lived or sung,"[6] is entirely different from the cerebral sex-consciousness. Phallic consciousness--i.e., "warm blood desire," a tender flow of blood sympathy--is absolutely precious for every man and woman. Lawrence firmly believes that the phallus is a great sacred image, embodying "a deep, deep life which has been denied in us,"[7] and that consciousness of it must be restored in man's life in order to reach the state of integrated being. Patently, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* has been conceived by Lawrence as "a novel of the phallic consciousness as against the mental consciousness,"[8] and it is the conflict between these two modes of consciousness which gives the novel not only its form and structure but also a rare dramatic-poetic intensity.

If we carefully study the novel, we come to the conclusion that Lawrence has poetically conceived and delineated characters, scenes and episodes. Thus, Sir Clifford Chatterley, one of the major characters in the novel, is envisaged and portrayed in a highly poetic and suggestive manner. He represents a modern habit of mind as well as a ruling class in transition from one type of economic proprietorship to another. He is presented as a character who has severed all ties with his fellow men and women. Though kind and polite, he, more or less, completely lacks the warmth of heart. Naturally, all of his relationships are mechanical and lifeless. Alone and isolated, he is incapable of any 'togetherness'. Unfortunately, he has overdeveloped his mental consciousness

at the cost of his emotional and physical life. He can be called "a pure product of our civilization."[9] The paralysis of the lower half of his body is, thus, very suggestive and symbolic. He is an apt symbol of the over-intellectualised and emotionally paralysed humanity of the present age.

Connie Chatterley, the central figure of the novel, is the creation of a writer gifted with poetic imagination and passions. She is very much like the heroine of a ballad. When she marries Clifford, her love is based on "all the passion of mental attraction,"[10] and she takes the "sex-thrill" as a sensation without sacrificing her pure and noble freedom which she considers "infinitely more wonderful than any sexual love."[11] She develops a deep personal intimacy with him because he is entirely different from other men who insist on sex like dogs, and is never very keen about his "satisfaction." When he is hurt incurably in the War and returns home, she feels passionately attached to him. But their intimacy is confined only to the mind, and they completely ignore their bodily existence. They are so intimate, and yet are "utterly out of touch."[12] Her tragedy gets intenser when she has no contact, no "real connection" with anyone at Wragby. This leads her to the depressing awareness that she is completely cut off from "the substantial and vital world."[13] She unexpectedly comes in contact with Michaelis, who is an "eternal outsider,"[14] a lonely figure, out of "contact with his surroundings,"[15] and she submits herself to him out of sheer compassion. In his company she has a wild, craving physical desire. Now she regards her life with Clifford as "years of suffering and patience,"[16] and the only reality about it is "nothingness."[17] However, this new relationship is based only on sex-thrill and has nothing of genuine life of emotions, warmth and tenderness (which she craves for and ultimately gets in the intimacy with Mellors), and therefore it comes to an end when she summarily rejects Michaelis' suggestion to leave her husband. As a result, she is completely engulfed in "nothingness."

The lyric-like spontaneous, impetuous and intense relationship of Connie with the gamekeeper Mellors begins at this point of her

life of utter "nothingness." The gamekeeper Mellors, who lives in the hut, is so unhappy with his wife that he wants to be left alone and seeks refuge in the wood to hide himself there. His alienation from the world is as complete as that of Connie, who is acutely conscious of "the agony of her own female forlornness."[18] It is during these moments of extreme emotional depression and forlornness that the first contact between them takes place. The exquisite scene of their sitting before a coop, with Connie holding a little chick in her hands and weeping bitterly, resulting in their emotional and physical intimacy, is soaked in lyrical simplicity, sweetness and melancholic tenderness.

In a state of fathomless compassion, the keeper takes Connie to the hut and their relationship begins with the sexual intercourse which proves "nothing" to her, but it imparts "pure peace" to him and makes him feel connected with life again. He finds her "tender with a tenderness of the growing hyacinths,"[19] and deeply feels her tragic lot. What is most positive about Connie's new relatonship with the gamekeeper is that it fills her with a deep sense of human warmth and tenderness never before experienced by her, and makes her aware of the beauty and joy of life all around her. As a result of her increasing intimacy with the gamekeeper, the two find life a beautiful, joyful poetry, and she feels the birth of another self in her and with this self she worships him. Thus, in the end they attain "wholeness of being" through a genuine, profound relationship.

The novel is extremely rich in poetic symbolism--all the major characters, episodes, scenes, etc. are embedded in symbolic significance unconsciously. Lawrence's poetic imagination makes Wragby Hall and the industrial village of Tevershall stand for the entire industrial, social and even spiritual concerns that are dominant in the modern life. Woodhouse is clearly a metaphor of death-in-life, while Wragby Hall is symbolic of domination not only in the sphere of ideas and sensibility, but also in the domain of economics. In addition, the two types of detailed scenes--the intellectual discussions inside the Wragby Hall and the sexual acts of the lovers in the wood--symbolically portray two different

kinds of life. The writer's poetic genius is also evident in his portrayal of the wood as the vital centre of the world, presented in the narrative. The wood is depicted as a sacred, natural place, and hence the great mysteries of life--birth and growth, embodied in the annual cycle of fertility in animals, trees and flowers--manifest themselves within it. In the wood, these mysteries of life are humanly presented in the sexual encounters between Mellors and Connie, giving them a new life and the promise of a child.

The sexual scenes in the novel are truly poetic and symbolic; they have sexual as well as poetic rhythms. According to Lawrence, the closest human intimacy is possible only through sexual intercourse, an experience that is marked by a temporary but complete unity of man and woman, and of the two with the very soul of life. No wonder, then, if Connie utters inarticulate cries when she lies with her lover in a condition described as "one perfect concentric fluid of feeling."[20] The authorial comment is that here we have "the voice out of the uttermost night, the life !"[21] We are made to feel that it is not the woman who is crying out, but it is the voice of the universe itself. In order to bring out the novelist's poetic delineation of the varied, simple and complex rhythms of sexual act, a reference must be made to the three successive descriptions of sexual intercourse between Connie and Mellors during the early stage of their intimacy, and the description of the "night of sensual passion," spent by the two lovers before the lady's departure for Italy.

The first of these descriptions evinces the complex experience of Connie who finds the sexual intercourse, despite its physical thrills, somewhat contemptible, ridiculous and disgusting, though she cannot dare end it abruptly. The second successive sexual intercourse reveals, in poetic terms, the outer and inner quivers of Connie and her real birth as a full, integrated woman:

> And she felt him like a flame of desire, yet tender, and she felt herself melting in the flame....
>
> And it seemed she was like the sea, nothing but dark waves rising and heaving.... Oh, and far down inside her the deeps parted and rolled asunder, in long, far-travelling billows, and ever, at the quick of her, the depths parted and rolled asunder, from the centre of soft plunging, as the plunger

> went deeper and deeper, touching lower, and she was deeper and deeper and deeper disclosed, and heavier the billows of her rolled away to some shore, uncovering her, and closer and closer plunged the palpable unknown, and further and further rolled the waves of herself away from herself, leaving her, till suddenly, in a soft, shuddering convulsion, the quick of all her plasm was touched, she knew herself touched, the consummation was upon her, and she was gone. She was gone, she was not, and she was born: a woman.[22]

However, it is only during the third successive sexual intercourse that all her consciousness is gone. The unspeakable,blissful experience is lyrically put by Lawrence in the following paragraph saturated with the natural glow and magic of great poetry:

> And this time his being within her was all soft and iridescent, purely soft and iridescent, such as no consciousness could seize. Her whole self quivered unconscious and alive, like plasm. She could not know what it was. She could not remember what it had been. Only that it had been more lovely than anything ever could be. Only that. And afterwards she was utterly still, utterly unknowing, she was not aware for how long. And he was still with her, in an unfathomable silence along with her. And of this, they would never speak. [23]

Much of the poetry of Lawrence's novels is also due to his masterly handling of language, often marked by felicity of expression, imaginative intensity, emotional fervour, suggestiveness, natural rhythm based on the use of words and their sounds to their full capacity, astonishing subtlety and range, remarkable vitality, etc. Poetry exploits all the communicative aspects of language to convey the various facets of reality simultaneously. Lawrence in his novels makes this type of poetic use of language; indeed, his medium of communication approximates to that of a poet. He uses the common language as if it were his own invention, and employs words and their sound arrangements to suggest the meaning poetically. Obviously, his skilful use of language imparts unique poetic dimensions to his novels. Sometimes, like Meredith-- another major poet as well as novelist--, he is so lyrical that his phrases seem to overflow the dikes of prose. His great fiction abounds in passages, which, with little change, might well appear in his collections of poetry. Most of his descriptions of natural scenes and sights bear witness to it, but as a specimen we quote the following few lines from the gamekeeper's long letter to Connie with which *Lady Chatterley's Lover* ends:

"....I love being chaste now. I love it as snowdrops love the snow. I love this chastity, which is the pause of peace of our fucking, between us now like a snowdrop of forked white fire. And when the real spring comes, when the drawing together comes, then we can fuck the little flame brilliant and yellow, brilliant. But not now, not yet! Now is the time to be chaste, it is so good to be chaste, like a river of cool water in my soul. I love the chastity now that it flows between us. It is like fresh water and rain. How can men want wearisomely to philander. What a misery to be like Don Juan, and impotent to fuck oneself into peace, and the little flame alight, impotent and unable to be chaste in the cool between-whiles, as by a river...."[24]

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QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA*

Bhagwat S. Goyal

One of the recurring and most persistent themes in all great literature has been what may be termed as the protagonist's 'quest for identity.' Such a quest involves the protagonist in a series of deep and far-reaching questionings: "Who am I, really? How can I get in touch with this real self, underlying all my surface behaviour? How can I become myself? A probing search for answers to these questions determines the value of the quest and its ultimate meaning to the protagonist. In this paper, *The Old Man and the Sea* is sought to be examined as a work in which 'quest for identity' forms the central core of meaning, giving the novel a spiritual and psychic orientation of great magnitude.

To set forth the general terms of the quest, first. The quest involves an encounter with a tragically antagonistic cosmos with all its traps and treacheries, corresponding to the contradictions, ambiguities and ambivalences of the human society. This multiple encounter usually lays tremendous stress on man's physical and spiritual resources and puts the limits of human courage and endurance on a severe trial. But in spite of this great ordeal, his inward voyage takes its committed course of action and the turbulent ocean of the unconscious flowing between the shores of cognitive and conative selves becomes the hunting ground for the reality of self.

If we look at the novel from this point of view, the entire action in it can be said to take place within the consciousness of Santiago, the strange old fisherman from Cuba. The physical terms of his fishing expendition during which he goes 'far out' to fulfil his life-mission, that which 'he was born for,' exactly parallel the psychic terms of his inner voyage during which he goes to the depths of his inner being to get hold of his real, noble, dignified 'self,' but which during its 'capture' by the old man is sadly mutilated and disfigured by the sharks of evil and corruption, though retaining in the end its essentially solid, skeletal structure. The lonely and painful

confrontation of the old man with the marlin and then with the sharks indicates the perils of existence in an individualistic in which each man has to fight a solitary battle with his own self and in which the built-in structure of evil hits hard at the hard-won prize of his selfhood.

The beginning of the novel provides us the frame of reference necessary for the quest to be undertaken. The very opening page catalogues a series of connotative words that suggest the condition of man who lives a marginal existence: 'old', 'alone', 'unlucky', 'sad', 'empty', 'patched', 'thin', 'gaunt.' There are the words that define the quality of a lonely, marginalised man's existence in this world, in which his 'wrinkles', 'blotches', and 'scars' function as "erosions in a fishless desert." But the "cheerful and undefeated eyes" of the old man, being the same colour as the sea, suggest a vision of life that emanates from the depths of his strong will power transcends the limitations imposed on it by the exigencies of human situation.

The fierceness of old man's future struggle is foreshadowed in Manolin's memory of his first experience with fishing, which was invested with a peculiar dynamism of 'slapping', 'banging', 'breaking', 'clubbing', 'throwing', 'shivering' and 'chopping.' Moreover, the nature of the old man's quest is revealed quite early, when replying to the boy's question about where he intends to go, he answers that he is going 'far out.' It is not an ordinary quest; it is going to be the biggest thing he has ever done in his life. People like Manolin's father are blind to the need of going 'far out' to achieve self-realization. But Santiago is "a strange old man" and he must do strange things to prove true to himself. Moreover, the quest for identity involves man's ultimate confrontation with the naked, cosmic self, and his "immersion in the destructive element of life." Therefore, no else can go with him on this journey. Although the old man deludes himself regarding his physical needs, he is quite sure about his spiritual ones. He is going out fishing in the month of September—the month 'when the great fish come'. The continued emphasis on the significance of his expedition and the greatness of the fish he is going to catch make it more than obvious that his mission has got a spiritual dimension of great value.

Once the old man sets out on his quest, he knows that he will have to encounter a network of forces that are out to destroy man's existential frame. The 'smell' of the land where he spends the days of his mundane existence is left behind and the rich 'smell' of the ocean greats him with its variety of created life. He begins to sort out his friends and foes on the ocean. His heart goes out to the 'small delicate birds' that starve in a Darwinian universe. The unmistakable suggestion is that of the plight of the 'sensitive' souls in a treacherous cosmos. The old man wonders, "Why did they make birds so delicate and fine as those sea swallows when the ocean can be so cruel?" The sea of life in its natural rhythm is kind and very beautiful. But when its rhythm is disturbed, it "can be so cruel." The old man always thinks of the sea, "as feminine and as something that gave or withheld great favours, and if she did wild or wicked things it was because she could not help them." Thus life for Santiago appears as a capricious, unpredictable, and whimsical force that "gave or withheld great favours" and that did 'wild or wicked things' to man as it ran its blind and inevitable course.

This time the old man is in search of a really big 'catch.' He 'rows' steadily and 'drifts' with the current. He holds out his 'baits' at varying lengths, he requires to establish his 'lines' of communication with the deep and variegated rhythms of life. He carries with him strong and thick 'lines' so that these could withstand the pulls, pressures and tensions exerted on them. He keeps his 'lines' of communication "straight up and down" and at their proper depths. While "others let them drift with the current," the old man keeps himself in full control of his 'lines' so that he does not miss any chance of getting his prize catch. He realizes the need and value of self-discipline for the exploration of the invisible, mysterious depths of his being. That is why he "would rather be exact than depend solely on luck. His efforts have borne no fruit so far. "But who knows? May be today. Every day is a new day."

Moving abour in a world that is plagued by uncertainties and delusions, the old man needs a reassuring faith in his quest. "My big fish must be somewhere," he muses and continues to hope to find his big catch. "The iridescent bubbles" of the Portugese men-

of-war represent the false and illusory temptations, while the big sea turtles that eat them symbolize an impassioned commitment to the faith and values of life that overcome the evil and poisonous temptations. The old man has as impassioned a heart as a turtle which 'will beat for hours after he has been cut up and butchered.' He has been preparing himself long for his big encounter with "the truly big fish."

