ISSN 0971 - 605X

POINTS OF VIEW

VOLUME VIII NUMBER 1 SUMMER 2001

Editor
K.K. Sharma

POINTS OF VIEW

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Annual Subscription rates are

India	Individuals	Rs.200.00 (by M.O.)	Institutions Rs.400.00 (Collection charges for outstation cheques Rs.30.00)
Overseas	Individuals	£10.00, $15.00	Institutions £12.00, $20.00

(Additional charges for supplying copies by airmail £4.00, $6.00)

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Volume VIII Number 1 Summer 2001

CONTENTS

SHAKESPEARE'S 'SINGLE-SPEECH HAMILTONS' AND 'SHADOWS'

S. Viswanathan

Thanks to the interest coming to be shown in recent years in the sub-altern and the liminal by quite a few cultural political critics, on the one hand, and, on the other, thanks to the illuminating attention accorded to 'bit parts in Shakespeare' by a critic like M.M. Mahood in her book of that title from the angle of the theatrical dynamics and other implications of these, really minor characters in Shakespeare would in a way seem to be in the process of coming into their own, critically speaking. It may perhaps be worth attending to some curious categories of these bit parts. There are some across the plays whose parts are shortest of the short; a single speech of a few lines or sometime no more than a single line. There are several more who make a single appearance and are seen no longer in a play, a kind of one-off figures. And there are a few who are only seen appearing and not heard speaking at all; such roles were known as 'shadows' in Elizabethan theatrical parlance. All such incidental figures are common in drama in general, and Shakespeare introduces them basically as cogs in the machine. Not all such merely functional characters evoke any particular interest. But certain of these, despite their fleeting role, dressed as they are in their little, brief authority, dramatically speaking, seem to develop a certain piquancy, a noticeable resonance and a certain accession of theatrical energy. They do so by virtue of the difference they make to the course and movement of the play and of the suggestions of 'looking before and after' emerging in and through them both in their immediate context and in the play's theatrical dynamic.

The more interesting instances of single-speech and single-show characters are Mercade in *Love's Labour's Lost* (5.2.724); the English Ambassador in *Hamlet* (5.4.), the Justice in *Measure for Measure* (3.1), Peter of Pomfret in *King John* (4.2.154); Jaques de Boys in *As You Like It* (5.4.158); the Priest in *Twelfth Night* (5.1.155); Francisca (*Measure for Measure*, 1.4.2); the Captain

in the Folio *King Lear* (5.3.35) and, 'with a difference' Francisco (*The Tempest*, 2.1.120). There are many not particularly significant instances such as Leonardo in *The Merchant of Venice* (2.2.189), and Helen (*Cymbeline*, 2.2.2). Then there are several single Gentlemen who arrive as messengers or missive-bearers on the scene and the First, Second and sometimes Third Gentlemen who perform choric or mediate functions, besides the messengers desiginated as such who come and go in the plays, these last very frequently in a play like *Antony and Cleopatra* and the numbered citizens. All these are mostly 'functions', except perhaps the First Citizen in *Coriolanus*. There are also the god-in-the-machine-like figures such as Hymen (*As You Like It*, 5.4.132), Juno in the Masque in the *The Tempest* (4.1.102), Jupiter in *Cymbeline* (5.4.93) and Diana in *Pericles* (5.2.241) who make a single appearance and a single utterance. But they are a class by themselves, and make for revealing theophanies as Wilson Knight pointed out. It may be worthwhile to look at some of the interesting instances of 'single-speech Hamiltons' in detail.

Even as Mercade bursts upon the scene in *Love's Labour's Lost* (5.2.721) and starts delivering the message of the King of France's death, the Princess would have guessed, presumably as the audience on stage and offstage did, the news of her father's death from the mourning black which Mercade would wear (supplying, incidentally, one of several variations on the motif of the black in the play). So she completes Mercade's verse-line and message.

Mercade: God save you, madam!
Princess: Welcome, Mercade
But that thou interrupt'st our merriment
Mercade: I am sorry, madam; for the news I bring
Is heavy in my tongue. The king your father—
Princess: Dead, for my life!
Mercade: Even so; my tale is told.
Berowne: Worthies, away! The scene begins to cloud.
(*Love's Labour's Lost*, 5.2. 721-729)

Mercade's arrival marks the surprise advent of reality breaking in into the enclosed world of the studious academy of the King of Navarre and company which has already got transformed into

love's academy, and also into the teasing game world of the Princess and her companies. The name Mercade with its spelling variation Marcade suggests both 'Mar-Ardadia' a dislocator of the world of pastoral and romance and Mercury, the messenger-god. The character's arrival effects a sudden shift in the climate and paves the way to the unusual conclusion of the play in which, as Berowne puts it,

> Our wooing doth not end like an old play;
> Jack hath not Jill... ... ... (5.2.882-883)

The figure is an interrupter not only of the long-drawn-out charade of the lords and the ladies with its gender war of love but the pageant of the Nine Worthies. The pageant itself ends with a twist, that of an access of reality by way of the sudden surfacing of the problem of Amado-Hector's affair with Jacquenetta and his rival Costard-Pompey's challenge, which comic as it is, almost serves as a precursor to the dislocating effect produced by Mercade's appearance. He takes on the significance of something like an emblem book item suggesting the intrusion of death into the pastrol world of ease and pleasure, the *et in Arcadia ego* motif. As the motto-like ending lines of the play say it,

> The world of Mercury (Mercade?) are
> harsh after the songs of Apollo. (5.2. 938-939)

Surprised by love that Navarre and his companies are earlier in the play, now at the end they are jolted into a confrontation with the harsh realities of the world from their retreat and into the prospect of a twelve-month-long penance of a wait. Yet, such an ideational progression commonly traced in the play is put in a different perspective by the ending epigram (which was printed, without a speech prefix, in bold letters in the Quarto). The assertion provides a strong intimation of the experiential validity of the pastoral, even as the play points out its complexities as well as the inadequacies of withdrawal. Shakespeare's theatrical stroke is to have used Mercade as an economical and effective dramatic shorthand for his multiple purposes.

The uncanny prophet of gloom, Peter of Pomfret, who makes a single appearance in *King John*, brought to the presence of the king by Falconbridge, makes a witheringly portentous single

phrase utterance to be led away to prison and subsequent execution is the kind of theatre figure and voice that would make a strong impact, however momentary, on the spectator (*King John*, 4.2). The situation is one of King John in the process of being engulfed by bad news from all quarters — besides the death of Arthur lying on his conscience, news of the death in France of his mother, of the French invasion of England under the Dauphin, and of the revolt of the lords and nobles against him. At the moment Falconbridge enters, Peter the prognosticator in tow, to give John further bad news to the effect that besides the alienation of the estates of the clergy and the nobility from the king, the third estate of the commons are

> ...strangely fantased,
> possess'd with rumours, full of dreams,
> Not knowing what they fear, but full of fear

and produces Peter with the words

> And here's a prophet that I brought with me
> From forth the streets of Pomfret, whom I found
> With many hundreds treading on his heels:
> To whom he sung, in rude harsh-sounding rimes,
> That ere the next Ascension-day at noon,
> Your highness should deliver up your crown. (*King John*, 4.2. 144-152.)

In straight answer to the King's angry 'twice-thouing' question

> Thou idle dreamer, wherefore didst thou so? (1. 153)

the awesomely grumpy prophet stands his ground and speaks up in stern, ringing tones, in his sole utterance in the play

> Foreknowing that the truth will fall out so. (1. 154)

John dismissively calls him 'an idle dreamer' and orders Hubert to throw Peter in prison to be hangedd precisely on Ascension day as 'fit' punishment.

Shakespeare develops with effective brevity a passing reference in Holinshed to a 'hermit' of York, who was hanged 'together with his son', when the day that he had predicted to be ominous for John passed off without any great damage, into a notable little cameo of a character who comes once and goes but not without leaving his impress. King John might seem to forget him but really cannot. He cannot but remember the strange prophet immediately after the surrender, albeit momentary, of his crown to Cardinal Pandulph, in a gesture of reconciliation and

submission to the Pope to get him to persude the French to lay down arms. The cardinal soon hands King John back his crown.

King John: Is this Ascension-day? Did not the prophet
Say that before Ascension-day at noon
My crown I should give off? Even so I have;
I did suppose it should be on constraint;
But, heaven be thank'd it is but voluntary.

(*King John*, 5.1. 25-29)

The prophecy comes true but not without a certain equivocalness, apparently characteristic of prophecies as a rule, and yet it comes home forcefully. In one deft passing stroke Shakespeare seems to make the fleeting figure of Peter the balled-making prophet, bring in his trail suggestions of the popular voice, the crucial significance of the crown in the histroy plays, especially the crown which lies so uneasy on King John's uneasier head, and, furthermore, suggestions of a curious intermixture of the preternatural and the Christian religious (Ascension-day). Peter's presaging is in line with, and by way of capping it all in, the vein of portents and foreboding running in the early histories upto *King John*. It is not for nothing that that Hubert when he returns quickly after jailing the prophet recounts so vividily how the country has witnessed the ominious phenomenon of five moons on the sky at a time and is also agog with prophecies (*King John*, 4.2. 181-202). When Cardinal Pandulph and King John enter at the start of 5.1., the crown is apparently already in the cardinal's hands, as the king enters with him saying

Thus have I yielded up into your hand
The circle of my glory (5.1. 1-2)

and the cardinal hands the crown back saying

Take again,
From this my hand, as holding of the Pope,
Your sovereign greatness and authority (11. 3-5)

Whatever ambivalence is seen to underline the Prophet's single-phrase utterance, even more strongly marks King John's relationship with the Pope and the clergy all the way from the cardianl to the monks at Swinstead Abbey. It is a relationship portrayed by Shakespeare from a point of view so different from that of the rabidly protestant play of John Bale on King John.

The sudden stage appearance of Jacques de Boys, the second son of 'old Sir Rowland' towards the very close of *As You Like It*, with practically his lone single speech is as if it were a performative utterance by proxy of the now abdicating usurper Duke Frederick serves to complete the movement of comedy in the play with economy, with both a forward looking celerity and a harking back to the beginning so characteristic of Shakespeare's endings. The spectator hears about Jaques de Boys from Orlando at the very opening of the play

> My brother Jaques he keeps at school,
> and report speaks goldenly of his profit. (*As You Like It*, 1.1.5-6)

But in the play it is the other Jaques who takes over. And Jaques de Boys the Oliver favourite materialises on the scene only at the very end to announce himself hard on the heels of the multiple weddings solemnised in the presence of Hymen and the series of revelations, recognitions and reunions, somewhat in the fashion of another god on the machine. He brings news to the whole company about how Duke Frederick who came to the 'skirts' of the Forest of Arden marching an army with intention to kill the banished senior Duke his elder brother underwent a sudden miraculous conversion on

> ...meeting with an old religious man,
> After some question with him, was converted
> Both from his enterprise and from the world;
> His crown bequeathing to his banish'd brother,
> And all their lands restor'd to them again
> That were with him exil'd. (*As You Like It*, 5.4. 167-172)

His advent and utterance brings to completion the pattern of regenerative repentance, and transformation, recognition and reunion, and restoration in the music of the play's close. It is interesting that with the arrival of this Jaques, the satitrical Jaques withdraws himself from the scene and the play saying that he would go to philosophise with the convertite Duke Frederick. In terms of theatre, the newcome Jaques perhaps supplies the lack of a dancing companion to the Duke in the final dance at the close, as the whole company dance their way out of the play. The 'fictional reality' of what the report of Jaques de Boys conveys

and brings about is curiously verbally foreshadowed in the instant fiction created by Shakespeare for Rosalind in her forest encounter with Orlando in 3.2. 357-367, 446-447. Rosalind tells Orlando that 'she-he' lives in the 'skirts of the forest like a fringe upon a petticoat', and that she had the cultivated accent of 'an inland man' since 'an old religious uncle of mine taught me to speak' and also taught her about his bitter experience of love of woman in his long past youth. Rosalind also tells Orlando that she could cure him out of his love for Rosalind by counsel and make him as she did her an earlier client of hers

> forswear the full stream of the world,
> and to live in a nook merely monastic.

Which last exactly the usurping Duke Frederick does. In the satirical Jacques' words,

> The duke hath put on a religious life
> And thrown into neglect the pompous court. (*As You Like It*, 5.4 188-189)

Jaques de Boys' appearance leaves the impression of a rounding off of the play through a process ot recall and restitution, as through the embroilments with a particular difference of its course this particular comedy hastens to its happy resolution.

The priest in *Twelfth Night* whom Olivia brings ready at hand to lead her and Sebastian taken by her for Cesario with dispatch to the altar to be wedded in secret (4.3) and whom she later has to summon to bear testimony to the wedding (5.1) plays a curious little 'bit part' noticeable in several respects. When he enters the stage to the monologising Sebastian, led by Olivia, he is a sort of voiceless 'shadow', as meekly and alacritously taking orders from Olivia to perform an instant stolen wedding for Olivia and Sebastian as Sebastian consents to be led like sheep to the altar. The irony, as Dover Wilson pointed out, is that Olivia weds Sebastian exactly in the chantry set up on purpose to pray for her father's soul, thus breaking her vow of a seven year mourning for her father and of absolute withdrawl from male company, and the chantry priest is the officiating clergyman. To be noted also is the telling juxtapositional closeness of the first appearance of the chantry priest (4.3.) to the comic ministrations of Feste the clown in the guise of Sir Topas the priest to Malvolio in the dark

house in the previous scene (4.2). Part of Feste's ventrioloquist playing of the role of Sir Topas the priest is his play with disguise, the gown and the beard, and with the assumed darkness of the stage during the encounter with Malvolio. On the stage for aught we know the same gown if not the beard may have been the chantry priest's also except that the actor of the chantry priest will be taller than Robert Armin who probably played Feste. The hints are there in the words of Feste and Maria.

> *Feste*: Well. I'll put it on and I will dissemble myself in 't; and I would I were the first that ever dissembled in such a gown. I am not tall enough to become the function well. (*Twelfth Night*, 4.2. 5-8)

and

> *Maria*: Thou mightst have done this without thy beard and gown: he sees thee not. (*Twelfth Night*, 4.2. 69-70)

When the chantry priest appears in the final scene of recognitions and reunions and ultimate union of hearts, called in by the desperate Olivia, the 'holy father' finds a tongue once and for all and pronounces his testimony with a public address of authority and dignity so different from earlier all too private role, and this sole utterance he makes in the play bespeaks these qualities.

> A contract of eternal bond of love.
> Confirm'd by mutual joinder of your hands,
> Attested by the holy close of lips,
> Strengthen'd by interchangement of your rings;
> And all the ceremony of this compact
> Seal'd in my function, by my testimony:
> Since when, my watch hath told me, toward my grave
> I have travell'd but two hours. (*Twelfth Night*, 5.1. 160-167)

He thus vouches for what he like Olivia takes to be the wedded state of the young Cesario the object of attention at that moment in the whole assembly. He stays on stage till the last and is silent witness to the proceedings including the 'natural perspective' of the truly wedded Sebastian the lookalike twin of Viola-Cesario and Viola-Cesario materialising together on the scene, and thus his mere presence provides a certain holy sponsorship and auspices for the final recognitions, reconciliations, and the union of the Duke and Viola. The priest's speech serves, moreover, to underscore the idea of the sanctity of matrimony and of the ceremony of

wedding, an idea which is as a rule a keynote of the music of the close and indeed of the progression of Shakespeare's comedies. The priest speaks only too much in character as a man of religion of late medieval and early Renaissance times when he computes time in terms of the progress of his life towards death. But he does so with the intriguing difference that he sports if not flaunt his watch, then modern enough for one thing and for another a rather expensive item of wear at the time and hence suggestive of some showing off; indeed Queen Elizabeth is said to have prided herself on her possession of one. All this will have the effect of lending the semblance of a person to this character function.

Making due allowance for the important factor of ambivalence attendant on it, we should note the presence in *Measure for Measure* of the reminiscences of religious and scriptural ideas and phrases and the figuring of the friars with the incognito Duke as friar centrestage in this regard and the monastic in general, though all this occurs alongside the place bawds and bawdry houses and the loss of maidenheads and heads have 'in the story'. Isabella the central figure appears in the guise of a novice about to enter a nunnery, and makes her first entry in the company of Francisca the only full-fledged nun in the play who puts in a brief single-show appearance as if at the end of her preliminary initiation and briefing of Isabella about the discipline and austerities of the Franciscan nunnery of 'poor Clares' (1.4 1-14.). Isabella does protest too much her ready willingness and active seeking of even a severer regimen, in response to Francisca's query whether she did not think the privileges accorded to nuns large enough. It is at that moment that Lucio comes to knock at the door of the nunnery in search of Isabella about her brother Claudio's predicament to seek her intercession to Angelo on his behalf. Francisca retires from the scene and the play after leaving it to Isabella to answer the door

Francisca: It is a man's voice gentle Isabella,
Turn you the key, and know his business of him:
You may, I may not, you are yet unsworn.
When you have vow'd, you must not speak with men
But in the presence of the prioress:
Then, if you speak, you must not show your face,

> Or, if you show your face, you must not speak.
> He calls again. I pray you, answer him. [exit]
> (*Measure for Measure*, 1.4. 6-14)

(Though the s.d. 'Exit' is not in the Folio, she does make her exit, one of the many instances of the omission of the exit direction in the Shakespearian playtexts.)

A telling overall visual and ideational effect is contributed to by this stage image of Francisca in her conversation with Isabella probably now with her novice cap on, together with the appearance of Friar Thomas at the beginning of the play and Friar Peter towards the close as a kind of confidant of the Duke, not to mention the Duke as Friar. The idea of the discipline of the strict religious orders is intringuingly juxtaposed in the play in contrastive correspondence at once with the strict discipline of and discipling by Angelo, on the one hand, and, on the other, with the license of the bawdry world and with the quotidian morals of the likes of Claudio and Juliet, and Mariana, and the passing First and Second Gelltlemen (1.2), with Lucio 'a fantastic' in between on this scale.

The captain in *KIng Lear* (5.3.27) to whom Edmund gives the written but unspoken command, jointly issued by him and Goneril, to kill the imprisoned Cordelia and Lear appears only once and speaks no more than a half-line of monosyllables.

> I'll do it, my lord. (*King Lear*, 5.3.35)

in the Folio text. But in the Quarto he has two more lines:

> I cannot draw a cart nor eat dried oats;
> If it be man's work, I will do it. (*King Lear*, 5.3.39-40)

According to the Folio, he takes one look at the command and unflinchingly and callously agrees to execute an unwarlike command without any scurple. The grim harshness of it all is more effectively communicated through this by itself rather than in conjunction with a shade otiose justification in the quarto lines of the captain.

Francisco in *The Tempest*, an attendant lord of the 'court party' of Alonso, Antonio and company in the play, presents an interesting instance of a character who is a regular in all the several 'court party' scenes but has only a single speech once, and in a subsequent scene a single half-line, and no more. Through his silent presence, as a non-participating observer for the most

part, he registers himself as a *punctum indifferens* and his voice in his only speech (2.1. 120-129) comes through as one of sane calm and assurance and sound observation. He studiously refrains from joining or countenancing the teasing game against the garrulous Gonzalo that Antonio and Sebstian relenlessly play, though his immediate companion Adrian does so though marginally. It is Francisco who expresses the strong belief that Ferdinand has survived the wreck in a speech which is among other things a striking evocation of a master-swimmer's stroke and feat, worthy of the very best sports-commentator.

Francisco: Sir, he may live:
I saw him beat the surges under him
And ride upon their backs: he trod the water,
Whose enmity he flung aside, and breasted
The surge most swoln that met him his bold head
'Bove the contentious waves he kept and oar'd
Himself with his good arms in busy stroke
To the shore, that o'er his wave-worn basis bow'd
As stooping to relieve him. I not doubt
He came alive to land. (*The Tempest*, 2.1. 120-129)

And it is Francisco who marvels with an observer's relish at the sudden vanishing of the spirits in strange shapes which bring in and spread in 'an excellent dumb discourse' an inviting banquet before the famished court party, the banquet that is to tantalize them supsequently; in his half-line

They vanish'd strangely. (*The Tempest*, 3.3. 40)

There are numerous instances in Shakespeare of attendants swelling the scene as part of a king's or royal or noble personage's customary appendage and also soldiers in scenes of battle where supernumerary actors take these minimal 'shadow' parts. As the revealing s.d. in the Folio of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (5.1.126) clearly a s.d. of theatrical origin,

Enter (Tawyer with a Trumpet before him) Pyramus and Thisbe and Wall and Moonshine and Lion

shows, servants in the theatrical company and stagehands would have chipped in to play these roles. For Tawyer was a servant in Shakespeare's company already in service at the time of perfomance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, who died c. 1625. Yet there are a few instances where 'shadows' in a way distinguish

themselves on account on their participatory function in plays. Some of these are interesting and in cases problematic for several reasons — Philostrate in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the Folio text but not so in the Quartos, and the jailor in *The Merchant of Venice*. These are to be distinguished from cetain major characters in plays such as Isabella towards the close of the last scene in *Measure for Measure*, similar to Silvia towards the close of the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* turning into silent stage presences.

The idea of the revels in the name of those specially commissioned for the occasion of the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta serves not only as a framework for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* but also as a governing motif of the festive comedy. Philostrate the master of the revels to Theseus is seen at the very start of the play entering with the couple, and he is commanded by Theseus to go and call up the festive spirit and, implicity, to commission the revels to make the celebrations.

Theseus: Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments;
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth;
Turn melancholy form to funerals;
The pale companion is not for our pomp.
(*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1.1. 11-15)

And Philostrate makes his exit after registering his silent presence, once for all in the Folio text of the play. But in the Quarto version Philostrate reappears to play his role as a master of the revels by reading out to Theseus the list and details of the 'devices' on offer for performance on the wedding night and also introduces the play of 'Pyrmus and Thisbe' as master of ceremonies. In the Folio text, however, it is Egeus, father of Hermia, who played the unrelenting spoilsport by opposing his daughter's love, who, now a reconciled parent, takes on the functions of the master of the revels. Both the alternatives seem to have been actual stage practices, as both the Quarto and the Folio texts according to textual scholars show signs of theatrical provenance. Most modern editors follow the Quarto and bring in Philostrate in Act 5. It could be that at a point of time the actor of Philostrate became unavailable for the full role, and an actor who could fit the role

only as a 'shadow' stood in for him at the start of the play, and the Folio reflecting that practice, substituted Egeus for Philostrate's sustained and active role in the final scene. There is also the possibility, though only slight as the text involved is the Folio, and not a Quarto, that the editors Heminge and Condell felt that they should not give chance to Philostrate being 'deciphered' (in Ben Jonson's term) as the real life counterpart of the contemporary master of the revels in Britain, and made do with Egeus taking on the role.

