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K.K. Sharma

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CENSORSHIP AND LITERATURE: LAW AND IMPLICATIONS

Madhumalti Adhikari

Theological concepts, philosophical ideas and laws of social conduct are the fountainheads of censorship in all countries and civilizations. Censorship in some form or the other, has been closely associated with man's existence. Initially, unwritten laws were observed and later, formal laws of censorship were codified. Any thought or act considered to be harmful for man is controlled by written or unwritten laws. It is ironical that the freedom of speech and expression cherished by man has been always governed by the tune of authority.

Encyclopaedia Britanica gives the origin of the word 'censor' and 'censorship':

> In ancient Rome [Censor was] the title of the two Roman officials who presided over the census (from Lat. *censere*, assess, estimate), the registration of individual citizens for the purpose of determining the duties which they owed to the community. This idea of 'discretionary power' was never lost; although it came to be intimately connected with the appreciation of morals. The censorship was the Roman manifestation of the state control.... Their [Censor's] functions in numbering the people have given us the English word 'census'; and from their other activities the word 'censorship' is derived. Censorship in modern practice may be defined as action taken by the governing authority to examine letters and other communications and also the text of proposed books, stage plays and the like in order to prevent any publication which would be contrary to the public interest or inconvenient or displeasing to that governing authority.[1]

Thus, censorship is the instrument that a government uses to control the freedom of speech and expression. Freedom of speech and expression should be treated as our birth-right but indiscriminate freedom often leads to chaos and thus it becomes necessary for man to use it with great caution.

Milton's *Areopagitica* traces the history of censorship and describes the attitudes of the Greeks, the Romans and the Christian emperors with great penetration and intensity. He considered the licencing order as a 'tyranny'. 'Milton in his *Areopagitica* pleads for the liberty of the individual to express and publish his views.'[2] In

the age of Milton, rigid religious censorship was practised. 'The Roman Catholic Church had worked out a complete system, *pari passu* with the secular censorship of national states. The *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* is a catalogue of censored texts on doctrinal or moral grounds.' Milton held very strong views about censorship; at that point of time, his reasons were also personal. In his tract he thundered, 'Who kills a man, kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye.'[3] His objection is more valid today: A book is the product of man's 'reason,' 'deliberations,' 'meditations,' 'industry' and many wise, judicious counsels. To be judged by someone 'younger,' 'inferior,' 'cannot be but a dishonour and derogation to the author, to the book, to the privilege and dignity of learning.'[4] Alas! frailty thy name is man. The same indomitable spirit, in later years, became one of the official censors of Cromwell.

It is true that many a times, inferior minds have done injustice to great thinkers. James Joyce's *Ulysses* is one such example. It is a case of misdirected judgement. Very often, books are censored on moral grounds but codes of moral conduct are interpreted as per 'discretionary powers' and standards of morality change frequently with time. *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, in comparison to many other modern novels, is not only decent but also very moderate. It cannot be labelled as immoral and yet its unexpurgated version is still banned under Article 19(2) of our constitution. It is surprising that Shobha De's *Snapshots* or Arthur Hailey's *Airport* is circulated freely and no mention is made of its obscenity.

The present democratic set-up of India, despite its independent Constitution, still, in many ways mirrors the British system and reflects its way of thinking. We as a democratic country, strongly believe in freedom. Our Constitution imaging our sentiments guarantees certain fundamental liberties under Article 19 of the Constitution of India. It clearly states:

(1) All citizens shall have the right-

(a) to freedom of speech and expression;

(b) to assemble peacefully and without arms;

(c) to form associations or unions;

(d) to move freely throughout the territory of India;

(e) to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India;

(f) to practise any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business.

Apparently, the range of the rights appear to be very wide. But the freedom of speech and expression, which at present is our chief concern, is immediately truncated by Article 19(2). It upholds:

Nothing in sub-clause (a) of clause (1) shall affect the operation of any existing law, or prevent the state from making any law, in so far as such law imposes reasonable restrictions on the excercise of the right conferred by the said sub-clause in the interest of [the sovereignty and integrity of India], the security of the state, friendly relation with foreign state, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.

The sub-section (2) of Article 19, under certain circumstances makes a myth of the freedom of speech. Way back in the pre-independence era many books, and texts were either banned from publication or stopped from circulation because, as per the opinion of the British rulers, it went against the sovereignty and integrity of India. Bankim Chandra Chatterji's *Anandmath* was one such book. Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* was censored because it was felt that it would create public disorder and hurt the sentiments of a section of the public. Interestingly, not all the states ruled by Muslim religion had banned the book. Thus 'reasonable restrictions' may not be always reasonable; it can be controlled by other considerations.

Satanic Verses had raised many debatable issues. The very basis of censorship was questioned. It is a 'sad fact that the freedom of speech has always been more of an ideal than a reality.'[5] The psychological reason behind official or unofficial censorship is often the element of intolerance that denounces any new thought. But it should be remembered that a free and frank communication of ideas between individuals and groups is the only way to continue the movement of progress and civilization.

Article 19(1) emphasizes upon the fundamental rights inherent in the status of a citizen. But none of these rights can be absolute

or uncontrolled. The state is empowered to curtail the freedom of the individual for the sake of the state/society. Socrates sacrifice was demanded on this ground only. In recent times, Das J has given his clear observation on the point, 'social interest in individual liberty may well have to be subordinated to other greater social interest.'[6] The need of the hour is to strike a balance between the individual rights guaranteed by Article 19 and the demands of the state which is the custodian of the interests of the general public, morality and other matters of public interest which is collectively described as social welfare.

The popular belief in England is that freedom of the press is their birth-right and their ancestors have fought for it fiercely. But a record of the statutes reveals a different truth. Rigorous censorship was practised in England till 1695. After that, press became free and it could publish anything except certain matters like details of divorce proceedings, or seditious, blasphemous, obscene, libellous subjects that would follow the ordinary consequences of law.[7] In 1914, war-time Censorship was re-introduced in England under the Defence of the Realm Regulation. In free India, Press Censorship has often been the cause of much bitter debate.

Dramatic performances have been categorized as a form of speech and expression. Shekhar Kapoor's *'Bandit Queen'* remained under a cloud of censorship for some time. In Article 19(2) the words 'reasonable restriction' have been explained. It must satisfy two conditions: firstly, 'the restriction must be for the particular purpose mentioned in the clause permitting the imposition of the restriction on that perticular right' and secondly, the restriction must be a reasonable restriction.[8] The Constitution does not define the expression 'reasonable restriction' and thus, the test of reasonableness has to be applied to individual statues and individual cases. In the *Golaknath v. State of Punjab*, the honourable Judge observed that the standard of 'reasonableness' in an elastic one: it varies with time, space and condition and from case to case.[9] Some of the principles of 'reasonableness' were laid down by the Supreme Court. The phrase connotes that the limitations imposed upon a person in the enjoyment of a right should not be arbitary

or of an excessive nature. It must strike a balance between the freedom guaranteed and the social control permitted by clauses (2) to (6) of Article 19.[10] The Court must also see to the period of restriction and determine if the right has been reasonably restricted.[11] Reasonableness has to be decided in an objective manner in the interest of the public. It is interesting that the burden of proving to the satisfaction of the Court that the restriction is reasonable, lies on the State.

A democratic state attaches great importance to the freedom of speech and expression because in the absence of this right, the appeal to reason, the very basis of democracy, cannot be made. The words 'freedom of speech and expression' should be widely construed to include the freedom to circulate one's views by words of mouth or to publish for circulation in the form of books, magazines, journals, etc. ideas that one thinks to be vital for a dynamic country. At times, this freedom can be abused and yet the fear of the possible danger should not compel any one to discard this freedom. In *Romesh Thappar v. State of Madras*, Patanjali Shashtri C.J. has made a pertinent observation:

Freedom of speech and of the Press lay at the foundation of all democratic organization, for without free political discussion no public education, so essential for the functioning of the process of popular government, is possible. A freedom of such amplitude might involve risks of abuse. But the framers of the Constitution may well have reflected with Madison..., that it is better to leave a few of its noxious branches to their luxuriant growth than by pruning them away, to injure the vigour of those yeilding the proper fruits.[12]

Article 19(2) gives power to the legislators to impose reasonable restrictions on the right of free speech and expression under the following heads:

(1) Security of the State
(2) Friendly relations with foreign states
(3) Public order
(4) Decency or morality
(5) Contempt of Court
(6) Defamation

(7) Incitement to an offence

(8) Sovereignty and integrity of India.

The Press is often controlled by these conditions but all these are also applicable to books and stage performances. The charge of the contempt of Court is very rarely usable against books. If a text endangers the security of the State or jeopardizes the relationship between India and any other foreign state, or disturbs public peace, safety, tranquillity or encourages the public to indulge in immoral acts or incites members of the Indian society to commit offence, it can be censored. Censorship on the charge of immorality is a tricky proposition because the concept of morality is not very clearly defined and it is easily modified by time, place and culture. There was a time when literature dealing with contraception was considered immoral, but now, it is not an offence to discuss such matters in print. In fact, with the liberalization of social codes and religious attitudes, the meaning of obscenity and immorality has under-gone a sea-change.

The question that remains to be answered is, 'Should literature or a work of art be censored?' Unfortunately, the answer is 'Yes'. Despite our right to the freedom of speech and expression, certain control is necessary. This freedom can be abused very easily. The concept of freedom combines the ideals of right and duty. But very often, man either ignores or feigns forgetfulness regarding 'duty' and when this happens, 'free expression and speech' becomes a curse. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world and a pen is mightier than the sword. Under these circumstances, an erring pen and an ignoble mind may very easily destroy the basic values of life or lacerate the very fabric of a nation. Written word has the right to dissect but not to murder. The voice of dissent must maintain limits of disapproval and not become an agent of subversive and immoral forces. Censor should also act as a nurse-maid and not become a grave-digger of democracy. The guarantee of free speech and expression is actually a re-statement of a Vedic prayer that remarks, 'Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides.' But we must remember that this cherished freedom is not absolute and unlimited in every case, age and situation. It never gives us the

right to speak on any subject, any time.[13] In democracy, right should always be governed by a sense of duty.

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BETWEEN OMAR AND *AREOPAGITICA*: THE CENSORSHIP OPTIONS

A. Raghu

In September 642 the Arabs captured Alexandria. No struggle preceded it, for the Greek troops and officials had already fled the city. The Arab general Amr sought instructions from Caliph Omar over what to do with the great Alexandrian library. Omar commanded Amr to destroy it, couching his order in a neat dilemma: "If the books agree with the Koran, they are superfluous: burn them. If the books do not agree with the Koran, they are dangerous: burn them." And thus what was one of the biggest libraries in the medieval world was turned to ash. Many recent historians including E.A. Parsons who discusses this incident in *The Alexandrian Library* and J.J. Saunders who mentions it in *A History of Medieval Islam* have doubted Omar's capability to order such an act of criminal vandalism. However, the stand Omar took, or is supposed to have taken, exemplifies one extreme censorship option: the banning of all books (with ofcourse, one exception.) The other extreme is perhaps exemplified by the stand taken by John Milton in that great defence of unlicensed printing, *Areopagitica*. Early in the essay, Milton declares that killing a book, leave alone killing a library, is worse than killing a man. He who kills a man kills a creature of reason but he who kills a book kills reason itself. Later he cries out, "Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties."[1] Omar and *Areopagitica* are thus the two most extreme censorship options and any stand on censorship has to necessarily fall somewhere between the two.

It is true that there is a difference between pre-production and post-production censorship. In most democracies books (but not films) are not subjected to pre-production censorship. Similarly, there is a difference between the post-production banning of a book and the prosecution of its author. However, these differences are only of a technical nature from the point of view of this essay.

A couple of years back, officers of the Saudi Arabian Government confiscated a book on *Kathakali* belonging to a friend of mine working in Riyadh. When he explained that it was a book on an

Indian dance form, one of the officers curtly told his, "We don't want knowledge on Indian dance in our country." But it is doubtful whether today, late in the twentieth century, even an extremely fundamentalist state like Saudi Arabia would declare that no knowledge of any kind is wanted in the country and hence all books have to be confiscated. No twentieth century state can afford the complete obscurantism of Omar but the same is also true of the other extreme, the total freedom from censorship advocated in *Areopagitica*. It is doubtful whether there is any country in the world even today where the freedom of expression is absolutely unfettered. It is not without significance that according to the Bible censorship is as old as the first man. Censorship was perhaps imposed for the first time ever when God forbade Adam from eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge: "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'"[2] It may be noted that the Lord God saw censorship as a serious matter, the breaking of whose laws was to be punished with death.

If a particular book is certain to lead to fire or plague, it would be impossible for any sensible person to call its banning unjustified. There is an interesting passage in Bertrand Russell's *The Impact of Science on Society* in which he discusses an inquiry by a House of Commons Committee into the causes of the plague and the Great Fire which were generally attributed to Divine displeasure. The committee found that what most displeased the Lord was the works of Thomas Hobbes and hence it ordered the banning of the books of Hobbes. Russell applauds the step: "This measure proved effective: there has never since been a plague or a Great Fire in London."[3] However, it is true that books sometimes lead to Great Fires of a different kind. The French revolution, for example, would have been impossible but for the long intellectual preparation that preceded it. The Russian revolution is *Das Kapital* and *The Communist Manifesto* translated into political reality with, ofcourse, all the modifications that such a translation might demand. In 1601, on the day prior to the rebellion attempted by the Earl of Essex

and his friends, some of the conspirators bribed the Chamberlain's men forty shillings to stage a play which presented the deposing of King Richard II by Henry Bolingbroke who then assumes the title King Henry IV. The play in all probability was William Shakespeare's *Richard II*. That the rebellion failed miserably and that Elizabeth sent Essex to the executioner's block--which she subsequently regretted for the handsome young Earl had once placed passionate devotion at the great queen's feet-- is beside the point. The same has also to be said of the doubts raised by Lytton Strachey in *Elizabeth and Essex* over the play's ability to raise the spirit of rebellion in its audience, for Shakespeare's Richard II is a political fool with minor poetic gifts. What is significant here is that as early as the dawn of the seventeenth century the capacity of literature to trigger, or atleast aid, political change was recognized.

Power systems have as much a sense of self-preservation as individuals and hence their propensity to ban whatever tends to destroy them. In any society power systems tend to interpenetrate and interlock. For example, in England the Sovereign is not merely head of state but also of the Anglican church, members of the royal family are the very apex of Society, the Prince of Wales is the emperor of fashion and the House of Lords includes not only the Lords Temporal but also the Lords Spiritual. It is only logical that blasphemy should be one of the core areas covered by censorship laws. As late as 1917, it was blasphemous libel in England to deny the existence of God or divine providence. Today any reference to the Christian religion, the Bible or the book of Common Prayer which can be considered derogatory is libel.

The role of free speech, and consequently writing, in a democracy cannot be overstated. A democracy which denies the freedom of speech, or even severely curtails it, is a contradiction of terms. Marc Landy observes,

> Political life in a democracy, or in a constitutional republic, is dominated by speech. Congressmen assemblymen, citizen activists, and bureaucrats talk all the time. They sit in hearings, go to meetings, and treat the telephone as if it were an appendage.[4]

On an ultimate plane, in a democracy, it is through speech that elections are fought and won or lost, majorities are made and

unmade and governments are lifted to power and brought down.

What has been observed of power systems can be observed of nations too. In times of stress, even the most liberal of nations tend to display totalitarian tendencies. For example, during war, even a very liberal democracy would show a strong inclination to encroach upon the freedoms of its people. When a nation is battling for its survival, freedoms, particularly the freedom of speech, appear to be a luxury, at least in the eyes of the ruling few. Sometimes, utilizing the conditions provided by a prolonged war, a democratic government might, while retaining its traditional structure, become largely totalitarian in content. A classic example of this process is provided by the first Prime Ministership of Winston Churchill. As the Second World War progressed, the Prime Minister of the world's oldest democracy came close becoming to a dictator, all but in name, and would have continued to be one as long as the war had lasted. It is only natural that his government adopted a highly totalitarian attitude towards the issue of censorship.

There are few things more precious to an individual than his own privacy. But, today, when the individual happens to be a famous one, he finds his privacy under constant seige. Sometimes this by itself is sufficient to wreck his personal life. The theory that the Prince and Princess of Wales were driven to separation, and later to divorce almost solely by the systematic intrusion of the press into their personal lives is not entirely lacking in foundation. One is tempted to contrast this with the discreet, total silence observed by the British press over the close friendship between the present Prince of Wales's immediate predecessor and Wallis Simpson almost until he, by then King Edward VIII, had decided to marry her, renouncing the throne. Even the most ardent defenders of press freedom would find it hard to justify the diabolical intervention of the yellow press in the private life of the famous, especially when such an intervention almost inevitably leads to disastrous consequences for the individual who happens to be the unfortunate focus of the attention. At the same time, there has been a growing tendency in the west for famous individuals to use privacy as a mere self-protecting shield and put forward absurdly exaggerated claims.

Celebrities like Frank Sinatra and Elizabeth Taylor have, for example, tried to patent their personalities. Richard F. Hixon has carried out a comprehensive analysis of the issue in *Privacy in a Public Society: Human Rights in Conflict*. There is always a conflict between the citizen's right to be left alone and the citizenry's need for information. His conclusion is that though personal privacy is perceived as one of our most important rights and the loss of privacy one of our worst fears, an open and democratic society cannot tolerate a high degree of privacy.

The amazing possibilities thrown up by the Internet have in recent years brought about dramatic changes in the issue of censorship. Some months back, a leading Indian film glossy let loose a storm of controversy by publishing a simulated near-nude photograph of a Bollywood star which had been downloaded by it from an Internet site. The star herself was above blame for the picture had been a simulated one and had been published without her knowledge, leave alone permission. The magazine claimed that what it had done was not against the law and that anyone had the right to do what it did. The Internet, the ultimate villain of the drama, being publicaccess and transnational, was simply beyond the grasp of the law of the land. If a picture uploaded by some young punk in Madrid scandalizes the *pattis* of Madras, the present state of affairs being what it is, neither the government of Spain nor that of India has the clear jurisdiction to intervene in the matter. Not that such intervention would be of any use. Numerous western governments have legislated carefully and comprehensively, but uneffectively, against the misuse of the Internet. In cyberporn, the machinery of censorship appears to have met its match. What cannot be achieved by state power can, however, be effected, atleast to some extent, by the power of public opinion. The most striking example of this is provided by the case of Johann Helsingius, the notorious Finland-based cybersleaze baron who was forced to give up his more questionable operations in the wake of the Mare Dutroux child sex scandal which had its epicentre in Belgium. In more traditional areas, however, the machinery of censorship remains quite adequate.

At the very core of the matter of censorship lies the issue of sexual morality. The sexual sin is the most human of sins, but it is also the sin which most rouses the collective wrath of many societies. Societies which happily tolerate unkindness, greed, cruelty and exploitation, often refuse to tolerate love when the lovers love not wisely but too well. For most people the difference between right and wrong in this area is as the difference between white and black though the wrong is usually more fiercely condemned than the right is lauded. They fail to remember two things. If it be suggested that he may cast the first stone who has never sinned, it would be impossible to find a stone-caster. Secondly, the concept of right and wrong has varied radically from age to age and society to society. In Victorian England the limbs of women-- as their legs were euphemistically referred to--had to be fully covered and perhaps the sight of a female ankle inspired in male hearts a flutter of an intensity as great as that would be roused by an exposed female thigh today. Hardly a century ago, it was perfectly legitimate for a woman to have more than one husband in Tibet, just as today it is perfectly legitimate for a man to have more than one wife in Saudi Arabia. In many Hindu communities marriage between cross cousins is completely acceptable, but marriage between parallel cousins is incest. Marriage between uncle and niece is taboo in some Islamic communities which see the marriage between parallel cousins as absolutely natural. The rise of gay and lesbian culture in the west in recent decades has powerfully challenged traditional sexual morality, especially the concept of heterosexual marriage. Censorship laws formulated by every state are products of the moral culture of the time and place and tend to enforce it.

Even the most liberal of societies refuse to dilute censorship laws in the case of children. What does not need to be censored when addressed to an adult public, needs to be censored when addressed to a younger public. Thus *Oz* magazine was successfully prosecuted for publishing an explicit discussion of sex in its school kids issue.[6] The prosecution would most probably have failed had *Oz* published the same discussion in any other issue. The argument that strict censorship laws have to be enforced in the case of children

as they are lacking in mental maturity and hence form a particularly sensitive segment of the community can be extended to some sections of the adult society as well. Such an extension is easily possible in a country like India where religion and caste are very much part of the software of the programme of human existence. Are not illiterate, superstitious masses as much of a sensitive segment as school-children? In most countries, whatever hurts the religious sentiments of the society or a significant section of the society is liable to be censored. In England in 1922, a man was prosecuted for writing a pamphlet in which Christ's entry into Jerusalem was compared with that of a circus clown on the back of two donkeys, as such a comparison was held to hurt the religious sentiments of practising Christians.[6]

John Stuart Mill devotes an entire chapter of *On Liberty* to the liberty of thought and discussion. He argues that no government has the right to control the expression of opinion. He visualizes a hypothetical situation in which the government is entirely at one with the people and never thinks of exerting any power of coercion unless in agreement with the people. Even here Mill refuses to give the government the right to exercise coercion.

> If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.[7]

Mill explains that by silencing an opinion one robs the human race, posterity as well as the existing generation, those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it.

> If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth; if wrong they lose what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.[8]

Never has the freedom of expression been more eloquently defended. A society which strongly fetters the freedom definitely weakens itself in the long run in a way in which a freer society does not. This is because by suppressing the expression of opinion the society denies itself the mechanism to identify its own errors and to correct them. The collapse of the political systems of the countries of the Communist bloc in a matter of weeks was no accident. They

collapsed because over the decades they had grown completely rotten at the core. They grew rotten at the core because nobody had the freedom to point out that the rot was spreading until it was too late. It would simply be impossible for, say, the United States or France to collapse in this manner. The wages of silence are death.

Thus the censorship spectrum extends from Omar to *Areopagitica*, from full censorship to full freedom. There are strong arguments in favour of censorship and stronger arguments against it. What then is the ideal censorship option? It is difficult to identify the best option except within a particular context. The ideal option in the context of one country or one age may be very different from that in the context of another country or another age. Mill, that doughty defender of liberty, who declares that over himself the individual is sovereign also admits that despotism is the legitimate means of dealing with barbarians. Even after the context is graphed in detail, identifying the ideal censorship option is not easy. It would be impossible to identify a point on the censorship spectrum equally acceptable to all. We can console ourselves with the thought that two of the wisest men in the history of western civilization, products of the same country and culture who lived in the same age were unable to hold the same opinion on the matter. In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates pleads for intellectual freedom and points out that free discussion has a supreme public value. He places the verdict of his own conscience over that of the jury. He claims to do a great public service when he carries out free discussion and inquiry. However in the *Republic* Plato paints the picture of an ideal state in which censorship is widespread. Plays of dramatists, fables and even the stories of mothers and nurses are subjected to strict censorship.

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[8]Mill 21.

QUEST FOR EMANCIPATION AND MORAL ETHIC: A STUDY IN CREATIVE ETHOS AND CRITICAL CENSORSHIP

J.P. Tripathi

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not.

In the above lines the poet Shelley presents two equations of literature--the writer and the reader, the poet and the reading public. Splitting the equations a little more vividly we can subdivide them into three, that is, the writer, the reader and society. Society is the larger world of a nation or many nations taken together. Reading public of poetry, fiction or literature is limited and may be much different from the larger society, called 'the world' by Shelley, which is inclusive of the state, its legislatures and judiciaries and other enforcing agencies besides the religious groups and heads who are often vocal of values, norms and ideals of life. If they, on the very face of it, find a piece of literature damaging to value systems, they become vociferous in protest and often harness their powers to clip the wings of the creator of such literature or get his creations banned or even forfeited and destroyed.

The creative artist, on the other hand, is busy with his intrinsic feelings, experiences and thoughts which he strives to shape in the form of art or literary pieces. In many cases he feels he or men of society, or certain classes of it are shackled and chained by custom, tradition, religious belief or governmental law. Emancipation of his soul or the souls of others is his concern. The writer or artist might work for it knowingly or unknowingly. But society and the custodians of moral ethic and values, are busy in its critical appraisal and its suitability to the prevalent norms. If it discovers major violations of moral, religious, political, social, national proprieties and values the books or the artistic pieces are banned or confiscated, or in other words, done to death. This tug-of-war between the two

sides, with reader sometimes laying his weight on this side and sometimes on the other, has been continuing since long.

The conflicts mostly arise out of the divergence between two viewpoints: that of the artist working under the pressure, the white heat, of creation and the society at large sitting in judgement over such literature. Now a days the governments are the mouthpieces of society, or at least so they should be. Shelley's poet wishes to sway the world and wield power over society as unacknowledged legislator of the world. The government mind is fixed on the fact that it has all the legislative, executive and judicial powers and must decide the right from the wrong, the proper from the improper. Thus the literary artist creates and the government censors the creations.

Let us make a cursory perusal of the historical background of censorship in general and that in literature in particular. The concept of censorship first originated in China in 'Ch' in' and 'Han' dynasties and was in force from 2nd century B.C. to the second century A.D. It had political and altruistic motives and aimed at preventing misuse or excess of power from the King on the people. Later it turned into censorates that helped the King and not the people. Censorship was imitated in Korea and Japan for a time.

Encyclopaedia Britannica defines it as under: "Censorship is the suppression or prohibition of speech or writing that is condemned as subversive of the common good."

In the ancient world the governments thought it their duty to regulate the moral and political life of the people. In Sparta drunken slaves were paraded in the streets for the benefit of the watching of the oligarchic class. Romans also thought that people's character is to be shaped by the government. The famous Greek philosopher Plato in his "Republic" visualises censorship of all art which he considered immoral and it was Aristotle who restored dignity to all art and literature by enunciating his theory of ideal probability as against truth. The censorship practice reached an extremity in China wherein authorities controlled the contents of texts of books.

In Christian Europe the first and foremost formalisation of Censorship was 'Index Librorum Prohibitorum' By help of this the Roman Catholic Church took upon the right of policing literature

being published. The Communist State in Russia exercised full authority in the field of all publications, suppressing all that it found anaemic to the state. All totalitarian states suppress elite literature because it might not confirm the government line. They favour popular literature which is uncritical of the state.

Liberal literature was suppressed by the Nazi regime in Germany. Thus the great novelist Mann had to go in exile. Remarque the great novelist who published *All Quiet on the Western Front* had also to go in exile. Censorship of literature was practised seriously both in France ans Soviet Russia. Government control and censorship of literature may block literary growth and may spoil and destroy it. This may lead to the destruction of literary talents. However censorship could not hamper the growth of literature in France and Russia in any significant manner.

The example of Russian censorship was observable in the middle of this century. All voices against the revolution and communist regime had to be silenced. The two novelists Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Boris Pasternak are the cases in point. Both were officially condemned in the Soviet Union although they wielded great honour in the field of world literature. Their literary talents were appreciated and they were awarded greatest literary honours, the Nobel Prize in Literature. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was published and circulated. But the Russian government was taken by surprise and did not approve later circulation of the work.