The old man's habit of talking to himself while engaged in his quest shows how self-communion and a continued dialogue with one's self are a necessary requirement for gaining self-knowledge and achieving self-discovery. He knows that the rich fishermen have "radios to talk to them," but he is different and such diversions are meaningless to him. He must concentrate on his life-mission. "Now is the time to think of only one thing. That which I was born for." The old man is repeatedly and constantly aware of the serious nature of his mission. After all, what for is a man born in this world? The only undisputed answer would be to know himself. The old man was born to discover his 'identity' as a human being in a cosmos where the pressures of necessity and manifold temptations existed to divert him from his true path. But the old man must pursue his quest with single-minded devotion, employing all his knowledge of the sea of life (with all its inherent evil) and the treachery of cosmos to lend his struggle all the dignity of human endeavour.

From the moment the old man hooks the huge marlin, he keeps his 'lines' of communication in control. He has achieved the first breakthrough in his long drawn out ordeal. For the first eighty-four days he has gone without a fish. But now he has achieved the desired maturity and humility to succeed in his quest. He remembers the days of his past glory, but they are nothing in comparison with what he is going to do "now." Now that the fish is hooked, he feels "something hard and unbelievably heavy." "He knew what a huge fish this was and he thought of him moving away in the darkness with the tuna held crosswise in his mouth." The old man has made a promising start, but he must be prepared for a prolonged struggle. The 'darkness' surrounding his hidden identity, which must undergo the pain and passion of the 'cross,' would require the light of

tremendous endurance and courage to enable him to embrace his true self. Having established his provisional contact with the hidden reality of his submerged self, he begins to realize that for the time there is "nothing to be done." He would try "not to think but only endure." Balancing the expediency of action with the confidence of experience, he muses: "What I'll do if he sounds and dies I don't know. But I'll do something. There are plenty of things I can do." Although now and then he is haunted by the thoughts of baseball and the boy Manolin, it is only in relation to his quest that he thinks of them. (The sword of Marlin is "as long as a baseball bat," and there is an obvious affinity of names between the Marlin and Manolin.)

That Santiago's fishing expedition is basically his quest for identity is made quite clear by Hemingway. The fish has all those attributes that are possessed by the old man. It is 'wonderful', 'strange', and probably 'old' like Santiago. "Never have I had such a strong fish nor one who acted so strangely." He wonders if the fish "has any plans or if he is just as desperate as I am?" The old man begins to project his own emotional focus on to the great fish whom he pities as well as fears. In every case he is commited to his quest in which he must confront his naked, intriguing, mysterious 'self.' He has chosen to go far out into the deep, dark corridors of his consciousness, to seek his real identity which lies "beyond all snares and traps and treacheries." Santiago and Marlin have done the bidding of their chosen destiny, which has brought them together. Now we are joined together and have been since noon. And no one to help either one of us." Then he begins to think that perhaps he "should not have been a fisherman." But he immediately realizes that "that was the thing I was born for." If not a fisherman, what else? If it is not to sound the depths of his own being, then for what purpose is a man born?

The channels of communication at the disposal of the old man can be replaced when lost, but "who replaces this fish if I hook some fish and it cuts him off?" It is obvious that Santiago and the marlin are the inseparable parts of an inviolate self. The huge fish is not only an imaginative construct of the reality of the self, but also an

indivisible unit of the old man's identity. Again and again Santiago sees in the fish something of his own self: "Fish," he said softly, aloud, "I'll stay with you until I am dead." Inevitably and inextricably the two are bound together. Besides, the old man knows that he has enough flexibility of resourcefulness to deal with his friend-adversary: "I have enough line to handle him." But his ambivalent attitude to the object of his quest puts him in a strange predicament. "Fish," he said, "I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends." The old man says this without, perhaps, fully realizing its deeply ironic implications. He has all respect for the sanctity of his self, but in the ensuing battle between the old man and his self, the latter should be captured and held as a victim, though a stage comes when all distinction between the hunter and the hunted is lost and the two become interchangeable concomitants of a single reality.

As the quest continues, the identity between the old man and the fish becomes more and more symbolic. Just when the old man's hand bleeds, he feels as if something had hurt the fish. He knows that there is an indestructible bond between the two: "But you can stay with him for ever." He again and again realizes the inescapable truth of man's cosmic loneliness, but knows at the same time that "no man was ever alone on the sea." As long as he could handle the 'lines' of communication properly and see the "prismatic hues" of life in the "deep dark water" of existence, nobody was alone.

The uniqueness of the fish which represents the noble and dignified self of man, is stressed throughout the novel. "Now alone, and out of sight of land, he was fast to the biggest fish that he had ever seen and bigger than he had ever heard of..." This oversized self of the old man gives him a sense of largeness of life in utter contrast to the sense of littleness and insignificance implied in his cramped hand and his old age. "I wish I was the fish," says the old man and then prays that he should "catch the fish," and kill it, big and wounderful though he is. "But I will show him what a man can do and what a man endures." This confidence in human dignity and endurance makes him think of the human condition in relation to other structures and forms of created life. "Man is not much beside

the great birds and beasts. Still I would rather be that beast down there in the darkness of the sea." With an awareness of his limitations and imperfections as a human being, he would still prefer to be one with the fish, which represents his real, human self, above everythings else. He knows that "nothing is easy." He must struggle hard to gain his fish. If he loses his 'line' of communication, he will lose the fish, the radiating centre of his identity. He feels pain in the process but with his growing knowledge thinks that "pain does not matter to a man." Pain for him becomes an inescapable reality of human experience. He puts in the maximum effort to conquer his elusive self: "Now I have done what I can.... let the fight come." He must not give up. He must stick to his guns: "You have to last." When he has to harpoon the fish, the old man pauses to consider where it should be hit. "I mustn't try for the head. I must get the heart." No empty intellectualism would get man to know the reality of his self; he must work through the heart. But whatever the way, the struggle to realize the meaning of one's identity can be dangerously fatal. "You are killing me, fish, the old man though. But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who." This invitation to death held out by the old man reveals the ambiguities and paradoxes inherent in the nature of the quest-the hunter becomes the victim while his 'killing' self glides smoothly in the sustaining waters of life.

Finally, the old man succeeds in driving his harpoon through the heart of the marlin. The extraordinary effort that he has to make leaves him 'faint and sick.' The visionary quality of his mission becomes soon apparent as Hemingway describes the old man's reaction to the floating fish: "The old mam looked carefully in the glimpse of vision that he had." The incredible size of the fish indicates its uniqieness while its eye looking "as detached as the mirrors in a periscope or as a saint in a procession" reveals how close it is to the saintly Santiago. The impalpable reality of his identity makes him wonder whether the 'fish' is a dream or a reality. He wants to make sure "that this had truly happened and was not

a dream." He looks constantly at the fish to ensure the reality of his vision.

Then come the sharks. "The shark was not an accident." He represents an ever-present reality of evil that destroys the finer essences of kife and impairs the delicate tissues of the self. The beautiful vision of the fish soon acquires the image of a dream that is "too good to last." The old man, however, has no option but to fignt. He knows that the way to self-realization lies through the intuitive heart and so he hits the Marlin through the heart. But the sharks of evil must be fought on intellectual plane and so the old man hits the sharks through the brain. The sharks, before dying, chop off substantial chunks of meat of the fish and the old man feels "as though he himself were hit." The wounded self of Santiago begins to recall the heroic feats of DiMaggio to cheer himself up.

The old man begins to anatyse now the moral meaning of his quest. "Perhaps it was a sin to kill the fish," he thinks. Then he finds a justification for it. "I killed him in self defence." But the crux of the problem is revealed in the paradoxical relationship between the old man and the fish. "Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive." Quest for identity can be a self-destructive venture, but it is also something that he lives for. The disfiguring of the fish by the sharks "makes everythings wrong." The sight of the mutilated under-side of the fish would give the old man moral pain and so he avoids it. The destructive potentiality of evil is revealed to him in all its horrible reality and nakedness and he begins to blame himself for the tragedy: "I ruined us both." But he had no other choice open to him. If going 'far out' caused his tragic loss, keeping nearer home in the shallow waters would not have brought him 'self-knowledge.' He might be hit again and again by the sharks of evil, but at least he would have the satisfaction of knowing that he plumbed the depths of life and fished out a noble, dignified self, the gain of which almost synchronized with its loss. The irony of it lay in the realization that to find oneself was to lose oneself. The white, naked, skeleton of the marlin that is left is the quintessential self of Santiago that will keep itself fresh in the living waters of eternity.

A NOTE ON V.S. NAIPAUL'S PATRIA

Surya Nath Pandey

The emergence of the Modernist movement with its emphasis on the cross-cultural interactions enjoined upon the artists invariably to ascertain their national identity or what Ezra Pound termed as 'Patria'. This problem developed into an obsessive preoccupation with the writers who had to confront a tussle between their inherited values and those acquired in a culturally different milieu. This 'exile' sensibility manifests itself in the portrayal of characters as well as in the arrangement of situations. V.S. Naipaul is one of the most celebrated men of letters whose singlemost creative impulse is his *emigré* experience and he has been struggling along to come to terms with the pangs of an uprooted artist. The present paper intends to identify the nature of Naipaul's 'patria'.

Naipaul was born in 1932 in a Hindu Brahmin family of Trinided where his grandfather Naipaul Pandey had moved as an indentured labourer in the 80's of the last century. While leaving his mother land in acute poverty, his grandfather tenaciously carried with him the cultural ethos in which he was brought up and had matured. Being the first generation of Indian immigrant in Trinidad he meticulously ensured the observance of Hindu rituals in the family with utmost piety and devotion. His son Seepersad, father of V.S. Naipaul, though born in an alien soil did conform to his father's religious and cultural predilection to a considerable extent. However, Naipaul, the third generation Indian expatriate as he is, found the profoundly Brahmin modes of life at home disheartening and embarrassing:

> It still horrifies me that people should put out food for animals on plates that they themselves use, as it horrified me at school to see boys sharing papsides and plates, local iced lollies, as it horrifies me to see women sipping from laddles with which they stir their pots.[1]

His inability to conform to the religious atmosphere of the family rendered him an agnostic and unbeliever for all times to come. The failure to accept the inherited identity created in him an urge to explore its alternative even when he was a small boy, "when I was in fourth form I wrote a vow on the end paper of my Keinnedy's

Revised Latin Primer to leave Trinidad within five years. I left after six, and for many years afterwards in England, falling asleep in bedsitters with the electric fire on, I had been awakened by the nightmare that I was back in tropical Trinidad."[2] Surprisingly enough, he is still engaged in 'finding the centre', to borrow the metaphor from his semi-autobiography *Finding the Centre.*

Naipaul has regretted quite frequently the lack of a native tradition in Trinidad in his writings. His agony is recorded in these words: "The English language was mine, the tradition was not."[3] It may be remembered here that the situation of Indian immigrants in Trinidad was similar to one living a double exile. Uprooted from their ancestral country, they were imposed on an island which had a substantive population of African immigrants living there for centuries. Sandwitched between the white rulers and the black ruled, the coloured Indians were subjected to untold miseries and hardships on several counts. Their credentials were suspect in the eyes of the people who had inhabited the island earlier. This conglomeration of different cultural, ethnic and religious groups created a confusion and the relief was possible only through death or flight. To Naipaul the urge to emigrate is the logical culmination of the inability of the West Indies to take root and form a distinctive culture:

> An ugly world, a jungle, where the picaresque hero starved unless he stole, was beaten almost to death when found out, and had therefore to get in his blows first whenever possible; where the weak were humiliated; where the powerful never appeared and were beyond reach, where no one was allowed any dignity and everyone had to impose himself; an uncreative society, where war was the only profession. (*The Middle Passage*, p.73)

Naipaul has exhaustively explored the divergent aspects of cross-cultural dilemma by creating characters and situations with utmost sincerity. The Hindu past which he inherited in his blood has always weighed heavy on his consciousness and in one form or the other it kept him battered and preoccupied. His situation is identical to that of his protagonists who confront the problem of acceptability in a culturally, ethnically and religiously new milieu. The protagonist is always apprehensive of his marginality and is also on the alert lest his identity should be absorbed in the mighty

mainstream of the host country:

> We are washed up here, you know. To be in Africa you have to be strong. We are not strong. We don't even have a flag.[4]

It must have been a very painful experience for Naipaul to disclaim completely the values which had once been very dear to the heart of his forefathers. Though now a British citizen, he has not shaken off completely the taboos associated with sex and marriage, a typically Indian trait. Naipaul's following remark corroborates this inference where he refers to his mother's anticipated displeasure on knowing about his sexual life:

> I cann't write sex... I would be embarrassed even at the moment of writing. My friends would laugh. My mother would be shocked and with reason.[5]

The impact of exile sensibility has its own hazards at creative level. The declassed artist is invariable possessed by either positive nostalgia or otherwise. In the case of the former he might experience a sort of inner immigration and glorify the values close to the country of his dreams. Should the artist be gripped by a negative nostalgia, he continues harking back to his obsession. In belittling his Hindu past Naipaul attempts to counter and neutralise his inbuilt love for India. The reasons are too palpable to be ignored. With the passage of time coupled with a host of various factors Naipaul couldn't "settle down in Bombay and rediscover my identity by losing myself in the millions of India."[6] The rather naive endeavour to measure Indian ethos against English and West Indian norms was destined to generate disenchantment. Without minding the anguish which his statement might arouse among Indians, he concludes the experiences of his first Indian visit most uninhibitedly. The dilemma of an expatriate writer has rarely been articulated so poignantly:

> India is for me a difficult country. It is not my home and cann't be my home, and yet I cannot reject it or be indifferent to it, I can not travel only for sight, I am at once too close and too far. (*The Middle Passage*, p.68)

By joining issue with him, Nissim Ezekiel has refuted Naipaul's impressions in *An Area of Darkness* and underlined the compulsions under which a declassed artist has to work:

> My quarrel is that Mr. Naipaul is so often uninvolved and unconcerned. He writes exclusively from the point of view of his own dilemma, his temperamental alienation from his mixed background, his choice and his escape. That temperament is not universal, not even widely distributed, that choice is

not open to all, the escape for most is not from the community but into it.[7]

It is, however, less despairing to note that with his coming of years Naipaul has outgrown his earlier apathy to Indian situation and one of his latest book *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is milder in tone and "compassionate in contention" as the dust jacket puts it. This work can be looked upon as an expatriate's last attempt at locating his *centre* because of his impatience to be at home anywhere, certainly not in Caribbean, nor England, nor the US, not even India but "of all these places, it is India that engages Naipaul, the country his family left behind, a hidden but capital source of customs and ideas, a place of pride and shame,"[8] as James Buchan puts it.

Naipaul's latest essay "A Million Mutinies"[9] is a sort of flash-back on his evolving image of India. It recapitulates his impressions about his ancestral country with a view to correcting or dispelling the misunderstandings generated by his writings for about four decades. Dwelling on the content of *India: A Wounded Civilization*, Naipaul is touched to the core at the tremendous depletion of the country during the Sultanate and the Moghul periods:

> What happened from 1000 A.D. on, really, is such a wound that it is almost impossible to face... I wrote a book about that, and people thought I meant that India hasn't really a civilization, or India can't go ahead. What I was saying is that you cannot deal with a wound so big.... Muslims shouldn't be too sensitive about this. Because in the Islamic world, a similar vandalisation occurred with the Mongols. Muslims all over still grieve about that.