The jailor who appears in *The Merchant of Venice* (3.3) leading Antonio out in the company of his associate Solanio in order that Antonio may meet Shylock and himself make a last plea to him for mercy does not speak a word. But he is paid considerable attention to by Shylock, thus evoking attention to him on the spectator's part. There is a good possibility of the player of Salerio the *alter ego* of Solanio the other constant companion of Antonio having doubled for the nonce as the jailor later reappears in the court scene ostensibly as companion to Antonio but actually to play some sort of an usher in the court. The piquancy of the injoke of the actor of Antonio's other companion now appearing as the jailor of Antonio, with the two flanking, Antonio now a prisoner, exactly as they did earlier on in the play is more than hinted at in the words put into Shylock's mouth.

> *Shylock*: Jailor, look to him: tell not me of mercy
> This is the fool that lent out money gratis
> Jailor, look to him.
> ... ...
> ... ...
> I do wonder,
> Thou naughty jailor, that thou art so fond
> To come abroad with him at his request
> (*The Merchant of Venice*, 3.3.1-3; 8-10)

the actor of Salerio who appears in 3.2 would have had time enough to make his exit in that scene in advance of the end of the scene leaving Bassanio and Portia in private, in order to appear as jailor for the next scene.

Overall, the impact made by such characters as may be called 'single-speech Hamiltons', at times with no more a cryptic

single line as their speaking part and also by 'one-off' figures who are 'shadows' or mutes without speaking parts at all adds a certain depth and a subtle new dimension to the plays where they occur. Trivial and negligible as these functional figures would seem, they at times both gather and radiate significances worth noting. In a theatre where doubling was in practice such parts would have lent another opportunity for players to exhibit their versatility if not virtuosity. Or such parts may have been conceived by Shakespeare with a particular player of his troupe who may have had a sort of special penchant for such appearances, somewhat akin to what in present day film parlance is called 'guest appearances'.

NOTE

Quotations from Shakespeare in this article are keyed to the old Oxford Shakespeare, ed. W.J. Craigie.

'OTHELLO AND OTHERNESS': TOWARD A POLITICO-SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE

Prasenjit Maiti

Othello: .....
I have done the state some service, and they know't;
No more of that: I pray you in your letters,
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of them as they are; nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice; then must you speak
Of one that lov'd not wisely, but too well:
Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought,
Perplex'd in the extreme; of one whose hand,
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away,
Richer than all his tribe: of one whose subdued eyes,
Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drops tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinal gum; set you down this,
And say besides, that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk
Beat a Venetian, and traduc'd the state,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog,
And smote him thus. (Act v, Sc II, 340-357)

This paper seeks to identify the otherness in William Shakespeare's Othello when in contrast with Desdemona as a mainstream white actor enabled with a certain role performance in the carnival of mainstream identities. I would try to establish in the process that Othello is the other on the marginality of being who has to negotiate constantly certain role performances like Desdemona's or even Iago's that are iconized as the white self of the narrative as against the black margin, the border of permissible interface with the otherness of the other.

I

What we have to appreciate here is the fact that Othello has always remained the outsider, the stranger whose modalities of interaction cannot be addressed by the white narrative. The outsider has a grammar of his own, but its syntax cannot relate to the syntactical realities of the white narrative. Othello-Desdemona or even Othello-Iago are dichotomies that have to be interrogated

outside the margin of meanings, away from the hegemony institutionalized by the signifier and signified. So, Othello as the outsider is the other who is a spectral point of reference in the context of hospitality. He is not hospitably accommodated within the range of possibilities of the text. It is as if Othello has a countertext all of his own whose ethos is yet to be explored while reading colonial and postcolonial Shakespeares.

Jacques Derrida's hospitality critique argues that any manner of interaction, to be ontologically relevant, has to be essentially informed by a necessitating *spectrality* that would ordinarily require two principal players, i.e. the guest and the host. We would do well here to remember that hospitality as a rather 'dynamic' category of analysis has to be equally shared by the guest as well as the host. Othello as the guest is the unknown spectre, the 'ghost', who has to be effectively accommodated by the host. Such hospitality is to be accorded entirely on the terms of the guest and not otherwise. But this has not exactly been the case in the play.

But why does the host at all go out of his / her way to cohere an ensemble of mutuality with the guest?[1] The explanation lies in the fact that there are possibilities the host would be able, at some point or the other, to benefit in ways more than one from this relationship. This is not to suggest, however, that benefits are unilateral so far as hospitality is concerned. Hospitality is actually all about accepting the *otherness* of the *other* and providing *openness* to others. This implies that the 'other' is an unknown actor who has to be entirely accommodated on his / her own terms of discourse. The host cannot afford to control the sovereignty or the regime of 'otherness' of the other. This would in its turn tend to ensure an equity of sorts between the guest and the host. This equity is efficacious in sustaining networks of trust between these actors that ultimately tend to facilitate better interelite understanding. But this does not happen in the play.

II

A politico-scientific reading of the play would indicate that Othello is a potential threat to the Establishment, an ambitious

counterelitist actor who aspires for even more political powers. We mean real and effective powers of course, and the text emerges more meaningfully if we initially examine the problematics of Othello as structured primarily by the center-periphery tension and underpinned by different aspects of legitimacy as a fundamental political concern.

Tom R. Tyler has explained that the "discussion of legitimacy has been framed by the perspective of legal authorities, highlighting the balance that they must strike between controlling the public and being sensitive to the public's views. Legal authorities must restrict the activities of those over whom they exercise power, but at the same time their effectiveness depends ultimately on their ability to secure voluntary public compliance with their directives."[2]

A peripheral actor has moved toward the centrality of politics dominated by the powers-that-be. This is the intentionality of Othello's power that would ultimately (nearly) subvert the white bases of politics. But this cannot simply be allowed to happen. So, Othello's rise to power is negotiated in such a manner as would suggest that the Moor is organically unable to translate his accepted career as a soldier into the career (not-yet-accepted by the white mainstream) of a statesman. Othello's vertical social mobility is arrested in the process.

We have to notice especially his final speech (that would end in his suicide) toward the close of the play.[3] The Moor would like the State to remember him objectively; his achievements and failures should also be assessed in a disengaged manner. So the dialectics of *Othello* are apparent by now. The State's apparatus has repeatedly used the military skill of Othello in incidents like the impending attack on Cyprus by the Turks. But this State can also display an indifference when the Moor is being increasingly marginalized in the polyphony of Venice's political carival. This is polyphony all right but without the heteroglossia of identities.

This is remarkable as any analysis of subaltern actors in history cannot really afford to do without the aspect of organic identities that have emerged from the battlegrounds and politics

of everyday life. But we somehow do not find the presence of many voices either in the Moor or in his immediate socio-political background. Othello appears to be a flat character bereft of any interesting angularities. His are dynamics without the exciting possibilities of further postcolonial critquing and exploration.

But we may still discover aspects in *Othello* that are insightful if we persist in our technique of separating actors from their institutions and processes of contemporaneous politics. This ensures that compulsions and imperatives of politics are analyzed within frameworks like 'actors and institutions' and 'actors in institutions'. Also, we have to keep in mind the relative autonomy of the State while negotiating Othello. The Moor is at first an actor about to interact with the ensemble of institutions we ordinarily address as the matrix of socio-political configurations when he is *duped* into committing a capital crime punishable by capital punishment.

But how can we at all afford to discuss justice when we have not yet resolved our basic problem of tension between the mainstream and the without, the narrative of a hegemonic text and its readerly interpretations? Can we treat the Moor as an actor without a lineage? It is true that Othello cannot realize political power in terms of his genealogy but there is yet another reality outside the reality of descent. This is the reality of praxes as obtainable in a given context of the material conditions of being. Jeffrey Reiman has analyzed that the "social contractarians realized that people do not normally see their political duties as self-imposed, much less as having been agreed to. If political obligations were to be understood as issuing from an agreement made by those subject to them, it had to be an agreement inscribed in the tendency of their reasoning itself, not an actual signing on the dotted line."[4]

III

Global informants that happen to address contemporary postcolonial narratives of power and history or even power in history generally tend to hinge on a strategy, namely "what is global is local and what is local is global."[5] This strategy is

effective as its priorities comprise apparently wayward and antipodal hyper-realities like territoriality, xenophobia and multiculturalism underpinned by alienation, insecurity and an absence of confidence in organic constructions that are all about the material conditions of life. We have to appreciate that *Othello* is an exemplar of all such benchmarks of analysis.

Alienation or even deidentification can result in a loss of legitimacy,[6] ontologically speaking; "...participation in a social system requires human beings to make their own contributions, and it leads to human beings' distinguishing themselves from one another and behaving exclusively for one another; because they must produce their own contributions themselves, they must motivate themselves. When they cooperate one must clarify, despite all natural similarity, who has made which contribution... however, that concerns not distinct forms of interpenetration but the fact that greater interpenetration requires more inclusion and more (reciprocal) exclusion. The resulting problem is solved by the 'individualization' of persons."[7] The above concerns would be interrogated after we negotiate, delimit and define the politics of appropriating the other (as in *Othello*), the principal concern of our paper.

Appropriation can be considered to be a function of dispossessing actors in a 'carnival' informed by 'polyphony'.[8] Is this not also indicative of the problems of interaction between civil societies and literary spaces and grand narratives as systems of hegemonizing, majoritarian politics? In the words of Steven Lukes:

> To use the vocabulary of power in the context of social relationships is to speak of human agents, separately or together, in groups or organisations, through action or inaction, significantly affecting the thoughts and actions of others (specifically, in a manner contrary to their interests).[9]

The next inquiry happens to be: how really to problematize a given literary space within a defined politics of ascriptions and identities?[10] Can this be done with the aid of complicity, entrapment[11] and consent as local tactics and global strategies?

IV

We would hypothesize here that language as control can

logically lead to conviction in signifier words and signified meanings as an ideology, building up the apparatuses of a polity in the process. So we discover a hegemony of the terms of discourse even within postcolonial, protest literatures, even when 'the Empire writes back', supposedly![12]

A certain poliltics of reversed attribution can be discerned in the process: the periphery interfaces with the center, resists it in an indigeneous idiom, even tries to dislocate it; but the periphery is ultimately rejected, its essence displaced and its perversions co-opted and appropriated by the colonial center.[13] In this connection, R.G. Collingwood states:

> An inquiry into the nature of historical thinking is among the tasks which philosophy may legitimately undertake...at particular periods of history, particular philosophical problems are, as it were, in season, and claim the special attention of a philosopher anxious to be of service to his age. In part, the problems of philosophy are unchanging; in part, they vary from age to age....[14]

While we are not quite convinced with the treatment of history as a mere collection of certain so-called grand narratives, we are also not entirely in consonance with the politics-from-below point of view that tends to examine history as an absolute discourse in terms of black and white. We cannot possibly afford to discuss our categories of analysis in straitjacketed terms like either the subaltern or the elite. We do not feel comfortable with such 'absolute' categories and would rather prefer to interrogate these in order to explore other in-between areas of research. This is why, we do not want to look at the subaltern as something that was without any further 'paraphernalia' of identity. There must have been intra-subaltern strife and tension, problems of sustaining a workable stock of *social capital* within the subaltern classes themselves.

V

Organically evolved institutions have a greater chance to succeed in the hands of their subaltern end-users as there is a general sense of identity attending these structures growing out of a sense of social and cultural acceptance and understanding. But what if nothing like this happens, and the people are left with institutions they do not really know how to handle and interact

with? The result is a general gap in communicating with the structures, as in *Othello*, that are supposed to represent legitimacy and hegemony, and this can lead either to resentment or indifference with the kind of politico-legal-cultural ensemble that institutions do generally tend to signify.[15]

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has argued that "They (the 'Subaltern Studies' group) *must* ask, Can the subaltern speak? Here we are within (Michel) Foucault's own discipline of history and with people who acknowledge his influence. Their project is to rethink Indian colonial historiography from the perspective of the discontinuous chain of peasant insurgencies during the colonial occupation. This is indeed the problem of 'the permission to narrate' discussed by Said (1984) ....Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effected. The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of the sexual division of labor, for both of which there is 'evidence.' It is, rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow."[16]

Thus, everything else is really a matter of interrogation: how does one perceive the world around him / her, how would one actually like to react to this given order of reality? This leads us to the ethos of 'high' or dominant politics, and the kind of language (and its discourse) that would be commonly entailed in the framework of such politics.

VI

What we have to understand at this point is the reality of institutions: their usefulness, efficacy and role in nation building and identity formation. This is a somewhat functional approach all right, but it also explains the importance of these structured interfaces for societal interaction and coherence. Ashis Nandy has contended:

> It should be obvious that this way of looking at social intervention and culpability dissolves the crude dichotomy between the study of the elites and the study of the masses or, for that matter, between elitism and mass-line.

> Following traditional wisdom, I like to believe that the story of the prince can never be told without telling the story of the pauper, and that the cause of the pauper can never be independent of the cause of the prince.... As Frantz Fanon recognized, the suffering of the victims cannot but be the sickness of their oppressors and the intranslatability between two sets of life experiences is complete once the rules of translation are identified.[17]

The construct of the subaltern in the context of *Othello* tends to be 'absolute' rather than a relative category of discourse. It certainly has to do with disempowerment in a very fundamental, ontologic sense. Othello cannot apparently envisage his destiny, cannot think and is not even allowed to act within his 'other' terms of discourse.

Obviously, we conclude that Othello as the other has been doubly relegated to the margin of margin — he is first marginalized as the politico-social other and next marginalized as the ontologic other. Such subversion of the Moor's identity has extended across a comprehensive landscape cohered by power / knowledge, a framework of ethos as well as values and a remarkable ensemble structured by hegemony, legitimacy and the politics of ideology; Othello's identity has been transtextualized as the other in the process. Moreover, we can always find disquieting parallels of Othello in other postcolonial contexts and in other histories; and herein lie both the applicability of our organon as well as the roadmap for further innovative research in this area.

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[2]Tyler, *Why People Obey the Law* (New Haven / London: Yale University Press,1990), p.71. Also see John Rawls, 'The Obligation to Obey the Law,' in Robert M. Baird and Stuart E. Rosenbaum (eds.), *Morality and the Law* (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), pp. 125-39.

[3]As cited at the very beginning of the paper.

[4]Reiman, *Justice and Modern Moral Philosophy* (New Haven / London: Yale University Press, 1990), p.27.

[5]Rajni Kothari, on the contrary, writes: "The struggle towards an alternative conception of thought and action has to face the challenge of reformulating and restructuring the dialectic between the locality and the globe. The earlier catch phrase used to be 'Think globally and live locally'. But the new situation is characterised by a radically different perception about the possibility of extending on a universal scale the existing global patterns of living. These global patterns are no longer believed to be extendable in a universal sense."

(*State against Democracy: In search of Humane Governance* [Delhi: Ajanta, 1989], p.9).

[6]"Legitimacy...constitutes the difference between authority and power: Authority is...legitimately exercise power." See James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts / London: Harvard Universitty Press, 1994), p. 470.

[7]See Niklas Luhmann, *Social Systems*, trans. John Bednarz, Jr. *et al* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp.220-21

[8]Certain tropes employed in this have been inspired by Mikhail Bakhtin, Francis Fukuyama, Immanuel Wallerstein, Jacques Derrida, Noam Chomsky and Samuel P. Huntington among others without, however, cluttering up the text notes and references.

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[13]See Homi Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London / New York: Routledge, 1990).

[14] R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), Part 5, p.231.

[15]See James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, *Democratic Governance* (New York / London: The Free Press, 1995), p.246.

[16]Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds.), *The Post- Colonial Studies Reader* (London / New York: Routledge, 1995), pp.24-8.

[17]Ashis Nandy, 'Cultural Frames for Social Transformation: A Credo,' in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds.), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*.

THE HUMAN SUPERNOVA: SOCIETY AS HELIOGABALUS IN THE POSTMODERNIST AMERICAN NOVEL

K.B. Razdan

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the twentieth-century American novel witnessed a radical, almost traumatic and dedoxifying transformation in from, content, theme and imagery. During the late 60's and the entire decades of the 70's and 80's, the American novel in the hands of such astute, innovatory and fabulatory exponents as Jerzy Kosinski, Kurt Vonnegut, William Burroughs, Joseph Heller, Thomas Pynchon and John Hawkes, to name only a few, got imbued with a detotalized totalizing ambience vis-a-vis the protagonistic situation, the nature of fictional experience and, above all, in the depiction of a Kifkaesque scenario in terms of the alazon-eiron syndorme.[1] Inculcating a "telegraphic-schizophrenic manner"[2] in the illustration of narrative, character, societal culture and the "ethos of a mass society,"[3] the aforesaid novelists became cardinally concerned with the portraiture of contemporary man as inhabiting a demonic human world, the "hell that man creates on earth... the world of the nightmare and the scapegoat."[4] Technical, scientific and industrial brilliance, coupled with angst, alienation and anomie, the chronically repulsive encroachment of society upon the self, all these constitute the sociological vision implicit in the American novel written during the penultimate years of the last century. Mankind, repetitively defines itself as a conglomerate of humans, a microcosm of races, cultures, clans and cults, hovering on the brink of apocalyptic dissolution and dismemberment. As an antidote to such a dystopian scenario, some attempt is made, of course in an innovatory fashion, to construct fictionally new models of society, family and even institutions, yet, as in the case of Burroughs, Vonnegut, Hawkes and Kosinski, the society of humans becomes akin to a supernova (an exploding star), tottering on the brink of extinction.

Heliogabalus, an ancient Roman emperor, made himself

notorious and famous in history, like Caligula and Nero. He would sumptuously entertain his guests with an assortment of delicacies and dainty dishes, and after a hearty meal, have all his invitees roasted alive in an iron bull! Such an apostatic hellish and tribulatory picture of society is what we witness in John Hawkes's *Death, Sleep and the Traveler* (1974), Heller's *Good as Gold* (1979) and Vonnegut's *Bluebeard* (1987). These deserve special attention, though other works of their contemporaries become equally prominent in the genre of disturbing and apocalyptically unsettling works. The above-mentioned novels have been chosen because of the twin metaphors of 'Supernova' and 'Heliogabalus', operating in the fictional cosmos of these works. Cumulatively, these three novels, with a kind of metronomic regularity, depict, through the delineation of the central protagonists, the burden and ambivalence of personal responsibility in a world, which accommodates and eulogizes evil.

John Hawkes's *Death, Sleep and the Traveler* (1974) presents a bizarre picture of modern man's society, an existential nightmare in which three characters: Allert (a middle-aged "Hollander"), his wife Ursula, and his friend Peter form the demonic triumvirate of humans presiding over the demise of the institution of marriage, family and productive and progressive human relations. Allert's wife deserts her husband after a long duration of married life, because, as Allert says, "she does not like the Dutch. Yes, Ursula is going off to find somebody very different from myself. An African, she says, or a moody Greek".[5] Hawkes's narrative in Death, Sleep and the Traveler follows a picaresque technique, perhaps due to the detotalizing and ironic self-reflexive essence of action, character and situation. What exactly Hawkes has done with the chronological string of events in the life of the central protagonist, Allert, is to make his hero the first-person singular narrator, a human being whose expertise churns out fantasies in regular succession. The derailment of Allert's inner psyche, as a consequence of encapsulation of his self by a fractured and dismantling society, is made implict in this confessional statement, while describing himself through his first name:

"clearly a repository for the English word 'alert' as if the name is thousand year old clay receptacle with paranoia curled in the shape of a child's skeleton inside" (*DST*.3).

In tune with the dismantling of the family, the break-up of the husband-wife relationship, as a corollary to the debasing properties of an animalistic culture, Allert's revelatory journey to self-awareness gets thwarted and imbued with terror and pathos. Hawkes's fictional hero tries to invent all kinds of excuses and justifications for his wife's departure. Suspicions bordering upon paranoia, even somnambulism, nibble away at Allert's mind. A "psychic leakage", as Bernard Malamud once termed such visionary preoccupations, is what governs, shapes and directs the plot and the action as well as character, in the fictive world of *Death, Sleep and the Traveler*. The terrors, beauties and blackness of the human imagination, all these become manifest in the person of Allert as Hawkes makes him traverse nightmarish landscapes "in order to discover the mainstream of psychic life."[6] The narrative soon unfolds a demonic arrangement in which Allert, his wife Ursula and a family friend, Peter, form a love-triangle. Paradoxically, jealousy, anxiety, and even nerousis, pervade Allert's descriptions of the three humans together. Strangely enough and metaphorically speaking, all the three — Allert, Ursula, and Peter — enter the iron bull of Heliogabalus, only to get "roasted" alive in a macabre drama of dedoxified identities and dismembered beings.

In one of the scenes, typical of the demonic human world and a perverted social ethos, Allert is shown as stealing into Ursula's bedroom and covertly having sex with her in order not to disturb Peter, who is sleeping in the same bed. In yet another scene, Peter and Ursula leave Allert to his prodigious collection of pornography, while both proceed to the bedroom. The most repellent, obnoxious and psychically nightmarish occurrence takes places when Peter, Ursula and Allert are shown as sitting in Peter's sauna, where Ursula performs oral sex on the two men, and Allert for whom sex and death remain chronically contagious lapses mentally into a trance-like state after Ursula's unnatural

act, and his words become symbolically symptomatic of a return to the womb: "I felt myself disgorging, disengaging, sinking, curling slowly into a gigantic ball like some enormous happy animal armed with quills" (*DST* 94).

The complex nuances of the Peter-Ursula-Allert triangle get confounded by Allert's involvement in another sexual triangle. After a spectacular orgiastic celebration of her relationship with Peter and Allert, Ursula suggests that Allert should go on a voyage (an ocean voyage) so that she is able to spend more time alone with Peter. Allert complies and during his voyage, metaphor for his own psychic journey, he becomes involved with a young woman, Ariane, and the ship's wireless operator, Olaf. This bizarre drama, like a battle of attrition, ends with Ariane's death, Olaf's nervous breakdown and Allert's arraignment on charges of possibly murdering Ariane. Allert is finally acquitted, but Ursula suspects him to be the murderer and torments him during the trial, and even years later, all the time questioning Allert about his innocence. *Death, Sleep and the Traveler* finally resolves both the triangles, the Allert-Ursula-Peter triangle and the Allert-Ariane-Olaf one through death. Peter dies suddenly of a heart attack, Ariane being already dead. Both triangles end in death. *Death, Sleep and the Traveler* cumulativley presents in the person of the central protagonist Allert an existentially Kaleidoscopic scenario of a perverted world of humans, who, while being the denizens of a so-called affluent, glamorous and exciting society, fail miserably to negotiate their own beings. Allert is his own *Alazon* and *Eiron*, an introverted 'voyager' suspended between death and sleep.