Nikita Khruschov was considered one of the most liberal Russian communist leaders in the world. During his time voices of DeStalinisation were heard and could be raised because then De-Stalinisation was taking place in the country but nothing could be said about the Bolshevik revolution. It was considered to be one of the models of Absolute goodness. Boris Pasternak was voicing his protest against the Absolute-Goodness concept of the Bolshevik revolution. He found it defective and also destructive. He was at one with Dostoyevsky in expressing the intrinsic feelings and sufferings of men of his time. The Bolshevik regime and the Revolution both caused immense suffering to the individual soul.

These two are the major strains in his famous novel *Dr. Zhivago* the publication and circulation of which were not permitted in Russia even in the times of liberal Khrushchov. The Russian literary censorship will not permit criticism of the Revolution and Pasternak dared it. His creative ethos overpowered him to express his real sentiments, truth must be out. Here is a case of sincerity of feeling and sentiment being banned from expression and therefore the quest for emancipation particularly in the context of a totalitarian regime. Boris Pasternak could not be permitted to get outside the Iron Curtain.

The creative ethos found an emancipation even inside the Iron Curtain. *Dr. Zhivago* has many companion pieces in the works of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's works such as '*First Circle, Cancer Ward* and the above-mentioned work *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich. Life and Fate* by Vesky Grosnin is another work of this kind. These cases support our earlier concept that censorship could not do much harm to literature as the modern world is interconnected and even banned books get published through other countries and thus suppression of genuine literature is not possible. Fascism in Italy, Nazism in Germany and Stalinism in Russia perpetrated censorship and banned freedom of expression. But the creative ethos could not be suppressed and writers either went underground or wrote in a way so that censorship might not choke them. Persons like Camus and Kafka working under these conditions have created a new brand of absurdist and existential literature that have a strange appeal.

The concept of the State's inherent right of censorship is based on the idea that the writer being an individual is inherently prone to be wrong. The State is self-assured that it is the best custodian of public weal and interest and has greater wisdom. The state is represented by some officials who are supposed to be above board. The power of the State is in their hands and they might say this is right, that is wrong. In most of the cases the artist has the greater breadth of vision and wider experience and also a sense of identification with the good of the people. But this cannot be said to be always right. In rare cases the possibilities are that an artist

may be misled by his own isolated conceptions and might create things that hurt others and bring harm. The naked painting of goddess Saraswati by the painter Husain may be made by some esoteric private feeling but apparently it has no intrinsic justification. Angered sentiments of some communities should have been visualised by the painter. The painting was taken by many as a sacrilege and religious offence.

The Renaissance in England, as well as in Europe, was an epoch of emancipation and release. Elizabethan comedies, lyrics, songs and the theatre freely depicted love and the fun and frolick really obtaining in the lives of the people. So some serious eye brows were raised against this so-called libertinism or levity in literature and puritans, called roundheads came protesting against it and sentiments were roused against drama. Much of the theatre, they thought, was antithetical to ethical proprieties and therefore the institution of licensing of plays started in England which is said to be one of the most liberal nations regarding freedom of expression.

That censorship law existed in England in the early half of the seventeenth century is proved by the fact that the government had a provision for licensing of publications. Milton was a great democrat and champion of freedom of expression. His famous work *Areopagitica* is full of arguments pleading against this government law of licensing which is another name for censorship.

The really liberal and open country in this respect is the United States of America. United States constitutional Amendment of 1787 guarantees freedom of speech and press in the country. As a result emigrants from all over the world, suppressed by governments on political and totalitarian grounds, found a safe haven in America. The result of censorship imposed by any country on a book was this that other countries took up the gauntlet and the books were published and read, and enjoyed. This led to cross-cultural give-and-take and a certain cosmopolitanism in the attitude to literature. So now directions are being created so that all literature may be taken as one integrated literature. This has led to cross-fertilisation in literature and sensibility. Thus censorship proves to be a blessing in disguise for the writer as the world in an integrated fashion

condemns the censorship and treats the author as a victim and a martyr. As a result we find Rushdie had become one of the most popular writers of the world including Asia, Africa, Europe and even America and is treated as a literary hero.

Censorship of drama had become a very stringent affair in England though the Restoration added a certain liberality to the puritanically ascetic atmosphere regarding drama. Thus John Gay's play *Beggars Opera* (1728) and got staged before the government attention could be drawn to it. It was tolerated by the authorities as it was already in circulation and on show. But the government became particularly alert on Gay's issue and his sequel *Poll* was not given license till 1777 for staging by the Lord Chancellor.

Censorship affected many a genius even in England and influenced their career. We have information that Henry Fielding was associated with English drama and theatre for quite more than half a decade. He had all the ingredients of a very successful writer of comedies. In fact he attempted his hand on this genre. But the Licensing Act of 1737 dampened Fielding's talent and he was forced to shift to the world of fiction and his dramatic career ended abruptly.

As Hardy's novels are characterised by a modernity and are rebellious to established orthodox belief they displeased many people. Many persons of the Priests class were angry with Hardy and did not favour the sending of his *Jude the Obscure*, particularly, to the libraries. *Tess* was also criticised.

Complications and difficulties arose in the case of D.H. Lawrence who entered the world of literature with his new theories about primitivism. He became the new prophet of male-female relations and Freudian theories of libido. He discovered a new force dominating human life in the form of Oedipus complex and electra complex, a fact undiscovered upto now. So he could paint the old mother-son relationship as a lover-beloved relationship. People might have relished *Sons and Lovers* but *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was not relished. It was found exorbitantly immoral. All ethical values were violated and the creative ethos of the writer found no favour with authorities. In the book Lady Chatterley has got to go to the game-keeper for full revelation of the mysteries of love. Perhaps Lawrence

wanted emancipation from the old ideals of sacred and profane love and like what the people do in the Hyde Park in the country Lawrence made *Lady Chatterly's Lover* the Hyde Park of English literature, a fact, the authorities did not approve. As a result the novel was banned in England. The rebellion to traditional ethic represented by Lawrence was considered reprehensible and hence the ban.

We already know that Plato's *Republic* had no place for poets and writers of tragedies and lyrics and the arousing of tender and soft sentiments and passions. All these weaken a king and are therefore excommunicated. Majority of the reading public in America and elsewhere in the world found no sympathy for Vladimir Nobokov's novel *Lolita* which is written in the Lawrentian tradition. Here is a fifty year old mature man who had a strong infatuation for a fifteen year old girl. The sentiments of the hero might be justified in the eyes of Vladimir Nobokov but they are dull and unpalatable to the public at large. Because the book was published in the United States while Nobokov was settled there, it was not censored formally by government but it met with a very cold reception.

The case of censorship of Salmon Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* was really reprehensible. We know that Rushdie has a very secular and cosmopolitan attitude to mankind. He is one of the most enlightened citizens of the world and his integrity and sincerity of belief have risen above anything spurious or shallow. The tragedy is that the book was censored by no less a country than India which is supposed to be one of the most liberal countries in the matter of censorship. The ban came much before anybody read the book, perhaps of the basis of hearsay. Perhaps the Indian government had a narrow aim while banning the work: it wanted to flatter the Muslim community in India or it had its eyes on the Muslim vote bank. The Iranian Fatwa of death sentence on Rushdie given by Khomaini is one of the most tyrannical orders in the history of the world and violates all proprieties. No body will agree to the purchase of cheap applause from the world of readers by committing sacrilege and blaspheme and thus hurt people's sentiments. It would be much nicer if Rushdie could harness some other device for becoming well-known over-night in the world. In any case the announcement of

a prize to be awarded to the killer of Rushdie is the most exorbitant act of terrorism in the present world.

Though the life of Rushdie, in its physical dimensions, is in danger but world attention has been attracted by his works. The censorship of *Satanic Verses* in India in a way has stimulated the world readers to read it and therefore the censorship instead of dampening the circulation of the book has fertilised the literary atmosphere. But for readers of one community, all others are after getting the book.

Similar is the case of Tasleema Nasreen, the writer of Lajja or *Shame*. the Bangladeshi lady who was forced by her creative ethos to paint the truth of the fall out of the breaking of the Ram Temple/Babari Mosque at Ayodhya in India, a misguided act of some shallow intolerant people who in their ignorance thought they were taking a revenge against history. This reactionary act had an adverse fall out all over the world and thousands of Hindu shrines were destroyed throughout the world and innocent Hindus were either mistreated or done to death. This sensitive, humanitarian, truth-loving lady of Bangladesh thought it fit to document her experience in the form of a novel, thus antagonising her people and the nation. Naturally it shows the darker side of some people of Bangladesh, as the destruction of the Temple/Mosque in Ayodhya showed the darker aspect of people. This single act of reaction has put Hinduism in bad light. Never has a Hindu been a reactionary. Now the shameful thing for India is that the said lady wants to visit India but the government is not prepared to offer her protection and shelter, an act guided by only political motives and not by Indian traditions.

We now shift our attention from the European and international scene to the indigenous scene in India during the days of British colonialism. The British government in India inherited the European tradition of censorships and bans and cultivated it in India. Like the Russian or Chinese censorship the British thought their censorship of Indian writers' works aimed at the good and benefit of the people as rebellion to British regime will bring chaos and disorder and disunity to India.

The most important example of this was R.N. Tagore's memoir of his Russian travel. Tagore went to Russia and was deeply impressed by the collective farming, the community life and the good work being done all around the country for the poorer sections of society. He was deeply enamoured of this new life that was obtaining in the country. He depicted his experiences in the form of a memoir but the British rulers of India thought it was an indictment of British rule in India, and praise of communist system. So the book was banned. The censorship was guided by political and imperialist considerations.

Similar is the case of 'Prison Life' written in several volumes by a great Indian freedom fighter, Shachindra Nath Sanyal who passed most of his life in and out of prison. It aims at depicting the revolution being organised in India at that time against the British rule and bringing freedom to the country. By depicting the troubles and travails of the Indian revolutionaries he wanted to popularise the revolution among the Indian people to help the overthrow of the British yoke on the Indians. As he was an active revolutionary truth could not be told in entirety, it had to be twisted and mystified lest lives of people associated with the revolution may be endangered. Consequently there was no ground for its finding favour with the British rulers of the country. There is a whole history of such revolutionary writings by various others which were suppressed, banned, confiscated and even destroyed. The entire tradition of Bangali writing is characterised by anticolonial sentiments and is one of the most powerful literatures of the world; sometimes in depth and intensity of feeling it is close to Russian fiction.

This cursory survey of censorship of literature practised in different countries of the world could not bring about any major damage to the inner ethos of feelings and experiences of the world writers. Their 'white heat' was irrepressible. Truth must be out. Valuable writings find a way out for publication and time has no special retarding value. The best of past literature is alive even today and as T.S. Eliot will have it the past literature is present in one form or the other in the current literature and the two together continue even in the future.

CENSORSHIPS GALORE

Romika Batra

Censorship of a work of art or that of literature is as old a phenomenon as are art and literature themselves. Suppression of the works of art has been exercised from time immemorial for sundry reasons--political, social, religious or ideological. History vindicates that the major factors that have promoted censorship of the works of art have been religious or communal fanaticism. It also depends, to a large extent, on the existing cult of ideological, political or sociological framework of the country that imposes censorship. Khushwant Singh expresses similar views in an article in which he says: "When books are banned or burnt in public one or the other of the following excuses are given for doing so: they are politically unacceptable to the govt., they offend the religious susceptibilities of some communities, or they are pornographic."[1] Censorship of art-works, however, certainly proves two things at least--the inherent import of the work and the bold attempt of the artist to express some sensitive aspects of reality. Khushwant Singh rightly opines in the same article: "Truly had Emerson spoken when he said, 'Every burnt book enlightens the world'."[2]

True art and literature are faithful vehicles for rendering the collective consciousness of a society. They are instrumental in restoring the encyclopedic wisdom of a nation. They reflect through the artistic medium the integrated psyche of a nation that includes the lifestyle of its people, their desires, aspirations and traditions. They also mirror the taboos, the milieu, the current trends and the overall metamorphosis that takes place in the society. Hence the seminal importance of art and literature for grasping and then presenting in right perspective the mood of times by unearthing not only the surface realities but also probing the inner truths. Anita Desai's description regarding the function of writing has a unique relevance in this context: "I think of the world as an iceberg--the one-tenth visible above the surface of the water is what we call reality, but the nine-tenths that are submerged make up the truth and that is what one is trying to explore. Writing is an effort to

discover and then to underline and finally to convey the true significance of things."[3] The medium of an artist and a writer may be varied--a sculpture's medium is stone, a painter's colours and canvas, a musician's musical notes, whereas a writer's is words. Irrespective of the fact whether the writer is a poet or a novelist, the ultimate aim is the same i.e., unravelling the truth.

The term "art" etymologically means "skill". Earlier interpreted to mean the skill as displayed in the areas of painting, sculpture, architecture, music and design-work, the term has been expanded to include language and literature. The main two of the many other interpretations offered by *The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary* are:

(i) The application of skill according to aesthetic principles, esp. in the production of visible works of imagination, imitation or design (painting, sculpture, architecture etc.)

(ii) Something in which skill may be obtained or displayed. Certain branches of (esp. university/school) study serving as a preparation for more advanced studies for later life, now esp. languages, literature, philosophy, history etc. as distinguished from sciences or technological subjects."[4]

The various disciplines that come in the periphery of art have been further elaborated in the same dictionary by appending to it the following qualifiers: "(1) decorative art: those which involve the production of high quality objects which are both useful and beautiful.(2) graphic art: those which involve graphic representation or writing, printing etc. (3) performing arts: those which involve performances. (4) plastic arts: those which involve modelling as sculpture etc."[5] Hence, literature is not something distinct from art. It is rather one of the branches of art in which the imagination is used to give expression to thoughts through words.

As good and evil coexist in all the ages, literature comprises of great, mediocre and cheap works of art. The words "art" and "literature" are used in a positive sense and are not meant to refer to the low-key and vulgar literature. One often hears some parts or some song-sequences cut out from some films by the Board of Censors due to the obscene content in them. The discussion, therefore, shall be restricted to the exploration of factors and causes

that work behind the censorship of those works of art which in the real sense deserve to be called so. Some of the banned works themselves speak for their great artistic value and their intrinsic worth in endeavouring to focus upon certain serious and underlying aspects of truth. It is also proposed to highlight some of the consequences of censorship.

In the modern context, especially in the democratic countries, over-exposure to print and electronic media has put a big question mark on the role of censorship. Today, the mass media and satellite-channels have permitted the viewers to taste the forbidden fruit. Just the manipulation of the remote control readily makes available all the unexposed, unthinkable and distant hinterlands. The havoc that the western pop music is playing with the impressionable young generation cannot be over-estimated. Rightly opine Manjula Negi and Dhiraj Singh: "An article in the May issue of *The American Medical Association Archives of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* reports that music videos expose viewers to large doses of violence, and that MTV does so at a higher rate than other American music channels. Roughly, one-fifth of MTV videos included violent content. They said Rap scenarios were more violent while rock videos had a better display of guns and goons."[6]

The basic characteristics of music viz., melody, rhythm, lyricism and cadence are missing from the western music. On the contrary, a variety of ear-splitting noise is produced in the name of music. Commenting on this, Manjula Negi and Dhiraj Singh ironically remark: "Whoever said that music requires rhythm, melody, lyrics and beat? ...who wants lyrics when all you need is to shake a leg, tap a toe, stub another and dance to drums, metallic sounds and general noise that splits ear levels?"[7] The democratic set-up in some countries nullifies the role of the Board of Censors. As a result, the media is unduly exploiting the liberty offered to it. It is grossly responsible for degrading the aesthetic level of the masses. It also deserves blame for encouraging violence as children are easily influenced by whatever they see and unconsciously make it a part of their lifestyle. Castigating the impact of the violent images shown in the music videos. Manjula Negi and Dhiraj Singh further observe:

"The statistics tell us that the violent images projected by music channels are detrimental to a child's growth; that they are negative reinforcements on a kid's psyche; that whether or not he denies their effect on his intelligence, ...he is internalising all the violence that he absorbs through the day through the music he listens to."[8]

But, generally speaking, censorship of a work of art largely depends on the political system of a country. In the countries like India, America, England, Canada where there is a democratic set-up, every citizen constitutionally enjoys the right of freedom of expression. There the creative output is neither biased by avouritism, nor has the press to wait for directives from the ruling party. The autonomy given to the press and the media gives adequate scope to the writers to retain an objective outlook in the projection of their view of reality. This enables them to expose freely whatever happens behind the curtain in the political corridors or the social lobbies.

But is a country like Russia, for instance, that has recently adopted democracy, the situation used to be grim in the pre-Stalin period, and even in the post-Stalin period. The communist system allowed little creative individuality to the writers to select, emphasise and treat certain subjects against the dictates of the party. Since 1930's, the Soviet authorities exploited all the means of communication to propagate the communist ideology. Since 1932, it was incumbent on Soviet writers to contribute to the party's campaign. The writers were compelled to highlight the achievements of the government. They could feel or think against the policies of the government but could not write anything anti-government. Bernard Guilbert Guerney aptly observes that "... the avowed purpose of the Union of Soviet Writers, a government-governed body which took over RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Pencraftsmen) was the creation of the artists writing to glorify the victories of socialism, expound the wisdom and heroism of the party and to portray Soviet man and his moral qualities fully and with full force. And that is how, with the party as midwife, social realism was born."[9] The official doctrine of Social Realism compelled them to select subjects from contemporary life and particularly the themes

which the party considered topical and important at any given time. The Soviet literature was not an exercise in the creation of art-for-art's sake. It was rather a political expedient, serving the purpose of the government. Accounting for the government using literature as a powerful medium to glorify the Soviet regime, Rosalind J. Marsh comments: "Political control over literature did not merely reflect the soviet authorities' need to direct every aspect of Soviet life, but also their desire to preserve literature's vital function as a generator and repository of myth. Soviet fiction frequently provided myths affirming and maintaining the values of Soviet regime..."[10]

The Soviet authorities controlled the literary process through such agencies as the official censorship, *Glavlit*, the State Committee for Publishing, local party organisations, the Department of Culture and Propaganda of the Party Central Committee, the Ministry of Culture and the KGB (Committee of State Security). The erring writers were subjected to psychological harassment and penalties which tremendously influenced the activity of the writers. A non-conformist writer could be deprived of his livelihood by a ban on the publication of his work. In some cases, most extreme sanctions were employed against erring writers. Surveillance by KGB, phone-tapping, the planting of microscopes, house-searches and confiscation of manuscripts were common occurrences in Stalin's time. Most writers faced with such situations were obliged to compromise and write recantations in order to be readmitted to Soviet literary life.

Though Stalin's death on March 5, 1953 created a sense of liberation, but it was short-lived. In spite of the publication of controversial works, such as Granin's story "Personal Opinion" and Dudintesev's "Not by Bread Alone," which were repressed for a long time, the government applied its suppressive policy through KGB against the literary dissidents. Three copies of Solzhenitsyn's novel *The First Circle* and his play *The Feast of the Victors* were confiscated by the KGB. The writers Andree Sinyavasky and Yuly Daniel were arrested and accused of having published their works abroad under the pseudonyms of Abram Tertz and Nikolai Arzhak respectively. Their trial in 1966--at which they were condemned to seven and

five years of hard labour respectively--caused considerable indigination throughout the world as it was the first trial against the Soviet writers in which the principal evidence against them was their literary work.

After 1966, the Soviet authorities displayed greater sophistication in their treatment of errant writers. They increasingly used the method of deportation or severe harassment designed to force dissident writers to emigrate. The Soviet writer Georgy Vladmov emigrated in 1983, claiming that he had been subjected to harassment for years because of the publication of his novel *Three Minutes' Silence* (1969) *in Novy Mir.*

The personal dictatorship of Stalin was not different from the methods of Nazi regime in Germany. The terror spread by Hitler and the privileges conferred on Nazis led to many German writers to go in exile. Those who remained in Germany were not allowed free expression. The German writer Thomas Mann, whose opposition to the dictators was unequivocal and who was certainly tireless in his denunciations even before the Nazis came to power, was attacked within a few months of the Nazis coming to power. Although he was not at first officially banished, he remained in voluntary exile which very soon became morally compulsory. Critics serving the regime quickly took up the attack on him. However, even during his exile Mann continued to be outspoken.

Those who remained in Germany were not allowed to express their opinions freely. Bertolt Brecht, who was a major representative of opposition to Nazism, was downright and outspoken in his antagonism. He, too, was forced to leave his country and wander from one country to another for survival. He travelled from Prague, Vienna, Zurich, Paris onto Denmark. The writers who had to work in alien lands faced a number of difficulties. Echoing the pains of rootlessness while living in exile, Frederic Ewen remarks: "Exile is a bitter thing for anyone. But for the writer, it is particularly galling experience. Unlike the musician or painter or dancer, he is bound by the limitations of language. Separated from his own people--from his readers--he speaks, as it were, in a vacuum."[11] In the last years of his life, when Brecht returned to live in the German

Democratic Republic, he discovered that he simply was not allowed to speak his mind. He realised that he could be against the Government as much as he pleased, in private. In public, he had to obey. The situation is still very unhealthy in Communist China and some other countries where books are banned primarily because of religious fanaticism. Says Khushwant Singh: "In present day Communist China books disapproving the regime are destroyed and their authors put behind bars. Somewhat worse is the fate of authors living in countries where religious fanatics hold sway as they do in many Islamic nations like Iran, Sudan, Afganistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Not only do they ban books but issue *fatwas* condemning their authors to death"[12] Bangladeshi writer Tesleema Nasreen, who wrote the novel *Lajja*, can be cited as a case in point. The novel provoked a lot of controversy and Tasleema had to flee from Bangladesh to save her life. This is religious fanaticism at its extreme.

In the Indian scenario, the paintings of M.F. Hussain were recently destroyed. Hussain is unanimously acknowledged as a painter of international repute. The paintings for which he became the centre of controversy were painted by him a long time ago and were the representation of Indian goddesses. Learning about the angry reaction of the Hindus who claimed that Hussain made a sinful attempt to defile their deities and also violated their sacred religious sentiments, Hussain, who was at the time in London, apologised publicly to the angry Hindu mob in India and clarified that he had no design of denigrating the image of the Hindu goddesses. Rather, he was merely representing respectfully the various aspects of these goddesses as he visualised them. His apology was rightly acknowledged by the intelligentsia of the country. The issue brings at least one thing to the limelight viz., the fanatic bent of the people. The communal feelings generally overshadow the rationality of the general masses and reduce them to unthinking robots. It is quite obvious that the paintings that could do no harm in the last thirty years or so could not become harmful overnight. The painter stands justified in having done nothing to provoke the communal frenzy of the Hindus who demanded censorship of these paintings. More

recently, Arun Shourie's book on Dr. Ambedkar was burnt in the Parliament of India. This clearly is a blur on the democracy of India.

Also, it instantly brings to mind the name of another literary figure, Salman Rushdie, who was forced to join the bandwagon of "controversial" writings, for his novel *The Satanic Verses*. Rushdie, who has five novels to his credit to date--*Grimus*, *Midnight's Children*, *Shame*, *The Satanic Verses* and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* and also a book on Nicaraguan journey *The Jaguar Smile*, gained eminence with the publication of *Midnight's Children* in 1981. The book was awarded the Booker McConnel prize for 1981, the James Tait Black Memorial prize and the English Speaking Union Literary Award. He has been compared to the novelists like Milan Kundera, Gabriel Garacia Marquez, Gunter Grass, John Irving and V.S. Naipaul by the literary critics. Also, he has been hailed as a creator of epics. Rushdie is acknowledged as a writer who possesses in a remarkable degree both the creative imagination and the capacity for objective observation and self-analysis. Applauding Rushdie's contribution to the genre of fiction, William Walsh remarks: "Combining the elements of magic and fantasy, the grimmest realism, the extravagant farce, multi-mirrored analogy and a potent symbolic structure, Salman Rushdie has captured the astonishing energy of novel unprecedented in scope, manner and achievement in the hundred and fifty years old tradition of the Indian novel in English."[13]

The Satanic Verses having been banned, is not available and whatever little was know about it is through some articles that also contain some of the novelist's comments. The general drift of the novel is nevertheless apparent from them. Rushdie, explaining his main purpose in writing it, remarks: "If *The Satanic Verses* is anything, it is a migrant's eye-view of the world. It is written from the very experience of uprooting disjuncture and metamorphosis ...that is the migrant condition, and from which, I believe, can be derived a mataphor for all humanity."[14]

The cultural displacement and its results have dominated Rushdie's creative self. He says: "I can't avoid the fact that my life has been constructed in a series of displacements--of which only

the last, the decision to stay in England, was my own choice. You have a Kashmiri family that comes to Delhi, then goes to Bombay, then to Pakistan and meanwhile I end up in London--there is a lot of dislocations there!"[15]

Rushdie has called *The Satanic Verses* "a love-song to ... mongrel selves" of migrants. It celebrates, according to him, "...hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of a new and unexpected combinations of human beings..."[16] Theirs is the experience of those who have been demonized by virtue of their otherness. Accordingly, *The Satanic Verses* has been regarded by John Leonard as a "metafiction on and around the theme of post-colonical identity crisis and modern pastiche."[17]

It is revealed through the reviews that the theme of migration has been treated by Rushdie in this novel from a comprehensive point of view. This is not merely a sociological view of migration; it also becomes symbolic of the human condition. In this regard, David Kerr comments: "We are all migrants then, on a journey to death and self-discovery. The novel charts the perils of the journey, testing the stances taken by sceptics and believers of various kinds. Meaning is layered on meaning, image on image, structure on linking past with present, east with west, suggesting an imponderable, shared destiny."[18]

It also becomes obvious from some articles that Rusdie in the novel had delineated the distinctive qualities of the major characters and their clashes at some length. Mahound's arch foe, Shaitan (Satan) suffers the eternal damnations of uprootedness and non belongingness. The two clownish anti-heroes, Gibreel Farishta and Salahuddin Chamcha, finally, leave the impression of futility, of lives wasted. "Theirs is nevertheless the search for a sense of personal worth."[19] Gibreel is presented as suffering on account of his narcissism and his hysterical obsession with sex and jealously. Chamcha's problems owe their inception to his soul-destroying phoniness and denial of his Indian heritage. "In trying to become more English than the English, Salahuddin has become a nobody, an uprooted, cosmopolitan mimic without a true original self..."[20] Chamcha is finally able to make himself whole by returning to his roots and,

more importantly, by facing up to... the great varieties of love and death."[21] Gibreel, however, does not survive and, in the end, kills himself, finding himself unable to bear his torments any longer.