His anguish explodes in the following lines:

> People in India have only known tyranny. The very idea of liberty is a new idea. Particularly pathetic is the harking back to the Mughals as a time of glory. In fact, the Mughals were tyrants, every one of them. They were foreign tyrants. And they were proud of being foreign.

Naipaul looks at the emergence of the so-called fundamentalist forces from a different perspective as a necessity for the building up of a new nation:

> People ask me about the forces of Hindutva in India. I got into trouble a couple of years ago when I said that with this new kind of self-awareness in India, the Hindu idea is almost a necessary early stage. It contains the beginnings of larger, new ideas: the idea of history, the idea of the human family of India.... When people start moving, the first loyalty, the first identity is always a rather small one. They can't immediately become other things.

Salman Rushdie, an equally significant writer of Indian origin,

is pronouncedly critical of Naipaul's point of view which he dubs as "the elemental power of what sir V.S. Naipaul has called their 'awakening to history'" (*The Moor's Last Sigh*). Rushdie is candid enough to admit, however:

> I'm not interested in an idealised, romantic vision of India. I know it is the great pitfall of the exile.... So you know for me, always, the issue of writing about India has been not to write as an outsider. I do think that the kind of attempt to define India in Hindu terms is worrying for that reason. It creates backlashes, it creates polarisations, and it creates the risk of more upheaval. Partly, I am saying this as a kind of objective observer, but nobody is an objective observer. I come from an Indian minority, I no doubt have a minority perspective. I can't ignore that and nor would I wish to.[10]

Before dismissing Naipaul's interpretation of Indian history, as bunkum Rushdie shrewdly attributes utopian vision as an expatriate writer's Achilles' heel, and thus commits two errors of judgement. He misconstrues Naipaul's perceptive look at medieval times as visionary and idealised. Secondly and more importantly, he tries to cover up his biased approach under the garb of being an insider. Rushdie may swear by Gandhi and Nehru—

> We were entirely sold on the Nehru-Gandhi kind of plan. We grew up and that was the portrait of the nation we had hung on our wall, and to the extent that you never entirely lose those formative ideas, that's still the picture of the country I've got hung on my wall.

but when it comes to christening a dog in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, he names it Jawaharlal. If the mere hanging of a leader's portrait on the wall is an insider's testimony, Rushdie's claims are perfectly justified since he has been studiously doing this exercise ever since his childhood.

A discerning examination of Naipaul's creative works unravels the fascinating facets of his 'love-hate' relationship with India. That he was impressed by certain Hindu institutions like the four-ashramas is evidenced by its artistic appropriation in *The Mimic Men*. Umpteen allusions to Indian scriptural and philosophical ideas also lie randomly scattered in his writings. It can be said in all fairness to Naipaul that he has never endeavoured to distort the spiritual content inspite of his vociferous antipathy to the ancestral ethos. His faith in the potential of the Indian subcontinent manifests thus in "A Million Mutinies":

In India the talent is prodigious, really, and it increases year by year. And in sheer numbers, in another 10 years, India will probably be one of the world's most intellectually gifted countries. The quality and the numbers are extraordinary, and I think this makes India extraordinary.

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DIASPORIC CONFIGURATIONS AND EXPERIENCES IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH POETRY OF INDIAN DIASPORA IN AMERICA

Manjari Shukla

Diaspora literally means the forced dispersal of the peoples and communities who settle in different countries away from their original homelands. Traditionally this term has been used to describe experiences of the Jewish people who were forced to flee from Palestine with the onset of Christianity and were scattered all over the globe. In culture critiques especially the post-imperialist and post-colonialist period diaspora has come to denote those people who were displaced from the countries of their birth as a result of the subjugation and domination by the globalized imperialist politics of the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With the gradual but steady dismantling of hegemonic political structures and their cultural discourses, diasporic literature, suppressed for so long, has suddenly bounced back into the center-state of literary theorizing. The process was accelerated with the publication of Salman Rushdie's trail blazing novel *Midnight's Children* which was hailed as the paradigmatic post-colonial work of fiction. Incidentally Salman Rushdie was also the first diasporic writer to articulate the predicament of writers with similar experiences of displacement and immigration. To quote his words:

> Exiles or immigrants or expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do in knowledge--which gives rise to profound uncertainties--that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable to reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost: that we will, in short, create fictions not actual cities or villages but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind.[1]

Alienation is thus deeply inscribed in the diasporic experience. The members of the diaspora suffer from double alienation--physical and cultural alienation--from their original homelands, and also alienation from the countries of their domicile where they have to contend against the oppressive political 12 structures and rivalries from other ethnic groups. Therefore, the term diaspora in so far as it describes the cultural experience of the expatriate communities

is a highly complex one because it involves question such as nationality, ethnicity and migrancy. Several attempts have been made to offer a comprehensive conceptual definition of the diaspora. One such effort is that of Safran who has tried to study the diasporic experience in terms of certain characteristics that subsume transnational diasporic categories. He has identified the following characteristics of the expatriate communities of several parts of the globe:

> 1) they or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original 'centre' to two or more 'peripheral' regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland—its physical location, history and achievements; 3) they believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulted from it; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would eventually return--when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate personally or vicariously to that homeland in one way or the other, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship.[2]

Comprehensive though this description is, it ideally applies to those expatriate communities which have come from monolithic cultural and national entities. India with its staggering complexities and pluralities of ethnicities, languages, cultures, traditions, life-styles and values cannot fit into any definition which proceed from the concept of a singular cultural or national paradigm. At best the concept of unity in the context of India is psychological and emotional; even post-independence India, which was carved out by the colonial masters who ruthlessly dismembered the original sub-continental region by imposing upon it artificial geographical boundaries, is a colonial construction as a political unit. These colonial impositions produced an unparalleled dilemma before the diasporic Indian. Therefore, an attempt has to be made to define the 'Indian Diaspora' taking into account the subcontinental cultural complexities.

The expatriation of Indians began in the early nineteenth century during the heyday of high imperialism. It was expatriation under the force of imperial might. Indians were recruited as indentured

labourers to replenish the depleting slave population in far-off British colonies in the South-Pacific, the Caribbean islands, Singapore, U.K., United States, Canada and Africa. These labourers were taken to those colonies under an agreement which was popularly known among the transported communities as 'Girmit.' The fact that the labourers vision of the past was distorted by their sense of disillusionment is vividy capatured by Gillon, who says that the Indians called "their life on the plantation *narak* which means hell."[3] This 'Girmit' ideology is at the core of the diasporic sensibility in the majority of cases. It was an ideology shaped by thwarted millenarian presumptions by perceived threats from the indigenous population and the socio-political devices of control and manipulation established and implemented by the colonial power. The failure of this ideology was a foregone conclusion and the diasporic writers have responded in their works to this girmit consciousness.

Outside the girmit diaspora, there is another group of expatriate Indians who chose exile for personal reasons. This is largely a twentieth century phenomenon when efficient transcontinental travel has facilitated the movement of population from one part of the globe to another. The diasporic Indians of this category mostly comprise professionals, highly educated and fired with an ambition to test their talents and intelligence on alien soils. Because of the professional exigencies they have stayed away from India and in a majority of cases have become settlers where once they were only sojourners.

Thus it is fair to conclude that within the Indian Diaspora there are various subdivisions pertaining to chronology and cultural and personal compulsions. Labour, trade and immigrant intelligentsia comprise the three major blocks of Indian Diaspora. It has been estimated that the Indian diasporic movements encompass nearly one hundred and fifty countries and their numerical strength stands at nearly 150 million. Indeed, in Amitav Ghosh's view, the modern Indian diaspora has now became an important force in world culture and literature.[4] Keeping in view the significance of the diasporic writers, Sudip Sen rightly suggests to "redraw the literary map of Indian poetry."[5]

Particularly in the present 'century of wandering' when traditional

cultures are being drawn more and more into dissension and conforantation, it is the writer of the Indian diaspora who is better equipped by the kind of 'double vision' to come up with the corresponding new literary forms and with new ways of articulating their sense of history and identity. By locating the texts in the diasporic contexts, the writers of the Indian diaspora "grasp more fully the unresolved tensions in the diasporic consciousness that shape those texts as well as the ethno-historical significance of those texts."[6]

The writers among the Indian diaspora have almost invariably chosen the English language as the medium of their creativity and have attempted practically all the literary genres. However, it is in the fields of prose fiction and poetry that their contribution is most noteworthy. The literature of the Indian diaspora whether in prose or verse is marked by the twin metaphors of loss and recovery. While the loss is real in terms of spatial and temporal distance from the original homeland, the recovery can be only imaginary or at best aesthetic. Some of the writers have also adopted an ironic attitude towards the mother country and have cynically celebrated their coming of age. There is tremendous variety of themes and subjects of the literature of the Indian Diaspora, but it is characterized by a certain commonality of response and attitude. Among the diasporic Indian poets who have built up an assiduous reputation in America, mention may be made of A.K. Ramanujan, Agha Shahid Ali, G.S. Saratchandra, Meena Alaxender, and Vikram Seth.

Commenting on the position and the world-view of these poets of Indian diaspora, Bruce king has pertinently remarked:

> Indian expatriate poets do not write from the position of a distinct foreign community, such as the exiled black or West Indian novelists, but their writing reflects the perspective of someone between two cultures. They may look back on India with nostalgia, satirically celebrating their liberation or asserting their biculturalism, but they also look sceptically and wryly on their new homeland as outsiders, with a feeling of someone having been lost in the process of growth. The ability to tolerate, accommdate and absorb other cultures without losing the consciousness of being Indian marks the expatriate poets.[7]

A.K. Ramanujan is one of the pioneers of Indian diaspora in America. The variety of ways in which Rmanujan explores and sets

forth his diasporic experiences promise an acute insight into the predicament of a diasporic poet. Ramanujan has confessed that his writing obtains its nourishment from his cultural and racial memory. Living in two different worlds--the one within, the one without, he possesses a critical attitude and does not shy away from expressing what is unpleasent or ridiculous in Indian life. As a poet, Ramanujan is extremely sophisticated in his handling of verse forms and rhythms. A linguist and anthropologist by training, he is deeply grounded in the literary and philosophical traditions of Dravidian languages. Regarding his creative process, Ramanujan himself has said:

> English and my discipline (linguistic anthropology) give me my "outer" forms—linguistic, metrical, logical and other such ways of shaping experience; and my first thirty years in India, my frequent visits and field trips, my personal and professional preoccupations with Kannada. Tamil the classic and folk lore give me my substance, my "inner forms," images and symbols.[8]

Ramanujan's poetry has been concerned intimately and persistently through his four collections--*The Striders, Relations, Second Sight* and *The Black Hen*--with the memories of diaspora. His diasporic memories relate to the specific society of the Tamil brahmins and he scruplously avoids vague generalizations about India. His poems have a plasticity of attitude and the rhythms and meanings unfold in a manner which is quite unpredictable. In the fabric of his poetry home remains a central point that unifies the individual and the traditional. In poems such as "Obituary," "History," "Love Poem for a Wife," "Small-Scale Reflections on a Great House," "Looking for a Cousin on a Swing," it is home that compels and inspires reunions to foster a sense of belonging and togetherness. Ramanujan's "Great House" preserves everything that squirms in; it has a sinister maternity and possessiveness towards objects and persons who get into this mythic house. The poet presents events and persons in his usual confessional mode and renews his search for roots.

While Ramanujan is searching for roots in an alien idiom, he achieves a synthesis which results in enhancement of both his diasporic vision and language. In the poem, "Still Another View of Grace," we find his diasporic sensibility encountering the American

milieu and enriching experience through irony. Similarly in another poem, "Conventions of Despair," the poet achieves a similar synthesis in vision and expression. Even when he says,

> I cannot unlearn
> Conventions of despair.
> They have their pride.
> I must seek and will find
> my particular hell only in my hindu mind

the juxtaposition of "seek" and "find" with the "Hindu mind" is quite suggestive.

Like most of the poets of Indian diaspora in America, Meena Alexander too creates her own characteristic version of diaspora weaving together the threads of her birth in India, and upbringing in Africa, Europe and America. She is, in her own words, "a woman cracked by multiple migration." Her exposure to various cultures, disciplines and languages appears to have had a considerable influence in shaping her diasporic consciousness and she uses her multicultural background to its fullest effect. In an interview with Ayisha Abraham, Meena Alexander says:

> It seems to me that we need a sense of multiple anchorages, so we make alliances--disparate, shifting ones. As Indians, and not only people from Kerala, Bengal or the Punjab, but from Fiji, Trinidad, Tobago and elswhere from the Asian diaspora. We have a great deal to learn from the African-American experience, the heritage of the Civil Rights struggle. Martin Luther King was directly inspired by Gandhi so that there are all kinds of connections. Neither white nor black, we need to have a rich complex sense of our own identities.[9]

Moving between countries and cultures, Meena Alexander is concerned with the construction of the self and its relationship with memory, history and identity. Her poems chart the ideological, geographical and spatial boundaries of her diasporic lives. Alexander's sensibility is deeply rooted in India and her responses to mother country are often a mixture of nostalgia for the past. Although, she has been writing for many years, it is especially her 1988 volume of poems, *House of a Thousand Doors*, that Alexander sees "as a kind of genetic bench-mark in her writing." With the help of memories, imagination and skilful fabrication, Alexander delienates a wide range of characters and puts forth memorable voices of woman who have lived and struggled at different times in history

and in different parts of the world. The feminine images tend to centre around strong and independent women who defy culturally imposed conventions as they strive to discover and make heard their voices. More often than not, that 'discovery' does not occur in an epiphanic flash; on the contrary, it involves a gentle emergence—a sense of growth that is often as gratifying as it is frightening. In general, the poems in *House of Thousand Doors* are substantial, phenomenal, thus eminently feminist and deeply humane, but they have an unmistakable vein of diaspora.

Alexander continues her exploration of diaspiric themes in *The Storm: A Poem in Five Parts*. The images of women and female experience abound in this collection of poems. Meena alexander comments:

> ...I do think of the *Storm* as a bits-and-pieces narrative, the only sort my life can fall into. The order of the parts instead of recovering any hierchical unity, quiver and replace in the acts of reading. Displacement, violence, but also the poise of a ritualized order are all parts of the feminine world. Nor would I wish to exclude the crudity of supermarkets and airports, the ashen stuff that clings to the imagination and must be washed off.[10]

In "Sita's Story" the poet sees Sita, drawn from the heroine of the *Ramayana* as an active, desiring woman torn, yet poised in her exile:

> despair trepidation,
> sullen words of rage suppresed,
> lips sore and scabbed
> the ragged end of loss
> tied down and knotted to her waist
> as she waits in a hillside garden
> pale Sita
> Whose palms
> flutter like sails
> cut from a bolt of blue

Born in Delhi, Agha Sahid Ali grew up in Kashmir shuttling between Srinagar, Jammu and the Indian capital. Ali was the beneficiary of a diverse cultural heritage that incorporated Muslim, Hindu and Western traditions. He sees himself and his work as a synthesis of these variegated roots as the product of multiple geographical and textual locations. His first volume of poems *Bone Sculpture* depicts a world beyond redemption, consigned to material

corruption and a legacy of bones and dust. Thus, whereas in "Bones" he argues the futility of searching for forgotten ancestors; in "Cremation" he confronts the 'stubborn' dead whose bones refuse to be born. Unmasked, he establishes a poetic identity and in confronting the power of time and the force of history, the poet discovers a poetic vocation to memorialize. The price of exile, reckoned in loneliness and anxiety, is set down in several moving poems such as "Postcard from Kashmir," "Snowmen," "Cracked Portraits," "The Seasons of the Plains" and "The Previous Occupant." Just as exile gives each memory with its own space, absence provides definition to what is absent, be it landscape, lover or self.