As a modernist and postmodernist writer of 20th century America, Helleris appraised as a novelist who presents to the reader, "a dark modernist view of man's position in an incalculable world."[7] Heller's protagonists, inhabitants of a societal 'waste-land', generally live and operate in a world full of bondage, pain and confusion. The epicentric problem, ostensibly, in *Good as Gold* (1979) is projected as a seemingly insurmountable existential affliction: how man may survive as a creature fully possessed of his human qualities, in touch "with the axial lines of existence

in a tangled world."[8] Heller's social vision in *Good as Gold,* again, brings us to the analogy of the cosmic supernova and the Roman Heliogabalus. Bruce Gold, the Jewish hero of the novel, is a University professor, a human being grappling wiht ennui, loss of identity and, above all, alienation and rootlessness. Gold's family scenario is typical of an emasculating and enervating society (the iron bull of Heliogabalus). His wife Belle, two sons and a daughter, and Bruce himself, present a discordant and mutually repulsive microcosm of the Jewish American family. Out of sheer desperation, helplessness and perhaps looking for an antidote to his domestic trials and tribulations, Gold has a number of extra-marital liaisons and climaxes his personal ironic odyssey with dabbling in Washington life and White House politics. Bitten by the Mammon bug, Gold takes up political assignments including authorial ventures. Finally, a wiser and chastened man at the end, Bruce gets shaken by the death of his brother, Sid, realizes the futility of power, rather craving for and chasing power, and goes back to the existential sanctuary, his family.

Dealing with absurd and meaningless syllabi and motivated and manipulative politics, Gold's intra-personal relationships become totally effete, defeatist and virtually Kafkaesque in their essence. Burce Gold gets so much dedoxified at the hands of 'Heliogabalus' that he craves for release. Even Gold's inter-family scenario is no better. The tripartite hierarchical structure of Gold's household — his father Julius Gold, he himself and finally his children —, besides depicting the ethical deterioration, clearly reveals the fact that each succeeding generation moves further away from its racial and ethnic identity. A progressive decline sets in. Gold's world shines like a luminous star, the society he travels across glitters with money, power politics and sex, and yet is on the verge of explosion and does 'explode' at the end when Bruce Gold, having undergone the alazon odyssey, returns to the 'black hole', his family.

Good as Gold as a postmodernist work also presents the family, not as an existential oasis, but a sterile wasteland and perverted work. Gold's father, Julius Gold, entertains a chronic

obsession to maintain somehow a stranglehold over the family. Scenes depicting the Gold household at dinner become symptomatic of farce and stupidity. The hero entertains a pervasive hatred for his father and brother, though occasionally entertaining some gratitude and pity toward his four older sisters. Gold's stepmother, his father's second wife, Gousei Gold, provides a touch of real insanity to the existing dementia. This moronish, almost schizophrenic woman, further dismantles the already sullied gamut of relationships in the human world of *Good as Gold.* She is a veritable reincarnation of Heliogabalus and what completes the picture of absurdity, as already pointed out, is the person of the senior Gold.

Kurt Vonnegut's *Bluebeard* (1987) is the first-person autobiographical narrative of a man, Rabo Karabekian, who was "in on the founding of the first major art movement to originate in the United States, Abstract Expressionism."[9] War, genocide, exploitation, family disintegration, adultery, hypocrisy, etc., constitute the recurrent motifs in *Bluebeard.* Who is Bluebeard? Well, the narrative interestingly explains it:

> A fictitious character in a very old children's tale, possibly based loosely on a murderous nobleman of long ago. In the story he has married many times. He marries for the umpteenth time, and brings his latest child bride back to his caste. He tells her that she can go into any room but one, whose door he shows her... she takes a look when she thinks he isn't home but he really is home.
>
> He catches her just at the point she is gazing aghast at the bodies of all his former wives in there all of whom he has murdered...for looking behind the door.

The Bluebeard symbol — monstrous, tyrannous, repulsive, abominable and horrendous — applies also to the iron bull of the Roman, Heliogabalus. Ostensibly, Vonnegut also chooses his name because of a secret chamber, which Rabo keeps always, locked in his huge mansion. Vonnegut's hero writes his autobiography in the mansion of his waterfront estate in East Hampton, Long Island, New York, in the year 1986. Rabo's mansion houses the largest collection of Abstract Expressionist paintings (paintings done by himself), and these he has acquired as repayment of small loans to colleagues in the early days of the movement, when

"paintings about absolutely nothing but themselves were considered worthless."[10]

Rabo's depiction of life in his paintings conforms to a true picture of a world of pain, agony, torture and violence. Sagas of lost families, survivors of the Turkish massacre of Armenians just after the First World War, and above all, scenes of innocent little girls dying of diphtheria, pneumonia, smallpox and what not. Later on, the bull of Heliogabalus, or the secret chamber of Bluebeard would get mainifested in the form of "miscarriages, violent husbands, poverty, widowhood, prostitution, death and burial in potter's field."[11] Two women zoom across Rabo's life. One called Marilee Kemp, the mistress of the Armenian illustrator, Dan Gregory, comes into the early life of the hero. The other one Circe Berman, a plain, frank, ruthless and highly realistic spokesperson of American civilization, intrudes uninvited into Rabo's mansion when he is writing his autobiography. Reminding one of Homer's enchantress, Circe, in *Odyssey*, Vonnegut's modern Circe dresses erotically, talks disparagingly about Rabo's art and, time and again, teases, torments and even bullies the hero in true Amazonian style. Circe Berman drives Rabo to distraction, and he says: "what a sexual bully she could be" (*B* 113). She looked "overwhelmingly erotic — her voluptuous figure exaggerated and cocked this way and that way as she teetered on high heeled, golden dancing shoes. Her skintight cocktail dress was cut low in front, shamelessly displaying her luscious orbs" (*B* 13). Instead of apologizing or feeling sorry, Circe declares that it is she who has resurrected Rabo and made him write his autobiography besides making him live again: "You are my Lazarus. All Jesus did for Lazarus was bring him back to life" (*B* 115).

Rabo Karabekian as a typical Vonnegut hero belongs as usual to a demonic human world of bondage, pain and confusion. *Bluebeard*, with the narrative flashing like an oscillating beam of light, displays insights into the world of Rabo's youth (Dan Gregory and Marilee Kemp) and his old age when he is writing his autobiography (Circe Berman). Practically, there is little to choose between these two worlds: both the scenarios project a dismal

and unwanted picture of twentieth century man and his culture and civilization. Be it 1918 or 1929, 1945 or 1986: it is the same dithyrambic dance of death, violence, rape, arsoon, loot and genocide — in fact, every conceivable monstrosity that one can think about. Marilee's calculated seduction of Rabo when he was a raw and inexperienced young man, aspiring to be as great an artist as Dan Gregory, or the hero's torture and getting abandoned and deserted by his wives and, finally, Rabo's agony at being toyed with in his old age by Circe Berman, Vonnegut gives it full-blast. Gregory's words here become symptomatic of a diseased and perverted mind:

> ...modern art is the work of swindlers and lunatics and degenerates...and the fact that many people are now taking it seriously proves to me that the world has gone mad. (*B* 123-24)

In his autobiography, Rabo also tells about the fate of his painter friends, and his revelatory statement epitomizes the nightmarish essence of a demonic human world (sympbolically, the roasting iron bull of Heliograbalus):

> Arshile Gorky hanged himself in 1948. Jackson Pollack, while drunk, drove his car into a tree along a deserted road in 1956. That was right before my first wife and kids walked out on me. Three weeks later, Terry Kitchen shot himself through the roof of his mouth with a pistol....Yes, and Mark Rothko...slashed himself to death with a knife in 1970. (*B* 133)

The fictional present of *Bluebeard* is the year 1987, the same year in which Rabo is writing autobiography. Existential afflictions like alienation, family disintegration and dehumanization, the products of postmodernist deculture and dedoxification, become the targets of Vonnegut's irony and satire. As a writer, Vonnegut may appear as an apocalyptist, but at heart he is a gradualist, a humanist whose only abiding concern becomes the future of mankind on a planet whose resources are being ruthlessly pillaged and plundered by a rational animal called homo-sapiens. Rabo's quest in the novel makes him earn the status of the alazon-eiron individual. He miserably fails to attain self-affirmation in his life through his artistic pursuits, nor is he successful is negotiating the encapsulating ethos of a mass society. *Bluebeard* as a postmodernist work depicts, finally, the predicament of the contemporary human self in a society or culture, which calls for total

surrender. It is really a spectcle of Heliogablus being at large. In *Breakfast of Champions* (1973), Kilgore Trout, Vonnegut's famous sciencefiction writer who appears in most of his novels, tells his pet parrot: "We are all Heliogabalus, Bill."

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[1]The words *alazon* and *eiron* are antithetical in meaning and have a linguistic origin in ancient Greek literature. *Alazon* is the compulsive rebel, who also becomes the rebel-victim and *eiron* is the gentle, unrevolting, meek and humble individual, who accepts his fate ungrudgingly.

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AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES IN THE POETRY OF JUDITH WRIGHT

Attia Abid

After the American War of Independence, Britain looked to establish new penal settlements to replace the North Atlantic colonies. From 1788, for a century and a half, most of the settlers in Australia were from the British Isles. The land had its original inhabitants, and from rock engravings it is surmised that they had lived there for approximately 175,000 years, giving birth to one of the oldest cultures of the world. However, generations of immigrants continued to push the Frontier back, and the Aborigines, inspite of their complex social system and highly developed spiritual traditions reflecting their deep connection with the land and environment, were marginalised, neglected and abused. In 1981 the World Council of Churches condemned the Australian Government's attitude to the Aborigines as "racist and discriminatory, entrenched in every aspect of its society."[1] At present, of a total population of nineteen million, 360,000 are Aborigines, belonging to a hundred plus tribes whose life expectancy is "twenty years shorter than the rest of society and they are the community's poorest, least educated and most jailed people."[2] At the recent Perth Film Festival, Alice Haines, a half-aboriginal (Gommilliroi father and white mother) actress spoke of her quest for identity in a mixed-up world. Chronicling a forgotten piece of Australian history, she says, "Home is where your heart is, and where your head is, and where your land is. My heart was broken, my head was all messed up, and my land was taken. I had no home."[3]

The past few decades have seen the emergence of a strong body of Aboriginal writing in English including a literature of social protest. Kath Walker, a part-aboriginal (Spanish-Koori) poetess, joins others in desiring a resurgence of racial pride. She sees it as her responsibility "to record the aspirations and frustrations of the aboriginal people; her message is that the Aboriginal deserves a place in Australian society equal to that of the white man but without the forfeiture of his own identity and culture."[4] Right from the outset the racial contact between the Whites and

the "sable race" was recorded in the form of memoirs, reminiscences, poetry, fiction and other genres, but it was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that the Aborigines' presence in Literature was marked. The poets like Charles Harpur, Henry Kendall and George Gorden McCrae must be mentioned in this regard. The turn of the century saw the Radical Nationalist Movement, and new attitudes gradually evolved. Judith Wright opines: "The traces of the various changes in our attitudes to the aboriginals are embalmed in our verse."[5] The Jindyworabak Movement gave a jingoistic fervour to Australian Poetry during World War II. It also vigorously advocated the use of aboriginal life and mythology. Their main slogan was "Australia for Australians", and their desire was "to present Aboriginal lore as an example to white Australians in the hope that they might establish an equivalent affinity with the Australian landscape."[6] Rex Ingamells, the founder of the Jindyworobak Club in Adelaide, took the name from the Aborigines' glossary meaning "to annex, to join", and epitomized the spirit behind the Movement.

In 1938 Judith Wright returned to Australia from Europe. She read her grandfather, Albert Wright's voluminous diaries covering the period 1866-1890, and conceived the project of writing the history of her family in Australia in the nineteenth century; they were early settlers in the Hunter Valley. Thus, writing of *The Generations of Men* (1956) was an act of imaginative self-consciousness, a fifth generation Australian's probings of roots and continuities in the lives of her forbears. It is among other things, an attempt to discern in these lives larger historical and social patterns, the disturbing history of the Aboriginal dispossession being one. Moreover, the Jindyworobak Movement was in full swing when she was flowering into a poetess in the 1940's. She was also associated with the "Meanjin" for some time. Her interest was unsentimental and academic. Because the Movement sought to salvage a race and a set of mythology, it appealed to her conservationist mind. The fact that the Aborigines were the real Australians, humiliated and dispossessed by the white settlers, gave her a guitly conscience, and, in her lecture "Aboriginals in Australian Poetry," she offers a comprehensive survey of the

subject and gives the readers a direct access to her own attitude towards them. Inspired by Rousseau's concept of the Noble Savage, she is never prepared to condone the crimes against them. In the lecture she observes: "The complete lack of understanding of the basis of Aboriginal life is only now, and very slowly, being remedied. So the process of 'civilising' Australia was a process of slaughtering in more or less overt ways, the original inhabitants."[7] However, as a woman, she feels herself in a privileged position to support them: "The burden of guilt is on the men, and where a woman could step out of line to express compassion and indignation, a man who did so would have been more harshly viewed."[8] Because the Jindyworobak Movement vigorously advocated the use of Aboriginal life and mythology, perhaps it proved reassuring to her in maintaining a pro-aborigine stance from the very beginning. "Bora Ring," "Nigger's Leap: New England" and "Half Caste Girl" are her earliest pieces on Aborigines and have been included in her first volume of poetry, *The Moving Image* (1946). A D Hope, a contemporary and leading poet of the region, says that they "evoke Australia's pre-history and the tragic fate of its inhabitants."[9] Other volumes, too, pursue the same theme showing that her interest does not slacken. "Old House" and "At Cooloola" not only lament the ethnic cleansing, but also give vent to a profound sense of guilt complex at the human rights violations.

Of all the poems on the subject, "Bora Ring" has perhaps attracted the widest critical attention. It is a nostalgic commemoration of the dance and corroboree of the aborigines which is no more to be seen, leading F R Brissenden to call it her "epitaph" of the Jindyworobaks. It deserves to be rated as the most Australian poem of her poems because of its theme, background and tone. No doubt, it is an elegy on the destruction and death of a culture and way of life:

> The song is gone; the dance is secret
> with the dancers in the earth,
> the rituals useless, and the tribal story
> lost in an alien tale.[10]

She has peopled a landscape which in actuality is desolate except for its ring of grass and its apple-gums, and by evoking the rider's fantasy of a "sightless shadow" the momentary expression of his

obscurely felt sense of fear and guilt are dramatised:

> Only the rider's heart
> halts at a sightless shadow, an unsaid word
> that fastens in the blood the ancient curse,
> the fear as old as Cain.[11]

Thus here, as elsewhere in her poetry, natural objects and events become the starting point for self-conscious reflection. Perhaps, she has in mind the Alchera myth of the Arunta tribe according to which spirits continued to dwell in places where they had lived their incarnated lives. Moreover, the pathos is heart-rending as is the irony because that is also the fate of the pioneers in the landmark poem "Bullocky":

> The hunter is gone: the spear
> is splintered underground; the painted bodies
> a dream the world breathed sleeping and forgot,
> the nomad feet are still.[12]

"Nigger's Leap: New England", though ostensibly evoking the depressing war-milieu, once again addresses a most disturbing question to the conscience of those who hold the Nigger's life very cheap; it sounds like a vitriolic attack, a satire, a diatribe, evoking a sense of repulsion at acts of savagery and barbarity:

> Did we know their blood channelled our rivers.
> And the black dust our crop ate was their dust?[13]

Then follows the great message that "all men are one man at last,"[14] and that the victims of racial prejudice are "ourselves writ large."[15] If the present trend is allowed to go unarrested, the poet fears that the whole unfortunate tribe may wholly disappear:

> Never from earth again the coolamon
> or thin black children dancing like the shadows
> of saplings in the wind.[16]

The "Two Dreamtimes" is her longest and maturest poem on the problem of Aborigines, as also on the "arrogant guilt" which she is heir to. It is addressed to Kath Walker, a member of the Noonuccal tribe, which can no longer boast of any full-blooded aboriginal. Walker received fairly extensive critical attention in Judith Wright's lecture on "The Voice of Aboriginals" delivered in Honolulu in 1974. In 1964 Kath Walker had published her first book of poems, also the first by an Aboriginal. She tried to bring about a change of heart among the Whites, but Judith Wright is anguished:

A knife's between us. My righteous kin
still have cruel faces

.....

I am born of the conquerors.
You of the persecuted.
Raped by rum and an alien law,
Progress and economics.[17]

Here Kath Walker does not remain an individual, but becomes a representative of her whole race exploited and dehumanised in the name of civilization and colonial expansion. There is a warning also, "Trust none — not even the poets,"[18] implying that amity and harmony are mere illusions, mirages. There is a sense of consolation, though "we are grown into a changed world [and] can exhange our separate griefs / over the drinks at night."[19] The interaction that was prohibited by elders during childhood becomes possible with maturity and freedom.

Though Judith Wright has used myths as varied as Dr. Faustus, Judas, Shiva and Krishna, etc, she relies on her own forte as a myth maker. However, she greatly esteems aboriginal legends and rituals; they are dear to her heart, and she refers to the "complex ritual connections / between culture and nature."[20] In "Cedar Park" she deferentially observes:

The Myths of primitive people
can reveal codes
we may interpret.[21]

To her the Aborigines have never been the unenlightened heathen, spending "their time in illicit joy and love unhallowed",[22] needing the Gospel for their cultural and moral edification. Though she occasionally draws upon aboriginal rituals and mythology like Aruaka, Alcheringa, Ishtar, Buniyap, corroboree, bora ring, etc., she abstains from giving full-length treatment to any item or aspect of it because she cannot accept a ready-made set of myths, and her own creations have the mystique and profundity of traditional ones. The "New Guinea Legend" is not only an absorbing aboriginal story, but it also eulogises the poet, an Aruako with the sun as a "burning father" and the jungle as an "angry mother"; the myth lends it an aura of primevalism, striking a cosmic note at the same time. *The Cry for the Dead* is a prose work of anthropological

significance published in the 1980's. The title is significant not only because it is a tribute to the martyrs on the altar of aggrandisement, but because it calls up a tradition, a custom of the Aborigines to waken their camps in the morning with a chant for the recently dead. Judith Wright has once again used her grandfather's diaries to study Australia's pastoral history and its effect on the Aborigine and on the country which is naturally a very depressing subject for her.

Thus, There is continuity and development in her work, ranging from the genres of poetry to prose. With reference to the Aborigines, her poetry goes hand in hand with the novels of Patrick White, and does not only echo indignation and idealism, but also rises to a higher plane of "rehabilitation and transcendence,"[23] resulting in the emergence of a "heightened consciousness of Australia in Australia."[24]

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INDIVIDUALISM VS COLLECTIVISM IN MORRISON'S *SULA* AND *BELOVED*

Monika Gupta

Toni Morrison is the second American woman and the first Afro-American woman to get the Nobel Prize for Literature. After completing her studies she came to Cornell where she wrote her thesis on the theme of suicide in the works of William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf. Here she married Harold Morrison, a Jamaican architect. But her marriage dissolved even before her second son was born. At the age of thirty nine she published her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, and from there she did not need look back. Being a female, or rather black female, she has justified her characters in an admirable way. Woman as a creature or a human being is the most beautiful creation of God. It is true that "the body of woman is one of the essential elements in her situation in the world, but the body is not enough to define her as woman."[1] Similarly, Sigmund Freud defines women as "powerful sex class".[2]

Among the women of all cultures, the black woman, has a distinctive place. Leaving her own African culture, she has been placed in the white Euro-Christian culture. In spite of this kind of conflicting situation, she has always maintained ideals of womanhood. A female has to suffer many things and being a black female she has to suffer from racism, sexism and classism. Almost in most of the cases, black women were discarded by both the 'white' and the 'black' men. During the days of slave-tradition the black man was not free to form a family. If he were able to form a family, he would fail to protect it, and so he used to run away and desert his family. Under these circumstances, it is the black woman who took the responsibilities of her family, house and children. It resulted in the conversion of the Afro-American society to a "matriarch". The black woman is doubly enslaved in white patriarchal, racist society. She becomes a second-class citizen of America. She has her own experiences — political, racial, sexual and emotional. All these experiences are taken up by Toni Morrison. She is concerned with the agony of being a black oppressed by the whites. Her novels deal with the primary issues

of black life and culture. She admits: "When I view the world, perceive it and write about it, it is the world of black people. I just know that when I'm trying to develop the various themes I write about, the people who best manifest those themes for me are the black people whom I invent."[3] Her second novel, *Sula*, deals with women-women relationship. Her prime concern is to celebrate the unique culture which the black women have managed to develop in the hostile environment of white America.

Among the women of all cultures, the black woman has a unique position. She has drawn attention the world wide. But her dilemma is as peculiar as a woman placed in the larger white society. She is doubly oppressed, racially and sexually. Her history in America is the history of "the other woman."[4] In this article I will try to discuss Toni Morrison's two novels, i.e. *Sula* and *Beloved*, though these are different in themes. On the one hand, the major characters of *Sula*, Sula and Nel, try to establish their identities in the male dominated society, and on the other, in *Beloved* Sethe gives relief to her life and family through collective efforts. This may be called Morrison's attempt to raise the question of 'individualism' vis-a-vis 'collectivism', but in both the cases women fight against their fate and circumstances, despite the fact that they have "felt sense of self, a culturally conditioned or constructed subjective identity."[5]

Sula is a story of two friends — Sula and Nel, opposite of each other in nature. Other than Sula and Nel, Eva Peace, the grand-mother of Sula, has a significant place in the novel. She hates her husband Boy Boy, but does not hate other men. She accepts this fact that her primary concerns are her children. Despite having only one leg, she presides once the house from a wagon on the third floor. Out of women delineated in the novel, it is only Eva who has utmost capacity for authenticity in caretaking. Throughout her life neither she leaves the community nor does she compromise with others. Generally, she performs the caring activities herself. Morrison describes: "Eva, old as she was, and with one leg, had a regular flock of gentleman callers, and although she did not participate in the act of love, there was a good deal of teasing and pecking and laughter."[6] The most

significant part of her character is her sacrificial attitude. Abandoned by her husband, Boy Boy, she struggles to feed her three starving children, Hannah, Plum and Pearl. She leaves them with a neighbour and appears after eighteen months, with one leg missing. In another pathetic incident, her son Plum returns home after the war as a defeated junkie, and she cannot tolerate her pain on seeing his disintegration. Eva mourns Plum, however, before she burns him, grieving that her child's personality has died. Moreover, when Hannah asks why she has killed Plum, Eva does not lie. Morrison in characterizing Eva Peace has pointed out the distinctive features of black American writers who "are sort of timeless people whose relationship to the characters are benevolent, instructive, and protective, and provide a certain kind of wisdom."[7]

Some of the caring and sacrificial qualities have been inherited by Eva's daughter Hannah, who is not a fully developed character. Hannah is married to Rekus, but after his death she never bothers to remarry. She refuses to live without the support of a man. She takes a steady sequence of lovers, mostly the husbands of her friends and neighbours. Hannah does not need any intimate relationship with anyone; all she needs to feel fulfilled is to be touched: "What she wanted, after Rekus died, and what she succeeded in having more often than not, was some touching every day."[8] She is in doubt about Eva's feeling for her, but the latter knows that she loves her, though cannot like her. She has no concern for the norms or roles prescribed by society. She wants to enjoy life, instead of being a wife, a lover, or a prostitute.