Censorship of great works shows the undemocratic bent of mind of the country in particular and its people in general. Whatever may be the reason for banning the books, it certainly disturbs the congenial and free atmosphere essential for artistic afflorescence. Paradoxically, banning increases the importance of the work rather than reducing it. Nehru was right when he wrote: "Human nature is notoriously perverse. One has to forbid a thing or taboo it to make it attractive."[22] It seems to be in the fitness of things to conclude the discussion with the comments of Khushwant Singh when he remarks: "I oppose proscribing or destroying books on any grounds and regard these practices as medieval barbarity unworthy of any society which calls itself civilised. The only proviso I admit is that the state or the parents have the right to prevent boys and girls below a certain age being exposed to explicit portrayal of sex in writing or illustrations."[23]

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THE IMPUGNABLE AS INEXPUGNABLE: CENSORSHIP AND ENGLISH RENAISSANCE DRAMA

S. Viswanathan

In what may be viewed as a collateral if not concomitant development of the vogue enjoyed by cultural political criticism of Renaissance drama and literature, there has been a rekindling of scholarly and critical interest in the question of censorship in relation to the Renaissance English drama. For example, there have been several recent book-length studies[1] of the matter, besides articles and the earlier examinations of the records of the English court's successive Masters of the Revels, Sir Edmund Tilney and Sir George Buc in Elizabethan and Jacobean times in this regard. These studies have, no doubt, served to bring to the fore the political dimensions of the Shakespearian theatre as an institution in general and to alert us to the political factors such as may have operated in and around particular plays which attracted the censors' attention. However, illuminating as these studies are, these would seem to have addressed and interpreted the figuring of the material under the shadow of censorship in the plays, and the censoring event and its outcome, either with the assumption that the theatre was inherently complicit with the Establishment and thus was 'always already' hegemonised by the powers that were or on the premiss that the drama and the theatre had radical potential and tendencies and could often take an oppositional role, now in covert, now in relatively overt fashion. Roughly, these two critical attitudes in their orientation could be categorised as the new historicist assumption that basically the Shakespearian theatre and drama were willy-nilly an agent and an instrument of power, and the cultural materialist or oppositional criticism's view of plays and playwrights as sites and voices of questioning of authority, received opinions and traditional social and moral values. An examination of a few representative instances of Elizabethan plays which were provocations to the censor and of the impact of the censoring action on the plays, playwrights and the theatre would go to show that the situation which obtained cannot be viewed with such all but

mutually exclusive 'either/or' assumptions and that, often, it could be seen to be one more of a 'both/and' multiplicity in varying degrees from case to case. The material liable to be censored often functions in the plays of the time in a double-edged or double-faced manner in several ways. So much so that it is not only that the sensitive material provokes the action of the censor's scissors on itself and thereby could achieve a *success de scandal* for the play. Also even as the material risks and faces trouble, it finds ways of sometimes escaping action and sometimes resuscitating and reincarnating itself and thus surviving as a sort of hardly perennial.

That such a two-fold status of sustaining or risking proscription and at the same time managing to achieve recuperation marks material in Renaissance English plays, and indeed the theatre and drama of the period as a whole as an institution, can be gathered from a brief consideration of certain examples. There are the censorship attentions that the play of *Sir Thomas More* came in for and the play's response, the involvement of Shakespeare's *Richard II* with Queen Elizabeth and the court as well as with Essex's followers, the possible disapproval at the hands of the authority evoked by passages in *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, both in their Quarto versions, the notorious and all but compulsive proneness that the plays of the boy company, the Children of the Chapel, exhibited in the first decade of the seventeenth century, and the telling instances of Middleton's *A Game at Chess* (1624) and Massinger's *The Roman Actor* (1625). The power vested with the Master of Revels to censor whatever in the plays may be regarded by him as 'heretical, seditious, or unseemly for Christian ears,' for one thing, left as much room for so much matter to escape the net of censorship as for the apparently long and strict arm of censorship to seize hold of it. For another, as the evidence of the Henslowe papers shows,[2] theatre owners and theatre managers like him could through periodical payments of cash and periodical entertainment of Tilney succeed in averting his censoring of plays. Ironically enough, the city fathers for their part tried to bribe Tilney to induce him to restrain the players. Thirdly, while it is true that governmental repression, more than the general strong wave of protestantism with

the iconclastic campaign it entailed, led to the cease of the active tradition of the Mystery and Miracle plays which was current till around the middle of the sixteenth century, the puritans' and city fathers opposition to the playhouses and playing could not come in the way of the phenomenal flourishing of the theatre and drama precisely because the monarch herself and her successor and the court far from despising the institution patronised it. Furthermore, in all probability as Margot Heinemann and Martin Butler have shown in their books the puritans and the citizen community leaders came to patronise the theatre and plays in such a manner that several plays and playwrights could seem to have taken as oppositional and anti-court stance and function, and, more interestingly, they could generally do so without incurring the displeasure much less the wrath of the powers that were.

In the case of *Sir Thomas More* one of the very few plays of the period of which the original manuscripts are extant we have on the manuscript the instruction of Tilney the censor written in that the whole scene of the 'Ill May Day' riots of the London populace in which the native citizens expressed their resentment against foreign artisans in London for their haughtiness by rising in rebellion and trying to kill them and burn down their houses.

> Leave out the insurrection wholly and the cause thereof and begin with Sir Thomas More at the mayor's sessions (a successive scene) with a report afterwards of his good service done being sherieve of London upon a mutiny against the Lombards only by a short report and not otherwise at your own perils.[3]

Tilney also ordered the amendment of a passage in another scene which carried fairly direct topical references to the discontents and outbreaks of rioting among sections of the London population in 1592-93,[4] which were directed against the foreigners in the city. In this collaborated play Shakespeare seems to have come to have a hand, apparently at this stage, and the scene he contributed which is now generally accepted to be in his own handwriting, called Hand D in the playscript by the bibliographical scholars, portrays the confrontation with More as the Sheriff of London, accompanied by the Earl of Shrewsbury, the Mayor and a few officers, of the leaders of the rioters and More's successful persuasion of them to give up

their plan. This Shakespearian scene was meant to take the place of the original objectionable scene of staging of the riots. But the point that emerges in a consideration of the scene is that it is still in the Shakespearian form a rioting scene, in a sense, without the riots and with the rioting at the same time. Though the design of the scene is mainly oriented to More's skilful handling of the crowd, his play of rhetoric and moral suasion, the rioting action is invoked in telling enough detail in the very speeches through which More turns away the wrath of the rioters and practically quells the riot. The verbal evocation of the rioters' proposed acts of defiance, violence and destruction is strong enough to the extent that the scene may be said to have it both ways.

> You'll put down strangers,
> Kill them, cut their throuats, possess their houses
> (ll. 119-120)

> .... by this pattern
> Not one of you should live an aged man
> For other ruffians, as their fancies wrought
> With self-same hand, self reasons and self right,
> Would shark on you, and men like ravenous fishes
> Would feed on one another[5] (ll. 82-87)

Apart from this, Shakespeare had himself portrayed the Jack Cade rebellion in lurid detail in *2 Henry VI* (Act IV), and the play for aught we know did not attract censorship action. Around 1592-93, the period to which *Sir Thomas More* may be assigned, there was the anonymous play *The Life and Death of Jack Straw* which carried scenes from the Peasants' Revolt and vigorous utterances by the character of John Ball in justification of the revolt. It held the stage, and its quarto appeared in 1594 and then again in 1604. Evidently, the topicality lent to that play by the civil disturbances in London 1592 did not attach any objectionability to that play.

Shakespeare later also portrayed scenes of encounter between representatives of the common people in the form of the plebeians of Rome briefly in the opening scene of *Julius Caesar* and rather more extensively in *Coriolanus*. Let alone the *Julius Caesar* scene's oblique connection with the artisan apprentices and their love-and-hate relationship with the theatre, through the connection between

the *Coriolanus* scenes in question and the contemporaneous food-riots in the Midlands and the protests against enclosures, Shakespeare could portray on the stage the stance of the plebeian representatives like the 'great toe of the commonwealth' in *Coriolanus* in a telling manner giving them a strong voice. Their voice is accorded a certain legitimation, however qualified it may be and whatever the ironies of Shakespeare at their expense. Making due allowances for the playwright's basic exploitation of the theatrical effect and value of the small and the powerless standing up to and speaking up against the great and the powerful, we can still sufficiently recognise the legitimacy which the playwright endows the popular voice with. This play of the popular voice in the theatre does not seem to have come to the adverse notice of the censor or the authorities.

It is instructive to consider certain features of the configuration of the well known instance of the deletion of the episode of Richard II's abdication, a highlight of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, in the two quartos of the play printed in 1598 and 1604 and of the political use of the play by Essex's followers on the eve of the Essex rebellion in 1601 and, more, Queen Elizabeth's significant reaction to the play, albeit a second-hand one. Scruples either in anticipation of censorship or imposed by it on account of the sensitivity of the portrayal of the 'unkinging' of a monarch led to the excision of the major part of the act-scene (IV.i) in the printing of the first quarto (1598) and the subsequent one. But the episode came to be printed in the 1608 quarto of the play and also in the First Folio. The 'deposition scene,' theatrical highlight that it is, must have been staged in performances in the theatre, all along. Otherwise, there would be little point in the use sought to be made of the play by the Essex faction by commissioning a special performance of it by the Lord Chamberlain's Men on 7 February 1601 as an inspiration and a morale booster for their design of conducting the Essex rebellion the next day and of ostensibly and eventually dethroning the reigning queen. The rebellion in the event failed and Essex was sent to the Tower and subsequently executed. Queen Elizabeth noted with displeasure the attempted exploitation of the play by her

enemy who was her one-time protege and favourite and the likeness sought to be suggested between Richard II and herself as monarchs. Indeed the provocation made her generalise what would seem to have been an once-off attempt at a particular political exploitation of the play. William Lambarde the Kentish lawyer and historian records the Queen's reaction in his account of his conversation with her

> I am Richard II, know ye not that
> ...., ... this tragedy
> was played 40 times in open streets
> and houses[6]

The historian Camden also testifies to the commissioning of the play for the rebellion eve performance as by Essex's steward Gilly Merrick. Yet, but for a questioning of the actor-shareholder Augustine Phillips, no action was taken against Shakespeare's company and they continued to perform at court, and performances of *Richard II* continued unhindered, while Sir John Hayward who published a prose history of King Henry IV dealing with Richard II had to suffer imprisonment and stand trial for the alleged analogies between Essex and Bolingbroke, Richard II and Queen Elizabeth. In Shakespeare's play for one thing, the chivalric model as something outdated and unsuitable is portrayed, not without a slight shade of nostalgia, in Richard II whereas it was Essex who was emulating the chivalric-heroic ideal and whom his supporters were trying to project thus. For another, Shakespeare presents Richard II with a certain balance of imaginative sympathy and critical judgment which makes the play at once tragedy and history in a sense. So that it is difficult to see how the play was expected by the Essex faction to evoke an altogether adversarial reaction against the monarch rebelled against in the play or in current history.

In other words, the 'deposition scene' in *Richard II* for all its political sensitivity had its fairly smooth stage life, barring the one event referred to of its single staging. If Queen Elizabeth had any real strong resentment against the play, she would not have waited till she counted as many as 'forty' performances, and even after reaching that count, evidently, she did not order action against the play or players or playwright. Similarly, even if the reference in

Hamlet to the 'late innovation' in Rosencrantz's line with reference to the visiting players, 'the tragedians of the city',

> I think their inhibition comes by means of the late innovation. (*Hamlet*, II.ii.330)

is to be taken as to the Essex rebellion and not to the new vogue enjoyed by the two boy companies in London, St. Paul's Children and the Children of the Chapel, the reference to the 'inhibition' is fictional rather than factual for there is no independent evidence of any ban on playing imposed by the court in the wake of the rebellion and of the commissioned staging of *Richard II* by the Essex faction. Also, the lines about 'an eyrie of children, little eyases' carrying the day at the expense of the popularity of the public playhouses (*Hamlet*, II. ii. 335-358) were not printed in the generally reliable, 'good,' second Quarto of the play published in 1604, though the indications are that the lines were spoken on the stage, and hence were included in the Folio text which omits several other Quarto passages. The omission of these lines of topical force cannot be put down to a fear about the risk of censorship. Nor can the omission in the same long scene (II.ii) of II. 239-269 centring on the claustrophobic idea of 'Denmark's prison' developed by Hamlet in the same second Quarto cannot be attributed to fear of offending King James I's queen who was from Denmark. Uncomplimentary references to the Danes, their 'wassailing' (I.iv. 8-22) for instance, are retained elsewhere. It is just as Shakespeare elsewhere in his plays makes uncomplimentary or satirical references to England and the English making them laugh at themselves.

Similarly, we are alerted to the double-edged or multipronged possibilities of the operation of the mere risk or actual action of censorship when we consider the omissions in the Quarto and the Folio texts of *King Lear*. There is now the near-orthodoxy of the current view that Shakespeare first wrote the play in the Quarto version and somewhere along the line after it had its stage life and textual existence for years himself revised and rewrote the play and left it in the Folio version. This view is partly based on one of its major assumptions that certain passages [I.i.40-45; I.ii.109-114; I.iv.322-333; II.iv.140-145; III.i.22-20; IV.i.6-9; IV.vi.165-170] and a

whole scene IV.iii came to be omitted in the Folio version for the reason that these passages tended to offend patriotic sensibilities and hence the authorities. But these passages were printed in the First Quarto (1608) and also in the Second Quarto (1619). If the passages risked censorship these would have been deleted from the Quartos, as it happened in the case of the deposition scene in *Richard II* which was omitted in the first two Quartos of that play. Correspondingly the passages which happen to be omitted in the Quartos do not exhibit signs of being politically provocative or sensitive. Viewed from the angle of the question of possible censorship, the omissions in the Quarto and in the Folio versions of the play as well as passages exclusively in the one or the other would seem to defy a clear-cut pattern and, thus, lacking a fully convincing rationale, would make one wary of accepting the revision theory or the two *King Lear*s theory about the play which is perhaps the one and only *King Lear* in two versions. Nor were the authorities, ostensibly, provoked by the possible, oblique allusions in *King Lear* to King James I's known fondness for hunting or to his relationship with his court fool Archie Armstrong suggested through old Lear's engagement in hunting and his relationship to the Fool.

There is the notorious example of the boy company of the Children of the Chapel getting into trouble with the authorities in play after play almost in succession starting with Daniel's *Philotas* (1604) (this in spite of Daniel soon after becoming an official censor) through Chapman, Jonson and Marston's *Eastward Ho!* (1605) and Day's *Isle of Gulls* (1606) to one of Chapman's *Byron* plays (1608). What is striking is that despite repeated offences the company flourished as long as it did and the court-patronage was not denied them as they played at court in the 1608-09 Christmas season, by which time Shakespeare's company began making use of the Blackfriars theatre where the boy company was playing till then, as an alternate playhouse to the Globe. True, Jonson and Chapman landed in prison (while the third author Marston fled and escaped) for the gibes at the Scotsmen they had introduced into their play *Eastward Ho!* (III.iii.38-45) and also perhaps for the quips in the play about King James I's creation of a plethora of 'ten-pound'

knights, that is, his selling of knighthoods. Not only did the author find deliverance soon enough but the play itself gained a popularity and not merely as a *success de scandale* for the same play was presented at court in 1613 and 1614. Three quartos were printed in 1605 within months of the production of the play and, although in the press in the last moment in the first of these the offensive gibe about the Scots (III.iii.38-45) was cancelled, other quips against them were left in as well as the several veiled references to King James I's indiscriminate conferring of knighthoods.

Another major example of a political play falling foul of the authorities is Middleton's *A Game at Chess* (1624). Here again, Middleton, as has come to be increasingly recognized, had earlier been writing plays which were critical of the court and though he did not gloss over the drawbacks of the city he was on its side. For instance, the Duke in *Women Beware Woman* was portrayed as exactly the same age as King James I and the play ends with a warning to the ruler on the need for sexual morals on his part. Middleton was the chronologer to the city, that is, the person in charge of civic pageants like the Lord Mayor's shows. Under the analogy of an elaborate chess game, Middleton was portraying in *A Game at Chess* (1624) the political relationship of Britain with Spain and especially the then impending marital alliance with Prince Charles the heir-apparent's wedding with the Spanish Infanta being then imminent. The play effectively captured the general mood of fear and dismay over the country seeming to bend backwards to make friends with its traditional enemy and compromise its protestant religion. The King's Men performed the play to crowded houses at the Globe for as many as nine days before the authorities came down on the play and suppressed it and that too only at the intervention of the Spanish ambassador. The point here is that the play was passed by the Master of the Revels and had a successful albeit brief run before the authority moved in with its action. Middleton subsequently resurfaced as chronologer to the city.

In this connection we may note the instance of Massinger's plays which could also, though from a conservative angle rather than from Middleton's questioning ironical point of view, offer an

oppositional standpoint as regards the court, especially his tragedy *The Roman Actor*, a play with three inset plays in which the characters of the main play are actors and which offers a defence of the drama and the stage in the face of the authority's prejudice and opposition in certain quarters, a defence which maugre itself turns out to be an ironical vindication of the power and value of the theatre. Paris the Roman actor speaks a lengthy defence of the theatre (I.iii) rehearsing the conventional arguments such as were put forward in Thomas Heywood's *An Apology for the Actors* (1612), and the arguments are proved true with a vengeance in part and, in an intended or unintended irony of the playwright, given the lie direct in part. Paris's, in effect Massinger's, main emphasis in the defence is that drama does not traduce the rulers. Only the first of the three inset plays illustrates the moral effect of drama; it is called 'The Cure of Avarice.' The miser is cured of his greed on witnessing the play. The other two inset plays in their curious intermixture of dramatic make-believe and the real situations serve to expose the guilt and lack of moral scruples of Domitianus Caesar and Domitia his mistress and also the violence and ruthlessness in the court ambience in which the actor gets killed and immorality flourishes. In effect, the play while claiming that drama does not traduce the rulers actually exposes their moral weaknesses. The play with its critical portrayal of the court milieu was staged by the King's Men in the Blackfriars theatre in 1625 less than a year after Middleton's *A Game at Chess* and was printed in 1629.

Indeed, in the Stuart and the Caroline periods plays like Jonson's *The New Inn* and plays by Shirley and Brome could make their political points. Also in a kind of Elizabethan revival, in which old plays like Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* were mounted, these could come to be viewed in a new political light alongside being seen in their old significance. Besides, several new plays could deal with contemporary political and politico-religious problems as Martin Butler shows in his *Theatre and Crisis* (1984).

Considering the large number of plays that were produced during the Renaissance period, very few were banned. Nashe and Jonson's *The Isle of Dogs* (1597) is one which gave such offence

that it immediately resulted in the closing of the new Swan playhouse and a civil ban on all playing in London. But the fact that playing in the other theatres was soon resumed would lead to the conclusion that the court intervened on behalf of the playhouses for it tacitly recognized the power of the theatrical institution and how the theatre could through the direct and indirect effects it could work promote the power of the authority. *The Tragedy of Gowrie* (1604), a lost play of the King's Men, was suppressed after a considerable run by the Privy Council for the reason that it dealt with a very recent conspiracy in Scotland and portrayed on stage the living monarch King James as the character of Jame VI of Scotland.[7] Otherwise, allusions to the reigning monarch, compliments or tributes or responses to her or him, as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, were taken by the audiences and the patrons of the plays in their stride.

In a brief consideration of certain aspects of the impact of censorship on Elizabethan and Jacobean drama such as the present one, the question of the playwrights either projecting characters as portraits of contemporary personages or implanting incidental suggestions of this kind in characters can only be glanced at. In many of these instances where 'decyphering' as Ben Jonson called the habit of identifying the real-life counterparts of characters in plays, a practice not uncommon in later interpretation, would not seem to have created great problems for the playwrights or theatrical companies. Shakespeare, in the Henriad, changed tha name or Oldcastle to Falstaff so that the descendants of the Lollard lord might not make too much of a grievance against him of the portrayal. If at all as Leslie Hotson thought, in *Twelfth Night*, the visiting Italian Duke Orsini was shadowed in Duke Orsino, Queen Elizabeth in Olivia, and above all the grumpy Comptroller of the Royal Household Sir William Knollys in Malvolio such a portrayal did not cause offence. If at all suggestions of King James I were seen in the Duke of *Measure for Measure* or if *Macbeth* was understood among other things as a tribute to the king, these did not attract adverse or favourable notice. Extant Quarto copies or Folios of the plays would not seem to bear any striking evidence of such marginalia as in the case of an extant copy of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* where the

contemporary reader identified the topical allegory by noting the names of historical contemporaries against the names of the characters. This is however not to deny that topical analogies and contemporary resemblances were discovered in the plays. Indeed an apprehension of these would have been facilitated and encouraged by the traditional habit of perception of multiple levels of reality, in a way inherited from the late medieval theatre and culture and a capacity to move swiftly and with ease across these.

Such a consideration as the foregoing of certain ways in which censorship was a factor to reckon with in the English Renaissance theatre would lead one to wonder if it is not an exaggeration to portray the situation then obtaining in this respect as one of 'art tongue-tied by authority.' There were certainly occasions when playwrights were restrained from publishing material as Ben Jonson was from printing his Apologetic Argument in the Quarto edition of his War of the Theatres play *The Poetaster* (1602). The playwrights and printers had to adhere to the 1606 Act banning the invoking of God's name in profane fashion. Expressions which amounted to swearing had to be scrupulously avoided on the stage and in print after 1606. But certain acts restraining writers in general as the Bishop of London's 1599 ban on satirical writings presumably nondramatic led to satire coming to find an increasing place in drama. In sum, subject as it was to regulation, the art of the theatre with its ample resources of elusion and of ventriloquism found in possible or actual censorship action an opportunity as well as a challenge and could hold its own against odds.

NOTES

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[2]R.A. Foakes and R.T. Rickert, eds. *Henslowe's Diary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. xxviii and n.5.

[3]Quoted from the *Revels History of Drama in English*, Vol. III, p.45.

[4]The date of the play of *Sir Thomas More* is not known for certain. The consensus favours 1592-94, though J.M. Nosworthy argued for a date circa 1601-

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CENSORSHIP AND VICTORIAN FICTION

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The form and quantum of censorship in the history of Victorian fiction have been varied and perfunctory: for, its relationship with fiction has to be viewed through the angle of its relationship with all the major movements during the Victorian period. Prior to the Victorian period, the censorship assumed a number of forms--often literary, but mostly political. Some part of censorship is directly related to the great movement of science, which practically revolutionised the entire gamut of human thought. Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, John Tyndall, William Wallace and Leslie Stephen are great names in the realm of scientific thought who invited censorship in one way or the other. However, the fact remains that their writings left a far-reaching impact on the works of Charles Kingsley, Walter, Beasant, James Rice and Richard Whiteing. Even on the works of women novelists, their impact is visible. M. Russel Mitford, Mrs. Bray, Mrs. Clive, Mrs. Marsh, Mrs. Trollope, Mrs. Gaskell, George Eliot, Mrs. Henry Wood and Mrs. Lynn Lynton--were greatly influenced by the new ideas propounded by these scientific thinkers and, hence, they wrote fiction which in due course of time invited censorship which did not, of course, tally with the traditional mould.

Thomas Hardy, the most representative novelist of the late Victorian fiction, was bitterly censored for writing *Jude the Obscure* for its frankness and candour. Hardy had to face a number of indignant outcries and denunciation for projecting characters in an un-Victorian fashion. The consequence that followed was that Hardy gave up writing fiction for ever. In another novel named *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy expressed his pessimism for living on 'a blighted' planet, i.e., the earth and posed the query "I shouldn't mind learning why-why the sun do shine on the just and the unjust alike."

On this 'blighted star,' Tess's Providence does not assist her at the time of crisis in her life. Hardy propounds the concept of Blind Power, a Mechanical Force, governing human existence being

greatly influenced by the evolutionary theories of the late Victorian period. He invited bitter censorship and had to face it. A famous priest read *Tess* particularly the ideas, expressed by Hardy, related to a Godless Universe and censored him. The idea under reference is the one where Hardy philosophises rather pessimistically, "Darkness and silence ruled every where around. Above them rose the primeval yews and oaks of the Chase, in which their poised gentle roosting birds in their last nap; and about them stole the hopping rabbits and hares. But, might some say, where was Tess's guardian angel? Perhaps, like that other god of whom the ironical Tishbite spoke, he was talking to, or he was pursuing, or he was in a journey, or he was sleeping and not to be awaked." (p.90). This is a specimen which indicates the fact that scientific impact influenced fiction writers like Hardy who in turn attracted censorship. Curiously enough, science and religion have always fought for supremacy and dominance. In this fight, often it is religion and mostly science which won the fight. This result is a form to be termed as scientific censorship. In this entire paper, I have talked of this kind of censorship only.

In Hardy's case alone, this example is not sufficient. One important tenet of evolutionism is the tenet of struggle for existence and survival of the fittest. Scientific censorship approved or disapproved the merit of the fiction writers solely on the basis of this factor. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Henchard, Farfrae, Newson, Susan, Elizabeth Jane and Lucetta--all have to struggle hard for their existence. Henchard is destroyed by the unusual fit of the paralysis of an Immanent Will: Farfrae comparatively survives more. Susan and Lucetta die miserably, but Lucetta survives more. Despondently, Hardy writes, "Happiness is but the occasional episode in the general drama of pain."

Another great novelist of the late Victorian fiction is George Meredith who reacts to scientific censorship in a different way. Like Hardy, Meredith, too, is greatly influenced by the impact of scientific thought. Nevertheless, he does not lose faith in the existence of God.[2] He has propounded the idea that whatever happens in nature is subject to the will of God. In the Meredithian universe, a man's

struggle for existence, and even his natural selection, has a noble effect. A man's trials and tribulations leave him a better evolved species. The barber, Shibli Bagaray, in *The Shaving of Shagpat*, with his winged emprise by oracular prophesy, dauntlessly encountering sorceresses and jinners, baffling illusions and paralysing enchantments; the imposter Shagpat, with the Peacockian stamp, and the magician Bhanavar with the traditions of Thersalian magic, which Meredith's father-in-law, Thomas Love Peacock found in Apuleius and Petronius; Sir Feveral in *The Ordeal of Sir Richard Feveral* with his intellectual load of a scientist and psycho-analystist; Richard, the son, with his worldly inexperience and falling into the toils of a siren, bribed by a villainous rival, for Lucy; Richmond Roy in *Evan Harrington* with his sombre vision of good and bad; Evan Harrington, with his impersonation of youth; Rhoda and Dahlia in *Rhoda Fleming* with their feminine psychology; Nevil Beauchamp in *Beauchamp's Career* with worldly involvements and political acumen; Sir Willoughby in *The Egotist* with his egoistical pronouncements; Mrs. Caroline Norton in *Diana of the Crossways* with her romantic bent of mind--all struggle for existence in their own ways, and all achieve not only the physical evolution, but also the spiritual one, or at least justify their decay or evolution, according to their quantum of goodness or evil. They, therefore, testify to the Meredithian Darwinism which is not wholly divested of divinity.

Meredith maintains balance between science and religion. As such, he did not receive hostile outcries like Hardy. On the contrary his novels were warmly received. Literary censorship was kind to him. This is because in Meredith's novels, the principle of struggle for existence and that of natural selection operate in a process which has its own ethical gravitation. Unlike Hardy, his universe has some ethical values and magnitude, and his characters accordingly evolve and perish.[3] The appalling tragic gloom of Hardy, in the Meredithian world, intensifies not because the Immanent Will suffers from a paralytic hit, or because the President of the Immortals has ended his sports with the poor and tiny human beings. It all happens because his characters repay their deeds; the law of Nemesis overtakes them, the principle of poetic justice testifies to their

doings. Even the bad has a grain of good, and it is not repressed with any reason under the triumphant gloom of Death forthwith. Richard Feveral, for instance, despite his selfishness and headstrong youth struggles for a happy existence under the benevolent protection of God. On this meeting point of harmony, scientific censorship did never clash with literary censorship.