Nostaligia for an authentic time or an authentic place eventuates in a frame of mind that not only does violence to history, but ultimately diminishes the value of uses of memory. Ali seems to be searching not for a real but a usable past. At the same time, the past is the necessary ground for change, characterized by arrivals and departures, crossings and recrossings. In "Snow men," Agha Shahid Ali claims a legacy of change and transition.

Agha Shahid Ali's latest book, *A Nostalgist's Map of America,* manifestly evidences the poet's diasporic consciousness. As a writer 'in search of evanescence,' Ali reclaims the voice of life's victims in painful awareness of the enormity, even futility of the task. As always, he is the chronicler of loss. Yet, despite seeing life in a rearview mirror as he hurtles by, Ali bravely memorializes the stories of the forgotten and vanished, be they the copper miners of Bisbee or the political prisoners of Chile. Agha Shahid Ali is an example of successful hybridization, which can be a source of strength for a poet of the Indian diaspora.

Vikram Seth, another poet of Indian diaspora in America, truly represents the postcolonial world in which authors switch culture, societies and even languages with apparent ease. Yet under the poised surface are the disquiets of those without the protection of place and home. A refusal to look inward, a celebration of simple pleasure and of survival and half-serious resort to platitude and pastiche for amusement and as defused make Vikram Seth a poet of our time, of eclectcism and self aware artifice. The single unifying

theme that runs all through his works is the plea for human camaraderie cutting across political, cultural, and national barriers. Seth's first book of poems, *Mappings,* records his sentiments of nostalgia for the Motherland after studying abroad for several years and his continuing attraction to the "notes of other birds/the Nightingale, the Wren."

The Humble Administrator's Garden which received the commonwealth prize for Asia, characteristically charts the memories of diaspora. The book is divided into three sections: "The Wutong," "Neem" and "Live Oak" named after the principal trees of China, India and California respectively. India, for Seth, is a place of memories and lost emotions but California, for all its joys and comforts, is alien and lonely. Moving between Nanjing, New Delhi and California, the poet has learned to look for all the mankind. He explains his quest explicity in the poem "Unclaimed."

Divided into five sections, *All You Who Sleep Tonight* sketches a life in transit. Vikram Seth has travelled much and written about his experiences of his movements. In "Suzhou Park," the poet presents vivid glimpses of China. But whereever he journeys he carries the same emotional weather with him. The poet's self, though smilingly, sadly, is humane, warmly witty, and self-deprecating. Afloat on an undertow of melancholy the poems in the final section of *All You Who Sleep Tonight* are versatile containers for thoughts picked up on the way. In mapping his own diaspora, Seth maps out the universal in mankind with sensitivity and concern. The title poem expresses his heartfelt emotions.

Thus, we can say that the sense of diaspora in contemporary Indo-American poetry takes on a form, scale and intimacy all its own, created through memory, nostalgia and desire. Poets like Ramanujan, Meena Alexander, Agha Shahid Ali and Vikram Seth have an emotional resilence which is beautifully matched by their craftsmanship. Their way of belonging is among the ensemble of distinctive voices, as indeed an Indian makes sense of his place in any ethos--rural, metropolitian, migrant, immigrant. It is, of course, gratifying that these poets have not only the right idiom at their command but also a native sensibility to articulate a variety of

diasporic experiences with striking originality.

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PROBLEMATISING THE MINORITY DISCOURSE: INLETS TO THE PARSI SENSIBILITY

R.S. Pathak

Writers of the Indian subcontinent have made the most significant contribution in the area of fiction. Writing about the Indian English novel, Dorothy Spencer opines that it is a major source for "a systematic study of cultural contact and cultural change" and would enhance the readers' "knowledge of acculturation process."[1] The fiction written by minorities is of special importance, for it enables us to have an intimate peep into their psyche. The question of minority in the Indian subcontinent is highly complex, critical and in many ways unresolved. The political discourse of the 1990s has tried to bring into focus the problematic of social insiders and outsiders, but the minority literary discourse here does not seem to have received the attention it deserves. Its careful analysis and appraisal is essential to demystify the concept and to take proper care of the minorities' perceived feelings of their position in the subcontinent as well as their psychological vulnerabilities. The present paper aims at throwing some light on socio-psychological values of the Parsis, their problems and plight and their predicament as delineated in the novels written by them in English, with a particular reference to the works of Dina Mehta and Bapsi Sidhwa, the two well-known novelists from India and Pakistan respectively.

The Indian Parsi novelists have thrown significant light on the way of life of their community, which is remarkably different from that of other Indians. The attitude of these novelists is not different from that of Bapsi Sidhwa enshrined in the Preface to her novel *The Crow Eaters* (1978):

> Because of a deep-rooted admiration for my diminishing community —and an enormous affection for it—this work of fiction has been a labour of love. The nature of comedy being to exaggerate, the incidents in this book do not reflect at all upon the integrity of a community whose scrupulous honesty and sense of honour... are legend.[2]

The contributions of the Parsis towards making a better India, right from the days of her struggle for freedom, cannot be set side. But notwithstanding their admiration and love for their community, the

Parsi novelists have projected its preferences and priorities, problems and "eccentricities" reiteratively. They have also taken occasionally a crack at its excesses and angularities at the cost of their quixotically amorous young people and their dotty characters. Their work re-creates their community, which takes pride in living together, sharing collective memories and perpetuating the value of its heritage.

Most Parsis, as delineated by these novelists, have a typical weakness for Western values and civilization and try their best to have a close connection with the English. Most Parsis in Dina Mehta's *And Some Take a Lover* (1992), for example, own their allegiance to everything English. They would make a point to visit the summer-resorts, which was "a matter of pride and prestige" to them.[3] They would feel particularly at home in these hill stations which were "an English creation, with their deluxe shops and hotels and skating rinks, with their dressing-for-dinner, their parties, dances and beauty competitions." Here the Parsis would blissfully forget all about "the strings and freedom-agitations in the country" (136). Roshni, the main character in Dina Mehta's novel, is conscious of the Westernisation affecting the Parsis including herself:

> The Parsee way of life was the most Westernized in India. More than the Anglo-Indians they could afford the tastes, the standards, the luxuries introduced by the alien rulers. She [Roshni] spoke English better than her adopted mother-tongue, Gujarati. She even thought in English. ...She read no Gujarati books or papers. She did not know Persian, the language of her ancestors. ...She did not know a word of Avesta, in which her prayers were written. She knew more about Christianity than of her own religion. ...She was more familiar with the Bible than with the *Gathas*, with the Acts of Apostles than with the life of Zarathustra (188).

Roshni also admits that her home itself is patterned on the Western style, right from its Victorian mass and solidity to Venetian glass vases and Dresden art-pieces. The English language and other aspects of the English culture are thus an integral part of the way of life of the Parsis. This Eurocentric approach considerably determines their world view and attitude to life.

Originally, this Anglomania seems to have resulted from practical considerations. Faredoon Junglewalla or Freddie, in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Crow Eaters*, spells out its advantages. He calls the

Englishmen the Parsis' "sovereigns." "Where do you think we'd be," he asks, "if we did not curry favour? Next to the nawabs, rajas and princelings, we are the greatest toadies of the British Empire! ...Otherwise, where would we Parsis be? Cleaning our gutters with the untouchables—a dispersed pinch of snuff sneezed from the heterogeneous nostrils of India!" (p.12). Having arrived in Lahore, the first thing Freddie did was to go to the Government House to demonstrate his loyalty to 'Queen and Crown.' When he took his wife out, he expected her to greet and behave "like any bold English girl" (190). He himself "hobnobbed with Maharajas and Englishmen" (101). His command of the language was slippery and yet he "prided himself on his English" (156). He would even quote English proverbs and swear the way the English would (51, 69). Then, we have in the novel Khan Bahadur Sir Noshriwan Jeevanjee Easymoney, the ex-military officer, who lost one of his eyes by an enemy bullet. Having been knighted, he "dressed and talked like an English lord-sahib" and "drifted in a rarefied atmosphere of lords, barons and sirs" (194). His house was lighted by crystal lamps and had brocade curtains, a huge French tapestry and "the dull gold furniture... of Louis XIV style," its "overwhelming elegance" being enhanced by "embroidered chairs" (199). "His suit was from Savile Row, [and] his patent leather shoes shone like mirrors." And yet, ironically enough, "Despite his *British affectations* he *looked* graciously and splendidly Indian" (212; emphasis added). When marriage negotiations for his daughter were being finalised, he took pains to "*demonstrate* that though he might be a sir, and accustomed to the ways of British aristocracy, he was first and foremost a loyal and down-to-earth Parsi" (221; emphasis added). His wife, Lady Easymoney, "tidy and meticulous," "washed tomatoes with soap" (199). Such was the craze for the English way of life that even Freddie's penny-pinching son Behram alias Billy and his fashionable wife, Tanya, evinced "a fanatical faith in the ways of English society in India, and a disciple's knack at imitation." Their "ability to converse in English" set them apart from the common people (245). Not only that, Billy and Tanya "fought in English, with an odd Gujarati word or sentence thrown in" (248), and when Tanya was

expecting a baby she was expected to contemplate the pictures of "chubby-cheeked English babies" and produce a "European style offspring" (249).

The Parsi novelists have given meaningful hints about other aspects of the Parsi way of life. Dina Mehta, for example, tells us that most Parsis are relentless eaters and have a remarkable passion for "elaborate food of most indigestible kind" (13). They are to Rustom, himself an influential member of the community, pretentious people "interested only in money and social advancement" (20). Any person who did not have "the decency to be born a Parsee" would be regarded by them as "a savage " (31). The Parsis' eagerness to remain a closed ethnic group has resulted in inbreeding, reduction in their number and other untoward repercussions. In *And Some Take a Lover* "Jangoo Batliwala was one such example with his soft, clammy palms, over-fleshed pink lips and the pale pigment of inbreeding. And Gulestan was another example of what happened when a minimal ethnic group sealed itself in its own juices" (37). Roshni Wadia, the protagonist of the novel, finds socialite evenings nothing but "odds and ends of looks, snippets of smiles, [and] a string of inane sallies" (116). A possible "superior husband material" (37) is invariably the topic of discussion among matriarchs and an object of relentless pursuits for eligible young women of the community. To an ordinary person the Parsis would, on the whole, appear to be a "vapid, pleasure-seeking crowd," or an "imbecile crowd" given to a "complacent, fatuous life," the "facet of the stylish ensamble" presented by them being "a fashionable pose, nothing more" (136). Roshni is averse to what she calls "the slithering and sliding and gambolling, [and] the frantic promiscuity" (215) of their get-togethers, although she herself is encouraged to participate in them frequently and whole-heartedly.

Bapsi Sidhwa, in *The Crow Eaters*, has also highlighted some of the most distinguishing traits of the Parsis. In general, a Parsi's "reputation for honesty and propriety is a byword" (23), and his faith is "based on charity" (47). Freddie's son Yezdi gives away his share of the property to poors. There are nevertheless exceptions like Freddie himself who would have no scruples in swindling in an

insurance case and "no one would know how diabolically wily, unscrupulous, and false he really was" (104). The Parsis do not allow conversions or mixed marriages and maintain their exclusive identity. Freddie tells Yezdi, who wanted to marry an Anglo-Indian girl: ...if you marry outside our kind, the spark so delicately nurtured, so subtly balanced, meets something totally alien and unmatched" and the children born "might look beautiful but they will be shells—empty and confused; misfits for generations to come. They will have arrogance without pride—touchiness without self-respect or compassion..." (128-29). This kind of claustrophobic exclusiveness may be responsible for slow-thinking persons and archetypal cranks. Gluttony is another deadly sin which lures the Parsis in a big way. Freddie's mother-in-law is an inveterate over-eater. She would easily appropriate "huge quantities of chocolate, buiscuits ...and wines" (26). Freddie says: "...she eats like a horse at meals, and then swallows enough sweet chutneys, candied fruits and liqueurs to give an elephant diarrhoea" (27). This mindless eating would give ultimately bloated dimensions to middle-aged prima donnas.

The novelist has also drawn our attention to the Parsis' love for money and their enviable business sense. Freddie is presented as a "dulcet-voiced adventurer with so few scruples" and a "charming rascality" (9). According to him, the "sweetest thing in the world" is one's need—the mainspring of one's "wants, wellbeing and contentment." "Need," he would add, "makes a flatterer of a bully and persuades a cruel man to kindness" (10). There is not much scope for pride and arrogance in his system, and he would follow the dictates of his needs which "make one flexible, elastic, humble." In support of his stance he would misquote Christ: 'The meek shall inherit the earth' and 'Sway with the breeze, bend with the winds' (11). "Business is business" (181) was the guiding principle of his life. What he dreaded most was "ruin, disgrace, and business annihilation" (190). Billy out- Freddied Freddie in this respect. "He was suspicious," we are told, and "avaricious" and "cunning" and "had a simple vocation in life. MONEY!". "He existed to make, multiply, and hoard it. He was notoriously and devoutly penny-pinching. ...His frugality he might have inherited from an undiluted

line of Parsi forebears" (192). He was "systematic" and his "mind worked in bracketed numerals" (230). Money was his real love. "Never was a man so parsimonious;" he was obliged to face "a gigantic conflict between his passion for his wife and his passion for money. Money, being his first love, triumphed" (247). His "commandments" directed at his wife included:

> Thou shalt not spend money!
> Thou shalt not waste.
> Thou shalt give me a minutely detailed account of expenses.
> Thou shalt obey thy husband, and jump to his bidding.
> Thou shalt bring up thy children to obey and to love me more than they do you.
> Thou shalt never require anything.
> Thou and thy children shall not disturb me.
> Thou shalt switch off all lights and fans (278).

The Parsi novelists have dealt with the themes of the Quit India Movement, the Partition, the Independence, the British colonial rule and other momentous events affecting the subcontinent. But their attitude is ambivalent. In *The Crow Eaters*, for example, Freddie vehemently protests against the nationalist movement and exhorts his children to be loyal to the British Empire. Anyone who goes against the wishes of the English would be unacceptable to him. Quit India! Quit India!" Freddie is expectedly "perturbed by the trend of events in India;" he is "stirred by [the] talk of rebellion, self-rule, and Independence from the British—and most of all by the role of a few Parsis in all this" (282). People like Naoroji, he feels, are "making monkeys of themselves." Others will benefit by breaking the country and the Parsis would nowhere be wanted.