Sula, the protagonist of the novel, under the influence of this kind of family atmosphere, adopts a character which can be called rebellious. From the very beginning she is brought up in a family where women's reign is supreme. Unlike other Medallion women, including Eva and Hannah, Sula refuses to accept the traditional role of a woman. She is in search of her selfhood. She is liberated and is hardly bothered about moral codes. Actually speaking, the novel is named after Sula but her character is incomplete without Nel. They belong to different families, but even then Sula in her

search of selfhood always gets in touch with Nel. For Sula, death is the last trial the individual must endure before attaining life. Death is the tragic end that allows another beginning. Morrison proves that a person alone is only half. Sula's rebellious nature doesn't permit her to adopt and accept the rules and regulations set by the society. She wants to prove her 'self' supreme without taking her status into consideration as a black and thattoo a woman. All the Peace women — Eva, Hannah and Sula — act and feel good about their lives when they sabotage the status quo. Sula is a free spirit and declares to Nel:

> " ... Me, I'm going down like one of those redwoods, I sure did live in this world."
> "Really?" what have you go to show for it?"
> "Show? To who' ... I got my mind. And what goes on in it. Which is to say, I got me."
> "Lonely, ain't it?"
> "Yes. But My lonely is *mine.*"[9]

Helen Sabat is a daughter of Creole Whore and her grand mother took her away from her mother, who was a prostitute. She is married to Wiley Wright and moved to Ohio, where she sets a standard for communal rectitude. She gives all possible good qualities to her daughter Nel, which can make her a productive member of society — politeness, neatness, cleanliness, obedience and hard work. Helene has successfully assimilated white values in a very dignified and graceful manner. In her community Helene becomes an impressive and respected woman, also stern and rigid in discipline. Nancy Chodorow writes: " ... a woman identifies with her mother and through identification with her child, she (re) experiences herself as a cared-for-child."[10] Contrary to Sula's character, Nel Wright's concept of love and female sexuality is rooted in possessiveness when she returns to the Bottom aware of her separate identity. "I'm me. I am not their daughter. I am not Nel. I'm me. Me."[11] She accepts her role as wife and mother. After her marriage to Jude, she values duty and tradition more than self. When Sula takes Jude as a lover, Nel fears looking at any other man. Nel has the capability to attain moral maturity and enjoy authentic relations with others. Throughout the novel

she and Sula live in such a way as they appear to complement each other. Both the girls are fatherless, and learn their lessons from their mothers, and in each case the mothers fail their daughters. Sula completely disregards her womanly responsibility set by the community, whereas Nel merges with the community itself.

Morrison's fifth novel, *Beloved,* which won the Pulitzer prize for fiction in 1987, deals with the life of a female slave, Sethe, who kills her own daughter to prevent her from the ancient suffering. She has used *Beloved* to demonstrate that collectivism can eradicate the national oppression and the class exploitation of black people. African people can survive and live in solidarity only when they are united. As a black female writer, she has presented people, who are living on the edge of life and death, and have managed to create a culture and keep their history alive. Through universal value system she has drawn a fine line between black culture and other cultures. Certainly, *Beloved* is about slavery, but it is not a "call for the abolition of slavery as it is a story narrated to a twentieth century audience."[12]

In *Beloved*, Morrison, like a film director, shows us a complete documentary on the history of Africa in slavery. Male, female, children and adults are treated as beasts of burden; and black women sexually and physically are exploited by white men. The protagonist of the novel, Sethe, understands her status and position when she faces the cruelty, violence and degradation. The nefarious system of slavery hardly allowed an individual identity to the black woman, let alone the recognition of her entity. Black women's dilemma was peculiar as a woman placed in the larger white society where she was racially and sexually oppressed. *Beloved* is the story based upon a real and true incident in which Margret Garner, a fugitive from Kentucky, attempts to kill her children rather than have them re-enslaved. Morrison insists that a useful black history should not be solely concerned with public and political issues related to Afro-Americans. She prompts her readers to consider what does not get recorded about the realities of black life in America. Morrison points out in an interview:

> The book was not about an institution — slavery with a capital S. It was about these anonymous people called slaves .... What they are willing to risk, however

long it lasts, in order to relate to one another — that was incredible to me.[13]

Apart from exploitation, dehumanization, degradation and theft of labor, Morrison mainly focuses on the tortures of slavery and of post-War violence against African-Americans. Sethe, the protagonist of the novel, is born of a slave mother, a victim of both sexist and racist oppression. Sethe is married to Halle, but when he fails to protect her from milk thieves, she rejects him with firm determination. She was only thirteen when she came to Sweet Home, which was neither sweet nor home. After two years she was married to Halle and gave birth to three children, Howard, Buglar and Denver. But after the death of Mr. Garner she faced sad experiences, brutality and different types of evils of slavery. Her maternal urge is beautifully described by Morrison:

> Anybody could smell me long before he saw me. And when he saw me he'd see the drops of it on the front of my dress. Nothing I could do about it. All I knew was I had to get my milk to my baby girl. Nobody was going to nurse her like me.[14]

Women-women relationship which is prominent in both the novels, *Sula* and *Beloved,* is true when we see how Baby Suggs, Sethe's mother-in-law, who is supportive, strong and big-hearted, helps her in every tough and crucial circumstance. Each character in *Beloved* proves that one can survive and live happily, once one shares a feeling of togetherness. Stamp Paid, Baby Suggs and Hi Man set an example for other Africans to realize the effective principle of collectivism. Living in a society victimized by racial discrimination for ages, channelization of love and friendship through collectivism can be the only solution. The pangs of slavery, which almost tarnish the dreams of good life, make Sethe determined to give freedom to her children, and that results in the killing of Beloved. After eighteen years, the title character, re-emerges when Paul D, Sethe and Denver are about to settle back into a happy family. Beloved appears mysteriously into Sethe house. She sleeps most of the day, waking to drink water or fed. Denver concludes that this is surely the murdered infant returned from the dead. After a thorough reading of the novel, *Beloved*, it may be concluded that Beloved's ghost is a manifestation of Sethe's guilt-conscience. When Denver asks Beloved:

> "What did you come back for?"

> Beloved smiled. "To see her [Sethe] face."

Beloved remains spirit until her mother names her by providing a tombstone for her grave. Beloved is an aspect of Sethe's life but she is also the incarnation of the "Sixty Million and more" victims of slavery.

Decision of killing their babies for Eva Peace and Sethe has different reasons; or rather, it becomes necessity for both the mothers. Eva kills her son Plum because she is not able to accept his self-destructive behavior and slovenliness. Like tigress, she puts him on the fire. In the case of Sethe, she has accepted the truth that death is nothing but continuation of life in a different form. So, she feels that death will be a better way than a life of slavery. Both Eva and Sethe are interested in protecting their family by providing sustenance and life.

Through *Beloved,* Morrison has raised a burning question: Has a mother the right to kill her child? Every reader or individual may have different opinion, but the protagonist of the novel Sethe thinks and acts what is true and necessary for her children. Sethe is determined and very tough in taking this kind of decision. Morrison in *Sula* characterizes Sula, who is determined to make herself even at the risk of distancing herself from other black women, but Sethe in *Beloved* does not care for community because she has no choice. Morrison writes:

> That she lived with 124 in helpless apologetic resignation because she had no choice; that minus husband, sons, mother-in-law, she and her slow witted daughter had to live there all alone making do.[15]

Living in a male chauvinistic world, Sethe is not oppressed by sexual exploitation by the white man as much as by the humiliation of and insult to her nurturing abilities as a mother. Though she escapes from slavery, yet she is haunted by its heritage. Slavery in its drastic and dangerous form is terrible for men, but it is much more terrible for women: "... super added to the burden common to all, they have wrongs and sufferings and mortification peculiarly their own."[16] The questions of 'feminity' and 'femaleness', and also of the 'nurtuting' and 'naturalness' seek fulfilment in their own but different ways. While *Sula* is a story of the struggle for Individual fulfilment, *Beloved* bears the solution

of solidarity as its theme. Morrison, while portraying her characters, forces them to discover the verisimilitude: "... they must go back to their African heritage if they are to find themselves in the fullest sense."[17] When we talk about the recognition of the Africans at the International level, we find them collectively struggling against a common enemy.

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CONTEMPORARY INDIAN FICTION IN ENGLISH: SOME RECENT TRENDS IN THEMES AND TECHNIQUE

R.S. Pathak

Writing a quarter of a century ago, Uma Parameswaran declared Indian English literature "immature and insignificant." Its future appeared to her "bleak, offering little but the prospect of extinction." She also maintained that this literature seemed "destined to die young" and went to the extent of setting 2000 as "the dirge date" for it.[1] Nothing has, however, happened like this, and during the recent decades Indian writing in English has evoked a widespread interest in India and abroad. What began (in V.K. Gokak's words) as a "hothouse plant" has proved since its verve and vitality, richness and resilience. As Mulk Raj Anand says, it has "come to stay as part of world literature" and cannot be wished away.

Indian writers in English are known today particularly for their achievements in writing fiction. Indian fiction in English did not assume the present shape overnight, but resulted from a series of ceaseless, howsoever unobtrusive, experimentations and innovations taking place surreptitously. However, these experimentations came in a big way after the seventies. Probably the most sensational literary event in this regard took place in 1980 in the form of the publication of *Midnight's Children*. Rushdie's novel inspired a generation of Indian novelists including Amitav Ghoh, Vikram Seth, Allan Sealy, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Tharoor, Farrukh Dhondy, Rohinton Mistry and Firdaus Kanga. *The New York Times* of 16 December 1991 designated these novelists as "Rushdie's Children." The purpose of these novelists, said Rushdie in a different context, has been to relate private lives to public events and to explore the limits of individuality in a country vast and populous and variegated as India.[2] This has resulted in significant changes in perceptions of history, social ethos, culture and politics of the nation, some of which may be briefly mentioned here.

Frederic Jameson has argued that all third-world fiction is

a kind of national allegory.[3] We find a number of Indian English novelists narrativising the nation by presenting its history in their own way. The "chutnification of history" first attempted by Rushdie has since been picked up by others. *Midnight's Children* presents the collective experience of a people and the history of a nation alongside of the personal history of the protagonist. In *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) also the history and the fortunes of Moraes Zogoiby's family are interlinked. If the signals of history are not heeded to, we are told, "Burlesque buffons [will be] drafted into histories' theatre on account of the lack of greater men. ...Madam History must make do with what she can get."[4] Rushdie takes liberty with historical facts and the sequence of dates and events — even the date of Gandhi's death has been given incorrectly in *Midnight's Children* — with a view to recasting the past to suit his purpose. He writes in *Imaginary Homelands*:

> History is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish, and capable of being given many meanings. Reality is built on our prejudices, misconceptions and ignorance as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge.[5]

Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) aims at presenting the contemporary political reality in terms of myths and legends of India's remote past. If *Midnight's Children* is about 'broken promises,' *The Great Indian Novel* is about 'betrayed expectations.' The narrator in Tharoor's novel says that "History... — indeed the world, the universe, all human life and so too every institution under which we live — is in constant state of evolution."[6] The novel ends on a note of uncertainty with the narrator waking up from dream to "an India beset with uncertainties, muddling chaotically to the twenty-first century."[7] The novelist claimed to have presented in his novel "an India of multiple realities" and "the multiplicity of truth."[8] The novel suggests that by accepting diversity alone India can escape from the mistakes of the past.

Allan Sealy's first novel, *The Trotter-Nama* (1988), written but not published before *Midnight's Children*, like Rushdie's, originally had a narrator born on the midnight hour of Indian independence. Sealy had to make changes in his plans, but the fate of his narrator still mirrors that of the nation. The convergence, according to him, represents "two writers responding to the same

historical moment. They have read the same book, but the book is India. India is dictating, the country is doing the 'thinking'. We do not write but are written."[9] Like Saleem in *Midnight's Children*, the narrator in Sealy's novel includes everything in his family chronicle. Eugene explicity contrasts his inclusive narrative method with that of European historiography:

> This foul substance is called what?
> The foul substance is called History.
> And its opposite?
> Is the chronicle.
> Which may be illustrated?
> Profusely.
> Is colourful?
> In the extreme....
> .... It is the end of History.

In some respects, Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988) can also be thought of as a historical novel. Like *Midnight's Children*, it is interested in recuperating histories squeezed out of the state's homogenising myth of the nation. Tridib teaches the nameless narrator that all communities are imagined or narrated: "Everyone lives in a story... because stories are all there are to live in, it was just a question of which story." A series of young novelists have followed Ghosh in trying their hands, with varying degree of success, at writing historical narratives that display a revisionary scepticism about narrow definitions of the nation.

Major alterations have taken place during the recent decades in respect of perceptions of values and social commitments and the politics of culture. Today, no institition is sacrosanct and no person venerable. Even the Father of the Nation is not spared. In Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* he is called by one character "the enemy of India's national aspirations."[10] In Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English, August* the person introduced to the narrator turns out to be one Mohandas Gandhi. "Now why does the name sound familiar?," the narrator asks.[11] Mohandas's story ends abruptly with the information that his hand was chopped off for raping one of the tribal women on the sly. Gandhi's statue in the Hall, where the National Integration meeting is to be held, is in such a dilapidated condition that a rod has to be fixed to prop

it up. In Dina Mehta's *And Some Take a Lover*, Roshni's mother regards Gandhi as a "scoundrel and vagrant ... the arch-traitor, the unmentionable, except with abuse," and to another character he is "an example of heroic failure."[12] This irreverence is even more pronounced for Nehru and Indira Gandhi — especially in the novels written by the Parsis, for obvious reasons. In Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey*, for example, Nehru is criticised for the country's "humiliating defeat" at the hands of the Chinese in 1962. The novel also exposes *en route* his frustration, ill temper, political intrigues thriving under his nose and also his "monomaniacal fixation" with "his darling daughter."[13] In *English, August* the narrator's sister is named Indira, which is "very embarrassing" to him. "I have an elder sister," he says, "my parents named her Indira. They do not care for confusing families and generations."[14] In *The Moor's Last Sigh* the dog is called Jawaharlal, and in *Midnight's Children* Indira Gandhi is referred to as Widow. Some of these appellations are rather ungenerous, but the fact remains that reputations of mighty leaders are demolished with characteristic and iconoclastic ruthlessness.

At the socio-cultural level also, the country has witnessed lots of changes. As we look back, the 1950s seem to be a time of wasted opportunities; the euphoria of independence lasted too long, perpetuating the complacency which had set in and the unquestioning acceptance of normative patterns as defined by the West. The 1960s did witness protest and innovation, but this dissent did not transform itself into any wholesale intellectual activity or meaningful social change. The 1970s ushered in a mood of ruthless questioning and repositionings. The assurances of the Gandhi-Nehru era having gone, the dominant attitude became that of mockery and criticism. Various economic and social pressures led to the end of the Nehruvian consensus. The idea of "unity *within*,"[15] as Boehmer calls it, has been since replaced by an urgent need to priortise the issues of imagining the nation and the fate of the midnight's children. In 1970 was published Mamata Kalia's *Tribute to Papa and Other Poems* which with a downright frankness slaps on the face of idealism. The rupture has been

suggested in quite a few fictional works also. For example, the literal cracking of Saleem in *Midnight's Children*, represents the end of one phase — the fracturing of Nehru's promise "to build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell." The fissuring of the body politic recurs in Rukun Advani's *Beethoven Among the Cows* (1994). The death of Nehru in the opening chapter of the novel represents the loss of both the narrator and the nation, the narrator being fear-stricken that he is doomed "to see India crack up like the fragments of my multi-channelled mind." Ranga Rao's *Fowl Filcher* (1987) acknowledges in its own way that "the nation itself has moved from the village centrism of the Gandhian era to the city centrism of the post-Nehru period."[16] In Shama Futehally's *Tara Lane* (1993), to cite one more example, Nehru's promise that "all of us will stand as one" is haunted by bad faith from the moment it is made. As the novel proceeds and the daughter moves out of the cosseted world of the extended family, the sham of the middle-class life is exposed. The family's possessions are constantly wrapped up and un-wrapped and protected zealously: "You had to make sure that the object in question was locked away against thieves, wrapped up against monsoon damp, mothballed against termites, guarded from stains, not paraded before servants."[17] The unity of the Nehruvian image of India is thus shown to be denial of the essential reality of the nation. Lastly, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) also provides a powerful imaginative statement of how the people can find themselves "trapped outside their own history." The romantic plot of the novel stands in an uneasy relation to the larger story of the nation. "Something happened," writes Roy, "when the personal turmoil dropped by at the wayside shrine of a vast, violent, circling, driving ridiculous, insane, unfeasable, public turmoil of a nation."[18] Since 'the God of Small Things' remains in an uneasy relationship with 'the Big God,' the mirror of history, allegorising the nation, gets distorted and cracks.

Several contemporary writers have drawn our attention to the rot that has set in in different walks of life. Social evils and individual weaknesses are exposed bluntly. In *The Great Indian*

Novel, for example, we are told that in modern India "dishonesty is the most prevalent art" and that "power is an end in itself rather than means, where the real political issues of the day involve not principles but parochialism."[19] The narrator of the novel, the modern Veda Vyas, unequivocally admits that in this confused time even he "can no longer distinguish between right and wornng, real and unreal."[20] Even the modern Yudhisthir says: "Let each man live by his own code of conduct, so long as he has one."[21] People, in general, however, do not care for "the basic values ... which do not change."[22] What makes matters worse is the role of the "midnight's parents" like Dhritarastra who have "the blind man's gift of seeing the world not as it is, but as they wanted it to be."[23] Certain other recent novels also contain comments on the cancerous state of the society. *Such a Long Journey*, for example, reminds us that

> ... our beloved country is patient with gangrene at an advanced stage. Dressing the wound or sprinkling rose-water over it to hide the stink of rotting tissue is useless. Fine words and promises will not cure the patient. The decaying part must be excised.[24]

P.V. Narasimha Rao, in his novel named *The Insider* (1998), exposes what he calls "the nauseating art of political make up"[25] and intra-party rivalry. Parallel to the political profile of the country, the social ethos is shown as changing fast:

> By the time... [Indira Gandhi] returned [to power in 1980], new generation had taken over throughout the country, there was a radical change in their aspirations. Thanks to the spread of education, the hunger for land began slowly giving way to the hunger for jobs. It took time for this to be realised at higher levels.[26]

The last two decades have shown how pervasive and far-reaching have been various changes in people's outlook, sense of values and way of life. Modernity has brought about in its wake disillusionment, lack of responsibility, institutionalised adolescence and disappearance of faith in traditional values. This has affected interpersonal relations. New freedoms are claimed as a matter of right. The depiction of man-woman relations reveals an unprecedented frankness. Khushwant Singh and Shobha De have become role models to younger writers in this respect.

At the level of the form also, the new novel is significantly different from the earlier one with its set patterns and staid form.

"The essential pressure for experimentation," as Irving H. Buchen says, "comes from the novelist's conviction that the demands of his vision are so new and urgent and the forms available so inadequate or tired that a new form or hybrid must be created."[27] In this respect also, *Midnight's Children* provided the much-needed model. According to Rushdie, the form represents the very basis of Indian art which is pluralistic. It has got to do with "the combining of many different ways of looking. And if you select one of those ways of looking you make a false pictures.[28] The novelist claims to have borrowed the non-linear, many-fibred and all-inclusive form of his novel from the architecture of Hindu temples. "I thought," said Rushdie, "that I would do that, to make an echo there in the form of the book with that architectural notion."[29] The novel, not unlike the spire of a Hindu temple crowded and swarming with life, has a form characterised by a free-flowing, unbounded, unrestrained and unshackled quality. The novel is at once experimental, interrogative, confessional, polemical and subjective. The narrator, Saleem, is not unaware of the problems involved in conveying experience in a befitting fictional mode. "There are so many stories to tell," says he, " ... such an excess on interwined lives, events, miracles, places, rumours, so dense a commingling of the improbable and the mundane."[30] Events in the novel zigzag from one matter to another and, ultimately, depend on "Memory's truth" which "selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimises, glorifies and vilifies also: but in the end creates its own reality."[31] This concept of fictional mode has led on to interactions with new modes chiefly the French *nouveau roman* and Eastern European and Latin American magical realism.

Besides the "pinwheeling" fictional mode of Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor and Allan Sealy, we also have the "compassionate realism" of R.K. Narayan, Rohintson Mistry and Vikram Seth. In *A Suitable Boy* (1992), when asked what it is like to write a novel, Amit, who seems to represent Seth's views in this regard, remarks:

> I don't know exactly; this is my first novel, and I am in the process of finding out. At the moment it feels like a banyan tree .... What I mean is it sprouts, and grows, and spreads and drops down branches that become trunks and

> intertwine with other branches. Sometimes the main trunk dies, and the structure is held up by the supporting trunks .... But then it's also like the Ganges in its upper, middle and lower courses — including the delta of course.[32]

In an interview, Seth also likened his novel to "a musician's *raag*, starting slowly but picking up speed."[33] The form of the novel in the hands of Indian novelists is undergoing fusion and expansion. In a letter of 17 March 1962, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala wrote to M.E. Derrett that Indian Englilsh novels cannot be really true to their writers' basic artistic instincts until they become "bits of prose-poetry, anecdotes, lots of philosophizing and music, and oblique kind of wit, and ... sinking back into formlessness."[34] Quite a few novelists seem to be striving for this very ideal.

Interestingly, some Indian English novelists have used old forms for new purpose. Raja Rao's adaptation of the folk form to the story of the nationalist struggle is a proof of his interest in literary experimentation. More recently, Gita Hariharan's *A Thousand Faces of Night* (1992) and *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* (1994) have attempted to rewrite folk tales and children's stories. The stories in *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* are reworkings of the tales from the *Panchatantra*, A. W. Ryder's translation of which has been cited in Hariharan's notes. The format of story-within-a-story was exploited by G.V. Desani in *All About H. Hatterr*. Both Desani and Hariharan anticipate something of Vikram Chandra's sense of Indian culture as an infinite set of perpetually circulating narratives. The idea of using traditional Indian literary forms also underpins Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*. According to Sealy, there are various Indian forms that can be "revived and intelligently reworked" so that Indian modernism need not be a wholesale imitation of foreign objects."[35] In his recent novel, *The Everest Hotel* (1998), Sealy himself has used an ancient form used by Kalidas with seasons as the openings of the chapters, which illustrates both the change and continuity of India. Arundhati Roy also places Ammu's story in the context of traditional Hindu narratives. The ferocity of the policemen beating Valutha to death is foreshadowed by a description of Bhima's beating of Dushasana, and the policemen regard a paravan's relationship with a high-caste lady as a parallel to the unrobing of Draupadi in the

Mahabharata by Dushasana. The novelists have frequently made use of some tricks from popular Hindi films. There is also a generous sprinkling of interruptions, subversions, playfulness, self-mockery, parody and so on.