The Victorian censorship has gradually evolved out of a raw lot of ethics and religion. The Papal authority swayed every kind of censorship. Whatever was anti-religion in the traditional sense of the term was declared unusual and hence was liable to be censured. Even during the Victorian period, the movement of democracy and its concomitant fall-outs were bitterly censored. Its champions, too, were looked down upon.

The Ptolemaic or the Aristotelian system which had the support of the tradition of the Bible clashed with the Copernican and the Tychonic systems, which had the support of the modern sciences. Spencer, Champan, Fulke Greville, John Donne and Robert Burton were for the Tychonic system, but the Descartesian and the Hobbesian theories drove a nail into the coffin of the old Christian concept of the Universe, despite the reconciliatory efforts of Boyle and Hooker to mediate between religion and science.[4] This was, of course, the starting point of the scientific censorship.

Gradually, this censorship got nourishment in three specific forms and shapes. One stream mingled with the Newtonism, the other with the rationalism and the third with the sentimentalism. The first tempered scientific truth with the providential regulation of God. The second combined scientific universe with the unquestionable principles of morality of the Cambridge Platonists stamp. The third intermingled the scientific laws with the Christian humanism. The modern positivism, the atheism, the theism, and the annihilism all merged into these three distinct channels of scientific censorship. As such, literary censorship worked *in tandem* with this dominant form of scientific censorship. William Gilbert, in a true Newtonian sense, divined the regular operation of cosmic magnetism and re-established a heavenly order in the dark world of chaos. John Dewy, with his typical strain of Locke and Berkeley, glorified the divine

system. Lord Shaftesbury, in a Whichcotean Way, asserted the existence of a benevolent God. This was the simultaneous evolution of scientific and literary censorship during the eighteenth century.

During the nineteenth century, scientific censorship virtually engulfed the literary one: for, there was a complete sweep by science over religion, ethics and morals. The early three decades witnessed a vehement opposition to the Newtonian mechanistic view of the world, the Hobbesian egotistic existence of man and the Paineian deism. Evolutionism, during the last phases of the nineteenth century, was a mighty force in itself giving a fillip to scientific censorship. Uniformitarianism as propounded by Charles Lyell was also a mighty source for scientific censorship. Naturalism, too, as Robert Chambers propounded it proved helpful to promote scientific censorship during the Victorian period.

The scientific censorship is also closely related to the currents and cross-currents of diverse forms during the whole of the Victorian period. Succinctly speaking, the early Victorian period witnessed many agitations for reform, religious revival and evolutionary speculation; it witnessed the evolution of slavery in 1833, and also the reformed Parliament; the passing of the Act abolishing child labour, and also the Poor-law-Amendment Act in 1834. The rather promiscuous growth of the industrialism and commerce strained relations between the millionaires and the toiling class, with London, Liverpool, Glasgow, Manchester and other industrial towns being horribly overpopulated, of which Charles Dickens writes in *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend;* of which, superadded by the epidemic calamity of Cholera in 1831, 1848, 1853 and 1854, Charles Kingseley speaks in *Two Years Ago* (1857); and, of which supplemented by multiplied abodes of want, of wretchedness, of crime, Thomas Love Peacock writes in his novels especially in *Melincourt* and *The Misfortunes of Elphin.*[5]

The democratic movement too attracted scientific censorship. The Chartists and the Anti-Corn Law League under the able leadership of Richard Cobden struggled a lot to do favours to the common men.[6] The French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars in 1815, brought about conservative reaction with apparent disdain

for liberal aspirations. The electoral system changed because of the Reform Bill of 1832. The great movement of Chartism necessitated the Reform Bill of 1867, and that of 1884, which sought to transform the essentially oligarchic England of William IV's time, of which Peacock, Dickens and Tennyson wrote as fervently as Ruskin and Carlyle did with a prophetic vision.

During the mid-Victorian period, the tone of censorship was comparatively mild: for, England witnessed an abundant increase in her prosperity and also an enormous sense of confidence, and she could, therefore, hardly refrain herself from poking her nose into the Cohtinental affairs with her vain conflict with Russia in the Crimea (1854-55), which considerably shook the Victorians out of their complacency and smugness, and which gave them sufficient prudence to avoid the threat of war with France, and to strengthen her diplomatic relations with, under Palmerston in the final liberation and unification of Italy. Tennyson, Elizabeth Browning and Meredith sang of all these Victorian moods and attitudes in their works with an apparent imprint of an objective and scientific approach.

Censorship assumed a new form with the religious movement. The Oxford Movement stirred Newman, Keble, Froude and Pusey to take upon science and to stop its onward march.[7] The landed proprietors practically divested the Church of its powers under the Tory regime. But it had to tolerate opposition from the Board Church Party and its champions such as F.D. Mourice, Benjamin Jowett, J.A. Froude and F.W. Newman.

But the type of censorship originated by the Oxford Movement gradually declined with the theory of Evolution propounded by Darwin, Wallace, Spencer and Huxley.[8] Religion became the greatest casualty: orthodox Christian Faith in God dwindled, and in its place emerged the Victorian scepticism and agnosticism from which all representative voices like Meredith and Hardy suffered in various forms. With the publication of such scientific books as Robert Chambers's *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* in 1844, Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 and Lyell's *Antiquity of Man* in 1860, the Victorian censorship grew into a somewhat technical type of freelance writing.[9]

So is true of the late Victorian fiction. With Gladstone's ascendency of power in 1868 the liberals passed the Education Act providing primary education to all. In 1874, with Disraeli coming to power as Prime Minister, England saw an unprecedented economic depression between the years 1876 to 1881, and also the unusual growth of unemployed workers. After the Disraeli Ministry collapsed, Gladstone again came to power as Prime Minister and passed the second Irish Land Act, extending enormous security to the tenant and through other social reforms, even the miners and agricultural labourers were given the franchise rights. The impact of industrialization was visibly seen on the agricultural decline, because during the tenure of both Disraeli and Gladstone as Prime Ministers, little care was taken of the innocent natives deserting their villages to inhabit in overcrowded industrialized slums in quest of good wages. The resulted in the decline of the agricultural output commenced in the year 1875, of which Hardy paints a very convincing picture in all his major novels-*Tess of the D'Urbervilles. The Mayor of Casterbridge, Far From the Madding Crowd,* and *The Return of the Native.* For upright depiction of reality in his novels, Hardy had to bear with the hostility of the contemporary censorship.[10]

In fact, censorship is not an isolated intellectual activity. Like other creative arts, it also requires public support, at least from those who have a firm resolution and conviction of ideas. The scientific researches of Dr. W.C. Wells, Professor Grant, Van Buch, Professor Refinesque, Professor Haldeman, Professor Owen, Dr. Freke, M. Naudin, Count Keyserling,. Von Baer and Dr. Hooker got wide acclaim with scientific confirmation by Spencer and Huxley. Herschel's theory of progressive development added significantly to the researches advanced by Darwin, Spencer and Huxley. Consequently, the Victorian mind looked askance at the divine existence of man. Darwin, Spencer and Huxley confirmed man's pithecoid origin and liberated the Victorian mind from the rigid trammels of a supernatural dread. Hardy and Meredith talk of this process of Victorian thought in their novels. Trollope and Thackeray were overawed by the mechanistic determinism of the Darwinian mould. George Eliot, being influenced by this type of Victorian mind,

talks of scientific positivism in her novels.

Censorship did not spare even the less celebrated novelists. For instance, Richard Jefferies wrote *The Dewy Morn* in 1884, which is based on the theme that in this Godless universe the principle of the survival of the fittest operates. The novel was immediately censored particularly by the so-called custodians of the Victorian smugness and complacency. But on the other hand, it was widely acclaimed by those who had developed some interest in science. In his another novel named *The Story of My Heart* which came out in 1883, Jefferies took a swing to the Meredithian compromise instead of pure Hardyian Positivism. But again in *After London or Wild England* and *Amaryllis at the Fair,* his position changed.

Mark Rutherford is also no exception to the type of censorship he was forced to face. In *The Autobiography* and *Deliverance,* Rutherford propounded the theory of action. In *Deliverance,* Therese and Miss Leroy are pure products of a Godless universe and their London a dreadful, horrible city in the true Thomsonian setting:

> The world rolls round for ever like a mill:
> It grinds out death and life and good and ill;
> It has no purpose, heart or mind or will.

Rutherford's *Miriam's Schooling, Michae Trevanion, Catharine Furze, Clara Hopgood* and *Robert Elsemere,* gave a new direction to scientific censorship: for, the emphasis there is on physoscientific analysis, paving the way for the upcoming stream of consciousness.

In matters of censorship, every novelist has its own share.[11] Some become instant success, whereas others a dismal failure. George Gissing's case is a mixed one. In *Demos* (1886), the universe is Godless and a man just a trifle, tiny helpless being. He is placed at the mercy of a blind power, whose ultimate causes are inscrutable, where man's destiny is pre-determined by an indifferent and nonchalant Providence. He confessed, "Rather must I apprehend that man, in some inconceivable way, may at his best moments represent a principle darkly at strife with that which prevails throughout the world as known to us."[12] In fact, the Manichaeism system of universe seems to have confirmed Gissing's view that man must struggle to keep up his existence and to obtain certain ideals without expecting anything in return, from the cruel, unkind blind force

controlling our life. "Of all theological systems," he writes, "the most convincing is the Manichaeism, which, of course, under another name, was held by the Puritans themselves."[13]

In another novel named *Thyrza* (1887), Thyrza, a factory girl, imbued with the Ruskian teaching, vehemently reacts to the scientific impact on modern life, and regards industrialization as a bane on human happiness, because her love, meandering through serpentine ways of modern civilization, ends in renunciation and death. In *A Life's Morning* (1888), James Payan transmogrifies her simple pleasures of life into a tragic one, because it is science which is wholly responsible for it. George Gissing was thus censored often mildly and sometimes bitterly as and when the Victorian mood settled and changed during the course of intellectual ferment.

Towards the close of the Victorian period, censorship faced a crisis in the sense that it became directionless. This was not because it had no potential and variety, but because the public at large, grew sceptic. The zest of life, the emphasis on noble deeds, the novelty of moral moorings all seemed of no value to a common man. In such a confused scenario, what was the standard of censorship? To some, industrialism was a welcome advance. To others, scientific temper became the only touch-stone or reality. Literary censorship too changed its tone and temper. However, a common complaint was, "Newton banished God from nature, Darwin banished him from life, Freud drove him from the fastness, the Soul."[14]

This confusion was sorted out by those who made the best in everything as the synthesizing force, the only common factor or basis for censorship. Literary celebrities like Meredith also contributed a lot to strengthen this unifying view. Meredith talks of a creative evolution which is of the Tagorean stamp. His creative evolution is also of the Schopenhauerian kind, which entails faith in intuition, spontaneity and free will, and which corresponds to the Hindu belief in the immortality of soul. But Hardy does not have the unifying view of Meredith. Hardy in fact believes in the physical evolution of Darwinism, where the world is completely devoid of any spiritual force, which naturally corresponds with the belief of a Sufi among

the Mohammedans, or of a Palestinean Jew among the Hebrews, or of a Harodotus among the Egyptians, or a Pythagoras among the Hellenes. Hardy's faith in the Biblical Monotheism and Meredith's in that of the spiritual evolution corresponds with each other, yet the concept of the former is shallower than the latter's; because, with Hardy, good reacts to good and bad to bad; and life, on the whole, should be virtuous: Whereas, with Meredith, even virtue evolves to seek approximation to divine powers. Hardy's concept of the Immanent Will is the Darwinian creative energy but not soaked in spiritual tinge of Meredith's inner force. It is autonomous, determining everything. Meredith's spiritual force has a set purpose and is always moved by a benevolent God.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1]S.D. Sharma, *The Impact of Scientific Thought on Victorian Fiction* (Delhi: Shree Publishing House, 1994), p.136.

[2]Ibid., p.138.

[3]Ibid., p.140.

[4]Ibid., p.122.

[5]H. Cole, *The Works of Thomas Love Peacock* (London: Arthur Barker Ltd., 1875), p.271.

[6]G.H. Read, *Scientific Thought in English Literature* (London, CUP, 1984), p.37.

[7]P. Hodgson, *Victorian Censorship* (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1941), p.95.

[8]Ibid., p.106

[9]Ibid., p.107.

[10]Ibid., p.204.

[11]Ibid., p.109.

[12]Letters, p.200.

[13]Ibid., p.200.

[14]Heard, Gerald, *The Third Morality*, p.33.

LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER AND THE RATIONALE BEHIND CENSORSHIP

Rashmi Gaur

> The Writer who deals with a sexual theme is always in danger of being accused, by those who think that such themes should not be mentioned, of an undue obsession with his subject. It is thought that he would not risk the censure of prudish and prurient persons unless his interest in the subject were out of all proportion to its importance.[1]

Like many other masterpieces of fiction--*Nana, The Sinful Priest, Lolita, Tropic of Cancer--Lady Chatterley's Lover* has also faced severe criticsm since its publication. It remained a taboo in Lawrence's native England for thirty-one years of its existence despite being "a book dealing with love as a serious, major, and sacred theme."[2] Although the novel was officially banned in England, its cheap, mutilated versions were soon available in Italy and America, which were circulated clandestinely and parodied Lawrence's lyrical treatment of love and romance as obnoxious pornography. The official ban published, enhanced and reinforced the popular belief that the novel had what Moore termed as "underground reputation" and gave an unfortunate and out of context emphasis to certain narrative passages, obliterating the possibility of balanced and objective criticism.[3] Flabbergasted by the violent and often contrary reactions to *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* the common reader was forced to ponder over the dilemma of defining morality--social as well as literary--in the context of official censorship.

II

Governments and parliaments have always tried to codify laws relating to obscenity and obscene publications. The idea behind it is to thrust an official code of morality over the society through negative and prohibitive measures, to stop or prevent the dissemination of certain types of publications harmful to any section of society. It is also felt that the growing body of such harmful publications encouraging acts of violence, and cruelty, and incidents of a repulsive nature; and the indecent representation of women through advertisements, books, pamphlets etc., as prove to be a

depraving and degenerating influence on society should not be allowed to be circulated freely and should be effectively prohibited.[4] The laws of censorship also bluntly and universally declare that children and young people must not know the facts of sex, and that "the question whether it is good or bad for them to know these facts is entirely irrelevant."[5] It was not surprising therefore that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was banned immediately after its publication, under the impression that it will deprave, corrupt and injure the public morality.

However, it is always rather difficult to precisely define the concept of social and public morality. Like most other conceptualized values it is basically subjective, contextual, gullible and non-universal. The task to attempt a precise definition becomes much more complicated when such problems relate themselves with the creativity of literary genres in an organic manner, because at that point other variables like the visionary quality of literature, poetic truth and poetic licence also interact with the questions raised by the traditional and conservative thought structure of any society. Lawrence has very aptly remarked in his essay, *Morality and the Novel:*

> *"The business of art is to reveal the relations between man and his circumambient universe, at the living moment. As mankind is always struggling in the toils of old relationships, art is always ahead of the 'times', which themselves are always for in the real of the living moment.*[6]

The concept of a social sex morality has to be based on and derived from certain principles the most significant of which is, to quote the beautifully worded prose of Russell, that "there should be as much as possible of the deep, serious love between man and woman which embraces the whole personality of both and leads to a fusion by which each is enriched and enchanced."[7] The relationship between man and woman is the most satisfactory relationship, as it imparts a sense of wholeness and fulfilment to the individual. No code of morality can overlook that this relationship is central and fundamental to life and the society must accept it accordingly. Lawrence admits it boldly, when he says, "The great relationship, for humanity, will always be the relation between man and woman. The relation between man and man, woman and woman, parent and child, will always be subsidiary."[8] This subtle

relationship changes as quickly and as dynamically as does a kaleidoscopic pattern. Still, as far as Lawrence was concerned, it alone could provide a bedrock of social morality. True sense of morality can pervail only if it is allowed to emerge spontaneously as it cannot be thrust as a veneer over a society and remain functional value-based conceptualiation of virtues cannot be nailed down on a person without killing his vitality. The only morality therefore is "to have man true to his manhood, woman to her womanhood, and let the relationship form of itself."[9] The relationships suggested and perpetuated by the social institutions of home, churches, factories etc are radically limited and thwarted by the socially transmitted class definitions based on accidental material conditions.

Literature must represent life in its true and also, simultaneously; visionary aspects. To be truthful it must also represent the trembling and oscillating relationship between man and woman with complete honesty and courage-recognizing the life-thrust and portraying it without the deceptive veener of conventional sophistication. The touchstone of a true piece of literature is that it should be able to reveal true and vivid relationships. Of all literary genres the novel, according to Lawrence, is the "most perfect medium for revealing to us the changing rainbow of our living relationship. The novel can help us to live, as nothing else can: no didactic Scripture, anyhow"[10]

Lawrence was preoccupied with the questions of social morality and their representation through literature, particularly novel. In his essays, *Morality and the Novel* (1925), *Pornography and Obscenity* (1929) and *Apropos of Lady Chatterley's Lover*, published posthumously in 1930, he has extensively written about these issues with an uncomplicated and futuristic vision. To him, literary morality consisted in a true representation of man's subtle relation with his circumambient universe in its momentous thrill, in its eternity and transcendental perfection. He felt that the civilization could not be purified and made stronger by didactic art forms and by systematic and codified moral preaching in the garb of fiction— it could be revivified only through a recognition of the vital essence of life, through a deeper involvement in the moments of fuller

relationship, through inculcating and worshipping an immediate belonging to the world of natural abandonment and gaiety. Novel as an art form records and reproduces this gnomic quest for real life, this yearning for imparting a more truthful direction to a man's soul. Hence no art form should be governed or directed by the legal constraints of any sovereign group, as they crassly overlook the aesthetic appeal and the visionary quality of such expressions, undermining their role in social restructuring.

III

Lawrence wrote the first draft of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1926, which is commonly known as *First Lady Chatterley.* Initially it was conceived as a short story. However, the subsequent drafts-*John Thomas and Lady Jane* (1926-27) and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1927-28) became elaborate and some new themes were added to the basic idyllic situation of *The First Lady.* Even though, there are critics like Hobsbaum, who have gone on record to say that every change was a change for the worse; it can be said even after a cursory reading of the novel that such criticism is largely lop-sided, chauvenistic and deliberately casts a shadow of misunderstood aspersions on the issues taken up by the thematic panorama of *Lady Chatterley's Lover.*[11] Lawrence has repeatedly used some motifs and thematic patterns in his work. His aversion to the artificialities introduced and encouraged by industrialization, diminishing human contact in face of the pressures from modern mechanical civilization which restricts individual fulfilment and his prophetic assertions that the man-woman relationship is the most basic to human life and it alone can suggest the emergence of a new cohesive order, have been sonorously recapitulated in his writings.

These themes have also been evocatively and organically woven into the main story of *Lady Chatterley's Lover.* Set against the background of the English Midlands it faithfully records the contemporary turmoil and uncertainty, responding polemically to the vagaries of war, looming fears of economioc problems, crumbling social ethos and the tensions germinated by the advent of technology. The novel presents and analyses these questions in the context

of a story which also sensitively delineates the relationship between Connie and Mellors as an attempt to find out a more fulfilling mode of life than the contemporary western civilization could offer. Even a superficial reading of the novel reveals its power, depth and an enchantingly poetic handling of psychological intricacies and social complications. To interpret the physical intimacy and emotional oneness of Mellors and Connie without and outside the periphery of these issues would be an injustice to the novel. Harry T. Moore also realized the indadequacy of the contemporary criticism, when he commented that, "only a reading of the book can reveal its power, its depth of complication, its psychological and social intricacy, all of which contribute to the effectiveness of the long, slow process which the gamekeeper and the lady of the manor go through in order to find enrichment in love. Without so full a development of the people and the situation, the love descriptions would be meaningless. So would the unleashing of the four-letter words by Mellors, the gamekeeper, in the presence of Constance Chatterley-words intended to root out and purify feelings long hidden by shame."[12]

What is *Lady Chatterlays Lover* about after all? Lawrence aimed at delineating the futility of over-intellectualisation and industrialization which had threateningly become the pervasive climate of his contemporary world. Lawrence thought that it had tragically killed the spontaneity, the initiative, the romance and the heroism of an age, crippling the very upsurge of life among people and diminshing them into pygmies--what type of resistance can a person dream of? The novel begins with this statement:

"Ours is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habits, to have new little hopes. It is rather hard work: there is now no smooth road into the future: but we go round, or scramble over the obstacles. We've got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen."[13]

The statement is followed by a brief commentary on Connie's life--her marriage to Clifford Chatterley, upgrading her social status, her one month's honeymoon, Clifford's war-accident when he was twenty-nine and she only twenty-three, his being confined to a wheel chair with a small motor attachment, and finally their settling down

in a rather forlorn Wragby Hall. These details have been compressed into three brief, matter-of-fact paragraphs, as if the banality of life has been transferred to language too, making it barren and drastic. The sham of dilapidated life flutters in equally dismal and dilapidated surroundings. There was no warmth of feeling which could organically unite the Wragby House. It seemed "as dreary as disused street"(20). Connie and Clifford desperately try to keep house together. Devoid of the real passion they try to find intellectual and sentimental consolation and some semblance of fulfilment in each other. Clifford was more upper-class than Connie, better-bred and more-society; yet he was not able to overcome the great shock of his maiming. His training and temperament had already turned him into a sequestered creature, now he avoided even the warmth of human relationship. "He was remotely interested; but like a man looking down a microscope, or up a telescope. He was not in touch. He was not in actual touch with anybody, save, traditionally, with Wragby, and, through the close bond of family defence, with Emma. Beyond this nothing really touched him. Connie felt that she herself didn't really, not really touch him; perhaps there was nothing to get at ultimately; just a negation of human contact"(18).

Clifford's dependence on Connie does not make him sensitive to her needs and whatever passion he was capable of, was gradually shifted to the pseudo-intellectual stories which became quickly popular among the maudlin masses. He wants that the intensity of passion and emotion, which Connie should have shared with him, should be given to his stories. "It was as if her whole soul and body and sex had to rouse up and pass into these stories of his"(19). Connie does not get the sympathy, the emotional bond she was unconsicously yearning for. For her, the time passes on machanically--"half-past eight instead of half-past seven"(23). Connie continues to live in a nonchalant void. Lawrence has very beautifully brought out her emotional state, "And thus far it was a life: in the void. For the rest it was non-existence. Wragby was there, the servants...but spectral, not really existing. Connie went for walks in the park, and in the woods... picked the brown leaves of autumn.... But it was all of a dream; or rather it was like the simulacrum of reality. The oak-leaves were to her like oak-leaves seen ruffling

in a mirror, she herself was a figure somebody had read about.... No substance to her or anything... no thouch, no contact! Only this life with Clifford, this endless spinning of webs of yarn, of the minutiae of consciousness, these sories Sir Malcolm said there was nothing in, and they wouldn't last. Why should there be anything in them, why should they last? Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Sufficent unto the moment is the *appearance* of reality" (21-22).

Cilfford's general inability underlines the stasis of his imagination, which reduces his realtionship with Connie to an intellectual and emotional fraud. To Connie, everything in her world and life seems "worn out," and "her dissatisfaction was older than the hills"(56). Her sentiments are echoed by Tommy Dukes when he says that there is something radically wrong with the tendency of over-emphasizing the mind alone, as this tendency ultimately leads to a life pattern "rooted in spite and envy, envy and spite"(43). In her frustration Connie feels despaired of bodily pleasures and realizes that all the great words-love, joy, happiness, home, mother, father, husband- "were cancelled for her generation.... As for sex, the last of the great words, it was just a cocktail term for an excitement that bucked you up for a while, then left you more raggy than ever. Frayed! It was as if the very material you were made of was cheap stuff, and was fraying out to nothing"(72).

Connie emerges before us as an alive full-blooded woman who is fidgeting under the emotional wound of her marital trauma and whose life has been smashed into a holy nothingness. All she has on her hands is the "empty treadmill of what Clifford called the integrated life, the long living together of two people, who are in the habit of being in the same house with one another.... To accept the great nothingness of life seemed to be the one end of living. All the many busy and important little things that make up the grand sum-total of nothingness"(64). In her bitterness she feels an indignation towards all those men who "defraud a woman even of her own body"(82). Yet despite the macabre and diabolically destructive nature of her surroundings she has retained an unconscious but passionate inner urge to partake joyfully in life

burgeoning around her. She wants to forget the world and its dreadful, carrion-bodied people and such emotions sweep through her consicousness: "Ye must be born again! I believe in the resurrection of the body! Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it shall by no means bring forth. When the crocus cometh forth I too will emerge and see the sun!"(98). Connie is not "merely a body to be excited, a set of loins to be hunted out."[14] She is a sensitive woman, may be a social maverick, but definitely an emotionally mauled woman who desires feminine fulfilment not by sex alone, but by having a child from a man whom she can love and admire. It is at this stage that she meets Mellors, their gamekeeper, for the first time.

Mellors is at first hostile and wants to protect his privacy and freedom. He does not welcome Connie's encroachment on his sequestered existence. There is "no facile throwing together of Connie and the keeper."[15] His hermit like hut in the secret clearing is his sancturary, where he wants to escape from the world. He recoils in anger and frustration when Connie asks for a duplicate key to this hut. His lapses into dialect, impertinent kinesics and insolent dialogue are deliberate acts of subterfuge to escape close human contact, particularly of the wife of his master against whom he feels defenceless. He feared her invasion, as he had "a big wound from old contacts. He felt if he could not be alone, and if he could not be left alone, he would die. His recoil away from the outer world was complete: his last refuge was this wood; to hide himself there!"(102). Two lonely souls, fighting against their inner claustrophobia and groping for a way in their spiritual darkness, accidentally and almost against their wills, come into a close contact with each other. Connie herself was "forlorn and unused, not a female at all, just a mere thing of terrors"(131). She feels strangely kindled when one day in the coops she finds two hens sitting proudly and fiercely on pheasants' eggs, and her female urge, female nature is strangely aroused (132). She is ecstatic to see the pure, sparky, fearless new life opening up alongwith the bluebells and the leaf-buds on the hazel. The alround fruition of nature enthralls, enchants and captivates her, yet strangely, also makes her keenly aware "of

the agony of her own female forlorness"(132). The desire for a child engulfs her being and she feels helpless, unsheltered, almost naked in her defencelessness. It is at this point, when she is crying blindly, "in all the anguish of her generations' forlornness" that Mellors tentatively and hesitantly approaches her to soothe her. They come together almost mysteriously as if together they wanted to ward off an evil shadow. Their first love-making is sudden, yet not passionate. It is more a release in which they abandon themselves and try to find out new identities. Instinctively they want to fruitify their lives, even though there is an element of pathos in their coming together which Mellors unconsciously recognizes: "He thought with infinite tenderness of the woman. Poor forlorn thing.... she too had some of the vulnerability of the wild hyacinths.... And they would do her in....as they do in all naturally tender life.... But he would protect her with his heart for a little while.... before the insentient iron world and the Mammon of mechanised greed did them both in, her as well as him"(139).