In her later novel *Ice-Candy Man*, Bapsi Sidhwa has revealed the Parsis' attitude to the imminent Partition and the concept of 'Swaraj.' Set in pre-Partition Lahore, the novel highlights vulnerability of human relationships. Here, again, the Parsis find it difficult to decide whether to support the 'Swaraj' or to continue their loyalty to the British Raj. At a special meeting organised at the temple hall in Warris Road an acrimonious debate on the political situation takes place. Col. Bharucha advises the Parsis to keep away from the nationalist agitation. Dr. Mody, however, pleads for involvement in the freedom struggle for the simple reason that "our neighbours

will think we are betraying them and siding with the English."[4] On the initiative of the banker Toddywalla, they resolve to follow their time-tested path of compromise and adaptability.

Dina Mehta's novel *And Some Take a Lover* also delineates the Parsis' apprehensions and political crises in the wake of the Quit India movement and the Naval Ratings Mutiny. Happy in their own orbits, most Parsis, we are told in the novel, would prefer not to remember about "the strings and freedom-agitations in the country" (136). Roshni's mother, who represents elderly members of her community, is convinced that once the English go, the country would go to dogs. Dina Mehta's is an absorbing work about the conflicting loyalties of a Parsi family enmeshed in the political and personal turmoil.

It is not surprising that some great Indian leaders have not fared well in such a paradoxical situation. To Roshni's mother and people like her Gandhi is merely "that scoundrel and vagrant ...the arch-traitor, the unmentionable, except with abuse" (38). To Roshni's cousin Framroze Gandhi's fasting is "political blackmail," and aunt Piroja feels that he is pro-Japanese and a fifth-columnist. After her failure to marry Sudhir, an indignant Roshni also begins to see Gandhi as a despot. Roshni has never met Gandhi but was "aghast when she thought of the strange, awesome power he wielded over other people's lives" (219). Nehru and Indira Gandhi have also not been spared. In Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey*, which hinges around the Bangladesh crisis of 1971, the subsequent Indo-Pak war and the Nagarwalla Bank Case, Nehru is taken to task for the "humiliating defeat" of India at the hands of the Chinese in 1962. The novel also mentions Nehru's frustration, ill temper, political intrigues that surrounded him and his "monomaniacal fixation" with "his darling daughter."[5] The successor of Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri, however, received unqualified praise because under his stewardship "the stagnant waters of government would at last be freshened and vitalized."[6] The Congress Party is alleged to comprise "crooks" and is reduced to "a rogues' gallery."[7] And the country is no better than "a patient with gangrene at an advanced stage."[8] There may be some dissenting voices, but the general drift

remains unchanged.

The Parsi novelists have reflected through their works the dilemma of the minority community and its identity crisis. Understandably an anglicized community would find it extremely difficult to identify with other Indian communities. Roshni, in *And Some Take a Lover*, recalls her grandmother's views about the majority community: A Hindu, to her, "turned his world into a vast spittoon by ejecting streams of betel juice on walls, staircases, roads, pavements; his bathrooms stank of urine and kitchens of *heeng*; he was dishonest in his business practices and mean with his money..." (38). In the pre-Independence India they felt, to use Nissim Ezekiel's phrase, 'natural outsiders' and at times deliberated "whether or not Parsees should return en masse to Iran, the land of their forebears thirteen hundred years ago" (29). Even the younger generation are not free from the dilemma. Roshni represents their challenges faced by them in varying degrees. Her lover Sudhir find her "cut adrift in the circumstances she scarcely understood" (136). After Sudhir's departure, in retaliation she "allowed herself to be manoeuvred into an ugly trashy affair" with Rustom Bharucha and consequently "was lost for ever, the scarlet letter her companion for life" (23). The most frightening thing in her life now was her isolation, her "citadel of aloofness" only leading her on to a "hinterland of confused values" (62,42). She feels "a terrible alienation... rather like a prisoner arraigned before the Bench," wishing "herself away on a desert island" —inside her "dirty ivory tower" (111).

Roshni, however, is not the only character in the novel who suffers from alienation. As she herself reminds us, "her confusions were but a quintessential version of the chaos outside" (57). Rustom, the go-lucky, bohemian sensualist, faces the same problem. As soon as she enters his house she becomes conscious of his rootlessness. Rustom, like so many members of his community, has failed to have a sense of belonging here. He asks Roshni: "Did you not feel how rootless they [the Parsis] are? That they do not belong? What has this country to offer us? What kind of cultural life? We Parsis are aliens here" (18). He feels that he belongs, on account of his breeding, education and background, to England,

with its "rich life" and the "freedom, the dispassionate pursuit of knowledge, and the concern for the well-being of the individual" (18-19). Initially, Roshni notices a marked similarity between hers and Rustom's plight. "He is like me," says she, "in that he feels he does not belong here. But while I feel like mere driftwood caught up in the swirl of these past two years, he stupidly believes he can come to shore *there*; and I belong nowhere" (19). Rustom's rootlessness is a natural consequence of his unbridled sensualism, satiety and the accompanying withdrawal. His ruthless egotism prevented him from developing intimate, natural relations even with his wife.

Two more cases may also be considered briefly. There is a reference to Zorastrianism (and some other religions) in Farrukh Dhondy's *Bombay Duck*. An informal chat between Xerxes Xavaxa and Lyla goes on as follows:

> "What do you feel, Mr. Xavaxa, or Xerxes? As a Parsee."
> "Parsees. We don't feel threatened, I don't." "Sikhs do and Muslims do and there's been slaughter these last forty years...."[9]

Despite their bravado, most of these characters suffer from a kind of cultural neurasthenia. A similar case is that of Daryus Kotwal (called 'Brittle' or 'Brit' because of his brittle bones) in Firdaus Kanga's *Trying to Grow*. He is gnawed by social alienation because he is "Educated, speaking [English] so well"[10] and belongs to a community which owes its allegiance to the British Empire. Like other members of his community he lives in the past and psychologically alligns himself to the King Emperor. Everything Indian is looked down upon including the Hindu religion and the Indian way of life. The adoration of the British royal family reaches ridiculous heights. The protagonist himself says, "We are reluctant Indians."[16] It is a different matter though that finally he comes to terms with himself; "I like the way I looked," he affirms.[11]

Literature, being a sub-system of a given culture, offers an illustration or exemplification of some general pattern or syndrome. Minority discourse is characterised not only by an urge to adapt and assimilate but also by a culture of protest and resistance. Culture is not merely an organisational principle holding together the members of a community; it is also a means of establishing

its separateness from and resistance to other communities. Writing about the Muslims, M.J. Akbar maintained in his book *Riot After Riot* (1988) that they have developed "a siege mentality." The consequences of cultural colonisation or subordination are too well known to be recounted here. It creates two conflicting tendencies, i.e. of imitation of the 'colonizer', and revival of the past (e.g. the building of the Tower of Silence in *The Crow Eaters*). As Kennrth Frampton suggests, modern art forms may have "the capacity to cultivate [a] resistant, identity-giving culture."[12] The Resistance Theory advanced during the recent decades has more insistently emphasised the value of the rediscovery and repatriation of what has been suppressed in a minority's past. The Resistence Theory advises recharting of "the place reserved for subordination" and regards cultural colonization not only as a form of enslavement and a loss of cultural independence but also as a form of historical denaturing and cultural deracination. 'Imperialism' is thought of today "not as a hierarchically structured system of global capitalism but as a *relation*."[13] In his Reith lectures, *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994), Edward Said has asked resistance to be content with marginality and self-exile. Earlier he adumbrated three choices to a minority community:

> One choice is to do as Ariel does, that is... when he gains his freedom he returns to his native element, a sort of bourgeois native untroubled by his collaboration with Prospero. A second choice is to do like Caliban, aware of and accepting his mongrel past but not disabled for future development. A third choice is to be a Caliban who sheds his current servitude and physical disfigurements in the process of discovering his essential, pre-colonial self.[14]

This is high time that relation between the centre and the periphery—the majority and minority communities—were recognised properly and serious efforts were made to invent more heterogeneous forms of unity that might be commensurate with the complexity of our subcontinent.

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THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS: A TALE OF MOMBATTIS' BRAVE STRUGGLE

Ranjana Harish

I propose to discuss *The God of Small Things* as a tale of 'mombattis.' The reference here is to the chapter named "Big man, the Laltain, Small Man the Mombatti" in which a Bihari coolie gives this piece of wisdom to Estha on the railway platform; Estha is on a school excursion. The coolie says:

> Big Man the Laltain sahib, Small Man the Mombatti. (89)

The sentence catches child Estha's imagination, and he translates it instantly as:

> Huge man the Strobe nights. And Small Man the Subway Station.(89)

I read an underpinning of protest in the symbol of Mombattis—a symbol indicative of smallness as well as of illumination. Smallness of the small people is fine, but their being self-illuminated is something which cannot be taken by the establishment. All small men are not 'Mombattis'; most of them are pieces of mirror reflecting Laltain sahib's light.

However, the two central characters of the novel, Velutha, the Untouchable God of Small Things, and his beloved Ammu, the Touchable divorcee daughter of Mannachi are Mombattis--small but self-illuminated. Though small and uninmportant--one because he is an Untouchable and the other because she is a woman and both members belonging to the minority class--, they defy the social prescription for a 'good Paravan' and a 'good woman.' In doing so, they reject their mirror-role and enter into a deadly combat with the establishment/patriarchy. The establishment must teach them lesson and make them behave or else destroy them before the epidemic of insolence catches up the whole society.

Both Velutha and Ammu are destroyed because they refuse to turn into mirrors, reflecting back the images the establishment wants to see. However small they be, they try to retain their identity as mombattis. Their lives are guided by an inner light, and not by the laws of the society. Neither Velutha endorses the rules applicable to the untouchables, nor Ammu endorses the inscription of touchable femininity.

Velutha's father Vellya Paapen provides a good contrast to his son--one is a mirror, the other is a Mombatti; one is an old day's paravan with the haunting memories of 'Crawling Backwards Days,' the other is a card holding member of the communist party; one is a Paravan with 'mortgaged limbs,' while the other is a skilled carpenter employed by 'Paradise Pickles and Preservatives'; one is a mirror, the other is a lamp.

The theme of untouchability is handled most artistically and dramatically by Roy with the glass eye of Vellya Paapen. "Mammachi had paid for his glass eye. He had not worked off his debt yet, ...he felt his eye was not his own"(77) On witnessing what he calls the "beginning of the end of the world" he reports it to Mammachi tremblingly. The scene that follows is somewhat grotesque, but is significant:

> He stared straight ahead with his mortgaged eye. He wept with his own one. One cheek glistened with tears. The other stayed dry.... He trembled his own body like a man with malaria. Vellya Paapan told Mammachi what he had seen. He asked God's forgiveness for having spawned a monster. He offered to kill his son with his own hands. To destroy what he had created.

Again, he goes to Mammachi. This time he puts something on Mammachi's palm--something sticky. It is his glass eye. "He said he did not deserve it and wanted her to take it back" (256). Mammachi takes time to recoil from its "slippery hardness" and its "slimy marbleness." On returning the eye to its rightful place on Mammachi's command, he begins to cry. Again, he cries with his own and stares "stonily ahead" with the other. He is a man whose vision, too, in addition to his artificial eye and other limbs and soul, is mortgaged--a Paravan with blinkers of History.

But Velutha, his son, is different. His "lack of hesitation" and his "unwarranted assurance" made his father fear. "His quiet way to disregard suggestions without appearing a rebel were the traits which could be construed as insolence in a Paravan boy"(76). He has a vision, a soul and a human heart of his own which goes out to suffering minorities.The rarest moments of happiness that the twins experience in the chapter "The River in the Boat" are his gift to them.

The one-armed cheerful man of Ammu's dreams, who "left no

footprints in sand, no ripples in water, no image in mirror" (216), evokes memory of the untouchable's History, again, when "Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan's footprints"(74). The absence of footprints symbolically is rejection from the human history of human status altogether.

The theme of untouchability is ably handled by Roy with reality-based dream of Ammu. She dreams of the man without footprints. The symbol recurs quite a few times--at least six times (216, 218 twice, 265, 289, 290). Velutha does not sweep off his footprints. In independent democratic India, comrade Velutha's footprints are erased by the establishment. The sweeping work is done by the Police: "History's henchmen sent to square the books and collect the dues" (310). All-powerful Inspector Thomas Mathew who dared humiliate Ammu in the Kottayam police station by tapping her breasts with his batton--"As though he was choosing mangoes from a basket" (8)--, one who dared drag Velutha from the History House and "beat him inhumanly to death," now has to bend down to sweep the Paravan's footprints by collecting false evidence of his crime. Such a humiliation ought to be suffered by the respectable touchable patriarchs for the sake of the purity of their future generations, for their "Touchable wives, Touchable daughters--whole Touchable generations waiting in their Touchable wombs" (259). The touchable wives, touchable daughters and their touchable wombs are as if the Estates of the Patriarchs.

Coming to Ammu, she is different. As a child she had disregarded the Father Bear Mother Bear story as in her version of the story "Father Bear beat Mother Bear with brass vases. Mother Bear suffered those beatings with mute resignation" (180). Being a child of discordant marital relationship,

> She developed a lofty sense of injustice and the mulish, reckless streak that develops in Someone Small who has been bullied all their lives by Someone Big. (182)

Her effrontery left everyone to wonder as she had neither that sort of education nor exposure. Perhaps, "she was just that sort of animal" concludes the narrator (180).

Yes, she was not a mirror, reflecting back an image of obedient, submissive 'good woman.' In marrying a man of her choice--a Malayalee girl marrying a Bengali man--she had already asserted her right of taking decision regarding her body. Unfortunetely, it was a wrong choice. The marriage failed as the drunkard father of her twins wished to offer the beautiful wife to his white officer to avoid a transfer in his job. Who was he to decide about her body? She had taken no time in deciding to quit such a husband and had returned to her mother with two kinds and had thus joined the company of "Man-less Father Mulligan-less Boby Kochamma and widow Mammachi. But when the footprintless cheerful man started visiting her dreams, no social prescriptions of so-called good woman or no 'Love Laws' could prevent her from doing what she wished. She claimed her body back from her twins who hugged her while she dreamed of her lover. "She shrugged children off the way a bitch strugs off her pups when she had enough of them" runs the simple description and then Roy adds a sentence, "She wanted her body back. It was her body" (222),--a sentence which brings in a distinct feminist shade of the feminist assertion of female body as female estate. She dares meet Vethula at the haunted house on the river bank: Untouchable Velutha seeks strength from her. He folds his fear into a rose and she tucks it in her long hair--a magic realist touch according to John Updike (*The New Yorker,* June 23-30, 97).

Patriarchy's tolerance of 'Man's Needs' reiterated by Mammachi at least some six times in the book while providing a special door for her son Chacko's room for the 'objects of his needs' (26, 168, 169, 238, 258, 295) fails to bear with Ammu's needs. It fails to bear with Velutha's needs too. As one is someone whose bodiness is wilfully overlooked by the Patriarchy and the other is an Untouchable not to be looked upon as a man at all.