Most Indian writers' "tongue" is said to be "in English chains." But some of them have experimented with the medium in a meaningful way. "We cannot write like the English," says Raja Rao. "We should not. We can write only as Indians." According to Shiv K. Kumar, the most distinctive feature of Indian English poetry is "its experimentation with English as a medium of creative communication, and its basic concern with cultural interaction."[36] Kamala Das is all for the writer's freedom to evolve a language which would suit his purpose. She says: "The language I speak/ Becomes mine, its distortions, its queerness/All mine, mine alone." G.V. Desani, one of the pionners in experimentation in the realm of Indian English fiction, also feels that English needs "to be modified" to serve his purpose.[37] He has been called "a playboy of the English language," "a juggler with words" and even "a lord of language."[37] Desani writes, observes Anthony Burgess in his introduction to *All About H. Hatterr,*

> ... what may be termed whole language, in which philosophical terms, the colloquialisms of Calcutta and London, Shakespearean archaisms, bazar whinings, quack spiels, references to the Hindu pantheon, the jargon of Indian litigation, and shrill babu irritability seethe together. It is not pure; it is like the English of Shakespeare, Joyce and Kipling, gloriously impure.[38]

Salman Rushdie also has resorted to what may be called, using his own phrase, the "chutnification" of the English language. In an article entitled "The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance," which appeared in the *London Times* of 3 July 1982, he has justified what he calls decolonizing of the English language. It may be noted that in this article he remembers Desani and others for "forging English into new shapes" and for demonstrating "how English could be bent and kneaded until it spoke in an authentically Indian voice."[40] Another work which deserves mention in this context is *The God of Small Things* which the Booker jury praised for "extraordinary inventiveness," although on several occasions we come across a juvenile excercise in breaking up sentences

and words and in coupling words, something that Nayantara Sahgal would describe as "too much artifice, all those capital letters and repetitions" (Outlook, 125), and pointless experimentation.

The nativization of English at the hands of Indian writers may involve lexical transfer, translation, shift or adaptation. Indianisms may include the following types of formations: (a) those expressions which are transferred from Indian languages into Indian English; (b) those items which are not necessarily transferred but are only collocationally unusual according to a negative speaker of English; (c) those word which are formed on the analogy of natively used forms of English and are collocationally deviant; (d) those which are formally non-deviant but are culture-bound; and (e) hybrid formations.[41] Some significant experimentation has also taken place at the level of syntax and semantics. Thus Indian English fiction, through experimentations at the levels of both theme and form, has made remarkable progress; it has made a place for itself and cannot be wished away.

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DISCOURSE OF TOLERANCE: SOME RECENT WOMEN FICTIONEERS

R.K. Singh

Contemporary novelists conjure up a world, to quote George Gerbner (1996), "much wider than the threats and gratifications of the immediate physical environment .... Stories socialise us into roles of gender, age, class vocation and lifestyle, and offer models of conformity or targets for rebellion. They weave the seamless web of the cultural environment that cultivates most of what we think, what we do, and how we conduct our affairs."[1] They reveal how things work, describe what things are and tell us what to do about them, fostering responsibility, trust, openness and community, and reinforcing the general aspiration for dignity, equality, liberty, identity and non-discrimination. They resist incitement to hate, prejudice or violence, and stigmatising people on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, class, caste, religion, language, sexual orientation, or physical condition. I would like to explore the contemporary Indian English novelists' literary discourse for direct or indirect promotion of mutual understanding, tolerance, conviviality and friendship among groups and people vis-a-vis religious, linguistic, ethnic or gender prejudices, ill-will based on caste, creed, religion, beliefs or community, the problems of inequality and discrimination, or lack of respect for other people's cultures, values and ways of life. I presume the novelists' social protrayal may not be devoid of a vision for improving the society or fostering social values or deepening the awareness that we are members of a global family and we must accomodate differences within the spirit of tolerance.

Sri Aurobindo predicted long ago in February 1936 "that the mind of the future will be more international" with expression of various temperaments in Indian English writing.[2] As the new millennium begins, we can discover the truth of the Indian philosopher-poet's statement: the contemporary writers in English are more 'open', more tolerant, more accommodating than tne blind supporters of cultural nationalism, religious sectarianism or casteist separatism seem to suggest.

We are now witness to a society facing numerous challenges, thanks to the dynamics of technological globalisation. As Biserka cvjeticanin notes: "The transformational changes at work today involve, simultaneously, processes of integration and disintegration, golbalisation and localisation, transnationalisation of culture and emphasis on cultural differences and pluralism of cultures."[3] Despite the pressures of political and economic imperatives of the day, recent writers creatively raise questions of identity, redefinition of old values and creation of new values, new ways of integration and cooperation, and acceptance of differences, pluralism, tolerance, which may be one of the Western values (the others being freedom, rule of law, and free market economy) and a part of civilisational process, but it has also been a distinctly Indian characterictic, positive or negative.

It is, therefore, socially and humanly exciting to explore the discourse of tolerance in the contemporary Indian fiction in English and be aware of ourselves, looking for meaning of our life which is now influenced by commercialism and market conditions loaded with scams, crime and mafia, political instability, disillusion and frustration with political leadership, rising poverty, fundamentalism, terrorism, and failure of centralistic and doctrinal order. Further, the increased internationalisation of human activities has led to our confrontation with many worlds, cultures and societies that *interact* and provide a new collective dimension, open communicative context, which makes a tolerant intercultural interaction possible.

I

A novelist like Kamala Markandaya explicitly abhors discrimination, racism, cruelty, or exploitation in any form in her comprehension of the complexity of life vis-a-vis her sense of spiritual values and social justice. In *Pleasure City* (1982), a novel which deals with racial and cultural issues against the backdrop of Western technology, she pictures Tully, who is friendly with a fisherboy, Rikki. In this intercultural encounter one sees Tully can open out and understand others without any prejudice. Unlike others at Shalimar he realises that colour makes no difference to basic humanity.

Gita Mehta's *A River Sutra* (1993) is a quest for humanity, for compassion and fellowship, for faith, love, devotion and self-realisation *a la* Indian values. Her dictum: "Man is the greatest truth," to quote from the epigraph to the novel, which is written with awareness of woman as woman. Then, the struggle in Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975) revolves around the vital question of accepting the terms of life. She depicts Sita as making compromises just as her two children make adjustments in order to establish proper relationships with the society around them. Maneka and Karan shed their narrowmindeness as their mother Sita sheds her obsession with isolation; she develops the courage to face life with all its ups and downs and her compromise is positive.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala in her depiction of transition from tradition to modernity proffers a broad view of Indian women's emancipation *via* education, position and responsibilities against a cosmopolitan background. As a Westerner she accommodates Indian sensibility in her thought-processes and observations of Indian culture and society. Rama Mehta's *Inside Haveli* (1981) provides a picture of the process of change: Geeta, the heroine, married in a conventional orthodox family, effects reforms by conforming to the orthodox society's norms.

Raji Narasimhan, too, deals with gender/sex issues: her characters, male or female, uphold values like sincerity, goodness, cooperation and mutual understanding. In the story 'Suresh and Bena', the protagonists defy the social norms of segregation of male and female in educational institutions. In another story, 'At the Temple', the woman asks her man: "I am always waiting for you, why can't you wait? ...Why?" Raji Narasimhan, like Shashi Deshpande, creates women characters who stand for equality, freedom and self-assertion.

Women writers like Shobha De are more realistic and down to earth, perhaps more sophisticated in their stand fo empowerment of women: they illumine the real human condition; they expose the way girls think and talk to each other when they are alone or in sexual encounters of any kind; and they depict careerist

women who are more cautious in using men (as men use women). They assert their feminine desire and sexuality, gender awareness and self-definition, existence and destiny. Sex is more common, more accepted and less cringe-making in that it is not superfluous but woven into the story; their stress is on women's self-respect, women equal to men, women behaving like men. The women characters in Sobha De are economically independent and socially uninhibited; they are competitive professionals and stand on equal footing with men who are equally a source of sexual enjoyment, security and luxury. Nisha in *Sultry Days* (1994) transforms and commits herself to the larger humanity and develops fellow-feeling for others, especially the lower and middle-class people.

In *Snapshots* (1995), De presents the contemporary Indian woman's point of view about life and living as it is; her younger characters, speaking about love, sex and marriage, prove themselves different from the older women. Their norms and values, howsoever 'advanced', do not decry the institution of home or family; they are rather critical of hypocrisy and inequality: "Our motto is: Say no to divorce. Never break up the home. Have your fun quietly somewhere. But don't leave the family. That is the sensible way of handling the situation"(p.214).

It is missing the correct perspective to Shobha De if she is seen as a 'clitarati' or read for 'orgiastic' pleasure. In fact, she is one of the prominent women novelists who articulate the voice and feelings of Indian woman defying "the well-entrenched moral orthodoxy of the patriarchal social system." Her women are modern, educated, independent, and refuse to be subordinated or dominated by their male counterparts. In comparison, women in Mulk Raj Anand of the older generation of novelists appear satisfied with their social status, though they are not educated enough to seek a destiny outside the domestic domain.

Another significant novelist who demonstrates a catholic temperament is Attia Hosain. She deals with Muslim households, revealing not only "the mysteries behind the purdah" but also situations "embarrassing to her sense of humanness." In *Sunlight*

on a Broken Column (1960) she reflects, to quote Mulk Raj Anand, "the mystery of an Indian woman in the light of the 'burning and melting' of her body-soul in a creative work which will shine forever."[4]

II

A more recent name in fiction, Humera Ahmed, compares well with Attia Hosain's syncretic fiction. The sensibility of Humera Ahmed processes an image of the "educated and liberated Muslim women." In her stories one discovers strong, articulate, gutsy and individualistic women who can bravely face the challenges of fate and reconstruct their surroundings with a balanced mix of traditional and modern living even as they are intolerant of their exploitation by men. Thus, Shakira, the gentle, shy and timid girl from a small town in the story 'Checkmate' boldly announces to her husband Asad: "....You mucked up my life, made me part of your selfish plans. And now kindly listen to my plans. You can stay with your darling Jean while I have my baby. By and by we will come to a solution. Till then our legal marriage, however, farcical, goes on" (p.15). The situation backfires when Shakira reaches America and announces to Asad that she is pregnant, and since he is her legal husband, the child to-be-born will bear his name. Asad is stunned.

In another story, 'There is Light at the End of a Tunnel', Azra, a traditional Muslim woman "trapped in an unethical, callous and nightmarish world" of her husband Akhil, finally makes the major decision to leave her husband to search for happiness with Rahat, a colleague of Akhil. She reacts against the society's intolerance of woman as woman (p.28). In 'The Wind of Change' Salma, brought up in an orthodox Sunni family, finds enough courage to decide to marry Javed, a Shia, despite a possible violent family opposition.

Humera Ahmed in *Checkmate and Other Stories* (1995) highlights the positive aspects on social, intellectual and personal interactions and rise of new values among the urban Muslim women and consciousness of their 'self' vis-a-vis the males who traditionally try to subjugate them by binding them within the four walls of shame or immuring them with the burden of guilt (p.28).

The new awareness building up within the Indian Muslim community has shaken the base of their orthodox social structure and given rise to a far more liberal view of the bonds of tradition, thanks to spread of education. As an educated modern Muslim woman writer, Humera Ahmed sets in her stories a new trend in intra-communal behaviour.

In fact, there are quite a few recent female writers who collectively and individually mirror the new sociocultural context of the processes of change and enlighten us about living with different value systems. Their creative re-evaluations and re-interpretations help reinvent individual or community positions, norms and values as they reflect the social realities of Indian life, telling tales that relate the past and the present in novel frames.

A relatively new name in fiction, Sunada Mongia writes about women's truth, reality and falsehood. In her collection of short stories, *Cryptozones* (1996) she reveals the attitude of intolerance towards women existing in Indian society. The disparity shown in rearing a male child and a female child by the mother ironically projects a picture where women become their own enemies. In the short story, 'Tara', the mother herself being a woman doesn't count her daughters as her children. To her Harish is the only child as he is a male. As the narrator observes: "... I've realised that in Eastern U.P. people usually don't count their daughters. Daughters are more like the *sarais* where people stop on the grand expedition of procuring sons" (p.40).

Another recent novelist, C.D. Irene deals with the complexity of inter-community marital relationship. In her novel, *A Flight to Freedom* (1993), she portrays the dogmatic social setting of Syrian Christian community. Irene presents an account of Roselyn whose intellectual capacity sails her through the difficult stages of becoming a doctor but whose status as a Syrian Christian woman does not allow her the freedom to marry the man she loves, simply because he happens to belong to a Hindu community. Her marriage to the man of her father's choice, a member of Syrian Christian community, however, collapses despite her sincere efforts for ten years to make it work. Psychologically drained after

her miscarriage she is dumped into her father's place by her husband and mother-in-law as a patient of aplasticanemia. When hospitalised she lands into the hands of Dr Arvind (the man she was in love with prior to her marriage) whose unselfish love and care hold a ray of hope in her life. Roselyn's father, who had initiated the break in Arvind-Roselyn relationship a decade ago, capitulates as he has already tasted bitterness of life and become more accommodating. "God bless you, my son," says he to Arvind, when the latter proposes to marry Roselyn and take her abroad for treatment.

In a similar vein, M.K. Devidasan in *Her Miseries* (1993) presents the story of a young girl, who runs away from home with her paramour to settle in Delhi. On their way the boy gets killed by some anti-socials and the girl's miseries begin as she is brought to hospital pregnant and injured. She is given shelter by a doctor, who falls in love with her and wants to marry her. But she is soon driven away by the doctor's mother, who suspects her to be immoral. In the look out for a job she once again falls into evil clutches, gets raped, and suffers a miscarriage again. However, she survives and subsequently unmasks the identity of her tormentors who belong to an organised gang involved in serious crimes but masquerade in the upper social circles as benign personalities. Despite her ordeal and social stigma, the doctor accepts the girl in the end and marries her which reflects his positive judgement, patience and tolerance.

Sunipa Basu in her book of short stories, *The Man in the Red Maruti* (1994), uses irony to raise some more social issues. The narrator of 'Overtonal' mulls over the status of woman over the generations in a typical Bengali family:

> My husband often shouts about some irrelevant matter when he is unable to confess even to himself the real cause of his anger. It is this streak of possessiveness that sometimes surfaces through his liberal, progressive facade. And I? I remain dump in the face of these outbursts. My words of rebellion die before they reach my lips. For what people will think? I have not the courage to endure the stares of this assembled crowd. So I, an educated, employed woman in the 1990s, bow my head meekly as my husband reprimands me as if I were a child.... (pp.24-5)

Sunipa Basu portrays the perspectives of two individuals

towards violence against animals to obtain food in the story, 'The Blood Sacrifice'. Padma, a young vegetarian, visualises Mrs Chatterjee as evil personified because she kills fish herself before cooking. Mrs Chatterjee holds that "killing for food is nature's way." She argues: "Don't you feel bad wearing pure silk? Thousand of silkworms dropped in boiling water to satisfy your vanity?" and "Someone else does your killing for you. Everything is alright; so long as you don't see it you needn't feel guilty" (p.94). Dipanwita Mukherjee's *Cross My Heart* (1996) is another collection of short stories which portrays emotions, sensitivities and susceptibilities in the world of small girls. The book is of small girls and for small girls, but related by a grown-up woman. Through picturisation of small incidents, Mukerjee displays her perception of the world of children and the need to inculcate tolerance in them by exposing them to the realities of life with care, patience, understanding and love. For example, in 'The Assembly' Mrs Mckenzie, the School Principal, solves the crucial problem of a child, who forged marks in her School report card, by her kind understanding of the situation. Similarly, in the story 'Mangala' Tara's grandmother realises the need to inculcate empathy in small girls when she states: "All Taras have need to be kind. And there need to be those that receive that kindness. Don't you think they have fulfilled each other in life?" (p.18)

On the shores of the Vitasta (1994), a collection of four novellas by Parineeta Khar, reveals the sheltered life of Kashmiri women and the trauma they experience when encountered with the harsh realities of marital life. Tolerance emerges from the interaction of characters who could be divided into two categories: first, the nontolerant who show unchangeable pre-conceived notions in their behaviour, and second, the tolerant who, despite their limited field of movement, show broad outlook to life and generosity. There is also another set of characters who, though do not practise or reveal kindness so often, are aware of their shortcomings and are positive. Parineeta Khar seems to suggest that this set of people can be persuaded to be tolerant of human differences, if they could be exposed to a less rigid, less orthodox

social set up. 'The Gap and the Bride' is the story of a woman, Bulbul, who is lured to marrying a man settled in the USA but "strayed" into waywardness. It is impossible for him to take his career, marriage, or life seriously, and thus he causes endless suffering to his wife. She is brutalised by her husband and not allowed to return home but deserted even by her parents and in-laws and forced to undertake menial jobs for survival. Bulbul, a pampered, class-conscious child of yester years, tolerates miseries but takes revenge on her father, husband and in-laws by concealing that she was pregnant and deciding that she would not name the child after her husband. She seeks help from her childhood friend, Lassa, after whom she would like to name her child, though she won't marry him.

Kusum Mercy Kapoor's collection of short stories, *Cobwebs* (1994), reflects tolerance through the structure of feelings and spirit she creates. In 'Silent is the Heart' it emerges from Rahul's determined efforts to make Mrs Varma, a widow, accept his proposal of marriage since he believes that even a lonely lady with a grown up daughter has the right to be happy. He pleads with the fractious adolescent Mini, Mrs Varma's daughter, who herself fancies Rahul despite the age differences between him and herself. Finally, the young girl realises her mother's emotional need to be happy, as Rahul pleaded. Mini sacrifices prospects of her own emotional happiness for the greater happiness of her mother.

Women writers depict the conditions of the socalled "weaker sex" caught in the interstices of tradition, convention, heritage, exploitation, violence and subjugation. Nirmala Moorthy in *Maya: A Novel* (1997) depicts a heroine, who challenges the norms and traditions of her family, joins an "unconventional American friend" and charts a career for herself as a single woman. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), which won the prestigious Booker Award and "funnels the history of south India through the eyes of seven-year-old twins", is "fundamental as well as local" (as Gillian Beer observed). She creates a rich mix of the competing values of caste, Christianty and Marxism, simultaneously alien

and inextricably indigenous.

III

As the brief discussion of some of the novels and stories confirm, revival of religionism or ethnic nationalism (as an ideology) or obscurantism or post-cold war colonialism finds no favour with any Indian woman novelist. These are rather negatively viewed social transformation. In fact, the recent novelists portray positive human relationship and attach more value to be more civilised and open-minded without denying or shunning conflicts (between 'old and new' or past values and modern values, etc.). There is a strong belief in civility, harmony, coexistence, compassion, and mutual understanding just as there is struggle for equality, liberty and non-discrimination, and voice against oppressive opportunistic exploitation, sexual abuse, discrimination, deprivation, neglect, personal gratification, 'political correctness' or threat to social and familial equilibrium.

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REFUSING MALE HANDS OF HISTORY: INDIAN DIASPORA WOMEN'S POETRY IN CANADA

Ranjana Harish

We loved those kindly gentleman, I mean,
your own father, and your father's father.
But in our long ancestry
Where are the Women?
I know I should be proud, but I feel
like a beggar. Is my vast vanity wholly illegal?

(Sunity Namjoshi, "Female Gulliver")

In many respects the above quotation encapsulates the issues that I have attempted to explore in this piece. 'Where are the women?' asked Namjoshi in the above quote in 1990s. 'Where are women in history?' asked Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* in 1920s. For almost seventy years the question has been asked repeatedly and yet has remained unresolved.

'The male hands of history' (Bannerji's phrase) have constructed woman as per their convenience and have let her remain invisible in national as well as literary histories. This reality runs into a poem called 'wife' thus:

I often think of her
this thing called wife
what is she?
This is a careful construction....
a mere form
built by male hands of history. (SW 3)

The only sensible way to correct the misrepresentation or to make woman visible in the history is woman's participation in its making and documenting — first by understanding how patriarchy domesticates and ignores woman and then by exposing such victimization / marginalization and finally by creating one's own space / history.

This piece is an attempt to explore the poetic discourse of Indian diaspora women in Canada as an attempt to create their own history. Theirs is an attempt to refuse "male hands of history" to "build" them. My thesis here is that these women poets are taking poetry as a tool to combat their multiple marginalization

in the so-called land of their choice which, in fact, is full of hostility towards them. Their search is not for individual identity but for a collective one which will earn them respectability and dignity for their future generations.

Before discussing these diaspora women's poetry let me highlight one important fact about these women poets — a fact which may help one trace a commitment to the making of history in their output. Unlike the common prevalent impression about the women of Indian diaspora documented by Kavita Sharma as "sponsored family class immigrants [whose] dependence has been sanctioned and even enforced by law" (Vevaina & Godard: 156), these are all highly educated university academics well informed about literature, literary history, critical theory and changing literary currents. Himani Bannerji is a faculty at York University, Surjeet Kalsey at the University of British Columbia, and Sunity Namjoshi now is a full time writer based in U.K., but she too used to teach in Toronto. Uma Parameswaran is with the University of Winnipeg, Tilothama Rajan at the University of Wisconsin and her specialization is Theory of Criticism. Nilambari Singh teaches in adult education at Montreal, Ramabari Espinet is a Professor in Toronto University and Jamila Ismail is a Faculty at the University of Vancour. Almost all of them are feminist activists. These women's academic/professional background, in my view, assumes a special significance and it serves as a pointer to their equippedness and commitment. The diaspora women poets are creating a history of their own with well earned tools of a very special sort of inwardness with critical theory and modern literary techniques of subversion, irony, alternate ending, etc.

Coming to their poetry, let me begin with a poem, "To Silvia Plath", by Himani Bannerji. It is a poem contemplating Plath's suicide, analysing her complex mental frame. The poet reads Plath's suicides as "returning to mother in that stove." The poet says further:

> When we emerge it is to the world of the father's, strife gathers strength, we struggle and only in sleep return to that warn dark home. But you were tired, the day of the father was long and bitter.... (S.W.12)

No one can miss Lacanian influence and his terminology in this poem. And yet it touches a very delicate and special chord of feminine sensibility and articulates the tyranny of father's symbolic order.