Ironically, the straitjacketed Victorian morality compelled many critics to overlook such sonorous passages of deep poetic intensity and highlight only those portions which describe scenes of physical intimacy between Connie and Mellors, taking them out of context, shearing off their emotional appeal and sensitive value in the delineation of character and plot. Intense passionate love-making is only an extension of the intimacy which they feel for one another and display without pretence or shame. The frank openness of such description symbolizes the need of establishing and nurturing genuine and close relationships which alone can impart a feeling of totality and happiness to any individual. These descriptions do not seem shocking to any sensitive reader, as they "represent different stages in the development of a physically passionate relationship."[16] Another aspect of these frank sexual descriptions which has caused much debate is the use of so-called four-letter words. Lawrence's intention was perhaps not to communicate the odious suggesions degraded by the common usage. However, language being a socially created instrument, it was impossible for him to change the whole drift and restore these words to any decent

usage.[17] Consequently, Mellors, instead of being an uncouth gamekeeper as he is made out to be by Clifford, emerges before us as a sensitive individual who combines tenderness and resolve. He offers his emotions, his physical faculties, even his instinct of self-preservation for Connie's defence. Keith Sagar presents it beautifully when he says that Mellors' commitment to Connie in tenderness "involves the renewal of the fight against Mammon, a fight which should bring him shoulder to shoulder with the best men of his class and generation. He begins immediately to contemplate social and political forms of activity. He wants to use the strength and hope which he derives from Connie to apply to more broadly human purposes and endeavours."[18] Through his vigour of flesh and blood, Mellors struggles to reach a consciousness which is definitely higher than phallic consciousness, and yet not altogether cut off from it. Connie submits to this rhythm, this flux of creation and realizes that life becomes meaningless without it.

In sharp contrast to the virility, enthusiasm and beauty of the relationship between Mellors and Connie, is the perverted bond of intimacy between Clifford and Mrs. Bolton, the nurse who looks after him. Mrs. Bolton is a widow, who has had a happy marriage, but her sense of class inferiority makes here subservient to Clifford. When Clifford comes to know about Connie's decision to seek a divorce from him, he breaks down like a child and lets go all his manhood and draws into an unnatural yet closer physical intimacy with Mrs. Bolton. Mrs. Bolton feels both thrilled and ashamed at this intimacy of perversity which is "almost like a religious exaltation: the perverse and literal rendering of: "...except ye become again as a little child"-while she was the Magna Mater, full of power and potency, having the great blond child man under her will and her stroke entirely"(341-42). Still, it is a strange love-hate relationship. Clifford's association with Mrs. Bolton makes him sharper and keener in business affairs, but in some corner of her weird female mind Mrs. Bolton despises him as a squirming monster. "While she aided and abetted him all she could, away in the remotest corner of her ancient healthy womanhood she despises him with a savage contempt that knew no bounds. The merest tramp was better than

he"(342). Clifford and Mrs. Bolton's relationship sharply brings into focus the healthy and vigourously natural sensuality and tenderness of Connie and Mellors and acts as an antithesis to it.

Lady Chatterley's Lover is a complex novel which has to be understood at several levels simultaneously. In it the theme of resurging phoenix of life is intricately related with visionary creativeness to the malady of industrial civilization. The earnestness of this argument is apparent from the authentic descriptions of Tevershall and Uthwaite, which present the dehumanizing effects of the grinding mechanical pressures of increasing industrialization and the resultant alienation. Connie finds the atmosphere of these towns stifling. She herself has been described as a "ruddy, country-looking girl"(6). On the other hand Clifford is parochial and unimaginative in his class-consciousness and does not treat his colliers as men. Even while he is working for improving the technology of mines, his response lacks humane understanding. He tells Connie:"....they are *not* men. They are animals you don't understand, and never could. Don't thrust your illusions on other people. The masses were always the same and will always be the same. Nero's slaves were extremely little different from our colliers or the Ford motor car workmen. What is wrong today, is that we've ...poisoned our masses with a little education"(213). Connie's drive from Wragby to Uthwaite can be treated as a running commentary on the decay of the agricultural and pastoral beauty of the old England juxtaposed against the industrial desert of the New England. Its a Wordsworthian lament for the death of the spontaneous, intuitive, robust life of man, which has been replaced by the sham of living by cold-spirited, "weird, distorted, smallish being like men"(179). Against this setting Mellors emerges as the natural man, a "survivor of real humanity in this industrial desert, who also offers some hope for the future."[19]

The pivotal character in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is Connie; it is through her that the regeneration of life force shall take place. Lawrence has vividly and assertingly presented the account of her girlhood adventures. But her natural gaiety is thwarted by her relationshop with Clifford. Her desire for human warmth and passionate understanding has been cruelly neglected by Clifford

who accepts her sacrifice and service with a cold spirit of vanity and indifference. It is not Connie's desire for sex as many critics have pointed out, but Clifford's inbuilt inability to respond to her as as individual which prompts her to be drawn towards Mellors.

The basic postulate of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is the very human urge to be loved and understood. Mellors and Connie want to share their loneliness to attain a tender feeling of togetherness, which perhaps could also provide a futuristic vision, howsoever tentative. Although the idyllic romance is counterpointed by the return of Bertha and complications about their divorce, Connie and Mellors decide to take a final plunge together. The faith in the rejuvenaisance and regeneration of life is confirmed by Connie's pregnancy. The thematic patterns of the novel communicate a vision of burgeoning life as an alternative to the contumely perpetuated by the stilted intellectual life of the industrial society. By combining the Christian myth of prelapsarian innocence and a pagan phallicism, Lawrence has tried to create an image of paradise regained, in which pople step aside "from the stifling accumulations of refuse, refreshing themselves in the living stream of desire."[20] *Lady Chatterey's Lover* is a sensitive commentary on the contemporary British life facing the ravages of mechanized industrial progress. It also suggestively portrays the dilemma of a sensitive soul trapped in boorish unnatural circumstances and fluttering to assert the vital necessity of leading an emotionally fulfilled life. This intensely individual and passionate urge has also been given a socio-economic dimension by Lawrence's comments on the malady of industrial progress, which reduces life into contrived mechanisms. The novel in its totality emerges as a significant romance of our times. Its a powerful book of psychological perception and social indictment, which makes its love descriptions meaningful. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* justifies itself, as Moore comments, "if not necessarily as a healing book for all readers, at least as our time's most significant romance."[21]

IV

To ban an artistic portrayal of vivid emotions smacks of straitjacketed definitions of morality and of an ignorance of thin

demarcating line which exists between the aesthetic suggestivity of literature and lascivious stuff termed as pornography. Several books have been banned in India and abroad on the plea that they violate the unwritten code of morality. Among the prominent literary pieces banned by several governments are Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* and *Little Black Box*, Fang Wen's *Wrath of Heaven*, Edwardes Allen's *The Jewel in the Lotus* and *Inside Linda Lovelace*. However, nowadays more and more books are banned on the basis of socio-religious taboos and political ideologies. Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*, published abroad to broad acclaim in 1957, was officially banned in the Soviet Union as an anti-Soviet work. Following such arguments Stanley Wolpert's *Nine Hours to Rama*, a biography of Mahatma Gandhi, Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* Aubrey Menen's *Ramayana* and *Rama Retold*, Desmond Steward's *Early Islam*, Amiya Rao's *Oppression in Punjab*, Khushwant Singh's *Truth, Love and Little Malice*, a book yet to come out, have been banned in India.

However, banning books on such grounds is an indication of an insecure and intolerant society, which cannot face constructive criticism. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* had initiated a world-wide debate on pornography and literature. The ban on this novel was subsequently lifted. Elaine Feinsteen has written a sequel to it entitled *Lady Chatterley's Confessions*. Spike Milligan has published his own satirical reading of *Lady Chatterley's Confessions*. But the questions which were asked in 1928, are still relevant--what is obscenity? What is aestheticism? What should be the limits of artistic license under the garb of its futuristic visionary nature? Can a suggestive description of man-woman relationship have a corrupting influence on society? And above all, who should be the people to decide these issues? The last question is perhaps the most decisive one, as the definitions of morality and tolerance shift very quickly and the social representation of such delicate issues may often prove to be quixotic. Within a couple of decades of banning *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, William Burroughs's *The Naked Lunch* (1965) was eulogised as having a philosophical content.

A very elusive line compartmentalizes the sensuous and the

sensual, and writers of a free country should not unduly be constrained by it. In literature the style, suggestivity, vision, structure and imagery distract the reader from his tepid lust and transport him to more aesthetic and sensitive domains. On the other hand, as Vladimir Nabokov has rightly pointed out in his note on *Lolita,* pornography connotes mediocrity and commercialism. All types of obscenity "must be mated with banality because every kind of aestheitc enjoyment has to be entirely replaced by simple sexual stimulation which demands the traditional word for direct action upon the patient."[22] Obscene porno writing is a type of discourse which is deliberately used "as a substitute for or stimulus to erotic pleasure."[23] It can never have the sublime exuberance, imaginative experience and liberalizing influence of literature. A good piece of literature imparts a pure aesthetic bliss--despite having certain references tothe physiological urges of man-that is, a sense of being somehow, somewhere, connected with other states of being where art (curiosity, tenderness, kindness, ecstasy) is the norm, and provides a depth of feeling and perspective of a better life.[24] Thus we see that the concept of censorship and idea of banning books is inimical to the very spirit of literature, and offers no permanent solution. Literature never perverts emotions, it has an ennobling effect on man. The evil of silencing the expression of literary opinion shall rob posterity of truth, beauty and wisdom. Governments are not infallible as J.S. Mill has once remarked, and therefore they "should have no authority to decide the question for all mankind."[25]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1]Bertrand Russell, *Marriage and Morals* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), p.194.

[2]Harry T. Moore, "*Lady Chatterley's Lover* as Romance," *A D.H. Lawrence Miscellany,* ed. Harry T. Moore (London: Heinemann, 1959), p.262.

[3]Ibid.

[4]The Young Persons' Harmful Publications Act, 1956 of the Indian Government defines harmful publication as-"...any book, magazine, pamphlet, leaflet, newspaper or other like publication which consists of stories told with the aid of pictures or without the aid of pictures or wholly in pictures being stories portraying wholly or mainly-

(i) the commission of offences; or

(ii) Acts of violence or cruelty, or

(iii) incidents of a repulsive or horrible nature;

in such way that the publication as a whole would tend to corrupt a young person into whose hands it might fall, whether by inciting or encouraging him to commit offences or acts of violence or cruelty or in any other manner whatsoever."

The Young Persons' Harmful Publications Act, 1956. Vide Notification No. SRO 334, dated 26th January, 1957, published in the Gazette of India. Extraordinary, Pt. 11, Sec. 3, p.331.

[5]Bertrand Russell, *Op.cit* p.65.

[6]D.H. Lawrence, "Morality and the Novel," *The English Novel: Developments in Criticism since Henry James,* ed. Stephen Hazell (London: Macmillan, 1978), p.56.

[7]Betrand Russell, *Op. cit,* p.212.

[8]D.H. Lawrence, "Morality and the Novel," *Op. cit,* p.60.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Philip Hobsbaum, *A Readers's Guide to D.H. Lawrence* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), p.83.

Other critics also uphold the view that a shorter version would have been better.Keith Sagar says, "The conclusion I am driven to is that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* should have been a short novel like *The Virgin and the Gypsy* or *The Man Who Died,* where the pressure to provide a realistic setting and fully drawn characters would not have sunk the myth of innocence regained."

Keith Sagar, *The Art of D.H. Lawrence* (New Delhi: CUP-Vikas Students' Edition, 1979), p.196.

[12]Harry T. Moore, "*Lady Chatterley's Lover* as Romance," *Op. cit,* p.264.

[13]D.H. Lawrence: *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (Delhi: Jaico Publishing House, 1996), p.6. Subsequent textual references are from this edition only.

[14]Philip Hobsbaum, *Op. cit,* p.85.

[15]Keith Sagar, *Op. cit,* p.183.

[16]Ronald P.Draper, *D.H. Lawrence* (London: Macmillan, 1964), p.110.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Keith Sagar, *Op. cit,* p.185.

[19]Ronald P. Draper, *Op. cit,* p.111.

[20]Keith Sagar, *Op.cit,* p.193.

[21]Harry T. Moore, "*Lady Chatterley's Lover* as Romance," *Op. cit,* p.264.

[22]Vladimir Nabokov, "On a Book Entitled *Lolita,*" suffixed to *Lolita* (New York: Crest, 1959), p.284.

[23]David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), p.35.

[24]Vladimir Nabokov, "On a Book Entitled *Lolita,*" *Op. cit,* p.286.

[25]John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," *The Political Philosophers,* ed. Saxe Commins and Robert N. Linscoll (New York: Random House; 1953), p.152.

WRITING/RIGHTING WRONG: THE CASE OF GRAHAM GREENE'S *POWER AND THE GLORY*

Urbashi Barat

The relationship between censorship and literature is an old one. It goes back to the beginnings of literature itself, which was originally, after all, literacy in the service of a god or of an illiterate aristocracy, and expected to be the moral conscience of society. The Aristophanic Euripides and Aeschylus declare in *Frogs* that it is poets alone who teach the young and improve "mankind's civic sense and their natures too" (qtd by Russell and Winterbottom 1989: viii); Plato's retort was his refusal to admit into his ideal state any kind of literature but "hymns to the gods and encomia to good men" (*Republic 10* 49). Plutarch's view is more moderate. "They [the young] need escort in reading even more than they do in the street," he remarks in *On the Study of Poetry* (192):

> What then ought we to do? Stop the young men's ears, like the Ithacan sailors, with some hard, insoluble wax, and force them to set sail with Epicurus and steer clear of poetry? Or fix and settle their judgment with rational arguments, not letting pleasure distract it into harm, and so protect them and guide them aright?(193)

Hence, therefore, the laws against obscenity in modern society, or parental injunctions against reading books they consider unsafe for children.

Evidently, then, although censorship of books has usually been linked to the invention of printing, attempts have always been made to regulate and control literature, by civil and ecclesiastical authorities alike, and in various ways. Such attempts have been made, primarily, by agencies who completely controlled channels of expression, as in medieval Europe, when the Holy Inquisition decided what could be written and read--the *censura praevia* of the Catholic Church, exercised before the printing and publishing of a work, now almost completely discarded in favour of the more universal *censura repressiva*, censorship exercised after printing and publishing, by repressing or prohibiting it: by the more "enlightened" mode of administrative restrictions on the author's

access to an audience without completely withdrawing his or her opportunity or destroying a literary work, as in the bowdlerization of Shakespeare or the ban on Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*; or simply by criticism. The pursed-up-lips reaction to certain parts of Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things*, the outrage expressed over the portrayal of Gandhiji in Patrick French's *Liberty or Death*, the stigmatizing of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* as depressing and negative, the removal of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* from the "required-reading" list of many American schools because its language was regarded as objectionable and its portrayal of racial relationships uncomfortable, are all examples of this kind of censorship.

Behind all this lie the clerical and the civic conceptions of literature: the view that art has a moral obligation to defend a cultural-social tradition higher than art, and a civic obligation to its community. If the assumption of the clerical conception is that literature has a great power to corrupt or to save, that of the civic one indicates a tendency to suppress anything that offends local self-esteem. Censorship comes into action when an established clerical or civic view is powerfully challenged by other artistic cultures; censorship, that is, targets content and valorizes political correctness, for it holds that the duty of every lawful authority is to protect people from the harm caused by a pernicious press, that the freedom of the press must be curtailed by an external source of power. It believes, therefore, that it has to right the written wrong.

Censorship is obviously paternalistic, and thus, as Milton pointed out in the *Areopagitica*, ultimately a question of power. When the Roman Catholic Church introduced censorship, "the Popes of Rome, engrossing what they pleased of political rule into their own hands, extended their dominion over men's eyes, as they had before their judgments" (8-9). Indeed, "What advantage is it to be a man over it is to be a boy at school, if we have only escaped the ferula to come under the fescue of an imprimatur?"(26) Censorship is an attempt to "silence us from reading except what they please, [and so] it cannot be guessed what is intended by some but a second tyranny..."(31)

II

Milton clearly associates censorship with the Roman Catholic Church and its arrogation of power over its adherents, and he is not far wrong. Indeed, the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* declares, "From the beginning and at all times in principle, the Church adhered to...censorship" Vol. Three 519). As a matter of fact, burning offensive books was commonplace even among the Jews of the pre-Christian era, and the author of the *Acts* describes approvingly how Christian converts in Ephesus "brought their books together, and burned them before all men"(xix.19). But the heavy hand of official censorship--of literature is evident from the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325) onwards, by its condemnation of the Arian heresy and its demand that all writings relating to this be burnt. In the following centuries the Popes, the Ecumenical Councils and the synods continued to order the destruction of heretical writings, apocrypha, spurious penitentials, superstitious works, and the like, and Pope St Innocent I brought out in 405 the first list of prohibited books in Church and European history. It should be remembered, however, that when the Roman synod of 745 ordered the burning of so-called superstitious writings, Pope Zachary ordered them to be preserved in his archives instead. Similarly, when the provincial synod in Paris strictly forbade the reading of certain works of Aristotle in their Arabic version, which they had found faulty, Pope Gregory IX merely suspended their use until they had been minutely examined and cleared of all suspicion.

Censorship by the Church did not, in fact, become harsh until the eruption of reformist activities began to coincide with the rise of literacy and the dissemination of literary works following the invention of printing. As heresies began to spread everywhere the Church's attitude began to stiffen, and it introduced preventive censorship--*censura praevia*--as their weapon in "their most sacred duty to safeguard the purity of faith and to protect the souls of the faithful" (*Catholic Encyclopaedia 520).* But in the beginning censorship laws--laid down first in Germany, where the Protestant Reformation flowered early--affected only theological and religious books. The papal Bull of Innocent VIII did prescribe censorship

universally, but it remained largely ignored; it was only after 1515, when Leo X promulgated the Bull "Inter sollucitudines" during the Lateran Council, that all writings without exception were subjected to Church supervision. Not only were offending authors penalized, offending printers, too, were excommunicated, and often fined as well. In 1542 the General Inquisition took upon itself the supervision of literature, and began to publish catalogues of forbidden works in their Indexes. Paul IV's Bull "In Coena Domini" in 1559 was not, however, just an "Index" of banned works; it specified that all the published or about to be published works of forbidden authors be censored and all the publishers of forbidden books be punished severely. During the fourth session of the Council of Trent, in 1546, censorship and the penalties it involved were reaffirmed, affecting writer, printer, bookseller and reader alike.

Changes continued to be made over the years, and slowly the laws were relaxed. Benedict IV's "Sollicita ac Provida" in 1753 once again reserved the prescriptive law only for theological and religious works and set down the method of conducting cases concerning literary works; its directions regarding the prohibition of books are used even today. When Pius IX reorganized the ecclesiastical censures in 1869, he abolished the penalty of excommunication. In 1897 Leo XIII classified the kinds of books to be prohibited, enjoined preventive censorship for others, and provided detailed rules for the application and sanction of the law which still continue today. According to the "Officiorum ac Munerum," Catholics in general, and priests in particular, are advised to write only for just and sensible reasons, while many forbidden books remain forbidden, ancient and medieval heretical works are no longer so, and the writings of heterodox authors permitted so long as they do not go against the teachings of Catholicism. Catholics may, however, read only those editions of the Bible or devotional literature approved of by the Church authorities. Apart from these books, which are or might be irreligious, heretical, superstitious or immoral, no other classes of literary works are forbidden, though occasionally individual ones might be; and even banned books could be read under dispensation from the Apostolic See or from someone authorized

by the Pope. Even the classics, which often contain matter previously regarded as objectionable, can be admired for the elegance of their style, although students are allowed to read only their expurgated editions.

In spite of the new leniency, however, the standpoint of the Catholic Church is clear:

> It is universally granted that especially in our days there exists hardly a greater danger to faith and morals than that which we may call the literary danger. From the greatness or rather indispensableness of the good at stake, the opportuneness and even necessity of preventive and strictly binding measures undoubtedly follow. In other words, the object in view of the law, that of safeguarding and keeping pure religion and morality, is absolutely necessary; now this object is at the present time more than ever endangered by a bad press; consequently those authorities whose principal office is to protect the faith and morals of their *subjects*, must needs make suitable provisions against that press. Natural law empowers the *father* to keep away from his *child* bad and corrupt companions...(*Catholic Encyclopaedia* 526: emphasis added)

The very phrasing of these statements bears out Milton's comments on the paternalism and the power play behind censorship, no matter how well-intentioned.

Not surprisingly, in spite of a new liberalization there are at least two categories of books that continue to arouse suspicion and attract condemnation: writings of sincere and well-meaning Catholics which contain, however, erroneous or harmful ideas, and books which are seen to be directed against the Catholic Church by, in the words of Leo XIII's Bull, "defam[ing] the ecclesiastical hierarchy or the religious" (*Catholic Encyclopaedia* 523-4). It is from this point of view that the reaction of the Church to Graham Greene's *Power and the Glory* must be seen: Greene was a Roman Catholic convert, whose novel developed out of his investigation into the persecution of Catholics and their priests in the newly secular State of Mexico, but his depiction of priests in *The Power and the Glory* was an embarrassment to the power and the glory of the priesthood.

III

Greene's conversion to Catholicism was part of the intellectual movement of his time, when the Roman Church stood like a rock before the tidal waves of angst, moral perplexities, intellectual

uncertainties and social and political disarray. Born in a family closely rooted in the soil of the Established Church, with both his grandfathers and several other relatives ministers, the novelist himself was, however, always aware of a sense of inadequacy about Anglicanism from his boyhood; it neither understood or explained the reality of evil nor imaginatively apprehended the good (*The Lawless Roads* 14-15). When he started off on his writing career as a journalist in Nottingham, he was young and lonely, and began taking instruction from a Catholic priest, as much to while away his time as to understand the religion of his fiancee, a Roman Catholic. He found in Catholicism a pattern and a dogma that could both include his intuitive early sense of evil and provide him with powerful symbols for the good (*Lawless* 15). "I had not been converted to a religious faith," Greene was to remark later. "I had been convinced by specific arguments in the probability of its creed." (*Journey Without Maps* 213) His emotional involvement with Catholicism had begun long before; his conversion was the consolidation of his early vision of life. No wonder, then, that he chose as his baptismal name Thomas, after the Doubter (*A Sort of Life* 121); his responses to religion have always been fundamental and personal rather then conventional.

The Power and the Glory is the second of the novels of Greene's so-called "Catholic trilogy" of *Brighton Rock*, *The Power and the Glory* and *The Heart of the Matter*, the novels in which his Catholicism became explicit for the first time. There were perhaps no emotional crisis to account for this (apparently) new direction in his writing, but his own voyage of exploration into Liberia, described in *Journey Without Maps*, had made him realize the religious significance of human action, and his interest in T.S. Eliot, Francois Mauriac and Frederick Rolfe gave him a new impetus towards examining religious motifs and themes. Political events further shaped his path: Franco's attack on Republican Spain and the persecution of the Church in Mexico, in Tabasco and Chiapas in particular, by the socialist forces of President Calles and then his successor and rival President Cardenas "inextricably involved religion in contemporary life," showing "the effect of faith on action.

Catholicism was no longer primarily symbolic... It was closer to death in the afternoon." (*Ways of Escape* 59) Longmans Green commissioned him to report on this persecution, and this produced not only the travel book *The Lawless Roads* but also a new emotional belief in his religion (ibidem 60), and a novel that many would regard as, if not his finest, at least one of his finest: *The Power and the Glory*, published in 1940.

The Power and the Glory is of course based very obviously on what was happening in Mexico at the time, and its protagonist, Greene acknowledges, was based on a "whisky-priest" in Chiapas he had heard of who had fled persecution and his duties (*Ways* 64), and whom he had referred to in *The Lawless Roads* as well (122). In his "Prologue" to his Mexican travelogue the author describes the heroism of the twenty-five-year-old Jesuit priest Father Miguel Pro, who had remained steadfast to his calling even in the face of mounting persecution by the State until he was captured and shot; his death, far from winning the battle for "the soul of the Indian" (*Lawless* 19), only reinforced the faith of the Mexican people in Catholicism and made the priest himself a martyr in the cause of the Church. Other characters, too, are people Greene had met or heard of in Mexico: for instance, Padre Jose, the apostate priest who had married and had children to avoid persecution, Mr. Tench the dentist, the mestizo, the corrupt Chief of Police, the kindly Lutheran couple who gave the priest shelter, and so on. If Greene's protagonist is a mixture of Pro and the whisky-priest of Chiapas, his opponent and the other protagonist, in Greene's own phrase (*Ways* 65), the lieutenant of police, is an invented one:

> I had not found the idealism or integrity of the Lieutenant of *The Power and the Glory* among the police and *pistoleros* I had actually encountered--I had to invent him as a counter to the failed priest: the idealistic police officer who stifled life from the best possible motives: the drunken priest who continued to pass life on. (*Ways* 66)

The corruption and the drunkenness of the Latin American priests was in fact historically accurate, but as Greene presented this in his novel he also showed something else he had seen himself

on this visit to Mexico, that goodness lies not in temperance or chastity but in the capacity to feel for and reach out to others in need, that it is possible to go beyond the flesh towards the power and the glory of the life eternal.

The Power and the Glory won the Hawthornden Prize for 1940, but it did not become immediately popular. It had to wait until after the war, when a Hollywood film based on the novel but changing the characters of both whisky-priest and lieutenant, *The Fugitive*, made it more acceptable to the audience. It was then translated into French, with an introduction by the French novelist Mauriac that made it successful among French Catholics. Its new-found success caused what Greene describes as a "backlash" (*Ways* 67); it attracted the attention and aroused the antagonism of the Church authorities in France, and the bishops there twice "delated" it--that is, brought a report against it (from the Latin *delatum* "inform against")--to Rome.

Ten years after its publication Greene was informed by the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster that the Holy Office had condemned his novel because "it was 'paradoxical' [i.e., contrary to received opinion] and 'dealt with extraordinary circumstances'" (*Ways* 67). The novelist refused to revise the book, however; he had already been outraged by the film version, which had so totally misinterpreted what he had tried to convey in the novel, and the changes the Church wanted would further falsify the experience explored by the novel and would go against his purpose in writing it at all: to examine and to show his readers

> how courage and the sense of responsibility had revived with persecution--I had seen the devotion of peasants praying in the priestless churches and I had attended Masses in upper rooms where the Sanctus bell could not sound for fear of the police. (*Ways* 66)

The Church's objection to *The Power and the Glory* was not, of course, that it was untrue; it was to the embarrassment and the ignominy caused by Greene's portrayals of priesthood. The priest is at the core of Catholic worship, the intermediary between God and man, whose life is, or must be, one of imitation of Christ's, the High Priest of Christianity, and whose principal act, therefore, is the offering of the Eucharist--the archetypal sacrifice--the figure and

renewal of that of Christianity. By virtue of his ordination he has the power to celebrate the Eucharist, to forgive sins, to bless, to offer extreme unction and solemnize baptism, to preach, to sanctify, and so on; not only the power, moreover, but the duty to do so. Unlike Protestants, then, Catholics accept the divinity of the vocation of the priesthood, which is the essential difference between laity and clergy. Had, therefore, Greene presented the priests of *The Power and the Glory* as versions of the Father Miguel Pro he had described in *The Lawless Roads* or as the imaginary Juan the mother in *The Power and the Glory* transforms the whisky-priest into at the end--" 'one of the martyrs of the Church...[perhaps] one of the saints...one of the heroes of the faith' " (219), in pictures as "truthful" as that of Greene's whisky-priest, the Church would never have disapproved of--would, indeed, have welcomed--Greene's depictions of priesthood in a land so violently secular. After all, Father Pro and Juan only throw Padre Jose into disrepute; Padre Jose is no threat to the Church's image.