Patriarchy must punish both--the woman who has "defiled generations of breeding" (258) and the Paravan who has defied the tradition. Both these Mombattis must be punished for unspooling unacknowledged fears--"civilizations, fear of nature, men's fear of women, power's fear of powerlessness" (308). They must punish

the lovers and thus "inoculate a community against an outbreak" (309). Finally Velutha, "a Paravan with pair of two egg twins hounded by history" dies in the police custody (262). The description runs as follows:

> He left behind a hole in the universe through which darkness poured like liquid tar. Through which their mother followed without even turning back to wave good bye. She left them behind, spinning in the dark, with no moorings, in a place with no foundation (192).

The narrator comments how contented history was: "The real teacher teaching. That was the stuff their (twins) dreams were made of" (326).

As Arundhati Roy has mentioned in a personal interview at the Frankfurt World Book Fair (October 1997), *The God of Small Things* is indeed a poetic yet sad book, "and somehow the sadness of the book is what stays with me," she adds. Sadness of two lovers' death and the sacrifice of two childhoods shroud it. Though "overwrought" with poetic prose, the charge levelled by John Updike in *The New Yorker* that 'Literary prizes are not nationalistic events... Full stop" is the characteristically ungenerous response of Rushdie to the booker bagger (June 23-30, 1997). I think it's an important landmark which cannot be overlooked not only because it brings home a Booker but also because it records Mombattis' brave, though unfortunate, struggle to survive against crazy winds of caste, class and gender in independent India.

REVERSING THE GEAR: A CRITIQUE OF ARUNDHATI ROY'S *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*

A.N. Dwivedi

The phenomenal popularity of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* compels our attention in a serious way. That it has sold about nine millions of copies the world ever and has been translated into as many as twenty-nine languages puts a stamp on its unprecedented popularity, which is next to none in the domain of Indian English literature. The winning of the coveted Booker Prize in 1997 simply confirms this enviable popularity. This kind of popularity prompts us all the more to examine this critically and thoroughly.

I am convinced that Arundhati Roy has written her novel with the western readership in mind. I say so because there are certain things--what she calls 'small things'--in it that do not promote the cause of Indian aestheics which propagates the principles of "Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram" (of Truth, Goodness, Beauty). Though there is no harm if a writer keeps the western markets in mind (as that guarantees a handsome earning), but it is a little painful and disquieting to see an Indian writer making a work of literature a mere saleable commodity. I shall cite here one or two examples to carry home my point. It is really distasteful to watch a twin--a brother and a sister (born of the same parents)--to get involved in incestuous relationship. Had Arundhati Roy consulted me before the publication of the novel, as she did with her coterie of admirers (see her "Acknowledgements"), I would have suggested to her to desist from such unnecessary incestuous, immoral scenes. And had she followed my suggestion, she would have been more in keeping with the Indian spirit and culture. This kind of physical contact, even if it was the twin's need, is uncalled for and totally spoils the artistic taste. It is nothing short of morbidity and vulgarity. Up to this point, the twins had maintained a spiritual bond, but now suddenly they break the Love Laws, as the writer puts it. This breaking of 'the Love Laws' is quite irrelevant and undesirable.

Similarly the entire fourth Chapter titled "Abhilash Talkies" is

like a cancer in the body of the novel. It is completely useless and purposeless, and does not add, in any way, to the progression of the plot. After reading this chapter, it is evident that the writer has set her eye either on swelling the size of the novel or on catching the attention of foreign readers. The behaviour of the Orange-drink Lemondrink Man towards an innocent boy like Estha at the Refreshment Counter during the film-interval is unquestionably unethical and objectionable. But it is in the nature of Arundhati Roy to exult in lewd and lecherous scenes. This is how she writes about the man-boy encounter:

> 'Now if you'll kindly held this for me; the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man said, handing Estha his penis through his soft white muslin dhoti, 'I'll get you your drink. Orange? Lemon ?'[1]

And she does not stop here, moves forward, and describes the ejaculation of that bastard (possibly as a woman experiences it):

> Then the gristly-bristly face I of the Man I contorted, and Estha's hand was wet and hot and sticky, It had egg white on it. White egg white. Quarter-boiled. (p. 104)

This beastly act of the Man causes headache and vomiting for Estha. But this is all useless and serves no purpose in the text. The entire episode is smelly, stinky, and un-aesthetic.

Elsewhere too, Arundhati Roy shows her expertise in depicting erotic and passionate scenes, as in the last chapter titled "The Cost of Living" where man-woman relationship reaches full consummation. But there is a reason for it--Ammu (the mother of the twins) has been a day-dreamer having afternoon-mares, and as an a abandoned woman (by Chacko, her husband) she remains unrequited physically. Roy, in portraying the restless feelings and passions of Ammu, is more womanlike, mere earthy, more natural. She is not so perverted and unnatural here as in "Abhilash Talkies" (pp. 94-123). Ammu's divorced and lonely life pays its full price in the last chapter. She always longs to get united to Velutha, a Paravan (low-caste by birth). She fulfils her unsatisfied desires. The writer paints her consummation with that Paravan in unequivocal terms:

> Ammu, naked now, crouched over Velutha, her mouth on his. He drew her hair around them like a tent. ... She slid further down, introducing herself to the rest of him. His neck. His nipples. His chocolate stomach. She sipped the last of the river from the hollow of his navel. She pressed the heat of

> his erection against her eyelids. She tasted him, salty, in her mouth. ...She felt his belly tighten under her, hard as a board. She felt her wetness slipping on his skin. He took her nipple in his mouth and cradled her other breast in his calloused palm. Velvet gloved in sandpaper.
>
> At the moment that she guided him into her, she caught a passing glimpse of his youth, his youngness, the wonder in his eyes at the secret he had unearthed and she smiled down at him as though he was her child. (p. 336)

Artistically speaking, Arundhati Roy employs crisp and racy language in this novel, and her similes and metaphors are very accurate and arresting. For instance. "Rahel's new teeth were waiting inside her gums, like words in a pen" (p. 37), and "She put her rosary back into her blouse where she kept it with her melons" (p. 81). Obviously, her spicy and racy style is her *forte.* Her language is littered with South Indian names and nuances, which call for a suitable glossary to precisely explain them to her readers, especially the western ones. Her prose is appearing, having the hurried motion of a swiftly flowing stream, but at times it becomes wordy and rheterical. Here is an example of it:

> So old a beat that it had taken root. Almost. A grey old *beatplant* with *beatflowers* and *beatfruit.* And underneath, a *beat-shaped* patch of withered grass. A scurrying, hurrying *beatworld.* (Italics mine, p. 202)

The 'beat' being described here assumes the shape and significance of the earth on which plants, flowers and fruits grow. This all happens due to the twisting capacity of the novelist, -- twisting the word (or words) in such a fashion that it loses its place and identity. Commenting on this capacity of Arundhati Roy, Prof. C.D. Nerasimhaiah writes thus:

> We soon become aware the novelist has a palpable design—to create an effect, not by her keenness of observation of what is *there* but by the manipulation of words -- the words don't mediate experience as she is busy peddling them. Consequently what started as a place in the first two sentences [of chapter 1] becomes *any* place, with her *seeking* in vain to invest airy nothing with a local habitation and a name. This is so in both the paragraphs. 'Mental bombasts', as Celeridge would have called it, with a feeling *for* words, not *into* them.[2]

Very clearly, Narasimhaiah is not happy with Roy's verbosity and longwindedness, with her use of words, lines and colours, but particularly with her words. Being an architect by profession, Arundhati Roy draws pictures in her work by means of words, and occasionally

while doing so she overdoes it. That is her fault indeed.

Though Arundhati Roy displays her dexterity in coining and compounding words (for example, 'Thiswayandthat', p. 101; 'Stoppit' becomes 'Stoppited', p. 141), greater is her propensity for word-distortion (for example, 'Locusts Stand I' for 'Locus Standi', p. 57, and 'Myooezick' for 'Music, p. 95). Frequently she slips into the fault of carelessly using punctuation marks and capital letters. For instance,

> She used her windows for specific purposes.
> For a *Breath of Fresh Air.* To *Pay* for the *Milk.*
> To *Let Out a Trapped Wasp....* (Italics mine, p. 28)

and:

> She deemed them *Capable of Anything.* (Italics mine, p. 29)

I imagine, this had been done for the sake of effect--to emphasise a point. Arundhati Roy also takes the liberty of truncating words at times (e.g., 'Never. The. Less.' for 'Nevertheless'. There are also truncated expressions in the novel; for example, "Rahel followed Estha to his room. Ammu's room. Once." (p. 91). But it is to the credit of Roy that she has made witty and humorous -- occasionally irronical -- remarks at many places in it; for instance,

> History's smell.
> Like old roses on a breeze. (p. 55)

and again:

> When the gurgling, bubbling sound came, she [Baby Xeohamma] listened with her eyes. A yellow brook burbled through a mountain pass. (p. 95).

The first-quoted passage contains brilliant imagery in it, and the second one presonts a graphic picture of a fatty woman urinating and watching the 'yellow water' jotting forth. The second one is free from inhibitions and becomes somewhat modernistic in detail. The woman writer tends to be a little vulgar and ironical in imagery. In fact, nothing is sacrosanct for this perennial joker, this master blaster

In an on-stage interview by Alice Traux, an editor of the *New Yorker* magazine, Arundhati Roy was asked certain questions after her reading of the excerpts from *The God of Small Things* at the Asia Society in New York. And one of the questions related to her employment of the unexpected full stops, rogue capital letters, unpredictable punctuation, and she answered with her usual gusto

that "it was because she hadn't studied grammar."[3] This is certainly a cryptic reply to unarm the critics, but the truth cannot be blunted by mere wit or dash. Personally I do not agree with her that she hasn't studied grammar, but sometimes she has deviated from the accepted norms of grammar. Hence her statement cenceals the truth.

Scholars like C.D. Narasimhaiah have found fault with Arundhati Roy's locale--the landscape of Kerala. Though I am not the right person to pass judgment on it and though I do not subscribe to the viewpoint of Narasimhaiah on this count when he remarks, "No, it isn't Kerala, it is Roy's fanciful picture, with remote resemblance to Kerala...,"[4] I do feel that. Roy's portrayal of Ayemenem, of the History House, of the Pickles & Preserves Factory, of the 'Chi... Chi... Chi...' people living there, is enveloped in vagueness and darkness. A 'fanciful picture' of a locale is telerable--even Shakespeare used to give 'airy nothing' a local habitation and a name--but the labyrinthine story moving indistinctly in a linear way, the weak characterization, and the overall vague atmosphere are some of the unpardonable crimes in a novel.

Perhaps 'smallness' is the watchword for the novelist here. The title of the novel is a pointer to this fact. Who is this 'God of Small Things'? As the text clarifies, he is--

> The God of Less? The God of Small Things?
> The God of Goose Bumps and Sudden Smiles?
> Of Sourmetal Smells--like steel bus-rails and the smell of the bus conductor's hands from holding them? (p. 217)

This 'God' is undeniably related to Ammu's dreamworld. Many a time the hint is thrown in the text that Ammu, the frustrated and sex-hungry mother of the twins Rahel and Estha, is a great dreamer. In one place, we find: "There are big dreams and little ones" (p.89). The 'little dreams' constitute an integral part of 'Small Things.' Hence Ammu's dreams of 'the one-armed man'--Whe is he? Is he Velutha, the Paravan?--are directly lined with 'the God of Small Things.' Ammu is such a great dreamer that her children (the twins) are afraid of disturbing her in her dreams. Speaking of her mother, Rahel remarks: " 'She says you should never wake dreaming people suddenly'... 'She says they could easily have a Heart

Attack' " (p. 217). Ammu often dreamt of "a cheerful man with one arm [holding] her close by the light of an oil lamp. He had no other arm with which to fight the shadows that flickered around him on the floor" (p. 215). This is precisely what we discover in Chapter 11 titled "The God of Small Things," and to this we revert in the last two chapters of the novel (Chapters 20 & 21). In chapter 20, Ammu is leaning against the bedroom door in the dark, neglected by her one-time husband named Chacko, his mother Mammachi, and Baby Kochamma at the dinner table, and these latter ones are quite conscious of their blood and high caste. At this moment, Ammu slips into her afternoon-mare (day-dream), and the "cheerful one-armed man with salty skin and a shoulder" emerges from the shadows of the jagged beach and walks towards her. Who is this man?--

> The God of Less.
> The God of Small Things.
> The God of Goose Bumps and Sudden Smiles. (p. 330)

He could do only one thing at a time, as the writer informs us:

> If he touched her, he couldn't talk to her, if he loved her he couldn't leave, if he spoke he couldn't listen, if he fought he couldn't win. (Idem.)

Earlier in Chapter 11, the same sort of information was given about this one-armed man:

> If he held her [Ammu], he couldn't kiss her. If he kissed her, he couldn't see her. If he saw her, he couldn't feel her. (p. 215)

Ammu longed for this man feverishly and ached for him with the whole of her biology. And this need of her biology is fulfilled in Chapter 21 through her dream. Evidently, the title indicates that these two lovers in life practised 'small things' clandestinely because society won't permit them to practise openly. The following extract corroborates this truth:

> ...they stuck to the Small Things. The Big Things ever lurked inside. They knew that there was nowhere for them to go. They had nothing. No future. So they stuck to the small things. (p. 338)

Thus, 'the Small Things' in the title of the novel suggests the fulfilment of sexual hunger, the satiety of physica desires. Hence the title is a pointer to the unrequited love of Ammu and Velutha. It is Velutha who is 'the God' of 'Small Things' for Ammu.

This 'smallness' in living conditions necessarily leads to despair

and frustration (as clearly witnessed in the case of Mammachi, Baby Kechamma, Ammu, and the twins), to death and destruction (as seen in Velutha and his family). Even Chacko and Margaret are unhappy, especially after the sad demise of their daughter, Sophie Mol, who got drowned in the river Meenachal. The financial constraints add to the misey of the Mammachi family.

As a writer of the Nineties, Arundhati Roy is a representative of the current Indian writing in English. She seems to be a harsh critic of the traditional way of Indian life, especially the one that Indian women have been leading. However, in matters of love and sex, Chacko's western style of living is not much different from Ammu's Indian life. The deterioration is universal. Clearly, Roy is modernistic in her approach to life as well as to art. Her style of writing and her language show that. But she should have nurtured the social and cultural values of India. If she attempts to cut asunder the age-old caste and creed shackles through the Ammu-Velutha meeting, one can understand her viewpoint. If she advocates the liberation of Indian women from the clutches of a patriarchal society, it is tolerable. Even if she tries to please the West through her spicy style, language and technique, it is not objectionable. But if a writer tries to negate the social and cultural ethos of a great nation (as ours is) and if he/she forgets the primary objective of Indian aesthetics and moral values, then he/she is commiting a blunder. And Arundhati Roy falls into the trap of this blunder.

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Subsequent references to this text are absorbed in the body of the essay and given within parentheses.

[2]C.D. Narasimhaiah, "Editorial I--The Booker Prize: A Curse to Creativity: Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (1997)," *The Literary Criterion* (Winter 1997), p. V.