"Doing Time", which is one of the most memorable poems of Bannerji, advocates collective identity of woman or of any marginalized group — a typical postcolonial theory provides the argument for the poem whose lines run as under:

> If we who are not white, and also
> women, have not yet seen that here we
> live in a prison, that we are doing
> time, then we are fools, playing
> unenjoyable games with ourselves
> .....
> Prisons when furnished by trendy
> designers don't become homes but
> burial parlours....
> Gone are the days when I had a
> 'private' private life...
> It's a kind of luxury, this personal life
> .....
> Personal life is constructed with
> personal history, personal tokens,
> which you give up at the warden's
> office at your entry and wear the
> clothes that others do. Yes I have no
> personal life... I have become so
> many people. (S.W. 7-9)

The poem moves from the private to public. All Indian women who come to Canada are doing time; they are passing prison sentence, says the poem. Once in prison, once subjugated who retains personal identity? The only identity available to these prisoners is a collective one. Again, it is a poem springing straight from the post-colonial literary theory. One may even trace the influence of the Black female bonding or womanist sisterhood in it, and yet all these theories do not make the poem unnaturally heavy with ideology. Theory, used with deep conviction, provides strength and beauty to Bannerji's poetry.

"The Prosecution Rests" by Namjoshi mentions a sentence from Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* as its take off point — "there issued from his such a groan that any other woman in the whole

world would have done something, said something." This sentence is followed by the woman paratagonist's response to a similar situation. She is the one whose experience of victimhood has taught her not to make any counter attack, not to do anything at all. The protagonist says:

> No, I didn't kill you,
> No, not an attempt.

She tells us that she just decided to ignore him, his silly jokes, his threats, his tantrums, and there he was

> ...suddenly
> You were covered with multiple wounds
> Do I regret what happened?
> I cannot regret it.
> You do not look a victim.
> You look like a fool. (S.W. 55)

Indifference is her war-strategy. Such a strategy does not come easy. Namjoshi's unheeding protagonist may be put under Atwood's 'creative non-victim' category.

Namjoshi's experimentation with technique in "Snapshots of Caliban," "Caliban's Journals" and *Feminist Fables* are fascinating. Irony is her main tool. Here follows an example from *Feminist Fables*:

> The Sun grimming and roaring, her fierce energy warming the earth-sisterly incest. Is reproduction possible? No more than light can generate in mud. The sun must be male. The earth must be woman. These are the principles.... When earth is sundered, every man suffers, everyone groans. Man is at the centre. There are no human women. (57)

Can there be a better way of exposing phallogocentricity of the world?

Uma Parameswaran's "I Wish I Knew What to Tell You, My Daughters" takes off with a day to day reality of siblings' teasing and pushing each other, but finally ends in a strong feminist discourse on all pervading female anger on being pushed around which may seem trivial or out of place to others. Little girl Duggi is asked by her mother to tell a story and she begins, "Baddu [elder brother] got mad at me." "Tell me a happy story, Duggi, a happy one," says the mother. Again, Duggi repeats the same "Baddu pushed me." "A happy one dear," the mother reminds. With tears in her eyes Duggi starts all over again, "I want Baddu HERE NOW" (S.W. 80). That is how the marginalized behave. It is not a child-

story; it is a story every marginalized, everyone bullied and pushed by different Baddus want to tell.

Surjeet Kalsey's "Speaking to the Winds" holds mirror to women's claustrophobia. "You should have gone out of these round walls," says a white ant to the protagonist who is happy to be in her well. The protagonist takes the advice seriously and tries to reach out, but returns back. In another poem entitled "She and He" Kalsey reaches a tentative resolution to women's problem, namely, "returning to one's self." She says:

When I become a flower
You hurry to snatch me from myself
You gurad my senses with red hot iron
bars of tradition.
You who wanted me only for yourself
Why now so quiet?
This quietude may be proof
That you are a spectator
and that I am alive
returned to myself
confronting a stranger. (S.W. 39)

In addition to the feministic concerns of these poets the 'bodiness' (Helen Cixous) of their poetry also can be looked upon as a tool to obtain a subject position. These women's poetry abounds in the use of body metaphors. To cite just a few examples, rejected poems to Lakshmi Gill are like an "aborted or still born" and are "loved like legitimate children" (S.W. 33), the strech marks on female body, the experience of pregnancy and birthing as described in good details by Parameswaran in "Usha", and seeing childbearing as a greatly dignified act, are very much a part of these women poet's world. Gill in "The Antique House" contrasts hostility of war and weapons with contentment of childbearing.

In form and content these academic-turn-poets are constantly experimenting; their experiment is very much rooted in their knowledge of literaray tradition. The effectiveness of their subverted poetic discourse lies in their awareness of the prevalent mainstream discourse of the White literary world which they challenge and mix with the mythology-based Indian poetic tradi-

tion. "Siddhartha Does Penance once Again" (Kalsey), "Trishanku" (Parameswaran), and *Feminist Fables* (Namjoshi) can be cited as illustrations in the case.

History with these women changes its texture. Instead of being his-story, it becomes a collective story of struggle and achievment. Instead of private self's experiences and responses, it documents the public selves' systematic fight against encroachment on female selves/space.

Whether it is Bannerji's Siddartha or Parameswarn's Trishanku, whether it is Namjoshi's muted wife or Kalsey's female protagonist from Indian folk tale sharing her secret with a well in woods, they are all representatives of collective suffering, exile, silencing, assertion, fight and achievement. The line of such argument finally may take one to the point of asking: Doesn't good poetry transcend the personal to attain the universal? Doesn't men's poetry, too, do it? If yes, then what is the relevance of this discussion. Why highlight the public in women's poetry as against the private in that of men's? The answer to this is straight and simple: men's poetry may or may not transcend the private, but for women, or for that matter for any marginalized group, walking out of the private singular self to the collective one is the first pre-condition, the first and foremost strategy of survival in the world at large and also in the world of letters.

Before concluding my paper let me quickly have a look at the second generation of women poets of Indian diaspora in Canada — poets like Kaushalya Bannerji, and Himani Bannerji's daughter who upholds herself as a 'feminist of color' like her mother. However, her feminism differs from her mother's in terms of her lesbian sensibility. In *the faces of five o'clock* (the only collection I could get to read) she celebrates lesbian liberation. But this does not interfere with her concern for women and their history at large. To quote her:

> to be women is to be broken
> without living ever
> the fundamental whole
> We are shards of glass
> brilliant and dangerous (16).

Jamila Ismail is the next second generation poet, an Indian-

Chinese based in Canada. Unlike her predecessors, a women-centred content and a gender-specific use of language and technique do not suffice her poetic needs. She pens her concerns for women and their visibility with a technique more visual than aural. Her poems have a typical visual appeal.

Though the poetry of Indian diaspora women in Canada is a very recent phenomenon, hardly two decades old, yet it has started making its effect felt. With their strong background in literary theory, world currents, political awareness and feminist moorings, these women poets have brought to the poetry of South Asian (Indian) diaspora a very rare combination of ethnic sensibility, feminist space-consciousness and mainstream concerns for aesthetics. They are creating a tradition of their own by their poetry and are moulding the literary canon as well by their participation in academics, both by teaching younger generation and by publishing the theory.

Judging from the output of two younger generation poets, discussed above, the future of Indian diaspora women's poetry in Canada seems to be full of hope. Yet while concluding this article, let me put up the questions asked by Vassanji in *Literature of Lesser Diffusion*. Would Indian diaspora poetry [both in English and in 'bhashas'] be relevant in the times to come? Would there be audience for such a poetry among the fast assimilating generations of hockey-playing Canada-born Indian people? Vasanjee's response to such questions is negative. "In my opinion, this writing will soon come to an end with this generation of immigrants" (807). However, I feel that as long as the desire to search for greener pastures dictates human hearts, the scattering of ethnocultural seeds will continue. The Ganga will always exist in the mental world of Indians even while being thusands of miles away. The Sanskrit verses in praise of the Ganga will flow spontaneously from their lips when the situation arises:

> Devi Sureshwari Bhagvati Ganga
> Tribhuvan Tarini Tara Lata Range. (S.W. 76)

The faith of Parameswaran's protagonist is:

> It will come back, he said
> All of it will come back. (S.W. 76)

That is the secret why though scattered so far and wide, the diaspora people sustain their identity and retain their culture. Their march is towards a history of their own: "They are trying to unify the fragments of female experience through artistic vision and they are concerned with the definition of autonomy for the women writers" (29). This observation of Showalter regarding the contemporary women novelists is equally applicable to the above discussed poets. Their struggle is to refuse male hands of history. Their struggle is to carve out subject position for women by creating a history of their own.

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"NO MORE MASKS": THE POETRY OF KAMALA DAS

Alka Nigam

Lovers of the poetry of Kamala Das are puzzled. What forced her to change her name and her religion? The reasons she has given in her interviews are not convincing because they are coming from a personality who till now had been the champion of honest writing, who till now in her works presented the interconnected realities of personality and culture without distorting the facts of either the personality or culture. Remaining Kamala Das she could have loved Islam. In fact, in the birth of Suraiya, we have lost Kamala Das. The present paper is a tribute to the earlier Kamala Das who with her poetry of rare charm and truthfulness had engaged the hearts of readers for nearly three decades.

To build an epic saga out of the predicament and dread of the lost self has been an effort of the major poets of this century. The poetry of Kamala Das is an outgrowth of this modern emphasis on the "I" as the crucial poetic symbol. A poet's raw material, she says, is neither stone nor clay; it is the poet's personality. She confesses she could not escape from her predicament even for a moment. The uniqueness of her poetic utterance lies in the fact that as a woman she braves the risk of exposing her naked self, and given the conventionality of Indian women it is her rare achievement. Extreme honesty and turthfulness are the most impressive characteristics of Kamala Das's poetry. Women are forced to lie for survival. And as Adrienne Rich, in her essay, "Women and Honor: Some Notes on Lying," says, "Women have been driven mad, 'gaslighted,' for centuries by the refutation of our experience and our instincts in a culture which validates only male experience. The truth of our bodies and our minds have been mystified to us" (1979:190). *My Story*, with its honesty, courage and willingness to reveal the most intimate aspects of her life, marks a turning point in the history of modern Indian writing. Her poetry removes skin after skin from over her psyche and in the manner of confessional poets like Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, John Berryman and W.D. Snodgrass, it has been an effort to remove the mask that covers the poet's

actual face. To accept what we are, and what we feel, and to come up with that with no intention of "telling it slant" is the new direction in women's writing and in India Kamala Das is the champion of honest writing.

Elaine Showalter in her book, *A Literature of Their Own*, charts out three phases in the evolution in female literary tradition and calls these Feminine, Feminist, and Female stages. During the Feminine phase the women writers attempted to equal the achievements of male culture. The Feminist phase enabled women to reject the constraints of womanhood; they made literature a stage for dramatizing the suffering of women. During the Female phase women stopped protesting and imitating men and turned instead to female experiences. (1977:139). Thus instead of extending the male conventions, women poets have cut loose from male hegemony and seek another more authentic and personal voice. In this endeavor, they link themselves inextricably to their cultural environment which forms a collective experience, binding women writers to each other across time and space. The poetry of Denise Levertov, Nikki Giovanni and Jean Arasanayagam derives mostly from the masculine tradition, yet the flashes of vibrant strength emerge directly from their feminine experiences. The poetry of Kamala Das, like that of Judith Wrigth, Erica Jong and Anne Sexton, drawing heavily on the personal life, shows an involvement in intimate feminine experiences. But whereas Erica Jong and Anne Sexton fall into the pitfalls of sentimentality and sensationalism, the poems of Kamala Das create a feeling of genuine pain, which moves the readers. It is her sincerity of feeling and her honesty to own the incongruity that creates pain. The cry of her heart is the cry of any ailing and aging wife; and this is how the personal blends with the universal:

From the debris of house-wrecks
Pick up my broken face,
Your bride's face,
Changed a little with the years.
I shall not remember
The betrayed honeymoon;
We are both such cynics,
You and I.
If loving me was hard then

It's harder now
But love me one day
For a lark
Love the sixty-seven
Kilograms of ageing flesh
.....
Show me what our life would have been
If only you had loved. (1988:204)

The crux of Kamala Das's poetry is a search for an identity. In this process of self-search she oscillates between her nostalgic past and nightmarish present. Past is a symbol of security, love and freedom, and present stands for insecurity, pretensions and bondage of society. Her consciousness lies stretched between these two poles; it is drawn towards the positive past but held back by the negative present. One emotion, however, that is common to both the states, is that of pain. On excavation she finds only:

Deep, deep pain
To be frank,
I have failed. ("Composition)"

In her past, amidst all the comforts, the pain peeped in through various creeks. In her early childhood she was very sentimental. She wrote "sad poems about dolls who lost their heads and had to remain headless for eternity" (1988:8). The rift between her father and mother also left a permanent mark on her personality. Her mother's timidity only created "an illusion of domestic harmony" (1988:5). The traditional society tried to clip her wings of freedom:

Dress in saris, be girl
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,
Be a quarreler with the servants. Fit in. Oh,
Belong.... ("An Introduction")

She turned rebellious and wore shirts and trousers of her brother, cut her hair short and ignored the fetters of her womanliness. She asked for love

not knowing what else to ask
For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the
Bedroom and closed the door. ("An Introduction")

The closing of the door was like drawing iron curtain on the childhood days. Soon the experience took the place of innocence,

betrayal of virginity, and indifference of involvement. The transition was not gradual but abrupt, and this was the transition form androgyny to femininity. Femininity means a woman's conscious way of being in the world. Kamala Das in her poems writes directly of her inner world.

When she comes to her present self, she finds that there are "selves" beyond her self which pop up from within and pain oozes from each self. She identifies herself with all that suffers. She is unhappy "because of the animals that get slaughtered for no fault of their own. I am unhappy for the human beings who get slaughtered, bombed.... Who has got the right to be happy now knowing that right around the corner this new cult of terrorism is flourishing" (An interview). The larger chunk of this self, however, remains parched for want of love. Her idea of love is "caring for another, having plenty of time for another. I want a kind of love that is all pervasive like ether — love which creates its own balming climate" (An interview). In fact, longing for pure love and its failure, is the major theme of her poetry. Her dream of love is the kind of feeling we find in the eagerness of a river mingling with the sea, in the blushing of dawn effacing itself in the brightness of the day, in the waiting of a newly opened flower to be caressed by the shimmering moonlight, and in the pining of Radha for Krishna.

She finds herself reduced to a mere archetype, a finished woman. Her marriage demanded a surrender of herself and a surrender of personal desires. Love and marriage seemed to her to be two poles. She wondered, "Was every married adult a clown in bed, a circus performer?" She concluded, "I hate marriage" (1988:70). This gave rise to an ambivalent situation — extreme love of body and extreme loathing of body. Abundance of body images in women's writing reveal the strong belief of contemporary women poets in the uniqueness of womanhood. They talk openly about the subjects which till very recently were considered taboo for women poets. In India, Kamala Das, admitting the demands of body, creates a new ethos and a new heritage:

> ....You were pleased
> With my body's response, its weather, it's usual
> Shallow

Convulsions. You dribbled spittle into my mouth,
You poured
Yourself into every nook and cranny,
You embalmed
My poor lust with your bitter-sweet juices. ("The Old Play House")

Preoccupied with the flesh, she swings between experiencing body as something sacred and also as rotten and filthy. She reveals an exceptional audacity to own the demands of her body. "I had lost during that illness the resemblance to anything human. I looked like a moultilng bird. My skin had turned dark and scaly .... Like the phoenix, I rose from the ashes of my past. I forgot the promises that I had made to God and became once more intoxicated with life, my lips had without rest uttered the sweet name of Lord Krishna while I lay ill, but when I recovered my health I painted them up with pink lipstick. On moonlit nights once again I thought wistfully of human love" (1988:170).

Her parched self steps outside marriage in search of love. Her husband was "nearly all the time away touring in the outer districts. Even while he was with me, we had no mental contact with each other. If at all I began to talk of my unhappiness, he changed the topic immediately and walked away" (1988:15). When she could no longer bear loneliness she became "Carlo's Sita." Her search for an ideal lover, however, had begun early in life:

I met a man, loved him, call
Him not by any name, he is every man,
Who wants a woman, just as I am every
Woman who seeks love. In him...the hungry haste
Of rivers, in me...the ocean's tireless
Waiting. ("An Introduction")

Looking back from a disciplined and mature angle, she calls it "animal lust". The confession of having this animal lust in *My Story* was like a bomb that shook the utter complacency of our society. In an interview, Kamala Das reveals the purpose of this confession: " I needed to disturb society of its complacence. I found the complacence a very ugly state. I wanted to make woman of my generation feel that if men could do something wrong, they could do it themselves too. I wanted them to realise that they were equal. I wanted them to remove the gender difference. I wanted to see that something happened to society, which had such strong

inhibitions and which only told lies in the public." Her impatience with such a society strikes a chord of recognition among the feminists today. Adrienne Rich in America at about the same time made an effort to drag women out of a similar complacency through her writings. Kamala Das, like Denise Levertov and Carolyn Kizar, wants women writers to have the freedom to write without affection. Blunt and colloquial, they criticise women for various forms of hypocrisy.

The poetry of Kamala Das, though it deals with the personal experiences of the poet, derives less from alienation; it tries to assess the destiny of personality in culture and presents the interconnected realities of pesonality and culture. The inner crisis of her reality is brought about by the crucial facts and artifacts of social reality. The survival of personality is caught in the flux of desire, frustration, and insecurity on the one hand, social fear, hypocrisy and injustice on the other. Her poetry struggles with both the inner and the outer turmoil. She makes no effort to distort the facts of either the personality or our culture, but in moments of intense pain wishes to transcend both:

> I shall some day leave, leave the cocoon
> You build around me with morning tea,
> Love-words flung from doorways and of course
> Your tired lust. I shall some day take
> Wings fly around, as often petals
> Do, when free in air, and your dear one,
> Just the sad remnant of a root, must
> Lie behind, sans pride, on double beds
> And grieve (1988:168).

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THE TRACES OF BUDDHISM IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S NOVELS — *DARK HOLDS NO TERRORS* AND *THAT LONG SILENCE*

Rashmi Gaur & Pallavi

The word Buddha symbolizes elightenment, knowledge, moral perfection and spiritual fulfilment. The Buddha founded his Dhamma (religion) in the 6th B.C., yet his teachings have always imparted a life-affirming zeal to the masses and given them a patience to bear the sufferings of life stoically. The Buddhistic theories have left an indelible impression on the cultural patterns of several countries. The land of Lord Buddha's birth has also reverently imbibed and absorbed the spiritual essence of his teachings, even though a conscious understanding of the Buddhistic tenets may often escape the masses. Buddhism has shaped and guided the Indian art and architecture, society and polity, and devotion and theology through different ages.

Buddhism, which states that one must shun ego and selfishness in order to dissolve the lugubrious state of life, that passion and ignorance overshadow the reality generating pain and suffering, and that one must strive constantly and compassionately towards a transcendental enlightenment, has been intricately woven into the socio-religious and cultural mores of Indian life. These concepts are evident in the writings of many contemporary writers. The influence of Buddhism can be easily discerned in the literary works of Rahul Sanskrityayan, Bimal Mitra, Nagarjuna, Asha Puna Devi, Arun Joshi and others. The fiction of Shashi Deshpande has also been influenced by the archetypal presence of Buddhism and its motifs are clearly present in her themes and character portrayal. Certain Buddhistic values are significantly evident in Shashi Deshpande's two novels — *Dark Holds No Terrors* and *That Long Silence*. Her characters display an aesthetic internalization and suggestive recreation of the basic Buddhistic postulates, viz., the Four Noble Truths, Rational Verification and the Right Path.

Buddhism "forbids the destruction of life and enjoins friendliness to all, kindliness to the distressed and sympathy for the

poor."[1] *Dark Hold No Terrors* artistically confirms the Buddhistic reassertion of positive virtues in life for obtaining eternal happiness. Saru, the main character of the novel, has been brought up in an orthodox superstitious atmosphere. But instead of surrending to it, she decides to fight against the contemptuous discrimination she faces within her own family. Her determination exhibits her inner resolve and reminds us of the Buddha's insistence on accepting only those traditions which have satisfied reason. He had said: "Accept not what is unreasonable, be it word of a Thera, or a Samgha, nay that of any Buddha; do not accept him who preaches unreasonable doctrines, though he is declared to be a Buddha."[2] Saru also refuses to bow to the discriminating social dictates. She cannot tolerate the preference which her mother gives to her borther Dhruva simply because he is a boy. When her borther dies accidentally, she is treated as a culprit because she, the girl, had remained alive, while the boy, the son, had died. Saru undergoes these traumatic experiences and is wounded, yet has a resilience to transcend these constraints and make her life meaningful. Her reaction to gender discrimination is analytical. Instead of blindly revolting against it, she tries to understand it.

Saru struggles not for an immediate remedy, but for a permanent change in her circumstances. She is not a hysterical character wallowing in her own sufferings. She has obtained that silent strength of being truly herself without any falsehood which is inherently Buddhistic and imparts an inner beauty and fulfillment to her. Buddhism admits that life is full of sufferings, but it also asserts that these sufferings are not everlasting and do not spring up without cause. The cause of sufferings, according to Buddhism, is desire. The doctrines of Paticca Samuppada maintains that there are three kinds of desires (tanha): Kamatanha, e.g. desire to see a beautiful form, etc; Bhava tanha,, e.g. desire for existence; and Vibhava tanha, i.e. desire for extinction. Desire begets longing for a dear object and that being satisfied, a feeling of happiness seems to arise for a moment, "but the apparent happiness at the fulfillment of desires soon turns into a cause of suffering in its transformation."[3] However, Buddhism simply does

not eliminate all kinds of desires. Unhappiness results from wanting to keep the same which can not be kept the same. Therefore, the Buddha had suggested the middlepath: "the middleway consists in saying 'yes' to life as it is, was and will be, to its opportunities for attainment as well as to its limitations."[4]

Saru appreciates that in order to change her life, she will have to accept it first and then only efforts can be made to change it. She accepts her predicament, and strives to overcome it for betterment after analyzing it. The emphasis on reason and experience is characteristic of Buddhism. The Buddha discouraged dogmas and blind faith and promoted personal verification, empirical and intuitive knowledge for the seeker. "The Buddha," as Jawharlal Nehru affirms, "condemned also the metaphysical and theological outlook, miracels, revelations, and dealings with the supernatural. His appeal was to logic, reason and experience; his emphasis was on ethics, and his method was one of psychological analysis, a psychology without a soul. His whole approach comes like the breath of the fresh wind from the mountains after the stale air of metaphysical speculations."[5]

In the character of Saru, we find a reflection of the Buddhistic traits. Her attempts at self-education are an evidence of her positive struggle. With the help of her education, she overpowers the neurotic clutches of a constricting mother and emerges as an independent professional, enjoying her status: "...I was too exhilarated with the dignity and importance that my status as a doctor seemed to have given me. I was young and callow, and so unused to my profession still, that to have real patients come to me gave a thrill I could scarcely hide. And so I listened to them, and examined and advised and prescribed with enthusiasm"(42). Her own suffering have made her compassionate towards the follies of others, and this understanding enables her to save her marriage and emerge as a fulfilled woman towards the end.