Greene's priests, in *The Power and the Glory* and in everything else that he wrote, are, however, human beings before they are roles in a well-plotted drama, just as he himself is a committed artist before he is a Catholic (indeed, he hardly ever was a conventional Catholic, and died what he had called a "Catholic agnostic"), exploring his world as carefully and accurately as any journalist proud of his reputation for accuracy would be (*Ways* 60). His Protestant upbringing, moreover, with its refusal to take anything for granted, made him realize the great distance between what men actually do and what they try to be or project themselves to be, which has been the great theme of all literature at all times. Accordingly, his protagonists are never like the heroes of old; they are inevitably little men in a fallen world. who somehow attempt to transcend the moral ambiguousness of human existence and enact the Passion of Christ through suffering and an acknowledgement of their common humanity. And Greene is certainly not the first or only Catholic to see the Catholic priest as corrupt or degraded: witness, for example, Chaucer's priests.

Because Greene's novels are full of the religious sense usually

absent in the modern novel, his Greeneland is not an imaginary region of futility, dereliction and meaninglessness but one that can be understood only *sub specie aeternitatis*, in which, as Walter Allen puts it, quoting from the old Icelandic sagas and eddas, " 'Though he believe it, no man is strong' " (1946:23). *The Lawless Roads* might contain the viewpoint of a Christian and a humanist observing the treatment of the faithful in Mexico; but *The Power and the Glory* is not reportage. In it Greene is the artist and thinker who sees that what is happening in Mexico is in fact an image of the human condition itself, and the anonymous whisky-priest, painfully burdened by his awareness of the weakness of his flesh, hunted alike by God and the police, yet finding goodness and divine grace in everyone around him, from the peasants who gave him shelter to the Judas-like mestizo and the Lieutenant of Police who tracks him down and has him executed, is the image of humanity. In the prison-cell, therefore, he learns of the depths of human degradation, but he also realizes that

> He was just one criminal among a herd of criminals...[sic] He had a sense of companionship which he had never experienced in the old days when pious people came kissing his black cotton glove. (128)

The piety that prevents one from empathisizing with one's fellow beings is limiting:

> When you visualized a man or woman carefully, you could always begin to feel pity--that was a quality God's image carried with it....Hate was just a failure of imagination.(131)

Indeed,

> it sometimes seemed to him that venial sins--impatience, an unimportant lie, pride, a neglected opportunity--cut you off from grace more completely than the worst sins of all. Then [in the early days of his priesthood, before the persecution began], in his innocence, he had felt no love for anyone: now in his corruption he had learnt...[sic] (139)

This perception is, after all, at the core of Christian belief in the importance of love, in God's image reflected in ordinary human beings. The whisky-priest thus enacts the triumph of religion over secularism, and thus endorses the stand point of the Church.

All Greene's protagonists, all his sympathetic characters, are sinners, even Father Quixote of Monsignor Quixote, lovable as he is, is flawed and imperfect. The so-called "good" people in his novels

are simply the pious and the hypocritical; it is only those who, like the whisky-priest, are only too aware that "evil [runs] like malaria through [their] veins" (176), that can be saved. This is a part, believe Greene's critics, of his "sin-mysticism" (a trend associated with the *nouvelle theologie* of twentieth-century Roman Catholicism, and condemned by Pope Pius XII), which glorifies sin and holds that damnation alone can lead to salvation. George Orwell complained that Greene seemed to find "something rather *distingue* in being damned" (1948-128), and Herbert Haber comments that the whisky-priest

> found the path 'to the good death,' to martyrdom and sainthood, through an immersion into the pentecostal flame of earthly sin....Through adultery, the Priest finds in himself the capacity for love ...Through drunkenness, he becomes humble to the point of ungratuitous self-effacement. (1957:266)

The point, however, is that it is not the priest's sins that propel him towards salvation. It is, rather, his suffering and painful awareness of his betrayal of his duty towards God and man, as priest and as human being, and his recognition of Christ in his fellow-men, even those in the depths of depravity and degradation. For

> at the centre of his own faith there always stood the convincing mystery--that we were made in God's image. God was the parent, but He was also the policeman, the criminal, the priest, the maniac, and the judge. Something resembling God dangled from the gibbet or contorted itself like a camel in the attitude of sex. (101)

There is also the complaint about Greene's Jansenist tendencies in the way grace appears to be denied to the lieutenant of police and the pious Christian woman sharing the priest's cell: for the Catholic God's grace is gratuitous, but according to the Jansenist heresy there is no freedom of the will, human nature is corrupt, and Christ died only for the elect, all others being irretrievably condemned to hell. Nowhere, however, does Greene deny the Catholic belief in the freedom of the will, in this novel or elsewhere; he condemns the "good" lieutenant not because he is "good" but because he lacks understanding of the emotional needs of people--no wonder, then, that he shows his affection for a young boy by pinching his ear, a gesture that inflicts pain. Similarly, the woman in the prison is blinded by her smug self-satisfaction to the need for humility, charity, fellow-feeling, the true Christian virtues, to, in fact, the need

for God's grace. It is they who reject God's grace. The objections the Church raised against *The Power and the Glory* are unjustified.

IV

The story of the Church's reaction to *The Power and the Glory* has a happy ending. Greene refused to revise the book, offering the excuse that it was no longer in his hands to make any changes because th copyright lay with the publishers. This might have been a "casuistical ground" for his rejection of their demand, but times have changed and so has the Church, and, in Greene's words:

> There was no public condemnation, and the affair was allowed to drop into the peaceful oblivion which the Church wisely reserves for unimportant issues.

Not only that, Pope Paul himself read the novel and agreed that, though some parts of it might offend some Catholics, the novelist should pay no attention to that. (*Ways* 67)

The Church, that is, has not only become more understanding of the needs and the position of the creative artist, it has withdrawn its earlier prerogative of supervising and controlling the minds and thoughts of its adherents in everything. "The price of liberty, even within a Church, is eternal vigilance," comments Greene (ibidem); censorship might still exist, and writings proscribed or permitted to be printed, but it exists with the freedom to think and act. Church censorship is now a guide, not a dictator, a signpost, not a closed door. In a society that has rejected colonialism, imperialism and paternalism alike, censorship has been shorn of its shears, and is confined to the civic world of social and political expediency. Writing what might be regarded by some as wrong no longer needs to be righted by the Church; it is up to the reader to accept it or to reject it.

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ANAND'S TRISHUL OF TEARS

O.P. Mathur

Mulk Raj Anand's *Two Leaves and a Bud* is an embodiment of what he calls his "holy anger"[1] which transforms "the yoke of pity"[2] into "a weapon for attaining humanness."[3] For him "needless suffering was no matter for complacent pride or gratitude."[4] Commenting more explicitly about the sufferings imposed upon the Indian labourers by their British masters in *Two Leaves and a Bud* he wrote in a letter to J.F. Brown, "I conceived *Two Leaves and a Bud* as a poem in suffering. I admit that is the most bitter of my novels, but it is poetic. Were it a literary reportage, it would be hundred times more bitter."[5] Infact, a reportage is hardly literary, and where it is attempted in a literary work, as in Taslima Nasrin's *Lajja* or even by Anand himself in the prose composition or speech of John de la Havre in *Two Leaves and a Bud*,it degenerates into only a mere skeleton of ideas and not a creation of flesh and blood, a barb dipped in the nectar of tears, making the work immortal by presenting vividly "all those offences, injuries, deceits, lies and murders of the body-soul."[6] The communication of such emotions is strengthened by their being represented by an Objective Correlative or a symbol, which transform a mere trait "a flow of sensibility towards, perhaps, tenderness."[7] into an authentic and glowing piece of fiction. In the words of the reviewer of *Time and Tide*, "Dr. Anand has shown once again that a novel need be no less a good novel for being inspired by a purpose; that in the hands of a competent literary craftsman, it can be all the better on that account."[8]

The appearance of such a novel revealing the shockingly miserable conditions of the coolies or workers in the Tea Gardens of Assam was bound to create a furore among the British Planters leading to a controversy in the British Press. In spite of Anand's spirited defence that the novel was based on his personal observation and on the facts given in the report of the Royal Commission on Labour (known, after the name of its chairman as Whitley Commission), the Planters were successful in getting the novel proscribed in 1937, the very year of its publication. The real reasons

for the ban were not given, and it was proscribed on the ground of 'obscenity.' The Conservative government did not want the Labour Party to know the real condition of the life of the coolies of the Assam tea gardens, and so the Home Office took away the whole available stock of books from the publishers Lawrence & Wishart and probably pulped it.[9] But the ban only led to an increased, though surreptious, sale of the novel. The Customs Office of the government took away from Anand even his copy of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* when he was coming to India.[10] Anand believes that the ban played some part in affecting the Labour Government to quit India.[11] The novel was published in a large impression in India in 1946, near the dawn of Indian independence, in 1946, and Anand wrote a Preface for its second edition in 1951.

The title of the novel *Two Leaves and a Bud* is itself a multiple symbol--not only of the mighty trident of Lord Shiva but also of the three-pronged arrows of Love and of the charm, the strength and the hope of renewal that enervates the hearts of men and women. Thus, Anand seems to suggest the feelings of love, bitterness and hope aroused by the condition of the coolies of the tea-plantations. The 'poetry' of the novel, starting with the symbol of its title, the simple refrain of the song sung by the coolies while picking the tea leaves, discovers, beneath its enchanting innocence, the tormenting miseries and the persistent resilience that underly the life of the coolies.

Perhaps the quality of *Two Leaves and a Bud* which gives it a unique flavour among Anand's works is its portrayal of the serene beauty of nature contrasted with fiery passions and melting miseries of its characters expressed in prose-poetry, illustrating the author's words, "A poem is really an aphorism, an epigram, because it is the statement of a mood."[12] The hills and dales of Assam provide a colourful and living background replite with symbols--the coolies who swarm in it like ants, insects and other lower creatures whose lives are valueless, and the white Sahibs and their Indian sycophants and touts, like the wild predators and their fabled followers, who rule over the jungles. *Two Leaves and a Bud* is Anand's only novel which has balanced the description of the lives of the coolies with

that of their British masters in almost equal detail, for in a jungle the growlers are at best as important as those who live and die for their pleasure and survival.

Nature and the inanimate world, in all its kaleidoscopic variety are a rich storehouse of symbols some of which almost make it one with humanity. The cavalcade of life is but a "toy train" with its engine puffing and panting on its "journey into the unknown," skirting fearful edges of steep inclines and going into the unknown, the "dark recesses of the foliage that seemed to swallow up the line."(p.1). Can the life of man in this universe or of the lower creatures leading a blind and brief existence be suggested more pathetically? Rain, "the violent play of God" gives Gangu an "imperturbable calm," for he has become used to such troubled moods of nature, which has destroyed his crops many a time, as if "he had been purged of a terrible weight on his chest" (p.250). Similarly, the ceaselessly swishing river "flowing onward through the parcelled spaces of the collies' allotments" gives to Gangu "a strange sense of immortality" (p.248)--the parcelled spaces possibly representing the blocks of pre-historical or historical time through which the river flows into eternity, apparently having no beginning and no end. Like the river, the hills also become symbols of humanity marred by conflicts and confrontations. The bungalow of Reggie Hunt, the assistant planter, is perched up on one hill, while Dr. John de la Havre's hut was on a gravelly spot "hanging precariously above the road which bridged the swishing cataract of the river." (p.17), and the "coolies' lines were on the edge of the stream." (p.17). The pattern of character-structuring in the novel is symbolised by the physical features of the places of their stay.

Some of the animals inhabiting the world of nature also have a symbolic significance. The bacilli observed by de La Havre under his microscope (p.15) swarming ants stand for the large, ever-increasing but, against the vast backdrops of time and space, absolutely insignificant mankind. The individual man too is like a "live fluttering pigeon" caught by Budhu and for whose release Leila is pleading (p.78). The change of focus from disdain into pity progresses further into a close and glorifying perspective where

Leila, in the coils of a python, fights like a mythical hero and cuts it up just with a scythe (p.163-64). The symbolic vision of man is multiple, revealing him both in his littleness and glory, opening up vistas of the ultimate victory of man over his multi-faceted environment.

In fact, as Anand himself comments, "What was true of nature was true of society" (p.15). Though surrounded by the Arnoldian "clearness divine," a serene and unsullied cosmos, man is condemned to be born into a life of stench and suffering. On arriving at the tea garden, Gangu wishes to "inhale the pure, clear air of the distant vistas," but he has to inhale the urinous smell that persists around him (pp. 15-16). The world of the novel is almost an existential universe which, however charming externally, is a source of suffering and confusion for man surrounded by "dense, coarse grass, deeply entangled in the bushes, but smiling with its wild rhododendrons" (p.9). Possibly confused at the sight of the simultaneous beginning and ending of the sharply curving train of human life and running "a grim race through a series of long tunnels, dark as sudden calamity and chockfull of a foul smoke" (pp.9-10), Gangu feels like jumping out of the train to pass his life in the "elysian fields" occasionally visible outside. But he is tied to move with "the inexorable rush of Time's black ghost, the engine," forced to sit "startled, unnerved and timid, feeling his big brave heart which had seldom been afraid, contract to the size of a grain" (p.10). Looking inwards, he feels only "a vague perturbation in his soul, the ache of an unapprehended doom" (p.11), confused at the incomprehensibility of this universe, "the uncanny air of its dark labyrinthine recesses, blind and empty, as if in his utter inability to distinguish one leaf from another, one branch from another, he had become one with the festering shade of this green hill, looking for the heaven that is promised to the righteous" after having undergone the tortures of hell (p.12), like the Doctor "exploring for a ray of light to illumine the darkness that enveloped his head." (p.88). The enchantments of nature, as portrayed by Anand in this novel, have often been noticed by critics. But sometimes they seem to be only the surface-gloss for the incomprehensible and irrational

universe which may be the essential reality beneath it. However much Gangu may wish to escape from the relentless movement of the train of life into elysium, he cannot do it, for jumping out of it would be the existential act of suicide, and Gangu's reactions are basically governed by the Indian ethos which makes him resigned to his fate and to the ultimate acceptance of life on its own terms. He does not voluntarily jump out of life; he is shot out of it. With all the existentialist overtones of Nature and Life in this novel, Gangu remains a symbol of the traditional Indian beliefs and cultural moorings battered but not shattered by the tempestuous tragedies of life.

A three-pronged symbolism of two leaves and a bud pervades the novel. There are three important features of the landscape near the tea-garden--the two rocky precipices and a strong current of water running between them. The landscape symbolises the three parties--the Tea Planters, the coolies and the man between, the healer Doctor John de la Havre. The current that separates them is not static but flowing fast, suggesting that the separation between in two parties can be changed for the better in course of time with the sanctifying waters of love. The main characters are also conceived on the same pattern--Reggie Hunt (the vicious exploiter), Gangu (the representative of the Indian coolies who suffer, protest and finally accept the inevitable). Within the chief protagonist, along with the above pattern, we can also discover the eternal pattern of Indian life in general--birth (beginning of a new phase of life with the arrival at the tea-garden), life (occasional episodes of hope and happiness in the general drama of pain and protest which is usually silent) and acceptance followed by the final curtain of death.

Thus, inspite of its artistic flaws, *Two Leaves and a Bud* has an "integral pattern"[13] a pattern of symbols. With its powerful trident-like thrust, made all the more devastating by his prose-poetry replete with symbols, the attack made by Anand in this novel went home. *Two Leaves and a Bud* occupies a unique place among Anand's novels, not only on account of the ban but also in its own right, for its virulent protest passes through the rainbow-hued filter of the author's tears of blood.

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[9]Mulk Raj Anand in a recent message faxed to the present writer.

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FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SALMAN RUSHDIE AND TASLIMA NASRIN

Attia Abid

On 30th June, 1994, the Bombay Union of Journalists organised a Press Debate in Mumbai on the burning issue "Is Religious Fundamentalism A Stumbling Block To The Freedom of Expression." Besides eminent clerics like Father M Pereira, a Jesuit Priest of St. Mary's Church, Dr. Vasudev Vyas, Visiting Professor Hindi and Ayurveda, Poddar College, and Dr. Zakir Naik, Secretary General, Islamic Research Foundation, Ashok Shahane who has translated *Lajja* into Marathi, was also present. It was a very lively discussion and many controversial topics were discussed, Salman Rushdie and Taslima Nasrin being the focal points as the latter's controversial novel had come out earlier that year. Father Pereira traced Fundamentalism back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when horrendous crimes were perpeterated against women in the name of witch-hunting as witches were considered to be spouses of the Devil. Not only that, Galileo too had suffered on account of ignorance and fanaticism. Talking in terms of the present in Third World countries, science and secularism had failed; there was no just and equitable society; corruption was rampant. There was a return to Theocracy implying a hierarchical, religious elite; revivalism was a global phenomenon. Communism had proscribed religion, thrown it out of the window but it had come in through the back-door. In the West which was post-Christian, secular and atheist, the younger generation seemed to be losing its moorings, taking to drugs, etc., so that fundamentalists became active promising answers to perplexing questions provided they return to the fold; it implied going back to and strictly adhering to the ancient principles of a religion, be it Christianity in the West, Islam or Hinduism. The liberalism of the West is hated by the Muslims in particular and Salman Rushdie had discounted that. He had deliberately adopted the Western arrogant position i.e. freedom of expression without responsibility. There being no military threat from the Communist

world after the collapse of Soviet Russia, the Anglo-Saxon countries had started feeling that their Enemy No. 1 is Islam, militant Islamic Fundamentalism (what has come to be called Islamophobia). Thus Islamic Fundamentalism has become their latest whipping boy. West Asia, on the other hand, is reacting to the post colonial era, to Western arrogance, be it Algeria, Iran or any other country (including Saddam Hussain's Iraq). Having presented the global scenario, Father Pereira referred to a report from Pakistan which said that blasphemy laws were vague, and anyone could be executed on account of them. He went on to talk about 'mob justice', 'rough justice' and lynching which were also common in America against the minorities on cooked-up pretexts. In Third World countries the governments were weak and issues were politicised; often in the face of opposition they are helpless. In the case of Taslima Nasrin it was the then Prime Minister and Zia ur Rahman that tried to claim mileage from the situation otherwise neither of the three persons nor Maulana Habib ur Rahman appealing against her had taken action inspite of the 50000 takas on her head. In the case of Salman Rushdie too the 'fatwa' could have been revoked five weeks later but for the political angle. Thus Islam was only being made a scapegoat, and vague statements were being made without proper references; scriptures were being used by politicians and obscurantists to support their view-point and oppress people.

Dr. Zakir Naik quoted the latest edition of the *Oxford Dictionary* which defines Fundamentalism referring to Islam. He explained the difference between 'fatwa' being an opinion and verdict; moreover, the civil law within a country can differ (eg. the Shariat Law) but the criminal law is the same for all citizens. He explained the law against blasphemy in the light of the Quran and Bible: for anyone who wages war against Allah and Prophet Mohammad, punishments differ--execution, crucifixion, chopping off opposite limbs and even exile; however, discussions could be held with the person concerned so that he/she could clarify his/her position; as courts are involved the person could also appeal or even sue the party. Though its easy to frame someone in the blasphemy law, 2-4 witnesses are required, and if any one of them falters, they are to be given 80 lashes each

which is no joke; thus though the laws in Islamic countries are stringent, strictly in the light of the Quran, their enforcement is just and equitable, and a person has options if he wants to stay and challenge 'fatwas' rather than run away to seek refuge in greener pastures. Referring to Taslima Nasrin, Dr. Naik said that if his personal opinion is sought, he would call her, examine her point of view, give her an opportunity to clarify her position, and thus through dialogue arrive at some conclusion. She had misquoted the Quran, and her interview was carried in the *TIME* magazine of 31st Jan., 1994. She had said that according to the Quran the sun revolves round the earth, a wife/woman is the farmland of the husband/man, and Islam is responsible for the high rate of female infanticide. Quoting chapters and verses from the Quran, Dr. Naik refuted all these misnomers. He said that 1400 years ago the Quran mentions what has now been discovered, that the sun too rotates: the Black Spots rotate in 25 days; thus the Quran talks of the motion of movement when it says that the sun and moon, each has its own orbit. The Quran talks of man's possessions: his women (wives included), sons, gold, farmlands, horses etc. of which he is proud; a wife is referred to as a husband's 'tilth'. The BBC in its programme entitled "Assignment" had conducted a survey on female infanticide and came up with the fact that India ranked highest in this sphere with 3000 foetuses being abhorted annually; in Tamil Nadu out of every 10 girls, 4 were being put to death. The Quran on the other hand says that on the Day of Judgement such a wronged girl-child will ask what crime she had committed to merit such a fate (being buried alive). Besides, it prohibits the killing of children for want because God is the Sustainer. Talking of Salman Rushdie, Dr. Naik pointed to the anomaly that he had abused his very protectors, Londoners and the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, using four and five letter expletives, but all that had been swallowed whereas when an American actor, Mickey, had used a four letter word for the policies of the same Iron Lady, there were demands for banning him. The British were sensitive no doubt, but selective about that too, using double standards. Permission was sought by anti *Satanic Verses* campaigners to quote blasphemous passages

(referring to Prophet Mohammad and his family, hence unacceptable to Muslims) to present their point of view on CNN and BBC but it was not granted even though they were ready to pay $ 50000. If the West professes freedom of expression why did they not allow this version to be presented to a discerning audience? Were they afraid that when truth would be heard against falsehood, falsehood would perish as it was bound to?

Mr. Ashok Shahane was asked why he translated *Lajja* into Marathi. He said it was a kind of "atonement" because exactly the same kind of situation prevailed in Bombay in December and January, but no Marathi author had come forward to say that he had been put to shame; atleast she had the courage to speak for the minorities of her country, and he admired her for that. She had subsequently been interviewed by *The Statesman* which had misquoted her creating the furore, endangering her life; it resorted to sensationalism, forming headlines in Indian newspapers whereas she did not get even 1% of that coverage in her own country (in retaliation Bangla Desh fanned the flames of panic when plague struck). The fundamentalists of her country could have ignored her but because of the Media she shot into the limelight, the Media which could not arrive at a consensus regarding her age and profession. After having stirred up so much trouble for her the least that the paper could have done was apologise because that too came in the purview of freedom of expression; everything can be criticised freedom of expression being no exception. Thus the question arises as to who is blocking expression, newspapers, fundamentalists or both? Journalists and poets are both practitioners of words, and neither can act irresponsibly. Besides, politicians and writers are in different enemy camps, and the territory they are fighting over is "Reality": politicians want only a certain perspective to be presented, whereas writers want to explore "reality" from as many angles as possible; thus the fight is from official and unofficial perspectives. Politics is a shade lesser than religion in that it too has ideologies and exercises repression and suppression to safeguard them, Soviet Russia being the supreme example with its Zhivagoes and Solytzns. Journalists feel that they are supreme dealers in words,

words that belong to poets not founders of religion or politics, hence the conflict. However, it is not fundamentalism or religion which is a stumbling block to freedom of expression, rather irresponsibility, misuse and quoting things out of context.

Though Robert Colby rightly says, "Yesterdays 'living library' is todays archive" we musn't lose sight of the fact that the novel served writers generally as a literary forum. "The 'obtrusive' narrator, so much deplored in our times, was natural to an age when the didactic purpose of the novel was taken for granted and the novelist was regarded as a friend to man. Fiction writers were child psychologists, marriage counsellors, vocational advisors, and lay analysts before these professions were even identified." They gave voice to the ideals and aspirations of a corporate 'fireside' audience when novels were read in family circles. Their tripartite role of instructor, guide, and inspirer were evolved. Our age shuns didactism in art but what does it encourage? Themes of modern novels may be pertinent but the style is so irreverent that on occasions it seems to border on pornography making family reading an embarrassing affair: *English August* by Upamanyu Chatterjee is out to shock readers with an IAS officer indulging in masturbation and contemplating the same in most of his leisure hours; *Strange Obsession* by Shobha Dey gives details of a lesbian relationship. No doubt these famous novels and writers have some purpose (art in the service of man and not just art for arts sake). Style is being sacrificed for hype. Graham Greene was called to Westminster Cathedral and told by Cardinal Griffin that *The Power and the Glory*, published ten years earlier had been condemned by the Holy Office and changes were required. Greene refused, and the Cardinal remarked that he would have preferred them to condemn *The End of the Affair;* Greene agreed saying, "You and I receive no harm from erotic passages, but the young...." *Lajja* is raw and vitriolic, but is it a novel or a historical treatise? Many socio-political novels have been written--most of Nayantara Sahgal's books are about the Nehru-Indira times--but they are very subtle, the authors being sagacious enough not to name names. No doubt the whole history of Bangla Desh is summed up in thirteen chapters called Thirteen

Days: division of Bengal and the partition (1947), the Language Movement launched to declare Bengali as the national language (1952), the six-point charter to attain self-rule (1966), revolt against the dictatorial regime of Pakistan (1969), Independence and creation of Bangla Desh (1971) the military coup toppling the govt. of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1975), amending of the constitution, making Islam the State religion (1978), large scale communal disturbances as a result of the Babri Masjid dispute (1990), communal riots followed in the aftermath of the demolition of the mosque (1992). Demolition is used as a point of reference and the number thirteen itself sounds ominous; besides, the decision taken on that day is extremely unfortunate. The stream of consciousness technique is used though the shunting back and forth in time is not all that confusing. However, the documentation and enumeration seems not only unartistic but is tiring and irrelevant (in a novel) the way it is presented page after page. The pains that Taslima Nasrin took in collecting these facts and compiling them (though the veracity of that is doubted too so that we don't know where fact ends and fiction begins) she should have devoted to also quoting the Quran correctly; coming from a Muslim, a national of an Islamic country, it would seem authentic, hence the danger; moreover, no excuses can be made for ignorance specially if a writer is serious about his/her work/job; he/she owes it to his/her audience. Is it surprising then that though Salman Rushdie has been publishing despite the death sentence/threat, Taslima Nasrin is resting on the laurels awarded by the West. Parallel to *Lajja* V.N. Rai wrote *Shaher Mein Curfew* which was very well received and is being (or has been) translated into English.

Lajja "is a savage indictment of religious extremism and man's inhumanity to man.... Unremittingly dark and menacing, the novel exposes the mindless bloodthirstiness of fundamentalism and brilliantly captures the insanity of violence in our time.... The Duttas--Sudhamoy, Kironmoyee, and their two children, Suranjan and Maya--have lived in Bangla Desh all their lives. Despite being part of the country's small Hindu community, that is terrorised at every opportunity by Muslim fundamentalists, they refuse to leave their country, as most of their friends and relatives have done. Sudhamoy,

an atheist, believes with a naive mix of optimism and idealism that his motherland will not let him down.... And then, on 6 December 1992, the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya in India is demolished by a mob of Hindu fundamentalists. The world condemns the incident, but its fallout is felt most acutely in Bangla Desh, where Muslim mobs begin to seek out and attack the Hindus.... The nightmare inevitably arrives at the Duttas' doorstep--and their world begins to fall apart...." (Penguin)

Looking at the four main characters of the novel, we become aware that they may be facets of the same persona: Sudhamoy, the alter ego, Kironmoyee, the cultural aspect, Maya, the Achilles heel, and Suranjan the impulsive response, the reaction. The fall of Suranjan and succumbing of Sudhamoy to leave for India is very tragic. Taslima is an iconoclast implying that all institutions had failed; even Hinduism is not spared--whereas Krishna had helped Draupadi in the 'Cheerharan', He couldn't help Maya or her mother. However, Taslima in the Shavian tradition offers alternatives: communal harmony, and doing away with the distinctions of name, caste, creed and religion that had spoilt the relationship between man and man--the epigraph clearly and categorically states: "Let another name for religion be Humanity."