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[4]*Idem.*

BOOK REVIEWS

ATTIA ABID, *THE NOVELS OF SCOTT FITZGERALD*

(New Delhi: Bahri Publications, 1997), pp.219, Rs. 200.00

Suresh Nath

One of the outstanding fictionists of the present age, Fitzgerald wrote, besides a number of short stories, five novels--*This Side of Paradise, The Great Gatsby, Tender Is The Night, The Last Tycoon* and *The Beautiful and Damned.* Dr. Attia Abid has presented an inspiring and interesting thematic study of his novels. Fitzgerald, as a matter of fact, lived the life of his times--the American experience—more intimately than any other writer of his generation, and it is this life that he deals with in his novels and short stories. "Amidst the echolalia and tomfoolery, there is a sense of nostalgia and quest for values in his writings. This is his irony or double vision." Like the great Hemingway and Faulkner, Fitzgerald's heroes are defeated by a society that has not fulfilled the optimistic vision of perfection to which they are committed. Inspite of all their failures and complete isolation, these heroes remain undefeated and unvanquished.

Fitzgerald has laid bare his social experiences--the principal occupations, hopes, aspirations and dreams of the society of his age. It is the power of money that brings social tremors, and changes the complexions of the post-War American social and moral ethos. Money and material possessions have, to a large extent, changed the fundamental notions of man, his place and predicament in society. Fitzgerald, a highly sensitive person, responds positively to the transformation in society and its social and cultural concerns. This society forms the fountain-head of his inspiration and the very material of his novels.

The gaudy gold has assumed legendary power to bestow status, prestige and distinctive lusture upon man. His novel, *The Great Galsby,* presents an artist's picture of a society which is subsumed by allurements of corrosive and corruptive wealth. His novel, *Tender Is The Night,* and *The Last Tycoon* also deal with moral values like Truth, Beauty and Goodness which appear to be replaced by the invasive force of corrupt wealth and wild possessions.

Industrialization and the gowing urbanization have further extended the horizons of materialism without caring for the moral decay. Thus, the entire economy, and the cultural and moral fabric of society are rudely disturbed by the new emerging god. His another novel, *The Beautiful and Damned,* deals with the theme of the corrupting impact of expectations of excessive wealth on moral barrier. Money fails to bring real happiness to man. As money is enthroned on such a high pedestal in society, people invent new ways to acquire it. New evils creep in. Even ecological imbalances can be seen. The quiet, idyllic virtuous world of rural innocence is replaced by maddening business. This is a misbegotten wealth which ushers in lustful venture and sex-gone wild. His novel, *In This Side of Paradise,* presents a very realistic picture of New York with its vices and carnal orgies. The author rightly remarks: "This interaction has urged the writer to put his diagnosing finger on the pulse of the age, the very source of its cancerous disease, what contaminates and poisons the stream of life; what defiles and debases individuals promiscuously and ruthlessly." Socialism was considered a panacea, but it failed to deliver good to the humanity. Women, too, became a victim of the emergence of enormous wealth with all its alluring and exciting potentialities; the "bitch-goddess" has debased the pride of family relationships. In life woman is presented only as beloved, wife and mistress. The wife prefers to be called the mistress, and there is no time for religion.

In fact, Fitzgerald came as an apostle for the American people. The author rightly pays her tribute to him thus: "The age needed an artist, an apostle, a spokesman who could help the nation attain its emancipation. Fitzerald stands in the vanguard of the phalanx of novelists of the period who endeavoured to portray the socio-cultural scene with fervour."

Dr. Attia Abid has a discerning eye and has seccessfully brought out a genuine understanding of the dilemma of the American people as portrayed by Fitzgerald in his novels. An illuminating study, the book is an excellent exposition of the basic themes of Fitzgerald. The books has been elegantly brought out and moderately priced. Dr. Attia Abid deserves all admiration and kudos for this scholarly study of the novels of Fitzgerald.

ASHA VISWAS, *MELTING MEMORIES*

(Delhi: K.K. Publications, 1996), Rs. 120.00

Shahnaz Hashmi

Poetry is the finest from of creative activity. It expresses a poet's sensitivity, power of perception and experiences of joys and sorrows felt in the marrow and blood, thus involving the totality of being. This pouring forth goes along an interplay of rhythm and sound, image and symbol. Asha Viswas, in her award winning collection (Michael Madhusudan Academy award for best poetic collection of 1997), has created a world of loneliness and aloneness, inner-tumult and entropy. This collection of forty poems swings the sensitive reader from dewy dust to mysty skies, from pastures new to lands unknown. One feels mystified, delighted, tormented and stunned by the range of human emotions.

Besides presenting the myriad scenes of life's little tragedies, the poems present a treasure of nature imagery. One can see a lark writing a "love-lore" on blue sky or the "waning moon" and "corrugated sidling waves of nacreous ocean" that smell of "lost rivers," shadows hang on "branches speaking the accents of vacuous winds" which often wail with the "moaning tress." The winds are rarely presented in their softer shapes and soothing colours except in "A Dream" where a "gentle breeze" caresses "a palpitating poplar." Most of the time one encounters "Raging winds," "whimsical wilful winds," "rude winds" or "teasing winds." The waters have a cooling effect. In "The South Atlantic Ocean" the elemental waters give a "sense of oneness," a "moment of pure kairos transcending chronos." In "The Gangetic Depths" the "unaccountably cold" waters serve to postpone ogling desire that "surveys and weighs the scene around the spine and the base of the water dripping neck." Nature is not just a mute witness to human pain, but has its own share in loneliness and pain:

"The barren evening
Discoloured, deserted
By Day, deceived by Night
Searches for moments
That slip from the palm
in the Dust of Time." ("Rakt Beej")

In "To a Friend" Asha Viswas confesses: "I told him I was

romantic in poetry and art/Shelley my first love, Keats always in my heart." The poems do certainly give us shades of Shelley. An innocent yet impossible desire is expressed in the following lines:

My desire was small
It never cried for moon
Or the seven colours
Of the rainbow sky
I only wished to touch
And talk to silken dreams." ("Rakt Beej")

An added attraction of the poems is the mingling of words and sketches. The female faces, delicately drawn, do enhance the intensity of emotion and often, on behalf of words, come forth to express the unsaid, specially when the persona feels like

"a fresco
on a broken wall
sculptor's
scattered stone
merely
For expression." ("In the blues")

Dr. Asha Viswas is a poet, artist, critic and a sensitive human being. These musical musings come spontaneously from a multi-faceted personality like hers. The singer and the solitary thinker merge to create a music from memories that melt, but are never effaced. A new signature is added to Indian women poetry written in English.

S.C. DWIVEDI, *EPIPHANIES AND OTHER POEMS*

(Delhi: K.K. Publications, 1997), Rs. 120.00

J.P. Tripathi

I was delighted to go through the short volume of Dr. Dwivedi's poems entitled *Epiphanies and other Poems,* published by K.K. Publications, Delhi. The title page has the red picture of the rising sun with eleven strips of different colours emanating from it stretching below. Red rays of the sun are shown going to the sky. The picture epitomises the Shelleyan idea of "The One remains, the many change and pass," and the Hindu concept of Brahma and Maya. The get up is fine and attractive. The printing is good.

I have read these poems with great curiosity and noted that all of them are characterised by deep sincerity of feeling. The over-riding theme in all the poems is the poet's awareness of his selfhood in all the multifarious colours of earthly and sensual bondage and the encroachments of avarice, attachment and desires for the world and worldly ambitions. He wishes to rise out of this coloured self into the 'whiteness' of eternity and become pure spirit. Purified spirit is none other than Brahman. The poems evince this desire of identification with the Brahman, and parts of some poems show the poet's transitory exultation with his transformed self. This is the thematic pattern set in all the poems one after another. In the choice and treatment of this theme Sri Dwivedi is at one with other poets such as Yeats and Eliot even if not so powerful.

All the poems give an expression to a very strong appetite for otherworldliness and love of divinity. The poet seems to be striving for a positive necessity of sinking all the awareness of multiplicity of the visible and experiential phenomenon into one unity and harmony, that is God.

The reading of the poems reveals that the poet is an adorer of religion in its essence, bereft of diversity of religious form. Desire for surrender to the Divine characterises almost every poem. These poems can be regarded as devotional poems and could be read before and after saying prayers to God by the readers of all kinds. They do arouse a mental state of piety and tranquillity. The yearnings

are sincere and have a poignancy that is acute. The poet does feel the pangs of separation from the Divine again and again, and the reader is also led into this state.

The reading of the poems further reveals a necessity of greater tapping of the musical, rhythmic, imagistic and symbolical traditions of poetry, and the diversity of poetic forms will enhance his standing as a poet in future volumes. Apparently, all the poems are divergent forms of lyrics which are reflective in the Arnoldian tones, but there is not a single stirring of the shadowy pessimism of Arnold. Thoughts are strong and positive in Browning's optimistic style.

Most of the statements in the poems are self-addresses, but some of them are exhortations offered to the men of the world for enforcing divinity and spirituality in their lives. The poet constantly sups on Hindu philosophy and metaphysics. The most appealing among all is the poem "The Last Word" in which the poet becomes autobiographical and personal. He pays a homage to his dying father, who is presented as an image of wisdom. In the poem poignant feelings of affection and reverence are aroused. The images of the breadth and liberation of the departing soul are aroused and fuse with the Ganga waves. The poem is solid and rises above philosophical ideations into affections, and has a deep touch of humanity.

To conclude, If the poet is able to cultivate greater metrical and musical nuances and tap mythical resources and variety of verse forms in future, he will be able to win a secure place for him in poetry.

R.S. SHARMA, *FLOWERS OF FEELING*

(Varanasi: Gyandeep Publications, 1998), pp.164, Rs. 150.00

Asha Viswas

"Brillianto" sounds like a cliche to describe this work. The expressions of laughter, sadness and anger leave us on the tenterhooks wondering whether what we think of poetry is right or we should dive into this poetry to search for reality.

A number of these poems are concerned with the pathos of human life. The poet seems to have no interest in art for art's sake or for that degree of formal perfection which is static like a geometrical figure. The poem "Art and Life" is the clearest expression of art which is infused with life. Pangs of partition, molested women and "The Child's distorted Face" colour the landscape of this poem. The poet cries: "Crafty Art, go fuck yourself with the ivory tower/I cannot leave the writhing man." The use of four letter words expresses the poet's impatience with art as a mere formal pursuit.

Many poems in the volume are marked with anger against the urban society, meaningless terrorism, cruelty to animals, and man's cruelty to men. This anger is aroused irrespective of time and space. "Junila" shows how a sensitive Indian heart feels anger against a deed of cruelty committed in space and time not ours. The righteous anger "hurtles up through time with tremendous charge."

Yet another feature of this collection is universalization. Poetry goes beyond history transcending a particular experience, a particular personal fact. Very few poems are personal or subjective in this collection. Though pure objectivity is an impossibility, yet the poet has achieved a workable distinction between the subjective and objective. In fact, the better the artist is, the more does his work becomes objective and exhibits universal principles of the subjective realm. Only a few poems like "Visitation" free themselves from the demands of universalization, and the unconscious of the artist peeps through the emotional restlessness:

> I have unlived my life with deeds misdone
> Its a dark vein in the breast of a cloud
> ... I must flee the ticking clock

And kiss you outside history's pale.

Humour and satire form a significant feature of these poems. Poems like "Cosmetics," "Toothpaste," "Skin creams and cures," "Hair care," "Breath-freshner," and "Detergent" laugh at the fallacy of persuasion which is a part of all advertisements. The humour of these poems is always mixed with satire:

We'll tend your skin and feed it
With nutrients, guard it against
Dryness and cold, bacteria and kisses,
Just as Urea and pesticide,
Make the field rich and green
("Skin Creams and Cures")

Even in these humorous poems there is a serious conflict. For example, in "Anti-Pollution Mask" there is conflict between beauty and machine--two contradictory images are intuitively perceived.

The poet has paid lots of attention to the minutest details of rhythm and sound. It is the movement of the poetic thought that determines the auditory and rhythmic movement. This point becomes clear only when the poems are read loudly with proper stresses, pauses and pitch movements. The use of rhyme is organic rather than mechanical. While there is a fixed number of stressed syllables, there is no fixed number of unstressed syllables which vary from phrase to phrase, from line to line.

In a word, the work is like "Oppenhiemer's deadly toy"—leaves no one when exposed to it and has strong after effects.

I.K. SHARMA, *CAMEL, COCKROACH AND CAPTAINS*

(Jaipur: Sand-Pra Publications, 1998), pp.51, Rs. 120.00

O.P. Bhatnagar

By a strange streak of literary tradition literature has come to align itself more with the serious than humorous, as if the latter is dispensable both in life and literature. While such an approach has produced much good literature of a type it has also helped prepetuate a state of worked up feelings and responses masquerading as genuinely serious. It is here that humour plays its formidable role in exposing the shams and pretensions that persist the one-way and one-mode society, creativity and aesthetics.

Camel, Cockroach and Captains is a slick collection of thirty poems which exhibit the poet's brilliant sense of humour bristling with irony, satire and sarcasm so rare to come by in Indian poetry in English. The most admirable aspect of I.K. Sharma's poetry lies in seeing poetic situations in insignificant things of life, like teeth, cockroach, roadside workshop, milkman and such other things. Who can bite more poetry by teeth than the following lines from *The Teeth:*

> Born in pain, they went out in pain,
> Leaving behind a train of broken dreams;

Another facility worth nothing is the poet's ability in making graphic descriptions of animals, seasons, places and persons. Look at the following lines from *The Camel:*

> Soon his frame becomes declamatory
> Willing to face winds and storms,
> his long resilient neck undulates
> in harmony with his rodlike legs
> and together they speak in language
> beyond the code of man.

Or, take an example from *This Winter :*

> Unrelenting
> shows the red eyes and dark teeth
> Of a tyrant. The sun rises
> without will, clings
> to its quilt of clouds
> like a whimpering child.

Sharma's humour cannot just be called banal or broad. It is well armed with mockery, satire, sarcasm and irony. *Our Captains* braces almost like a satire upon the present day political leaders. *Good Morning Sir* breathes of sarcasm on pollution. Mockery finds its expression with succintness in *An Old Place Revisited* in the following words:

> and the last child of the sun family
> eye witnesses say,
> is fighting with history
> by sleeping
> with the daughter of his grandpa's cook
> in her house.

Poetic juxtaposition of the opposites makes for an engaging display of irony in Sharma's poems like *The Saviour, Shanidev, Gopal* and *An Old Palace Revisited.* In *The Saviour,* the tree which saves the occupants of a jeep from meeting their death in an accident is ultimately cut off to release the jeep and its occupants from its hold. In a penchant for the ironic the poet remarks:

> The tree dies.
> Its death gives birth
> to many a voice within.
> Here is one to celebrate:
> One who saves others soon meets the axe.

Then there are serious poems paying personal tribute or homage to poets like A.K. Ramanujan, Krishna Srinivas and Montri Umavijani. The poem *Ezekiel on My Scooter,* however phantasizes the situation for driving some light humour home in a casual way. Although there are other serious poems like *Among the Handicapped* and *Conscription* dealing with the problems of the deprived and the exploited the genius of the poet lies in bringing humour to the centre-stage of poetry otherwise sagging by its aesthetics of the serious. In a way, the poet revives the much desired Arun Kolatkkar tradition in Indian Poetry in English for a happy change. The collection adds a new freshness to the urban intellectual imagery practised by Nissim Ezekiel.