The initial phase of her marriage is full of happiness and emotional security. She takes pleasure in societal outings and mildly stimulating banter of her intellectual friends. Shorn of any desire, she is living in the present and is happy. The frictions appear, however, when her husband Manu feels jealous of her

professional success and turns into a saddist. Saru is baffled and in this baffled mental state the trauma of her childhood appears again — the incessant criticism of her mother, the fearful whimpering of her brother Dhruva and her haughty impatience with it, Dhruva's tragic death,etc. — all these fears create an aura of darkness around her. To escape these fears she decides to stay with her father for some time.

The Buddhistic tenet of compassion is evident in Saru's personality. Even after taking refuge at her father's home she can not detach herself from her motherly affection and a wife's dedication towards her home. Her compassion towards her family urges her to review her traumas and suffering from a distance. Saru discovers that she herself will have to struggle hard to overcome her weaknesses — the help shall not come from outside. This aspect of Saru's personality is reminiscent of Buddhistic principles which state that in order to remove the clouds of ego, igonorance and emotional undulations one should indulge in self-analysis. Buddha advised the seeker to develop faith in oneself. He said, "Be an island unto yourself; take refuge in yourself, take no other refuge, and that you must accomplish your liberation through careful perseverance."[6]

The analysis of life helps Saru to find her true self. She discovers that though her male couterpart was dominating, but her submission was also responsible for her sufferings. In her adolescence, she had fought against the constricting forces of her family and society with courage and determination and overcome them. Once again she realizes that one has to grow up to know that the dark holds no terror: "That the terrors are inside us all the time. We carry them within us, and like traitors they spring out, when we least expect them, to scratch and maul"(85). In the epigraph of the novel Shashi Deshpande has very appropriately quoted from the Dhammapada —

> You are your own refuge;
> there is no other refuge.
> This refuge is hard to achieve.

Saru's determination to draw on her inner resources is essentially Buddhistic. The Buddha had said, "What you think you

are; what you think you will be."[7] Such teachings emphasize the significance of the mind in human life and activities: "All that we are is the result of what we have thought; it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage. All that we have thought; it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him."[8] Saru is also able to put her varied experiences into proper perspective and maintain her individuality to attain a free selfhood: "My life is my own....Some how she felt as if she had found it now, this connecting link. It means you are not just a strutting, grimacing puppet, standing futilely on the stage for a brief while between areas of darkness. If I have been a puppet it is because I made myself one. I have been whose substance has long since disintegrated because I have been afraid of proving my mother right" (220).

Saru finds and hopes for a successful marital life after analyzing her traumas and fears. She decides to shun silence and work out the hindrances of her life for betterment. Buddhism stresses forbearance, forgiveness and endurance. It preaches that in order to put an end to misery we must think positively towards enlightenment. The Four Noble Truths of Buddha are evident in the character of Saru. It gives us eight paths or angas to destroy sufferings: "The light angas or steps of this path, viz., Right View, Right Life, Right Aspiration, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Efforts, Right Memory and Right Miditation, are the eight courses of conduct, which must be observed by one desirous of attaining emancipation."[9] When Saru analyzes her past she finds a way out of the complexities of her passions and emotions. The end of the novel presents Saru as a woman who has passivity, has developed an inner strength, and has the capability to live with an equanimity.

These strains of Buddhistic philosophy which have been woven in the fabric of *Dark Holds No Terrors* are also present in *That Long Silence.* The female protagonist Jaya grapples with her problems and ultimately comes to have a grip over her

emotions and life following a path which was postulated by the Buddha. The Buddha's eight-fold path does not discriminate between man and women. The main object of the Buddha was to teach the Dhamma to men and women, and liberate them from the bonds of ignorance. He allowed woman in his Sangha. His concept of Sila (conduct), Samadhi (meditation) and Panna (wisdom) are equally applicable to men and women.

Shashi Deshpande's protagonists, too, seek equality, which was so eloquently propagated and practised by the Buddha. *That Long Silence* is also based on the Buddhistic concept of self-analysis and a rational appreciation of life. Women suffer in their married life not only because of the hegemony of their male counterparts but also because of their habit of submission. Sometimes women are themselves responsible for their pathetic state and they are oblivious of it.

Jaya has placed a high value on her education. She also tries to get adjusted to her environment. But the negative impact of stifling the womanhood within her takes its tall. At times she hides her creativity and achievements from her husband. She passes through a phase when questions arise in her mind, but her passivity stops her from taking any decisive step. Ultimately, it is her analytical rationalism — a quality preached systematically for the first time by the Buddha — which gives her courage to remould her life. She realizes that she had shaped herself "so resolutely" to the desire of her husband, and "yet what was I left with now? Nothing. Just emptiness and silence.... They had deserted me, all of them"(144).

Jaya resolves, although belatedly, that she will not be frightened of the silence and stillness; something has to be done to realize her own potential: "And then it was all done and with the returning silence the truth came to me. I hadn't stopped writing because of Mohan; I could not possibly make Mohan the scape-goat for my failures, for I had written even after that confrontation with him — stories that had been rejected, stories that had come back to me, stories that I had hidden here in this house"(145).

The responsibility for one's actions and the innate capacity

for striving towards the higher goals are two basic concepts of Buddhism which have always inspired the people. Jaya, too, during the process of self-analysis recalls her failures as a writer. Kamat, being her professional mentor knows her weaknesses. Jaya could very skillfull shake off her identity of an unsuccessful writer by claiming to be a devoted wife and mother. Buddhism preaches that we are responsible for our own actions. Man must be cautious before performing an action because bad deeds lead to suffering. Kamat cautions her against this tendency. He points out that her writings were not upto the mark and she must improve by working hard.

As Buddhism states that through the process of self-analysis the emotions, passion, ignorance and ego are removed and the reality of life appears which leads to the active participation in life, Jaya's ignorance of the reasons behind her failures is removed by the truth-revealing words of Kamat. This reminds us of the Buddhistic Theory of the Right View incorporated in the concept of Four Noble Truths: "It also enables man to distinguish the real from the insubstantial, the eternal from the transitory, the ego from the non-ego and happiness from misery. It leads to salvation and liberation from sorrow and destroys the influence of any false belief."[10] Right View is an insight into the truth which destroy ignorance and enables an individual to aspire towards a naishkramya. The words of Kamat makes her acquainted with her weaknesses and follies. Kamat points out that it was her fear of failing as a writer that kept her away from her profession, and not her responsibility towards her family. Jaya discovers that Kamat is right in his assessment about her. She accepts that she was sacred of failing and the best way of avoiding and neglecting this truth was by taking refuge in her home. Buddhism preaches to live the life by actively participating in it and not by running away from it like a coward, but by facing it boldly. Once Jaya understands it, she is able to find out the answer to all her pending questions which had caused remorse and grief to her earlier.

Jaya recalls and assesses her life while living a life of solitude at her Dadar flat. Her hours of contemplation lead her to a decision

of giving up the role of a silent and passive partner. She decides to clarify the misunderstandings and turbulations in her relationships with Mohan. She develops her inner strength to solve the labyrinth of her life pragmatically. "People don't change, Mukta said. It is true. We don't change overnight. It's possible that we may not change even over long periods of time. But we can always hope without that, life would be impossible. And if there is anything I know now it is this: life has always to be made possible" (193).

Buddhism believes that the reality is overshadowed by the dark clouds of passions and ignorance. Once these are removed, a ray of hope and enlightenment appears before us. Similarly, Jaya and Saru overcome their passions, desires and fears which make them understand that they will have no refuge in any relationship unless they believe in their own self and accept the responsibilities of their own lives. Buddhism preaches mankind the human values dealing with morality, classifying the priorities of life and helping us to move towards enlightenment and awakening. The novels of Shashi Deshpande present the philosophy of Buddhism, though it does not seem to be a part of any conscious planning.

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS AND PERSONAL LIFE

O.P. Bhatnagar

Orphaned by living parents, I was gifted with innumerable honours of misfortunes. Although many poets come of extremely adverse backgorunds it, however, may be wrong to conclude that poetry and poetic vision are a product of disharmony in personal life. They might carry some sharp sensations from the past but poetry by its nature and principle of creativity activates harmony and right perception beyond prejudices and all personal discordances. It helps promote tolerance and accommodation. As words rush in, in the process of creation and vie for supremacy, the experience of it has to be undergone silently and peacefully in a detached way without their repulsions, charms and exclusions or inclusions. The decision making or selecting spirit acts independent of personal choices. A creatively disposed mind refuses to adopt a partisan approach in terms of words and attitudes. Poetry being the pathos of life leads human sensibilities towards flexibility and sympathy. It teaches man to compose something positive and aesthetic and meaningful out of one's sufferings and crises. That was how I was able to steal some hours of peace and restore dignity to my highly bruised self.

Poetry or the creative process offers repose and leads one to recognise the element of the constructive in life. My art is but a way of overcoming the travails of my life including society, nation, god or man, which form and provide the context of and for life consciousness, through sympathy and tenderness. It is a kind of conduct in which nobility of mind and feelings unite with virtuous action. That is how I was able to overcome my hurts, conflicts and sufferings life had managed to inflict upon me. It was like saying prayers to God. A poem with me would take hours and days to finish, without my sufferings pursuing me. Not that I was born a poet but it came to me as a way out of my painful and tense psychic complications of tiresome and exhausting memories and reactive thoughts of childhood become a pattern. Poetry by its creative act helped me to break out of the pattern

and prison of pain and sufferings and revel in their temporary suspension from awareness. The creative moments also provided opportunities for regeneration of dull, dead and misdirected energies towards a useful and satisfying purpose. The painful memories seemed to disappear in the image making; the negative feelings, in composition. Thinking of social problems, cultural degeneration and national issues provide disengagement from the self to feel free and independent in the moments and process of creation. This very freedom changes the mode of imagination and the texture of poetic vision. It also enriches sensibilities and enables perception. It, in fact, is a reculturing of the whole man from his roots.

As I gradually got more frequently engrossed in the act of artistic creation the hold of rigidity, bitterness and prejudices seemed to relax and level and lead me to be both human and humane. What I aspired for in poetry was secondary but what I gained in the process of creative act was important and rewarding. I know I have not written poems with a high finish in the formal sense but I have the satisfaction of "authenticity". Except for the poems on death the rest are neither confessional nor autobiographical. In my humble opinion, poetry ought not to be tried as a highly finished product at the cost of authencity, substance and spontaneity. That is why the simple folk poetry and songs are more appealing and relevant than the finished and academic poetry. Even the great Indian epics were written for appeal to the masses. It is all the more necessary in the case of Indian poetry in English which is already twice removed from reality and the local feel. For the foreignness of medium increases the gap between feelings and expression. In order to give local colour, both the poets and the novelists resort to placing their compositions in Indian landscape on a large (which also is true of the Indian diasporic writers) scale but the attitudes and feelings projected are tangential to the landscape, sometimes verging on to the ludicrous and shocking to the native sentiments. It is therefore only right that more Indian poetry in English be written by the commonly educated Indians than by the specialized academicians or those educated and cultured abroad. The validity of Indian poetry in English lies in its

nativity rather than in its foreign oreintation or diasporic writing. I have neither followed any foreign model for my compositions nor pursued any movement poetry. I have taken to subjects, themes and events that have come and struck closest to my dispositions of mind and feelings. The failures or successes are totally mine. I am aware that some compositions may not have turned out to be as poetically perfect as others. But all of them have been my private efforts in social expression. I drew equal solace in writing them. I do not boast of representing anything in my poetry except existence. It has been my private and personal satisfaction; compensation and support to my wearied self-relating experience to expression. The one important thing I learned in the process of creative act was the sense of freedom and the pleasure of being free from the troubling memories of the past and the dreams of future. In the creative act the presence of the present is felt most enduringly. In me it helped resolve the conflict of polarities. It even smoothened the uneven suface of my being. It also assisted me in facing the realities that lay embedded in me, and also outside me by way of condensing intensity into thoughts whose structural meaning and logic gave poems their forms and expression. The condensing process of intensity doesn't always succeed so successfully into a clarity or transparency of thoughts which Robert Frost describes to A.F. Housman as "tantalizing vagueness." But I, as a common practitioner of poetry, would prefer "meaning" to be the core of composition, which is not available without the clarity of thoughts and their projections in a construct, especially to an Indian poet in English.

It was quite relieving to me to make some meaning out of the chaos and crisis of my personal sufferings stored raw in the recesses of my unconscious. But writing in English always made for ambiguities, paradoxes and contradications and gaps of culture and thoughts in the language. That is why many a times the Indian poets in English become functions of the particular linguistic system and remain half revealed or expressed. A foreign language is a dinosaur which needs sizing which can be done only by the texts and textures of our native feels and values. For a

foreign language forces its integral forms of thoughts, feelings and conceptions. Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo were the only poets whose creativity and creations were not subject to distortions by the language they were using. Therefore, keeping close to socio-cultural and national concerns alone could enable one to be free of the fetters of the foreign language become part of our usage and expression. A continuous effort at nativization alone can divest and deconstruct the language of its fixed associations. This can be made possible only by addressing and keeping the native readers, and not the foreign readers, in mind. The Indian poets may avoid becoming pets of the English masters and language. Otherwise we would only be producing motherless sons and daughters and making eternal entries in the housewife's daily diaries.

I admit that I have been tempted to use western myths, which may disrupt comprehension of the poem to a common reader. The rationale of such a practice lies first, in the fact of their intense integration in literature. Secondly, their currency in communicating notions of social import, as of Ulysses for adventure, cannot be ignored. Thirdly, our knowledge of these myths is intimate through the courses of our studies in English. Certainly, they will be of disadvantage to a general reader of English. The Indian myths can definitely be integrated in Indian poetry in English more easily the same way. It can also be modeled on Indian poetics through inward introspection, which all will require training in the Indian critical tenets. Almost all practitioners of Indian poetry in English have grown and been groomed in western critical canons and poetics. I personally suffer from this disadvantage. It is a long way from coloniality to freedom in arts and culture in our country. Awards and propanganda apart, in my opinion, the Indian Literature in English is no match to the excellent literature being produced in the regional languages of India today.

In this exposition I cannot underrate the therapeutic effects of my engagement with writing poetry. The long silence forced upon me by the rigid repressive measures craved to get free of the cage of the choking silence with the help of quiet words uttered not in speech but in writing. This encouraged conversation with

the self and the tortured being. In the process of creation words rolled upon words and flowed in a torrent competing with one another for supremacy in arrangement. Expressions and forms of words vied with one another for selection causing confusion. Each expression and image offered several alternatives making it difficult to complete a poem. The process was neither boring nor bothersome. Instead it was highly engaging and relieving. The endless process of rewriting was engrossing. The completion of a poem was fulfilling and satisfying the personal way. Something harmonious had flowed out of the chaotic; pains diluted into pleasant sensations for a while. It was like chipping rocks; a streak of light entering a cave.

Certain themes or subjects surfaced on their own out of the ocean of the subconscious, like — solitude, death, art of creation, God, the enigma of life, freedom and slavery: others by association, like — religion, heaven, hell, truth, patriotism, etc. Some came up through observing life around, like — hunger, floods, injustices killings, poverty, corruption, moral degeneration, social evils and political upheavals. The strange juxtaposition of opposites and contradictions in life, events and happenings gave rise to wonder of paradoxes and play of irony in life situations presenting themselves in the treatment of themes and envisioning the nature of existence as in poems on idealists, politicians, saints, life attitudes, socio-religious modes and practices. On account of the unfavourable circumstances of my childhood there was a natural inclination and presence of pathos for the discriminated, deprived and the dispossessed along with the protest for justice. From the poetry of inner self my consciousness became more centered in the outside world and its concerns. Empathy flowed easy. This kind of state forced me to skirt the grandeurs of the romantic in life. Consequently, the play and presence of intricate imagery suffered a setback in my compositions. The ideas and thoughts in the rhythm of their meanings took natural hold of my endeavors. I myself thought over it and asked myself the question if by traditional definition and conception I was writing poetry or poetizing my thoughts. Some senior and seasoned poets even condemned it as poetic-jigsaw or pseudo poetry. But I did

not want to be untrue to myself and dilute and dissolve the appeal of plainness, directness and simplicity of my compositions inspired by my inner urges and aspirations. I had to say my say. Not beauty but goodness and truth were my concern. Through this discipline I learned to exercise patience; endeavor to arrive at the right word and expression; understand the value of relationship of words creating images and meanings; cultivate precision; use of illustrative similies and expanding metaphors; the sense of opening and closure; the culture of repose and restraint of the flow of feelings and rhetoric, and much more. But it also introduced the element of creative restlessness and discontent. I never felt satisfied with one version of a composition. I always was eager to rewrite several versions of the same poem till something inside me confirmed that the composition was quite or as close to what the creative self intended to convey. Personally, I am of opinion that no poem is ever "perfect". It is only near perfect. I would love to rework on any of my finished poems. May be I am not a perfect poet myself, which affords this facility to me. I see a close parallel between the imperfections of life and art. Both try to approximate to the ideal, but always fall a bit short of it.

The greatest advantage my engagement with the creative process offered me was that it lent me a voice in lieu of my forced silence dumped upon me by the sour repressions during my childhood. Yet the impress of the innocent sufferings durings the period of innocence was far too deep and intense even for poetry to fathom and represent. So much still lies buried in the inner layers of the subconscious. However, breaking the rigidities of retreat, withdrawal and isolation through the process of writing did offer partial unburdening of unpleasant memories and pains and identification with the deprivations and sufferings of the people crying for a voice.

MYTH AS SYMBOL: AN INTERPRETATION OF GIRISH KARNAD'S *THE FIRE AND THE RAIN*

O.P. Budholia

Girish Karnad, as actor, film producer and T.V. artiste, is one of the most outstanding Indian English playwrights. A Rhodes scholar and a Bhaba fellow, he has several plays to his credit. His *Hayavadana* brought him the *Natya Sangh* award, and in 1999 he was honoured with the prestigious *Jnanpith* award. Like T.S. Eliot, he follows in his plays the sense of history and tradition on the one hand, and, like Shakespeare, analyses his characters deeply for focusing their sensibilities in the modern context on the other.

Girish Karnad's *The Fire and the Rain*, being a symbolic and psychological interpretation of a myth of the *Mahabharata*, revivifies the myth again into modern contexts. The same myth also happens to be analysed by C. Rajagopalachari in his abridged version of the *Mahabharata* which becomes an inspiring source to Karnad. This peripheral tale of the *Mahabharata* exerts an influence upon Karnad to such an extent as he finds in it some "uncanny parallels with that of Aeschylus's *Oresteia*."[1] Deviating slightly from the original story of the *Mahabharata* he brings into being the character of Brahma Rakshasa and Nittilai, a hunter girl, for bearing upon the colonial and post-colonial perspectives in the play. In addition to it, Karnad also defines the art of theatre and the knowledge of theatricality and regards it as a fifth *Veda*. On the request of Indra, this fifth Veda known as the art of drama was created by Brahama Himself for managing the social hierarchy of instinctual and irrational passions of man:

> On being implored by Indra and the other gods to provide such an instrument, Brahma, the father of the universe, took the text from the Yajur Veda, the song form the Sama Veda and rasa (aesthetic experience, form Atharva Veda and created a fifth Veda called the Natya Veda. (70)

Karnad also makes the parallel stream of Bharata's *Natya Shastra* run amidst the symbolic interpretation of the Yavakri myth from the *Mahabharata* in *The Fire and the Rain*. Yavakri, the son of sage Bharadwaja, burns incessantly with the fire of jealousy

inside his body and mind. The jealously, that Yavakri implants in him against Raibhya and his sons, symbolizes his unconscious mind. The two close friends in the original version of the *Mahabharata* — sage Bhardwaja and sage Raibhya — used to live in their respective hermitages. Raibhya's two sons Paravasu and Arvasu were learned as they had mastered the mystical knowledge of the *Vedas* through years of studies and by the grace of guru. Bharadwaja as a Brahmarsi never thought of having social recognitions for his *Brahma vidya* (divine knowledge). His son Yavakri becomes jealous of the social prestige and priestly honours bestowed upon learned Raibhya and his two sons. Burning with jealoulsy like a tinder, he makes a vow to please Indra for mastering all the sacred knowledge of the *Vedas* without the help of any *guru.* Pleased with his austerities, Indra appears before him and grants him his long cherished boon for gaining control over the *Vedic knowledge.*

As a self-willed man in possession of his boon for knowledge, he comes back to the hermitage and tells his father about this surprising boon. Bharadwaja suspects the inner hollowness and impulsiveness of his son for slighting the real knowledge of great sage Raibhya. He warns him not to hurt the ego of Raibhya. But the egoism, repulsiveness and an ever burning fire of jealousy make him lose his self-control and the limits of good conduct. As a ravaging beast with lust, he accosts the daughter-in-law of sage Raibhya and violates her person. When Raibhaya learns about it, he is seized with implacable anger. He gives birth to *Brahma Rakshasa* from his sacrificial act and orders him to kill Yavakri, and he kills him outside the hermitage of sage Bharadwaja. Although Bharadwaja knows the sinful deeds of his son, yet as a passion-ridden and sorrow-stricken father, he loses rationality and curses the faultless Raibhya that his elder son will kill him. The curse of Bharadwaja so overpowers Paravasu as he kills his father Raibhya for his mistaken identity as a wild beast and becomes guilty of patricide. More than this *patricide* is the imposition of his sinful act on his younger brother, Arvasu when he comes back to the sacrificial place after performing obsequies

and the expiation of a Brahmana who was his father too. However, Karnad leaves deliberately the curse-episode of sage Bharadwaja in the structural pattern of the *The Fire and the Rain.*

Girish Karnad has already exhibited his dramatic excellence while working on the myths and symbols in his *Hayavadana, Tughlaq* and *Naga-Mandala.* Myths and folk tales, to Karnad, become symbolic of unveiling the social and moral norms and the psychological obsessions with men and women of the society. He excels in the structural pattern of *The Fire and the Rain* by showing vehemently opposing elemetns: the fire of human passion and jealousy and the rain of human love and sacrifies. Originally written in the Kannada language under the title *Agni Mattu Male, The Fire and the Rain* (1998) is indeed a translation of his Kannada play by Karnad himself. English being the language of his adulthood misses something original, as he himself acknowledges honestly some "kind of loss" (63) in this transcreation. However, the play is steeped in the riches of psychology, the aversion and the jealousy of man against man, father against son, brother against brother, wife against husband, the high caste poeple against the low caste, man against god, ritual against sacrifices, freedom against bondage, attraction against repulsion, hate against love, the fire against the rain, illusion against reality, passion against truth and, above all, *Vidya* (knowledge) against *avidya* (ignorance). Karnad in his *Notes,* appended to the play, remarks about the opposing elements in the play:

> Thus the phrase, Agni Mattu Male, in addition to counter pointing seen as antagonistic, also sets up several oppositions: between an Indo-Aryan (sanskrit) and Dravidian (Kannad) language, between the pan-indic and the regional points of view, between the classical 'Marga' and the exalted 'desi' traditions, between the elevated and the mundane, and even perhaps between... sacred and secular. (63)

The structure of *The Fire and the Rains* runs into three parallel streams: Raibhya and Vishakha at the hermitage, the sacrificial place with Paravasu as the Chief Priest and the story of Nittilai and Arvasu with the company of the theature. In addition, some western influences on Karnad are visible with regard to the development of theatrical art adding some new dimensions to the

aesthetic sense of this play; but the soul of the play entirely rotates around the indigenous myth of Yavakri. The mythical and symbolic plan of the *The Fire and Rain* is so designed as it links within its structure the original myth of the *Mahabharata* for displaying Indian ethos and modern apathy, towards human relationship. The overweening arrogance of Yavakri to acquire knowledge without study and experience becomes the cause of his annihilation. The original story of the *Mahabharata* shows the molestation of Raibhya's daughter-in-law by Yavakri[2], but Karnad exhibits a willing submission of Vishakha to the incestuous behest of Yavakri. Karnad also assures the readers about their personal relationship even before this meeting. The incestuous and aggressive forces in Vishakha become the salient traits of her mind, but her meeting with Yavakri creates a stress and split in her personality:

> Ten years ago I had come to your house to bid you good bye. And you led me quickly to the jack fruit grove behind your house. You open the knot of your blouse, pressed my face to your breasts, then turned and fled.... The smell of your body. Ten years later I opened my eyes and I knew I was hungry for that moment. (14)

Vishakaha knows the inhibition of natural impulses in Yavakri and perceives symbolically the metaphor of his "hunger". She replies to him thus: "I had lost the initiative — missed the moment of decision. Because I know that hunger well, Yavakri" (15). Being well-aware of the instincts and impulses of Yavakri's mind, there rushes in her the process of disorganization of thoughts. Amidst such mental state of an individual, "the overwhelming emotional stress, prelogical thinking regressively dominates mental activity."[3] Recollecting her *screen memory* of the unconcious mind, she recalls the repressed store of her ideas and emotions. She again responds to Yavakri's metaphor of hunger: "These ten years have not made any difference to your teenage fantasies....But...my breasts hang loose now"(14). She explains to Yavakri that these ten years have made her "parched and wordless, like a she-devil" (15). As a young girl and as a wife, she desired to know the mystery of life — a mystery that emanates from the physical union with the opposite sex; but the departure of her husband to be the

Chief Priest left her alone with her pangs of isolation and seperation. Her long isolation in the hermitage bites her and she becomes a psychosis-patient who desires for her immediate wish-fulfilment with no concern for logic, morality, time sequence, casual connections, or the demands of external reality.