At the end a question comes to mind: Would Sudhamoy be safe and at home in India? People were still on platforms, Maya had been looked down upon by her own relations on the other side, and to date the 'Mohajirs' are second class citizens in Pakistan. In developed countries the situation is no better because the seeds of discord were sown by them--the Golden Apple thrown across the table by a humiliated and vindictive goddess. Taslima is so involved and subjective, that the novel not only reads like a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions, a flow of red hot lava, but also some elements of autobiography. She has got carried away and made strange generalisations which don't seem logical and sound e.g. "Muslims are used to travelling from one place to another for the purposes of Haj, but a Hindu would any day prefer to live on his own land for all practical and religious purposes" (pp 190-91). Elsewhere she says, "Women afterall were like commodities,

and stolen just like gold and silver" (p 162). She should have been less obtrusive, and more careful in her insinuations. No doubt the "litany of destruction" caused by hooligans is deplorable but people take advantage of situations of turmoil to seek personal vengence and gains especially in small towns and villages. Not that such behaviour can be condoned but enumeration has affected her style adversely. Had she distanced herself and written objectively the extremely poignant theme would have had a greater artistic appeal and impact. However, the characterisation is good, thats why the present review is from that angle. Suranjan's metamorphosis is really touching, and people can identify with him because wherever there is such kind of suffering and moral let-down the very psyche is affected. This happened to the Muslims after the Rath Yatra and its trail of blood. The Bengalis cannot forget the extermination of the intellectuals during the War of Independence.

The title is reflecting not only the situation and states of mind of the characters, but it is satirical, almost censuring the majority community for letting down their fellow countrymen, indicating religious extremism and man's inhumanity to man "a collective shame". In an interview Taslima said, "I wrote *Lajja* based on the situation after the breaking of the Babri Masjid. I wrote about Babri because it was a symbol of discrimination.... I feel for the minority, I feel for weak people--they are all tortured persons.... I saw the shops of Hindus were broken. I saw Hindus were being attacked by Muslim fundamentalists. I saw mandirs being broken and destroyed but the government was silent. Some meetings and rallies were held by the National Party but it was not enough to protect the Hindus, so I wrote *Lajja*. It is a shame for me, shame for my country" (Savvy, Nov.'93). Moreover, a question comes to mind: How many times and in how many places will the exodus take place? "When they were small children, Suranjan and Maya would make small clay huts on the banks of the river during the day. At night the tide would come in and wash away the huts...." (p 174) The huts wiped off during that period of madness and nightmare housed human beings with dreams and aspirations. This could not be the work exclusively of fundamentalists who, to quote

the earlier text of this paper, are people strictly adhering to the ancient principles of religion, and no religion sanctions killing and kidnapping of innocent people, burning down houses and crops etc. Such things are instigated by a vendetta and politicians who are unscrupulous choosing to side-track issues and divert attention. Had Taslima steered clear of politics, religion (as her father had even advised), and naming names, and exercised some tact and subtlety, she would not have been implicated. In young countries struggling to get their houses in order, restraints of various kinds are enforced lest anarchy is let loose. Besides, what she left unsaid in her novel, she said in her press interviews, playing to the gallery by asserting her radical views about Islam in particular, marriage and sex. Complementing her novel, these attacks on the politicians, clergy, feudal system, 'Purushtantra', a male-dominated society, chauvenism didn't help her; she had tempted too many institutions and people. Regarding allusions, a meticulous writer (be he/she a novelist, poet or journalist) would check facts and not make blunders specially where religion was involved else it would be tantamount to yellow journalism or mere sensationalism.

Before concluding, lets go back to the time when the novel was published, and see what the hue and cry was all about, and what Taslima had to say in her defence. *Lajja* was published in Feb. '93 with stark allegations of a xenophobic persecution also referred to as genocide, as a backlash to the riots following the demolition of the Babri Masjid. There were strikes, bandhs, and schools and colleges were closed protesting against the book. Taslima's books and her effigy were burnt; she received threats to her life, was branded a spy and an agent of RAW, and a traitor; it was alleged that she had been paid 45 lakh takas by the BJP to write the book. A little-known sectarian group, Sahaba Sainik Parishad (SSP) which comprised supporters from Madarsas, and whose chief, Mr. Habibur Rahman, a central committee member of Khelafat Andolan, issued the 'fatwa'. However, this was not the first time that she had been in the eye of a storm. In '89 when she began writing the "Nirbachito Column" in a highly circulated daily, *Jai Jai Din*, the clergy was provoked saying she hit out at Islam,

and a call was resounded, "Fashi ! (Hang her)" They complained against all her writings. However, the Sylhet Fatwa shook the foundations of her country and rocked their gigantic neighbour because the 'Sangh Parivar' seized the opportunity "to make out of the Muslim--though heretic--writer a martyr to the Hindu cause" (SUNDAY '93). The SSP denied that the 'Fatwa' was to kill her; they called it "false, concocted and motivated." Taslima herself was confused and called it "toning down.... I'm not sure whether they have done it under instructions from any foreign power or the government" (SUNDAY'93) However, it became a weapon in the hands of the 'Sangh Parivar' and before the Delhi elections of Nov. '93, the BJP had distributed thousands of leaflets containing inflamatory portions; a magazine commented that "even the *Satanic Verses* had not come in so handy to them." Ironically, she wrote the novel in an attempt to bridge the communal divide but fundamentalist forces used it to widen it hampering the progressive movement. She became more wary of the BJP than the clergy of her country. Savvy which awarded her with the title "Woman of the Month--a Champion for all Womankind" (Nov. '93) said in its article "Fighter Unto Death." "I only feel sad that we in India are making capital of a book and creating problems for a country that is already beset with problems of its own, instead of collectively condemning the death sentence without going into the content of Taslima's books for our own political gains" (p 17). Bangla Desh said that "the matter had blown up out of proportion unnecessarily to serve the cause of interested quarters who are out to malign the total freedom of expression enjoyed by all under a democratically elected government in Bangla Desh" (SUNDAY '93). Taslima continued to have meetings with hosts of journalists including foreign media persons which did not help quench the flames of hatred; rather they added fuel to the fire.

Originally only a few copies of *Lajja* were brought out but after it was banned on 10th July '93 it became a bestseller. Taslima brought out a revised and enlarged version. Critics point out that she tried to pad up sweeping comments with statistics and reports, delving into the psychological dilemma of the Hindus so as not to

appear biased. She says its not an act of 'towba' (penance) as she had been asked to do: "I have neither changed the theme of the novel, nor have I brushed its sharp edges. The revision was necessary because the earlier version was written in a haste, as a result of which some structural and linguistic looseness had crept in. I have only brushed up those (portions) for the new edition." She further added that her government had not said that she distorted facts; they only said it was likely to disturb communal harmony. However, diplomatic circles were of the opinion that the revision, etc., were just publicity stunts.

Though the feminists thought that Taslima was radical to the point of being "irrational and obsessed" and that she was a "hard hitter," and the novel itself was "crude and provocative." They explored it from their stance, saying that she intended to break the male shackles that bind women of Bangla Desh, to shake the very foundations of society so that women are treated with more respect and are given what every human being cherishes--freedom. Women's Liberation seems to be the central theme of her works--newspaper columns, poems and novels. *Savvy* opines, "What Taslima is fighting for is what women in the West and even we Indians have to a large extent. Freedom to do what we want just like men--to go out, study, associate with the opposite sex, work outside the home, use contraception have a say in child bearing and rearing--in short equality. Is there anything wrong in what she wants? The Mullahs think so, because when she asks for rights for the women in her country she automatically challenges the tenets of Islam. She automatically challenges their hold over society" (Nov. '93). The magazine cannot be blamed for challenging the "tenets of Islam" because I don't expect Ingrid Albuquerque or others of the team to have read "Surah Al Nisan" or "Surah Al Imran" (in the Quran) which refer to women's rights--Swami Vivekananda had said that by reading other religions one's faith doesn't weaken, rather it gets stronger; moreover, journalists should be better informed so that they don't make sweeping statements which can mislead people and get others into a lot of unsavoury soup. Besides, in the name of freedom of expression Taslima herself has given leeway to the

critics of Islam; she says, "Islam gives no woman freedom" (Savvy). In her years of exile it would do Taslima good to make a comparative study of religions particularly the Quran which she has so much misinterpreted--I hope she is mature enough to differentiate between the Book, the clergy, the social system.

The BBC in one of its programmes on Afghanistan referred to the restrictions imposed by the Taliban on women (when they reached Kabul, victorious), and justified it saying that the soldiers were returning from the battle field after ages so it was in the interest of women not to be seen around. Bangla Desh has been going through a number of upheavals in its very short history, so for it to become the Utopia of some Taslima's dream is nothing short of a miracle. Moreover, the process of change is gradual; for a writer to imagine that she is Ramses II, "So let it be writ, so let it be done!" is sheer madness, and I'm afraid Taslima has been called "mad." It is said that she only talks and writes, but is not an activist; anyway, the reforms that she like her countrymen (and women) want--economic independence for women, change in family laws, employment opportunities, education, equality--will not come by antagonising all sections of society or by mud slinging; there should be discussions, debates, public polls and referendums. Then comes her personal life which is Bohemian to some extent and reason for resentment: She calls marriage "a paper nothing," and says that she divorced her first husband, Rudro, not because he had syphlis or beat her but because he didn't support the freedom of women. She married a second time because Naib, her husband, professed to be an advocate of women's freedom, but that turned out to be a lie, and she divorced him after two months. She lived with another man for two months and then they went their separate ways: "I no longer believe in marriage but if I met someone I wanted to live with I would.... As for sex, I believe in the freedom of sex--you don't have to be married for it. That way no one can have a hold over you. And for the same reason I don't want to have children "(Savvy) She even holds religion responsible for the unhappy marriage of her parents: her father is broad-minded and doesn't pray whereas her mother who calls her a 'murtaad' (atheist) is a staunch believer,

a fanatic. As far as she herself is concerned, she says, "I don't believe in the Quran.... I don't say 'namaaz' even today.... I want to remove Islam from society" (Savvy). Islamophobia is not a new phenomenon--the whole Western World is engaged in a fierce crusade against it (this is what was said in the Press Debate quoted in the earlier part of the paper), let Taslima also join up as a zealous knight (or Lady) !

Salman Rushdie was again in the news because of *The Moor's Last Sigh* an inference to Bal Thackray; Arunaditi Roy, after the eclat of the Booker, was in the news for her irreverent allusions to Communism and Namboodripad in *The God of Small Things.* M.F. Hussain's prized possessions which were national treasures bore the brunt of communal frenzy. In Europe too *The Sixth Temptation Of Christ* and a film with a non-conventional portrayal on the cross have made news. Thus freedom of expression will no doubt come into conflict with some icon if some restraint is not exercised by the writer, not because of fear or compulsion but his own sagacity since the pen is mightier than the sword, and may not harm physically but can inflict a lot of mental torture and trauma; moreover, art is made to suffer because of the raging controversies, and the artist is "cabin'd, cribbed, confin'd," not being able to give his best; after all, wisdom is the better part of valour, and artists can serve their cause better by not allowing themselves to be exploited by politicians and racists who are waging another kind of war and are surreptitiously using gullible people as pawns by appeasing them and promising them glimpses of paradise after having turned their countries into battle grounds where "ignorant armies clash by night." The "passionate intensity" on both sides, and Taslima's defense of herself has side-tracked or even drowned a "ceremony of innocence" that she as a Bengali is crying to redress: Firstly, "A partially burnt book brushed against Suranjan's feet. It was Maxim Gorky's *Ma* (*Mother*). For a moment, he thought he was Pavelvolasov, and he imagined himself setting fire to his mother and later crushing her beneath his feet. He shivered involuntarily at the thought the charred book at his feet" (p 28). Secondly," I love my country ... and will never leave it .... I love Bengal and it is my

dream to see the two Bengals together" (Savvy).

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[1]*Lajja*, ed. Penguin (All references are from this text)
[2]*Savvy*, Nov. '93
[3]*Sunday*, 21-27 Nov. '93
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CENSORSHIP AND LITERATURE : A STUDY OF TASLIMA NASRIN'S *LAJJA*

Tapati Lahiri

Taslima Nasrin wrote *Lajja* (Shame) in the wake of the Babri structure demolition on 6 December 1992 at Ayodhya. Perhaps in *Lajja* Taslima Nasrin wanted to show the other side of the picture and to make the riotous temple-breaking mobs of Bangladesh look into their own hearts and ask them sharply whether they were any better than the 'mosque-breaking' Hindus or were they not worse, for they had destroyed not only structure of stone but the lives of countless men, women and children and made quite a few of them refugees seeking shelter in India.

Soon after five months of its publication in 1993 *Lajja* was censored by the government in Bangladesh. The reason why the book was banned was that "it was disturbing the communal peace."[1] Hence the censorship, which is commonly interpreted to mean

> The suppression of books, plays, or passages therein, as sacrilegious, immoral, seditious, or otherwise objectionable.[2]

What such a statement implies is to deny one's liberty and one's freedom of speech, one of the fundamental rights of human beings. It is obvious that under the system of censorship the individual freedom of Taslima was summarily taken away. The then government of Bangladesh wanted to throttle the brave and genuine voice of the lady writer simply because the novel

> deals with the persecution of Hindus, a religious minority in Bangladesh, by the Muslims who are in the majority. It is disgraceful that the Hindus in my country were hunted by the Muslims after the destruction of the Babri Masjid. (Preface, p.IX)

Whenever man has been made to suffer bitterly at the hands of "man's inhumanity to man" the conscience of humanity has been outraged and strong protest is lodged against the tyranny of his fellow human beings, so that he can be assured of atleast his basic rights to life. History has many records of such atrocities that had been committed against innocent people, one of which was "the persecution of Hindus" in Bangladesh after the destruction of the Babri structure in India. Against this savagery and barbarism Taslima raised her voice and blamed the whole Muslim community

in her country. In return the die-hard mullahs claimed her head to stop the voice for good. But Taslima launched a fierce polemic against the Muslim fundamentalists. She writes with much boldness:

> The mullahs who would murder me will kill everything progressive in Bangladesh if they are allowed to prevail. It is my duty to try to protect my beautiful country from them and I call on all those who share my values to help me defend my rights. (Ibid.).

Was there any signs of improvement in their attitudes towards her? None whatsoever. The religious Muslim fanatics reacted aggressively and offered a reward for her death. As a matter of fact, freedom of thought and expression is dangerous to the Establishment.

Taslima's is not the lone case. In world literature there are many instances of this kind. *The Rainbow* (1915) by D.H. Lawrence, now considered by some critics to be the best novel, was proscribed by the authorities and censored on grounds of obscenity, but later on by 1965 it was a prescribed text for study in schools. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) was his another novel, the full version of which was suppressed in Britain for immorality. But expurgated edition was published in 1928. Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* (1957), which describes the Russian revolution, was banned in the Soviet Union. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four*, an effective nightmarish story of a world ruled by dictatorship of the Stalinist style, was kept under survelience. His private life and private thought are all but suppressed by 'propaganda and the systematic perversion of language' in Russia.

In Indian Writings in English, Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses* (1988) aroused worldwide controversy and criticism from Muslims for its alleged blasphemy. But in the wake of controversy *The Satanic Verses* was heavily sold in some countries establishing the freedom of speech and expression and the freedom to publish. Annie Besant edited a paper entitled *New India*, which upheld the right of the Indians for freedom, and that landed her in Madras jail in 1917. Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* was also banned. Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's *Pather Daabi*, a Bengali politico-romantic novel, in spite of being suppressed, won immense popularity among readers. Similarly, in Hindi, Dr. Dwarika Prasad's novel *Ghere Ke Bahar*, and Mridula Garg's *Chit Kobra*, another Muslim lady writer Ismet

Chugtai's short story *Lihaf*-all these writings attracted strong criticism and were considered to be controversial and objectionable. The motive behind censorship was, then, to cunningly crush the freedom of speech, though people at all stages or levels grew conscious of their rights and as such took much interest in the functioning of the State.

Thus, it is evident that no power in the world, no sceptre could choke the voice of a man, the freedom of speech, writings of great thinkers, and leaders of the time. It is because of the fact that all those books suppressed have had their deep and lasting influences, fresh and energizing impact on readers' mind. Similarly, no threat was strong enough to curb the true voice of Taslima Nasrin. To quote her own words:

> For myself, I am not afraid of any challenge or threat to my life. I will continue to write and protest persecution and discrimination. ...I, for one, will not be silenced (Ibid., IX-X).

Thus like other revolutionary writers, Taslima engaged herself in her writing *Lajja* to represent the mainstream of contemporary maladies.

The novel is just a sequential presentation of actual incidents already recorded in primary sources of information which include *Ekota, Azker Kagoz, Bhorer Kagoz, Glani* and other Bangladeshi newspapers.

Lajja opens with the scene when Suranjan was lost in revivifying all deplorable incidents of the past from 1947 to 1992, that horribly reveal the details of bloody massacre of Hindus within the Bangladeshi Muslim matrix. In the other room, his father Sudhamoy also recalled tha past days when all his relatives had begun to leave Bangladesh one by one. Sudhamoy's father Sukumar was also advised to change his mind:

> 'Sukumar, come, let us go away. This is the homeland of the Muslims. Life is uncertain in this country.' (p.6)

Further, they warned Sudhamoy, barely nineteen years old: 'Your father is going to regret this decision sooner or later.' Whatever situations, they lived in Bangladesh for generations and claimed it as their motherland. But it was not so, though they were a warm lover for their motherland.

The plot of the novel moves through flashbacks of those days when Sudhamoy participated actively in so many movements, social, political as well for the sake of his Bangladesh. He took part in the Language Movement of 1952 when Mohammed Ali Jinnah was adamant on Urdu being declared as the sole national language of Pakistan. The young, highly spirited and politically conscious Bengalis of East Pakistan stood against it. As a result, "the city road was awash with their blood." At that time Sudhamoy was filled with the spirit of revolt. He observes in this context

> the United Front elections of 1954, the Education Movement of 1962, the Six Clause Movement of 1966, the Movement protesting against the Agartala Conspiracy case, the General Elections of 1970 and the Freedom Movement of 1971... (p.7).

All these rolled into one in a reminiscent mood. Here is also an account of Sudhamoy's sentimental attachment to his motherland. He reminisces:

> He had hoped that in the independent and secular State of Bangladesh, Hindus would enjoy the same political, economic, cultural and religious privileges that the Muslims enjoyed. Unfortunately, the principle of religious impartiality had slowly lost its place in the country's scheme of things. (p.12).

Another factual account of events in Bangladesh is recorded in the following lines:

> The State of Bangladesh was founded on the basis of four major principles: nationalism, secularism, democracy and socialism. The country had worked long and hard for its independence. Beginning with the Language Movement in 1952, the struggle had been long and arduous but independence had finally been achieved. In the process, the evils of communalism and religious fanaticism were defeated. After independence, the reactionaries who had been against the very spirit of independence had gained power, changed the face of the constitution and revived the evils of communalism and unbending fundamentalism that had been rejected during the war of independence. Religion was used as a political weapon and a large number of people were forced to follow the dictates of Islam. Thus, unlawfully and unconstitutionally, Islam became the national religion of Bangladesh. As a result, communalism and religious fanaticism exploded out of control (pp. 42-3).

This is not all. Throughout the novel we come across several instances. Take, for instance,

> The Muslims in India are in a position to fight, because India is a Secular State. Here, power is in the hands of the fundamentalists. ...The Hindus here are second class citizens. Since when do second class citizens have the

power to fight? (p.81)

It was because of the fact that the Hindus were, from time to time, hunted by the Muslims. The demolition of the Babri structure further increased the tension among the Hindus. Suranjan asserts:

> All over the subcontinent, in the name of religion, riots were rampant. The minorities were brutalized, and Suranjan being a minority himself, understood their plight full well (p.88).

Lajja reminds us not only of one incident related to the Babri structure demolition in 1992 but of a number of historical incidents of the past. As it is recorded in the novel:

> It was no secret that the victimization of the Hindus had begun long before the riots in 1990 and the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992. Suranjan remembered that in 1979, on the morning of 21 April, the idol of the Goddess Kali in the historic temple at Saheb Bazaar in Rajshahi district was smashed to pieces by a person called Ayub Ali ...There were other instances of mayhem visited on the Hindus (p.56).

Lajja gives us yet another true instance of what was going on after the 1965 war between India and Pakistan:

> ...the attitude of the fascist Pakistani government towards East Pakistan as a dominion and its intensely communal character-had led to the 'Enemy Property Act'... The act had quite clearly stifled the fundamental, human and democratic rights of its citizens. The failure to award equal rights, under the cover a cleverly planned and renamed act, devastated almost twenty million Hindus. They were practically uprooted from their homes and pushed out into the cold. If under such provocation the Hindus felt unsafe, could anyone blame them? The seed of communalism was rooted deep in their soil; once again, was it their fault? (p.124)

Sudhamoy felt much worried about the alarming decrease in the number of Hindus after the division of India into two Pakistans and one India. He states:

> Within ten years after the division of India in 1947 the percentage of Hindus went down from twenty-eight percent to only twenty-two percent... in 1974 it was only 13.5 percent... By 1981, Hindus constituted 12.1 percent of the country and it was logical to conclude that the number of Hindus leaving their ancestral homes had grown less in number. But for how long could this be expected to continue, especially after the troubles in the year leading upto the 1990 riots and now this in 1992! Were the Hindus now expected to leave the country? (p.11)

How are the Hindus given equal status with the Muslims in Bangladesh is beyond us? In the field of education the Hindus suffer serious problems. The Hindu students are forced to attend compulsory classes in religion. If there is any complaint lodged by

Hindu students, the authorities pay little heed. To quote a few lines from the interior monologue of Sudhamoy, for instance:

> Besides, if as a parent, he was not willing to allow his children to acquire knowledge about any religion at all, how then could the school authorities compel them to follow the dictates of any one religion? (p.72)

In *Lajja*, yet another deeply humiliating situation cannot escape our notice. This is the awful position of women, especially Hindu women in Bangladesh:

> Hindu women are shameless that they learn how to sing; that is why they sit in public in front of unknown men and sing for everyone (p.37).

This sort of unkind remark is unjustified.

What a stunning revelation it is when we readers come to know that the Hindus during riots would protect themselves under Muslim names. This was the case with Maya "I'll call myself Feroza Begum." Even Sudhamoy had to take the pseudonym 'Shirajuddin.' Whatever circumstances develop, the Hindus out of fear try to wipe out their identities:

> 'Sudhamoy realized his Hindu name would not go down well with his tormentors and he forced himself to forget his own name, his father Sukumar's name and his grandfather Jyotirmoy's name (p.10).

When all of us believe in hating each other, can we in the situation imagine Hindu-Muslim brotherhood? Unless we know how to love each other, we cannot chant a slogan proclaiming Hindu-Muslim brotherhood. Here lies the crucial point that Taslima Nasrin wants to propagate through *Lajja*, a documentary novel.

Taslima Nasrin keeps telling us about all the facts and figures, actions and events which are supported by political discussions, in the most graphic detail. Her chief concern in the novel was not to provoke communalism but to defend her beautiful country like Bangladesh. To quote her own words:

> Bangladesh is my motherland. We gained our independence from Pakistan at the cost of three million lives. That sacrifice will be betrayed if we allow ourselves to be ruled by religious extremism ("Preface" IX).

But the die-hard Muslim fundamentalists claimed her head for this. Taslima was steadfast in the pursuit of her goal and held that fundamentalism is a disease, a social evil. Her voice against these Muslim fundamentalists is a bold step. She emphatically puts before them her own views:

> I am convinced that the only way the fundamentalist forces can be stopped is if all of us who are secular and humanistic join together and fight their malignant influence (Ibid., X).

Further, Suranjan's voice is the voice of Taslima:

> Let our places of worship be converted into rich, green, sunbathed paddy fields, vast rolling fields, gurgling blue rivers and wild unquiet oceans (p.164).

It is true that *Lajja* is now banned in Bangladesh, notwithstanding that it brought to Taslima a worldwide fame. The novel made a tremendous impact on people's mind. What an upsurge in the sale of the novel! 60,000 copies were sold within five months of its publication.

Recipient of the prestigious Anand Puroskar, Calcutta and the Natosobha Puraskar, Dhaka, Taslima Nasrin is one of the most important writers of Bangladesh. She writes in Bengali, her mother tongue. She is essentially a novelist and has also to her credit much poetry and a number of short stories. Some of them are *Nirbasito Bahirey Antorey* (1989), *Amar Kichhu Jai Ase Na* (1990) and *Aye Kastha Jhenpe, Jeebon Debo Mepe* (1994). All these writings based on political and mainly social indignation have a flavour of newness. She felt in the heart of her hearts the social, political, moral and intellectual problems facing the small community of her country and made efforts to portray them in her novel, *Lajja*. She was determined to make religious fanatic mullahs conscious of social regulations so intrinsically rotten that they had created about themselves an atmosphere of a gloomy discontent that is still prevalent in the state. That is why Taslima is not interested in art for art's sake. She does not argue the theory of the matter. She holds, "a novel must have a social purpose."[3] Life, as it is lived, is of primary concern to her. Elizabeth Drew's views on art, in this respect, are worth mentioning:

> Life, of course, is the basic raw material of all art, but no artist is so close to his raw material as the novelist. It's all around him all the time: people, incidents, scenes, sense, impressions, curiosity, his excitement, his compulsion to transmit it into language and then relieve his own feelings and communicate them to others.[4]

It is this keen awareness of Taslima that led her to put before her readers' eyes the callous administrative officials who had shouldered the responsibilities of the State. She wrote according to the dictates of her own temperament, not according to any inviolable conception

of the novelist's art.

There is no denying the fact that Taslima's *Lajja* will be considered to be a new kind of a novel in world literature and stands in a class by itself. The novel has a plot of its own. It begins from the point of tense excitement caused by the demolition of the Babri structure in India. The leaves of the novel are gradually unfurling and all the incidents along with baffling and acute problems are flashed not only on the protagonists' minds but on our minds also. Thus, the main action of the novel moves on with passing references to contemporary politics.

In order to flash all the factual incidents across the country, Taslima adopted a technique what may be called interior monologue. All the factual and statistical events are in the form of the interior monologues of the Datta family. For example.

> Sudhamoy wondered that the conflict could originate from the basic discrepency, (In a country where ninety percent of the farmers were Muslims, ninety percent of the land was owned by Hindus). It was from the land that the Chinese and the Russians had risen in revolt, and, similarly, it was from land that conflict between Hindus and Muslims had begun (pp. 180-81).