A. ARAVINDAKSHAN, *COMPARATIVE INDIAN LITERATURE*

(Kochi-Kerala: Bharatiya Sahitya Pratisthan, 1998), pp.110, Rs. 80.00

Basavaraj Naikar

Comparative literature happens to be a very significant branch of criticism in India which is a multi-cultural and multi-lingual country. Scholars like K.M. George, Ayyappa Panikker and Amiya Dev have done pioneering work in this field. Though comparative literature is the most relevant need of the country, it has not been growing as fast as it should because of the slow process of translation work which is the first stage in extending the vista of knowledge. Hence the comparatists have to fall back upon their bilingual resources to attempt comparative studies of two or more texts or authors though they are not available in English translation. Comparative study is simply not possible for anglicised or convent-school products of India whose ignorance of Indian language and literature is monumental.

Aravandakshan's *Comparative Indian Literature* is a welcome addition to the realm of comparative literature in India. It contains twelve essays which directly or otherwise throw light on some aspect of comparative Indian literature. Two of them deal with the theoretical aspects of comparative literature. Chandrakant Bandiwadekar, for example, outlines the possibilities of comparative areas in literature like theme, plot, milieu, imagery, literary history and style in the Indian context. V. Vizialakshmi rightly points out the extraordinary need for translation in a multi-cultural and multi-lingual country like India.

The other ten essays deal with different themes and writers of different languages of India. K. Satchidanandan points out how the dissent against the modern consumerist society is expressed in different ways by 1) the progressive modernists, 2) the Dalit writers, 3) the women writers and 4) the Dravidian writers. He illustrates the note of dissent in Indian women writers in his own second essay. Prashanth Kumar shows how the Indian women writers try to indulge in revisionist myth-making in order to give expression to their feminist protest against male chauvenism and masculine discourse. P.P. Ravendran shows how colonialism and

nationalism are closely linked with each other in the Indian context. Nikhileshwar offers a brief picture of the Dalit poetry in Marathi, Kannada, Gujarathi and Telugu languages, whereas Girdhar Rathi discusses how poetry in north India is dominated by Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi and how Kashmiri, Dogri and Gujarathi lag behind the former group. E.V. Ramakrishnan traces the *takshaka* image in modern Malayalam poetry and shows how it is an image of a serpent in the *Mahabharata* symbolising the destructive force and how it has been appropriated by nine Malayalam poets in the modern context.

Some articles offer a relatively closer picture of two regional poets or texts from a comparative perspective. For example, Basavaraj Naikar's analysis of the allegorical element in the Hindi mythical epic *Kamayani* and the Kannada religious epic *Prabhulingalile* is very incisive and disturbs the conventional reader. Aravindakshan's comparative study of a Hindi poet Muktibodh and a Malayalam poet Sankara Pillai is insightful in that it shows how time, quest for self, power politics, inertia and cultural disintegration happen to be the common thematic concerns in their poems. S. Nagalakshmi offers a comparative picture of the bridal mysticism as expressed in the devotional lyrics of a north Indian Hindi poetess Mirabai and a south Indian Alwar poetess Andal. She highlights the common themes of devotion *(bhakti)*, self-surrender, theogamy and separation, etc., in the two poetesses.

Comparative Indian Literature is a very important work as it offers a panoramic view as well as some close readings of Indian literature. Many of the essays in this anthology present seminal ideas which can easily be extended into wider projects like M. Phil., Ph.D. and post-doctoral research thereby paving the way for the world comparative literature. A unique feature of this anthology is that it happens to concentrate on poetry form. It can be extended regularly by adding more and more essays on poetry in other Indian languages not covered so far. It can also inspire other scholars to edit and publish anthologies of comparative literature by concentrating on other forms like drama and fiction. Indian scholars can benefit a lot by pursuing topics of comparative nature rather than by wasting their precious time and energy in the parrot-like indulgence in the derivative discourse of Eurocentrism.

SURESH NATH, *BETRAYAL*

(Delhi: K.K. Publications, 1998), pp.48, Rs. 120.00

K.K. Sharma

After *Bubbling Life, But...* (his first collection of twenty seven impressive poems), *Betrayal*--bunch of twenty six poems--fully exhibits Suresh Nath's mature poetic genius. The thread of betrayal weaves through all these poems and presents an integrated picture of betrayal in modern human life, manifested in human relationships as well as in social, political, economic, religious and spiritual life. The poet's personal concerns are at once individual and universal. Also, he has espoused the cause of mankind, confronted with the prevalent breaking human ties, social inequality, pollution and exploitation. He delves deep into the whole gamut of human experience--love, faith, fear, hatred, jealousy, pity, agony, and hope. He has painted life in varied hues, merging into one overwhelming colour of betrayal.

Betrayal is the keyword to denote the degeneration of values that has set in our life at all levels. The first poem "Why Did You Betray Me" is sensuous and passionate, written in Sufi Style. The beloved (God) deserts the lover (Man) who has showered all his love and material possessions on her. The lover warns her that, in no case, will he be able to bear this separation. But the inevitable happens, the safe ship of the lover sinks, "Safe it was/but you made it sink," and his songs melt into thin air, "I was a soaring singing lark/You have killed my song." Though "The swinging universe is held by the cords of love," the beloved, for reasons known to her only, "Pushes him into tramps' hands." Hence the question is repeated: "Why did you betray me?" Despite our love and devotion, God appears to betray us at times. The modern man faces a strange dilemma: "I dont want to live/But I cannot die" ("I Cannot Die"). In this world of Death-worshippers, he feels that he is born for pain and sorrow only as his body is wounded and "Soul is thirsty." "Like cattle they push us/Into slaughter house" ("My Share in Life"). Even his own eyes cannot hide his pain and agony: "My eyes betray me/ And spoke all about me/Like unbound pages of a book/I lay scattered before her" ("The Truth"). Nature, too, is a victim of betrayal ("Environment"). Even memories, which are always a pillar

of strength in dispair, betray and "Trickle down one by one/Like particles of sand/From the cabins of my hand" ("A Handful of Memories"). God bestowed man with the life force for creative purposes and asked him to respect it. This beautiful and vital aspect of life has been subjected to a careless exploitation. Without genuine love, "We have/Become sexual acrobats/Like clown we/ Behave in bed."

India, which has been a torch-bearer for the world, finds herself in a sad predicament of the betrayal of her rich cultural heritage by her progeny, "Sun-burnt faces like baked earth/Helpless, we look to others for help," and "Like dogs we yelp for bones/Outside the butcher's shop" ("A Useless Race"). Man's betrayal of the ideal, universal principle of love and charity appears to have adversely influenced even the mighty Sun and Moon: "what can we do/when the Sun becomes the robber of his own/Graceful golden beams" or "What can we do?/When the Moon/Ceases to throb/Poor romantic lovers/and vomits fire." The word "Fake" has assumed astronomical importance. It has inspired betrayal to strech its sleeky hands to every conceivable walk of life. Fake passions, fake exhibition, fake freedom fighters, fake God-men, fake political citadels, fake police encounters, fake currency notes, fake reports, fake problems with fake solutions "Adorn the newspapers/Their fake achievements/ Fake intellectuals/Give only fake visions" ("Modern Puzzle"). Because of betrayal at various levels, man has been reduced to a forest bloom "To blush unseen/And make and exit serene." He feels "I am Autumn garden/Long deserted by singing birds" ("A Forest Bloom"). Modern man's love for excessive material pursuits has betrayed his conscience which has always inspired him to make sacrifices like that of Christ, Socrates and Mansur. In movements of divine light, the poet, despite the ghost of betrayal accosting modern man, cannot ignore the soothing fragrance of flowers that embalms his mental pain: "But the sweet fragrance of roses/the fainting queen of the night/And gushing Champa/Always beackon me/By their airy hands." Prostitution, as a profession, is as old as human history but prostitutes in the past were always treated with reverence and sympathy. The society, at large, has betrayed them because it has failed to realise their painful situation: "When the intenstines/Twist and belly roads/Poverty and deprivation/Stay for ever." They are

better than the corrupt businessman, bureaucrats, and leaders who "Mortgage her (Country) for their passion/To quench their/Insatiable slobbering thirst/for more and more." The so-called prostitutes "Carry the burden/Of your dirt and sin/on their heads/And leave you free/To roam and pride/In your boastful ride/Your shameful claim/ Of sweet home/A sweet home" ("Prostitution"). The book closes on a very optimistic note with the poem, "To Basant Panchami" which augurs well of beauty, happiness, love, melodies and ecstacies.

Passionately moved by human concerns, Suresh Nath's poems flow from his lips spontaneously and effortlessly. Gifted with the felicity of expression, these exquisite poetic pieces are, to quote Milton's words, "simple, sensuous and impassioned." The new expressive and suggestive idioms, essentially Indian, successfully express the poet's agony and human concerns lucidly. This little volume is a major contribution to the development of Indian English Poetry. Undoubtedly, this collection of poems will be a source of perennial inspiration to many budding poets.

S.D. SHARMA (Ed.), *RECENT INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE*

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K.K. Sharma

Though India's freedom brought with it unprecedented holocaust and devastation of human attributes and values as is evident in creative works like *Train to Pakistan, Tamas, Azadi, The Rape, Ashes and Petals*, etc., social and political life had a glorious beginning and the writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Bhabani Bhattacharya realised their role in the changed scenario and wrote some of the finest novels in the language. Later on, women novelists like Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, and the latest to join this galaxy Arundhati Roy have proved the potentiality of Indian English fiction. Major poets like Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, Jayant Mahapatra, Kamala Das, Dom Moraes, Shiv K. Kumar, K.N. Daruwalla, R.Parthasarathi, O.P. Bhatnagar, and the latest to join these established poets A.N. Dwivedi, Suresh Nath, Asha Viswas, N.K. Rattan and S.C.Dwivedi have authentically depicted the subtle nuances of socio-political, socio-cultural and psychic problems with new experiments in poetic forms. The growing materialism with its widespread ramifications and the poet's freedom of expression are quite explicit in recent Indian English poetry. In the field of drama, not much has been done, though we have playwrights like Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Asif Currimbhoy, Murli Das Melwani, Guru Charan Das, Girish Karnad, to name a few. And in the domain of literary criticism much more remains to be done. However, Indian English writers truly reflect the cherished values of life which help us to keep faith in the essential dignity of man. The book under review is a collection of brilliant articles, and is truly significant in that it provides new, insightful perspectives on the variegated aspects of Indian English literature.

Shyam Asnani, in his article "The State of Indian English Drama," rightly remarks that the growth of Indian English drama has lagged far behind that of Indian English fiction and poetry. However, dramatists like Murli Das Melwani, Guru Charan Das, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Asif Currimbhoy, Girish Karnad

have chosen social, political and religious themes and have successfully tried to enrich Indian English drama. The article presents a perceptive picture of Indian English drama. L.R. Sharma dwells, at length, on the achievements of C.D. Narasimhaiah, K.R. Srinivas Iyengar, M.K. Naik, S.C. Sen Gupta, A.N. Kaul, Raj Nath and S. Nagarajan in the field of literary criticism. He rightly bemoans the fact that, despite some fine scholars in the country, "no Indian writing in English has given to the world a critical theory or concept that has been happily accepted. Concepts as striking as Eliot's theory of Tradition or Objective Correlative, Annold's 'Touchstones,' Leavis' affirmative principle, Richard's Practical Criticism, and the New Critics' Close Contextual Reading" (p.29). A.G. Khan critically examines some of the outstanding novels published in the eighties and the new upcoming novelists of the nineties. They include Rohinton Mistry, Gita Hariharan, Shobha De, Vikram Seth, Shashi Deshpande, and Nina Sibal. Malashri Lal focuses on the brilliant portrayal of socio-psychological dilemma of Indian woman in Rama Mehta's solitary novel, *Inside the Haveli*, which won the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award in 1979. Karuna Sharma accomplishes an interesting study of R.K. Narayan's seven collections of short stories, with a focus on his protagonists, caught between their impulses and the imposed social institutions. A.B. Sharma presents a postmodern reading of Gopinath Mohanty's *Paraja* (1987) which was published originally in Oriya in 1945, while Jagdish. V. Dave evaluates Nirad C.Chaudhuri's book *Thy Hand Great Anarch!* as a critique of India's struggle for independence. He regards Chaudhuri as Indian philospher of Indian History in the manner of Arnold Toynbee and Spengler.

A.N. Dwivedi brings to light the sparkling prose of Kamala Das, from her autobiography, *My Story* (1976), to *A Doll for the Child Prostitute* (1977). Though her poetry has been closely studied by several scholars, her prose, which has remarkable openness and honesty, has been hitherto ignored, and hence the value of this article. A.K. Ramanuajan's contribution to Indian English poetry has been fully brought out by A.N. Dwivedi in another article contained in the book under review. Ramesh K.Misra offers us an interesting analysis of Rohinton Mistrys' *Such a Long Journey*, a novel portraying the life of Parsi community, and also subjects like nationalisation

of banks, corruption in RAW, the anarchy created by irresponsible politicians, etc. Shyam Asnani, in his characteristic insightful style, delves deep into the use of myth, archetype and symbol in Anand's *The Old Woman and the Cow, The Road* and *The Death of a Hero*, V.P. Sharma discusses the problem of communalism and the difference in vision in the novels of Khushwant Singh, Bhisham Sahni and Chaman Nahal. He should have dealt with a few more novels on this theme, such as *The Rape, A Bend in the Ganges, Twice Born Twice Dead, Ashes and Petals,* etc. Pradeep Trikha's appreciation of Amitav Ghosh's novel, *The Calcutta Chromosome,* is a bit laudatory and unbalanced, whereas Shrawan K. Sharma's appraisal of Vikram Seth's narrative art in *From Heaven Lake* is convincing.

Perhaps one of the most impressive pieces of criticism in this book is Anirudh Trivedi and Rashmi Gaur's probe into the influence of Buddhistic philosophy on Arun Joshi, reflected in his novels in theme, images, metaphors, the unbearable agony of living with unanswered questions and unattained ambitions, etc. R.S. Tiwary presents an illuminating study of A.N. Dwivedi's much acclaimed poetic, volume, *Random Reflections* (1994), and so is Ramakrishnan's essay on Indian English poetry. Namita Gokhale's novel, *A Himalayan Love Story,* concentrates on women's social, cultural, political, sexual, psychological and mental experiences in a patriarchal society, and M. Mani Meitei does full justice to this work. As usual, R.S. Pathak is simply brilliant in his paper on Shashi Deshpande's fictional concerns. He convincingly demonstrates the outstanding qualities of Shashi Deshpande who has published seven novels and has made various statements about her ideas and art in different interviews. The book ends with Prof. S.D. Sharma's incisive study of the concept of marriage in Nayantara Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh.*

A close perusal of the book impels me to affirm that it will prove very useful and inspiring for both students and scholars of Indian English literature in India as well as abroad. The book, with the insignia of fifty years of Indian Independence on the title page, has been elegantly published. I feel that a paperback, cheap edition of it will compel every student and scholar of Indian English literature to have his personal copy of this remarkable volume, brought out by Prof. S.D. Sharma so intelligently and carefully.

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