Further, a mental conflict between love of their motherland and the appalling behaviour of the Muslims towards the Hindus in noticeable and echoes Brutus' speech in *Julius Caesar*. The novel reaches its climax when we notice how Sudhamoy heartily feels attached to his motherland, though he was repeatedly unwanted:

> Why don't you have the independence to wear your dhuti? Come. Let's go away...
>
> Sudhamoy roared in anger. 'No, I will not go', he said. 'You go if you want to.'
>
> 'You won't come?'
>
> "No...." Sudhamoy turned his head away in disgust.
>
> 'I am asking you again. Baba... Please let us go away,' implored Suranjan.
>
> Sudhamoy repeated firmly: 'No'
>
> The word 'No' fell like an iron rod on Suranjan's back (p.214).

It is undoubtedly a dramatic representation of a real event. And *Lajja* ends with a touching note of a surprise.

> With his wife's help, Sudhamoy had walked upto Suranjan's bed, where his son screamed in the grip of a nightmare...
>
> 'Baba?'
>
> Suranjan could not conceal his surprise.
>
> "Where will we go, Baba?" he asked.

Sudhamoy said, "India" (p.216)

Were Taslima Nasrin born in a different age, she would have developed into a different sort of writer. It was her age and society to which she belonged, that appeared to have shaped her genius and governed her utterances. In fact, she is a person of unpretentious nature. She takes up for her story a number of incidents, actual historical events, facts and statistics and expresses them in a Language, which came to her spontaneously.

It is true, *Lajja* is a documentary novel but truth lies in the fact that the novel is seen as a harbinger of a message of Taslima Nasrin. Let all Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs think alike:

> Let all those brick-built buildings of worship be smashed to smithereens... Let the other name for Religion be Humanity (pp. 163-64).

This is not only Suranjan's voice, it is also the voice of Taslima Nasrin for her beloved country. This is what makes *Lajja* attractive to anyone interested in the welfare of the nation. Now a question may arise: can censorship succeed in subduing the spirit of humanity latent in *Lajja*?

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THE MIND IN CHAINS: ANATOMY OF CENSORSHIP

Bhagwat S. Goyal

A book is banned. A painting is proscribed. A film is forbidden. A theatrical performance is called off. News is suppressed. These are but a few examples of CENSORSHIP at work.

Censorship is as old as the oldest profession in the world. In spite of all protests, prostitution has been flourishing in every part of the world. Similarly, in spite of all claims on behalf of the "freedom of expression," censorship has existed in one form or another throughout the length and breadth of the world.

"Every idea is an incitement," said Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes. Elaborating on this as the *raison d'etre* of censorship, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entry on censorship says: "Censorship i.e. restriction on ideas prior to, or prosecution following, their publication--historically was based on the principle that ideas are always important as incitements to action, as guarantors of salvation or damnation of the soul or as confessions of character, and therefore in any case a matter of grave social concern. Recognition of what Holmes spoke of as 'free trade in ideas' was a late development in history and has never been universally accepted. The history of censorship demonstrates that every idea may be an incitement to persecution."[1]

In view of this, censorship is likely to exist in every society irrespective of its political or ideological complexion. Since there can always be ideas that are perceived as 'dangerous' by an establishment or a religious group or a political party, censorship will always rear its ugly head everywhere. Yet the Promethean fighters for intellectual and creative freedom have fought many a heroic battle against censorship as an instrument of suppression and coercion.

According to Harold D.Lasswell, "Censorship is the policy of restricting the public expression of ideas, opinions, conceptions and impulses which have or are believed to have the capacity to

undermine the governing authority or the social and moral order which that authority considers itself bound to protect."[2] Thus suppression of ideas, opinions, conceptions and impulses is at the root of all censorship. Lasswell further holds that censorship is a conscious policy which may be enforced without the assent of the greater part of society. Regarding its application in the society Lasswell avers that censorship may be exercised by the political or religious authorities or even by private persons who take upon themselves a quasi-official position in respect of the enforcement of accepted censorship policies.[3]

Though the censorship of political and religious expressions has been the function of political and religious authorities respectively, there is sometimes a tendency in any form of censorship to identify its interests with those of other forms. To illustrate this, Lasswell writes: "The animus of the traditional minded Athenians against the teachings of Socrates may have been primarily religious, but moral and political motives were skilfully woven in. The censorship in Czarist Russia was primarily aimed at the suppression of subversive political ideas, but the autocracy was solicitous about identifying its interests with those of the Church and of sound morality.[4]

Censorship spreads its tentacles far and wide, but its most significant applications have been to the spoken or written word, to action as represented in the theatre, pantomime and dance, and to the plastic arts. Referring to the sporadic existence of censorship in Classical antiquity, Lasswell observes: "Sparta placed a ban on the forms of poetry, music and dancing current in the fifth Century B.C. on the ground that they induced licentiousness and effeminancy. Aeschylus, Euripides and Aristophanes suffered under a censorship because of their too free thought on religious matters. In republican Rome the theatre was banned by the censor, except on the occasion of certain games, where a time-honoured tradition of license in speech and gesture gave a limited degree of freedom to dramatic art. No permanent theatre was permitted in Rome before the time of Augustus."[5]

The Encyclopaedia Britannica article on Censorship also recounts examples of censorship in ancient Greece and Rome: "In

Periclean Athens (5th Century B.C.) the philosopher Anaxagoras was fined for impiety. Likewise Protagoras was charged with blasphemy; he fled from Athens but his books were burned. Euripides may have been prosecuted for impiety. A law repressing dramatic invective was enforced for two years in wartime but was repealed in 437 D.C. Phrynichus was fined for presenting a play that brought to mind the destruction of Miletus, and the Athenians 'forbade forever' the acting of that (lost) play. These laws seem not to have intimidated authors and philosophers. In fact, free speech came to be accepted as the most important differentiation between the citizen and the slave or the alien... Yet history concedes that the most famous Athenian of all, Socrates, was the first martyr to freedom of speech. Socrates was executed in 399 B.C., when he was 70 years of age. Because he exercised freedom of inquiry to the annoyance of some fellow citizens, Socrates was charged with worshipping strange gods and corrupting the youth... In Plato's *Apology* Socrates pleaded for intellectual freedom by asserting the supremacy of his conscience over the verdict of the jury and by maintaining that when he exercised freedom of inquiry he was a public benefactor--that free discussion had a supreme public value. Socrates was, then, not only the first great martyr to freedom of speech, but also the first philosopher to formulate a rational, principled defense of this freedom."[6]

The article goes on to suggest that Socrates' pupil, Plato, however, could not be counted among the defenders of intellectual liberty. In his *Republic* Plato said that he would establish a censorship of fables in his ideal state. "Censors would reject and prohibit tales that they considered bad, and mothers and nurses would be permitted to relate to children only authorized tales. Furthermore, he would censor the plays of dramatists who tell untruths about the gods. Art, to Plato, could function only as an aid to education and what might be harmful to the young should be prohibited."[7]

The 16th-Century writer, Michel de Montaigne, with his hatred for cruelty and violence, made a very pertinent remark on the undesirability of censorship, "... it is setting a high value on one's opinions to roast men on account of them."[8] John Milton in his

Areopagitica: a Speech for Liberty of Unlicensed Printing (1644), presented a forceful rationale of freedom from censorship. To Milton, the first fredom was "the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience,..."[9]

J.M. Landis, in his article on the "Freedom of Speech and of the Press" has made some valid observations on the prohibitive and restrictive nature of censorship. He writes: "The idea of censorship is inapplicable to mere expression. Restraints upon freedom of mere speech must be achieved through punishment in the event that the bounds of the allowable liberty are passed. Censorship is applicable only when the necessity to use some means of communication affords an opportunity for government to intervene between the formulation of an idea and its expression. Restrictions upon freedom of expression are created by the offenses of libel and slander, obscenity, blasphemy and sedition. Their history is the latter day history of free speech. Together with censorship they portray the struggle for the freedom of the press."[10]

Explaining the logic of the freedom of speech as an expression of the intellectual *laissez faire* or *laissez aller*, J.M. Landis says: "The doctrine of free speech bases itself upon a conviction, fortified by experience, that 'the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market.' No person or group is deemed wise enough to be trusted to discriminate between valid and invalid ideas. It recognizes that suppression of itself either tends to impart a factitious validity to the suppressed idea or that the idea, if valid, will survive such persecution. On the other hand, if opposition by speech is allowed, it will be impotent if the speech is mere fulmination, if the thought in valid it will effect the inevitable change in existing institutions by the non-disruptive process of conversion. But that the public safety demands that certain limits be set to the bounds of free speech is also recognized, premised upon the fact that for the moment 'eloquence may set fire to reason.' The problem lies in framing these limits as ultimate safeguard because of the tendency of legislators and judges, especially in times of stress, to regard ideas of which they disapprove as dangerous to the public welfare.[11]

Censorship can be either preventive or punitive. It may take the form of an examination of material prior to publication and its suppression if disapproved. This is known as preventive censorship, in contrast to punitive censorship, which inflicts penalties after the offence and seeks to destroy the offending material. The censorship of antiquity was punitive, while that of the medieval church and of early modern times, was in general preventive. According to Harold D.Lasswell, "While political censorship has played an important part throughout modern times, especially in periods of great political upheaval, the dominant concern of censorship has been the suppression of material and activities presumed to have a degrading effect upon public morals. This preoccupation of the censor with problems of sexual morals has as a rule appeared simultaneously with the rise of the middle class to political dominance. Autocratic and aristocratic governments have seldom applied censorship to such matters as licentious books, pictures or plays. ...A plausible explanation lies in the fact that the middle class position can be maintained through generations only by thrift, prudence and self-control--virtues that are believed to be seriously shaken by licentious communications.[18]

The maximum amount of censorship has been exercised over what is termed "obscene." But the concept of obscenity has always remained very vague. Lasswell aptly observes in this connection: "The obscene picture, book or spectacle, pornographic in character and intent, is generally considered as open to legitimate censorship. But any administrative description of such matter which is definite enough to guide the action of police officers will at the same time apply to works of art, often of great genius and vital moral worth. The moral censorship through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been notable for the prosecution of famous works of art, such as Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Hardy's *Tess of the d'urbervilles*. In America under one jurisdiction or another many books of outstanding literary merit have been subject to censorship. So universal has been the stupidity of censorship in dealing with works of art that even many of those who believe in the importance of suppressing pornography have come to view censorship as on the

whole an undesirable institution."[13]

Obscenity has remained a major plank of censors. The publisher of *Venus in the Cloister* was prosecuted in England in 1727 on grounds of obscenity. Most of the modern law pertaining to obscene literature is based on Lord Campbell's Obscene Publications Act 1857 and the observation of Chief Justice Alexander Cockburn in the famous Hicklin Case (1868). Cockburn held that the test for obscenity under the statute was "whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences."

Obscenity, the favourite whipping-boy (or is it whipping girl?) of the censors, is sometimes associated with pornography and erotica. The three terms, however, carry different shades of meaning and provide three different perspectives. The term obscene is derived from the Latin *ob*, meaning *to* and *caenum*, meaning filth. Obscenity is therefore traditionally associated with *filth*, and with offensiveness, disgust, shame, and the idea of insulting or breaching an accepted moral standard. *Pornography* is derived from the Greek *porne* meaning whore and *graphein*, meaning to *write*. Thus pornography literally means the 'writings of harlots' or 'depictions of acts of prostitutes.' *Erotica* is derived from the name of the Greek god of love, Eros, and refers to *sexual love*. It is often used to refer to literary or artistic works that have a sexual quality or theme.[14]

Three theories about the effects of sexually explicit materials—*conservative-moralist, liberal* and *feminist*—correspond to the definitions of obscenity, erotica and pornography. "The obscenity perspective focusses on the effect of sexual arousal in the individual reader in response to practices that are considered disgusting or offensive. More broadly, the conservative-moralist approach suggests that sexually explicit materials often attack basic societal and religious values, and the reader or viewer may become desensitized to immoral acts in general. The pornographic (feminist) interpretation assumes that harm to all women in our society arises from portraying a woman as happy in sexual enslavement and as existing merely for the pleasure of men. Furthermore, there are harms to particular women from men who internalize this message

and act upon it. In contrast to both these theories, the liberal erotica perspective suggests that the story is harmless fantasy. Potentially a work of art, the story provides stimulation in the sex lives of some persons and may even be sexually liberating for the reader or viewer.[15]

On the basis of the preceding discussion, it can be argued that all forms of censorship, particularly those that take the refuge of obscenity or pornography or erotica, are repugnant to the creative freedom of human beings. We have to remember that the concepts of good and evil are culturally defined. What we believe to be immoral today may well be acceptable tomorrow; what is considered obscene today may be considered erotic art tomorrow. Even within the same time frame what may be pleasurable and arousing for some persons may not be so for others. Besides, sexually explicit speech or depiction is a result of the fact that humans are naturally sexual and that a free flow of ideas about sex may help people reach their full potential as individuals. Within this perspective, sexually explicit speech is generally viewed as a socially beneficial form of expression, one that creates a fantasy world built around a variety of sexual interests.

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CENSORSHIP AND FREEDOM OF MIND: SOME REFLECTIONS

K.K. Sharma

Much has already been written about censorship--its varied implications, forms, nature, and impact on the individual as well as society--by a number of scholars in the critical studies collected in this volume and elsewhere as well, and hence in this essay I shall avoid the repetition of material and agruments on the subject, and shall only examine objectively the basic merits and demerits of both censorship and freedom of mind. I believe that censorship, if exercised judiciously and wisely, is a boon to mankind, just as restrained freedom of expression is of paramount importance for the full growth of the individual and society. In other words, what I feel is that for the truly wholesome, all-round advancement of civilization, both the tyranny of censorship and the licence for limitless liberty of thought must be curbed, and kept under reasonable control and discipline by each other. Thus, the two should not be treated as antagonistic forces, but must be used as complementary and supplementary to each other. In fact, it is only by forging a harmonious tie between the two that the individual and society can be immensely benefitted and enriched. Let me elaborate it.

Consorship is as old as human race, and has been usually regarded as a curse to the full, natural growth of man's mind. Since time immemorial, persons in power have always been ruthlessly imposing restrictions on free, independent thinking in every sphere of life--religious or moral, social, political, literary, etc. This accounts for the untold, grossly unjust sufferings of men who are born once in ages, such as Socrates, Jesus Christ, Galileo, Gandhiji and several others. Indeed, censorship has often been the bane of culture and civilization; but the dam of it has never been strong enough to withstand for long the tide of new ideas and beliefs. True, man's mind and heart, i.e. his thoughts and feelings, are irrepressible; they can be suppressed for a short period of time only.

Human thoughts and activities are usually banned on two

grounds--religious or moral and political. Most of the works of art and other kinds, too, are suppressed on the pretext that they are immoral or irreligious and hence pernicious to the welfare of society, or that they are dangerous to the nation because they smack of treason and anti-nationalism. The first plea for censoring art has been the most common one. While in ancient times, censorship was exercised more on religious and political grounds than on moral, in the modern age the situation has changed and immorality has become quite a prominent basis of it. The other common terms for immorality are indecency, pornography, etc. A work of art, even if it is indecent, may be outstanding and fine, to quote the words of Robert Lynd, "by reason of its humanity, its imaginative intensity, or its humour."[1] In case a piece of art is the presentment of life without faith, hope, charity, considerateness, compassion, self-control, etc., it may be branded immoral and may be censored.

It is true that the primary aim of art is to create or re-create beauty; it has no right to exist unless it presents something more beautiful than reality. Unfortunately, if the artist loses sight of this fact, he offers us nothing but frightful reality, real or imaginary. Such a work is almost a deliberate denial of the essential beauty permeating the universe. God bestows upon man genius with the sacred trust that he will make use of its magical powers to purify, and not to pollute, the human soul; it is not to be employed to serve as a clue to the recesses of hell, horror and corruption. The common reader looks to art for some revelation of loveliness, wholesomeness and ardour, and not for vulgarity, indecency, depression, shock, etc. The beauty created and communicated by art is largely due to the artist's responsibility emanating from his wonderful sense of natural restraint and "selective conscience."

Undeniably, art is not anarchy and its majesty and might should not be employed as a means of debasement of life. The artist cannot and should not assume the role of a law-giver; rather, he must bow before the will of the generations of men, and the age-old, time-honoured and well-tested values and ways of life. Moreover, art is a public thing, and not a private matter. Therefore, it should conform to the accepted norms of decency; it has no business to

flout or violate them. The censor should act like the sanitary inspector and must notify and bring to book all that is unhygienic and unwholesome in art. True, an indecent artistic production is a greater menace to our public health than any of the epidemic diseases, for it destroys the soul, while the diseases only destroy our body. Genuine art must contribute to man's mental poise and balance, and his self-preservation, and this is possible only when it is free from pornography, indecency and corruption. It should attempt to make life noble and elevating rather than horrible and hideous. And if it fails in this regard, it must perish, for life is much more precious than art, and so the former is to be preserved, no matter even at the cost of the latter. Life should ascend rather than descend, and if art or any other thing drags it down to the low ebb, it must be flung away. Freedom of expression in any form, including artistic one, cannot and must not be allowed as a pretext for licence. Unbriddled licence kills the genuine spirit of freedom. Thus, men of genius, who discard the age-old sanctities of life, render irreparable harm to art.

It cannot be refuted that men have the basic instinct to moralize their actions and to see the society comply with certain well-acknowledged ethical concepts. Plato's casting of the poets out of the Republic illustrates the fact that the ethical side of man has always been generally so dominant that it has never tolerated the defiance of the framework of moral rules and social conventions. No wonder, then, if both the Government and the general public have often been easily upset by the activities of the artists, who are very original and innovating. Naturally, the state and society could not bear Byron and Shelley's revolutionary ideas, Ibsen's anti-bourgeois conception of marriage, Tolstoy's threatening unconventional interpretation of Christian ethics, Flaubert's so-called "immoral" representation of life, Hardy's unconventional view of love, sex and marriage, and D.H. Lawrence's explicit and elaborate portrayal of sex-life and the depths of the world of seething passions.

Indeed, there will be scarcely any need of censorship if the artist does not fail to realise the old basic truth that man is a moral being with a conscience and with responsibility to himself and to

others. To be unaware of this great reality means the impious denial of life, the rejection of the moral essence of life--*i.e.* the very core of human existence. Sometimes, an artist produces a lurid work, not intentionally but out of sheer artistic impulses which have decadent tendencies. Frankness and freedom in art are not to be opposed vehemently, and it is wrong to believe that art should be confined to school or home. If an artistic creation is not absolutely suitable for general public because it touches certain aspects of sex, it does not mean that it is not a genuine work of art. For example, novels life Mrs. Gaskell's *Ruth*, George Elliot's *Adam Bede* and Thomas Hardy's *Tess*, notwithstanding their treatment of sex, have always occupied a distinguished place among the masterpieces of world literature. But this should not lead us to assert that even inartistic intrusion of indecent matter in a book does not deserve excision or expurgation.

We have to admit that it is very difficult to moralize the beauty of passion and the fire of senses. Obviously, the moralists cannot put up with the works centred upon them, and condemn them by asserting that they are without high ideals, and that they are not first rate works of art because of aesthetic representation of such baser sensations which exert deleterious influence on the reader. But such a strong, one-sided so-called moral attitude towards art is pernicious and abhorrent because it does a great disservice to both art and morals by paralysing the artist's sacred sense of duty of deepening our consciousness and widening our recognitions. If the moralists, with their narrow view, had had their way in all the ages and succeeded in their special missions, there would have been left very few great works of art or aesthetic classics. We cannot forget how the moralists condemned and charged with immoral tendencies the immortal artists, "the pilgrims of eternity" like Euripides, Aristophanes, Rebelais, Moliere, Voltaire, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Fielding, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Flaubert, Maupassant, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Whitman, Tolstoy, Hardy, Lawrence, James Joyce and many others. Luckily, their charges could not be sustained by the public for a long time because their conception of "the good" was found too narrow to be considered true. Under the impact of such

an unwholesome moral outlook, artistic representations of life would invariably appear either over-idealized or over-moralized and in opposition to the higher and more spiritual instincts of mankind. As a matter of fact, a work, howsoever indecent and morally unconventional it may appear to be, should be judged in consonance with the relation and the equilibrium between the morality of nature and the morality of man. Even a work, dealing with sexuality like that of D.H. Lawrence, can be of high artistic standard if it succeeds in exploring and establishing the relation between the morality of nature, as expressed in the sexual activity, and worldly conduct. For, everything which we call spiritual is born of physical needs and reactions, the most patent expression of which is the sexual act which is the only means of creating or preserving life on this planet and also, according to many thinkers both in the West and the East, a means and a symbol of spiritual consummation.

I am not in favour of strict, blind censorship. Most of the men must agree that there is a point at which the police must interfere; we can imagine all kinds of things, but everything is not to be written down and exposed for sale. But all those, who are opposed to censorship, must feel happy to note that in most of the countries of the world it is really very seldom that the police act against pornography in art, and even if they act, they do not act very thoroughly and persistently. Moreover, even the most pornographic works are not banned for ever. For instance, once Zola was prohibited from the reach of the reader, but now we can buy him anywhere. Then, Balzac and *Contes Drolatiques*, inspite of horrible bench, had not disappeared from the book-stalls for long. If the task of artistic prosecution is taken seriously, we shall get scores of works condemned every year in every country.

The fact that there are no definite, fixed laws to assess the indecency of a piece of art is really very appalling. Inevitably, many works escape censorship, while some, which are less objectionable on moral, religious, political or social ground, are vigorously and downright censored. This can be illustrated from varied cases of censorship in the past. When D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* was brought before the court of law in November 1915 with the charge

that it was a mass of obscenity of thought and action throughout, Clement Shorter observed that Zola's novels were child's food in comparison with "the strong meat" that *The Rainbow* was. Mr. Shorter would not have made this assertion, if he had read Zola's *La Terre* which was much more obscene and lurid than Lawrence's masterpiece. By referring to Zola, he, like so many other people who disliked censorship, was, as a matter of fact, tried to go miles out of his way to assist censors. What I want to point out is that if a book is to be sentenced to death and all its copies are to be destroyed as per the court order, one must not ignore the truth that there are always scores of books that demand prior scrutiny and that all these works must also be judged by the same criterion that is applied to a censored book.

What shocks a genuine lover of art is that whenever a great artist is prosecuted, most of the brother artists and the intelligentsia keep silent and very few of them venture to defend, or take up the cudgels for, him. They tolerate the persecution and do not make a collective protest against it, and thus prove themselves more fickle and cowardly than the common man. This had happened when Hardy and Lawrence were condemned as anti-social and immoral for producing their masterpieces, and the same happened recently when Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and Taslima Nasrin's *Shame* were banned and condemned. But for Arnold Bennett, nobody had come out to defend D.H. Lawrence for writing *The Rainbow* which does not shock the moral awareness of the people, let alone *Lady Chatterley's Lover.*

The suppression of a work of art is inescapably accompanied with a number of evils. First, the moment a work is banned, the smugglers, pirates and expurgators get to work and become the strange and uninvited allies of those who take upon themselves the holy responsibility of preventing "the corruption of public morals"– it is impossible to understand the connotation of this expression, though it has been commonly used ever since Socrates was murdered on the pretext of corrupting the morals of the youths of Athens. And this evil, bigger than that of simple censorship, is bound to continue so long as the law is in the hands of a generation too

old and rigid to comprehend the changes in morality, custom, speech, thought, etc. occurring with the passage of time. And it is a fact that the modes of morality and traditions change with the changes in society; what was highly immoral and socially objectionable in the Victorian age was not so after the First World War. Indeed, the cultural and social changes with the passage of time invariably give birth to new moral and social norms. Secondly, the evil of suppression accelerates and intensifies the viciousness of the press which tries to survive only by exploiting news, and hence to clamour for the suppression of a work is more profitable for the press than merely reviewing it impartially or ignoring it completely. Apparently, unless the press develops a moral sense, justice cannot be accorded to a work and the ban on it cannot be easily withdrawn. Lastly, a very lamentable aspect of a serious work censored for pornography is that some very significant parts of it are expurgated, and thus the very soul of it is crushed and it is rendered very ordinary. The most glaring example of this baneful influence of censorship on a great work was *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The cuts made in the book reduced it to just mediocrity, damaging its intrinsic artistic beauty and worth. Condemning the expurgation of the novel, V.S. Pritchett, a celebrated novelist and critic of the present century, rightly observed:

> This expurgated edition is the final crime against him.... It was not mentioned that Lawrence's trustees for some reason felt justified in making cuts in the book which he himself refused to make during his lifetime. The result is that what was in the original not very good Lawrence has been deprived of half its point and much of its poetry.... It is not *Lady Chatterley's Lover* as Lawrence wrote it and it would have been better to have left it unpublished until such time as our guardians recover their sense of proportion. There is a good case to be made, in view of our national temperament, for the suppression of the obvious pornography which is displayed in our chemists' shops; but there is no case for the suppression of serious works and works of art.[2]

However, I feel that absolute freedom of mind is as injurious to social order as strict censorship, and therefore both, though necessary, must not be used without restraint. In certain cases censorship is essential to curb undesirable and harmful mode of thinking and expression. Even the inimitable, great Shakespeare

is not free from the element of pornography which needs to be weeded out. For instance, the following directly sexy, light remarks towards the close of *The Merchant of Venice* cannot be accepted as artistically and functionally interwoven with the texture of the play:

Por. .....
By heaven, I will ne'er come in your bed
Until I see the ring.

or

Por. Let not that doctor e'er come near my house;
Since he hath got the jewel that I loved,
.....
I'll not deny him anything I have,
No, not my body, nor my husband's bed.
.....
Lie not a night from home; watch me like Argus;
If you do not, if I be left alone,
Now, by mine honour which is yet mine own,
I'll have that doctor for mine bedfellow.

or

Gra. Well, do you so, let not me take him then;
For, if I do, I'll mar the young clerk's pen.

or

Bass. Sweet Doctor, you shall be my bed-fellow;
When I am absent, then lie with my wife.[3]

Again, Hardy's vehement denunciation of God in the last paragraph of the novel, *Tess*,--" 'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess"[4]-- does not seem to be the artistic need of the narrative; the statement is very strong and leads the reader to depression, nothingness and loss of faith in goodness and divine justice. More objectionable than this are some of the situations and scenes in *Jude the Obscure*; for example, Jude and Sue's living together for years without marriage and having children out of this relationship can but damage the very foundation of the social structure of any country. Obviously, the social and religious condemnation of Hardy's last two novels was not wholly unfair, and he was, to a great extent, justly compelled to lay down his magic wand of fiction. Likewise, if Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was vehemently and outright censored, there was some justification in it. The writer's repeated use of the words

like "fuck," "penis," etc. is not the artistic necessity of the tale, and the same is true of some detailed, unrestrained descriptions of the sexual intercourses between Connie and Mellors. The closing sentence of Mellors' letter to Lady Chatterley with which the novel ends is undoubtedly indecent, cheap and obscene--penis and vagina are addressed as John Thomas and Lady Jane: " '....John Thomas says good night to Lady Jane, a little droopingly, but with a hopeful heart.' "[5]

To conclude, much can be said in favour of and against both censorship and freedom of mind. Therefore, what I believe is that sensible and intelligent use of censorship and freedom of expression are necessary for the well-being of a cultured, civilized society and art. The slightest imbalance on either side will only cause irreparable damage to the individual as well as the society on the whole; the two must serve as the two healthy legs of equal strength for the onward march and all-round progress of meaningful human life on this planet.

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