The textual analysis unfolds the internal drama that crept like an insect incessantly into her unconscious mind when she reveals an obsessive idea of her psyche to Yavakri: "Alone, I had become dry like tinder. Ready to brust into flames, at the slightest chance" (16). If the textual image of "tinder" is linked with the phrase "slightest chance", it symbolically represents the intensity of her passion or the brewing of an obsession in her unconscious mind, which stands closer to Freud's analysis of "id", for in his analysis "id" stands for "untamed passion" and is a "couldron of seething excitement." It serves as a reservoir for "libido" — the term is applied to the energy of sexual impulses. Vishakha amidst such mental fluctuations submits herself to Yavakri just for the demand of her body. When Raibhya learns this happening between them, he calls her in anger a "whore" — a "raving whore". In fits of wrath, he invokess of "kritya" and challenges the spiritual powers of Yavakri. Vishakha rushes to the spot where Yavakri is sitting. Her confession of her submission becomes a wonderful example of psycho-analysis in *The Fire and the Rain*: "I was so happy this morning, you were so good. I wanted to envelope you in everything I could give, It was more as a mother that I offered my breasts to you" (24). However, she fails to save his life when *Brahama Rakshasa* kills him in spite of his spiritual powers. In fact, the creation of *'kritya'* symbolises demoniac powers of Raibhya and the birth to *Brahma Rakshasa* becomes symbolic of his *krodha* (wrath) in this play. When Paravasu for a night leaves the sacrificial precincts and meets his wife in utter desperation and despondency, Vishakha confess her guilt of submitting herself to the incestuous behest of Yavakri. But the thing that strikes an attentive reader is her observation of Raibhya's jealousy and lust:

> Something died inside your father the day the king invited you to be the Chief Priest. He's been drying up like a dead tree since then. No sap runs in him. On the one hand, there's his sense of being humiliated by you. On the other,

there's lust. An old man's curdled lust. And there is no one else here to take his rage out on but me. (32-3)

Admitting her sinful act, Vishakha compares "an old man's curdled lust" with the warm lust of Yavakri: "At least Yavakri was warm, gentle for a few minutes, he made me forget the wizened body.... And he paid for it his life" (33). She is ready to meet her fate in death, and asks her husband Paravasu to kill her.The awakening of guilt-consciousness makes her a lady with super-consciousness. Paravasu realises his weakness as a man and also acknowledges her genuine arguments for situational and contextual reality, and regards her as his "guru". He finally decides that Raibhya "deserved to die. He killed Yavakri to disturb me in the last stages of the sacrifice" (33), and he kills Raibhya, his father.

Thus, Paravasu becomes an archetypal figure in this play and Vishakha symbolizes the case of an unfulfilled woman. And Arvasu becomes symbolic and suggestive of revealing the snob-bery, hypocrisy, raving jealousy and corroding ambitions in man. Arvasu, on the advice of his elder brother, Paravasu, performs the funeral rites and expitation for his father's murder, and comes to attend the sacrifices of *yajna*. Karnad analyses here the sociological and anthropological problem as how the profession of man decides the base of his caste. Arvasu so intensely thinks of learning the art of theatricality as an actor that he decides to give up the artificial garb of high-caste morality. He even casts off the fear of his elder brother for the choice of an actor and for the love of Nittilai: "Paravasu himself has ostracized me. I'm an outcaste now. He can't stop me from acting" (49). This change of caste brings into being the post-colonical perspectives in this play. Arvasu gives up his brahmanical order of life for wetting with the rains of Nittilai's love. Even Nittilai remembers the words of her father for showing the double standard of high-caste people: "These high-caste men are glad enough to bed our women but not to wed them"(8). He thus becomes "a low-caste actor" (41). Again, he unveils the conspiracy of his father and brother for the choice of his profession and for Nittilai's love. Thus, he is to be subjected to the process of inner conflict which is the soul of

drama. He says to Nittilai: "It's a conspiracy, don't you see, it is all planned because I wanted to marry you. Because I was ready to reject my caste, my birth" (43).

Arvasu accuses Yavakri, Raibhya and Paravasu of being custodians to the illusive Brahmanical order and regards them guilty of planting the corpses through sacrifical acts for restraining him from the love of an untouchable hunter girl, Nittilai. He curses even his elder brother, and asks Nittilai if "such an evil man continues, as the Chief Priest of the sacrifice, it'll rain the blood" (43). A girl of hunting clan, a dalit, Nittilai attracts him more than the snobbery, hypocrisy and egoism of high-caste society. As Karnad binds the varied groups of society together on the basis of emotional integration, he leaves an image of a secular writer. Nittilai becomes a goddess to Arvash as she saves his life from the cruelties of his elder brother Paravasu only on humanitarian grounds.

The compassion, love and humanitarian touch of Nittilai make Arvasu happy as an outcaste. Arvasu, thus, undergoes the metamorphosis into his mind and comprehends completely the essence of human love. Nittilai as a married woman of hunter-clan poses an apparent contradiction with that of Vishakha — a married woman of brahmin - community. Nittilai symbolizes some inborn personality traits of true love and humanitarianism, though she, like Vishakha, becomes guilty of breaking off the social code as a married woman. However, Nittilai, being a saviour of the life of Arvasu and standing firmly with him even at the cost of her life, has an edge of superiority as a woman over Vishakha. Vishakha's love for Yavakri is meant for the fulfilment of her bodily needs; she also exhibits some perversions and a split in her personality when she willingly submits her person to Yavakri saying "I am a married woman" (12). Nittilai as a married woman hardly transgresses the limits of decency and good conduct for the needs of her body. Even as *dalit* of the society, she knows and understands the real meaning of love and sacrifice. She reminds Arvasu of the impossibility of their physical union as a married lady. Blum analyses psychologically such personalities thus:

> When the super ego prohibits expression of sexual or aggressive drives, the ego typically joins the super ego in opposition to the Id. Submission to super

> ego forces enhances a person's self-esteem. Resistence to them usually results in feelings of remorse and unworthiness.[4]

Vishakha slips to the voluptous urge of Yavakri, while Nittilai controls her passions amidst the unfavourable scenes, situations and contextual realities, and emerges triumphant as a being of rationality and super consciousness. She, as a rational being, says to Arvasu:

> I have been vicious enough to my husband. I don't want to disgrace him further. Let's be together like brother and sister. You marry any girl you like. Only please Arvasu spare a corner for me. (42)

Again, Nittilai as a *dalit* lady shows a well-balanced mind, when she calms down Arvasu's feeling for revenge:

> Leave to the gods, Arvasu. Look at your family, Yavakri avenges his father's shame by attacking your sister-in-law. Your father avenges her by killing Yavakri. Your brother kills your father. And now in your own turn want vengeance — where will it all end? (43)

Paravasu, being overpowered by his guilt-consciousness or super consciousness, regards Vishakha his "guru"; Nittilai, too, becomes a teaher and a preceptor to Arvasu as he, on her advice, opts for a world which lies far from human trivialities and egoism: "We don't need this world. We can find our own" (44). He, thus, rehearses as an actor at the instance of Actor Manager, and his dance appears "like a celestial being" (49). As Shakespeare in *Hamlet,* Karnad, too, arranges the device of play within the play for the self-reflexivity of the characters' inside, especially the myth showing the killing of Vritra by Indra. As an actor, Arvasu undergoes some bizarre sensations which are called in psychology the process of nightmare. The nightmare represents unconscious motifs and unacceptable thoughts of human mind. Nittilai, as an obsession, becomes an object of day-dreaming to Arvasu. The worries about the life of Nittilai haunt the unconscious mind of Arvasu: "I had such nightmares.... I thought I was in the land of the dead. But I did not see you. I wish I had (41). This bizarre world of dream brings forth the total flux of time in which the merging of time past and time present has been effected successfully. As Nittilai understands the attachment and fear-psychosis in Arvasu, she makes him free for his attachment towards her. She advises him to perform the role of Vritra for prefefence to

a mortal life. Nittilai, thus, succeeds in relieving Arvasu from his unconscious fear and his hysterical state. She compares the active principle of the mortal human beings with the pleasure loving principle of the immortal gods:

> He (Indra) is immortal.... He can't change himself. He can't create anything. I like Vritra because when he's triumphant he chooses death. I always wonder if the flowers didn't know, they were to fade and die, would they have ever blossomed. (51-2)

Arvasu now resolves to act the role of Vritra and unfolds yet another symbol of Brahma's *triple progeny*: god, man and Rakshasa. Vishwarupa as a man and a son of Brahma symoblizes the acts of compassion and kindness and has an edge over the pleasure loving principles of Indra, another son of Brahma. Brahma instructs his third son, Vritra, a demon, to save the life of his brother, Vishwarupa, from the jealousy and trickery of Indra even at the cost of his own life. Overladen with emotions and overpowered by unseen powers, Arvasu as an actor in the play decides to save the life of Vishwarupa by killing Indra. Chaos prevails on the stage. Paravasu suspects of the foul intentions of demonic powers for polluting the sancity of the sacrifice; he calmly walks in to the blazing enclosure, and sacrifices himself for the general good of all. Nittilai, as "a lamp into hurricane" (59), symbolizes, thus, the rains of human love. She is finally murdered by her husband and brother. Amidst such scenes and situations, Indra appears on the stage, and is pleased to grant a boon to Arvasu for two reasons: Paravasu's altruism and Nittilai's humanitarianism. As a passion-ridden man, he begs from Indra the life of Nittilai back. But Indra makes him understand the complexity of his boon, for it will create the reverse movement of the wheel of time with a complete chaos in the world. Arvasu now understands the mysterious and visionary perceptions of Indra: "I'm wiser, I can now stop the tragedy from repeating itself" (60). Just then, a shout comes: "I want release — release from this bondage" (60). This was the voice of *Brahma Rakshasa*. Momentarily, Arvasu swings between his two halves: the egoistic and the altruistic impulses of his mind. Indra further unveils the secrets of a soul being released from the pangs of life and death, for "not

even the gods can guarantee a soul the ultimate release" (60). *Brahma Rakshasa* also stamps the superior validity of man for performing the deeds of mercy and compassion: "I don't forgive. I can't. But you are a human being. You are capable of mercy. You can understand pain and sufferings as the gods can't" (61).

Arvasu, being aware of the mystery of life and death, changes the contents of his boon, and begs now from Indra the release of *Brahma Rakshasa*. The release of *Brahma Rakshasa*, like that of Ariel in *The Tempest*, reveals the colonial consciousness of the playwright. The total impression that the reader draws from this play is that of the vocal superfluity of the rites and rituals, the restriction of the universal knowledge on the caste-based division in society, and the superiority of altruism over egoism. The world of gods with the concept of immortality is scoffed off, and the cyclic phenomenon of the death of human beings is applauded for its dynamic approach. In a word, *The Fire and The Rain* is, indeed, a brilliant attempt at revealing the indigenous myth with an individual talent, and this undoubtedly enrisches Indian English drama.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH G.S. SARAT CHANDRA, A POET OF INDIAN DIASPORA

Basavaraj Naikar

Dr. G.S. Sarat Chandra (1938-2000) was a poet of Indian diaspora who taught creative writing at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, USA. He was born in Nanjangud in Mysore district of Karnataka State, India and educated in Pune, Canada and America. He published five collections of poetry, namely *April in Nanjangud* (1971), *Once or Twice* (1974), *Heirloom* (1978), *Immigrants of Loss* (1993) and *Family of Mirrors* (1993). He is an important Indian poet unfortuantely neglected by the Indian critics. I met him a little before his death at Pune and interviewed him about his own poetry as well as the Indian literary scenario. The interview throws light on many aspects of Indian literature.

BN: Why did you choose to write in English and not in Kannada, your mother tongue?

GSS: As you'r aware, the pre-independent educational system in India encouraged study in the medium of English and we all went through High School and unversities taking every thing in English expect our second language courses.Thus, the study of Kannada literature took a back seat, although I read with avid interest the works of Servagna, and Kannada writers like K.V. Puttapa, D.R. Bendre, R.K. Narayan, Shivaram Karanth, A.N. Krishna Rao and T.P. Kailasam. Gubbi Veerana was a client as well as a friend of my father (who was from Gubbi), and I was familiar with his stage productions and films. In my own writing, I felt more at ease writing in English rather than in Kannada. A few attempts in Kannada were rejected by editors. (I was broken hearted by a rejection from Mastil Venkatesha Iyengar who was then editing an influential Kannada journal) My poems in English found publication in P. Lal's *The Miscellany,* Anniah Gowda's *The Literary Half-Yearly*, Delhi's *Caravan,* and the news paper *Deccan Herald.* C.R. Mandy was planning a feature on my work in the *Illustrated*

Weekly of India, when he retired. I felt at ease writing in English and never considered it as an alien language. Because of this, as I grew older, it became far more difficult to write in Kannada rather than in English.

BN: Why is poetry form dear to you and not other forms?

GSS: I don't know why, but I always loved poetry in English, Kannada, Hindi and Urdu. I felt that poems conveyed emotions and thoughts more intensely than prose, for they evoked recise images in the mind with their carefully chosen rhymes and words.

BN: By which great writers (from India and abroad) are you inspired or influenced and in which aspect of writing?

GSS: I admired Tagore and read everything he wrote. My earlier work was Tagorean, but I slowly moved away from hisromanticism and found much to learn and emulate in the work of poets such as Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Robert Frost, W.H. Auden, William Carlos Williams and other modern poets. They influenced my poetic diction more than my Eastern and metaphysical conceptions.

BN: Do you want to be called an Indian English poet or an expatriate poet or an American poet on account of your American citizenship and of American themes in your poetry?

GSS: I'm proud to say that I'm an Indian poet writing in English. I live in America and I do reach a very large readership in the West. I've lived here for over 30 years, and my poetic diction in English is closer to the diction of American poets. But I'm not American simply because of certain themes explored in my work. I'm bi-cultural, and write of both my past roots and my present cultural insights and assimilated experiences.

BN: Under which category should your poetry be classified? I mean — impressionistic, imagistic, cerebral or lyrical, etc.

GSS: In my work I use free or formal prosody that feels right for the content. I write poems that use all that's exciting in the language. Some of the "categories" you mention are useful

influences or insights, not persuasions, or unbreakable habits of commitment to any school of thought.

BN: What is your definition of a good poem? Do you have your own aesthectic? If yes, kindly elaborate it.

GSS: A good poem lasts longer. A great poem lasts forever. What one writes about is totally sub-conscious. How well what's in the sub-conscious surfaces depends upon chance, luck, and hard work. All poems a poet writes will not turn out to be great poems, although he tries to do his best with language.

BN: Even in the modern secular India caste-politics plays a great role in publication as well as criticism. Have you ever felt the pinch of it? If so, please expatiate.

GSS: I've felt a great pinch of caste and group politics against my work in India. R.Parthasarathy deliberately omitted my work from the Oxford anthology of Indian poetry. Jayanta Mahapatra had sent him my book *April in Nanjangud,* but he wouldn't consider my work. After Alan Ross wrote a review of the Oxford anthology in London Magazine and commented about my non-inclusion, Parthasarathy tried to compromise the issue by soliciting a book from me which he eventually published (*"Heirloom", in 1982). Ramanujan and Dharwarkar* have done a new Oxford anthology that's being used at Indian universities. It has gone into a 3rd or 4th printing, I'm told. I'm not in it. If you look at the poets, almost all of them belong to the Brahmin caste. I'm not a brahmin. Parthasarathy is here now. I like him as a translator and scholar. But he expects other poets to revere him (because he was the editor for poetry at Oxford, or that he feels he has been on the scene for a long time) like he was some *guru* or something. Arvind Mehrotra exposed his lagiaristic habits in an article in *Chandraghaga*. But it looks like no one took notice. I wonder why? It is because Brahmins don't wish to undermine one of their own? Mehrotra is himself a Brahmin. Is he forgiven for his trespasses? The game of exclusion of writers for whatever reason only

damages Indian writing in English. Maybe it's more of a group politics than a case of prejudice. Important work will not simply die because somone plays politics with it. V.K. Gokak has done remarkably good and impartial service to Indian poetry in English. P. Lal, despite my differences with him, was a pioneer in creating a venue for Indian poetry in English with his Workshop publications, especially in the early sixties and seventies. He was certainly impartial and fair and believed in the promise of Indian writing in English.

BN: What do you think of Indian English criticism as compared with Anglo-American criticism? Do you think it is healthy and impartial?

GSS: Indian-English criticism needs to be much more impartial and critically focused. There are many excellent scholars and critics in India, but sometimes their understanding of modern poetry in English seems to be derivative and unsure. Those who have studied Indian writing in English and know how English prosody works or fails to work in the writing of an Indian poet are few.They "toe the line" of reputation rather than challenge their own inadequate understanding of this genre.

BN: Among your several collections of poetry, which, do you think, is your best one and why?

GSS: *Family of Mirrors* (1993, University of Missouri) and *Immigrants of Loss* (1993, Hippopotamus Press, Somerest, England). Both these books examine themes and concerns of an Indian past and an American life. I've used various poetic strategies from the conventional metres and rhymes to surreal free verse and experimentation with blending the traditional with contemporary forms.

BN: Have you ever tried to write an epic in your life? If not, why?

GSS: I haven't tried to write an epic on my life. However, I intend to explore the possibility of writing a novel with a biographical approach. The success of my short story collection, *Sari of the Gods*, has prompted this thought.

BN: Should an Indian English poet try to imbibe the Indian or Hindu spirit and knowledge or anglicise himself completely for getting an international readership?

GSS: If an Indian writer "anglicises" his work, he'll only produce mediocre and stylistically derivative work. Anyone who writes with a premeditated readership will not write anything worthy of being read by anybody.

BN: Have you tried to experiment with latest techniques in your poetry? Like for example, Cummings or Wallace Stevens?

GSS: Wallace Stevens has been an influence but not e.e. cummings.

BN: What is your contribution to shorter fiction? What are the main themes and techniques employed in them?

GSS: *Sari of the Gods,* published in 1998, contains nineteen stories out of a total of 26 stories that I've written. In its three separate sections, I've dealt with provincial life in the town of Nanjangud (my birthplace), the uncertain and confused anxieties of immigrants to America, and the limbo in which those who cannot change or adopt are caught. I must say my work has been compared to that of R. K. Narayan (in *Kirkus Review, ALA Booklist, London Magzine* and others) and I'm proud of this, since I know R.K. Narayan as a friend of my family, and as one who knows me. In fact, in 1982, when I visited him in Mysore City, he insisted that I return to Mysore City to write and be his successor! I grew up reading and admiring his work, and feel guilty that I haven't done what he asked me to do — return to Mysore City.

BN: How does the American reading public react to your poetry? Do they consider you as part of the mainstream?

GSS: American readers react enthusiastically to my work. They feel that I'm very accessible and that my poetic world is free of any conscious boundaries or regional conformities.

BN: Do you feel any nostalgia for India? If yes, why? If no,why?

GSS: I feel terribly nostalgic and miss everything that was part of my life. But it's important that this sort of nostalgia shouldn't overwhelm the sense of universal aesthetics.

Poetry is art and art doesn't accommodate sentimentality.

BN: What do you think of Raja Rao who is geographically nearest to you in Karnataka? Do you like his spiritually oriented writings?

GSS: Raja Rao is a very important writer. He comes from Nanjangud too, but I haven't met him. I admire his earlier work like *Kanthapura*.

BN: Do you think Indian English poetry has a bright future? or not? Why?

GSS: I cannot answer this question for I don't know what holds the future of Indian English poetry. Right now, it's oversatu rated like all poetry in all countries.

BN: Can creative writing workshops help the budding writers to improve their careers really?

GSS: Yes, Creative Writing workshops help budding poets to improve. Whether it helps their careers is another matter. It's common knowledge a poet in any language cannot make a living writing poetry. It's true for poets in every country. We have to make a living by other means, but it's possible to continue to write while working for a living. Workshops create a collective atmosphere for writers where they can interact with other writers of various persuasions and learn about life. Workshops create a positive artistic pressure which is necessary for one to hone his own craft.

EXCERPTS

FROM *INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE : 1980—2000: A CRITICAL SURVEY*

M.K. Naik & Shyamala A. Narayan

On Shobha De

'Sagas of bed-hopping,' chronicles of copulation, stories of high society and low ethicality, of drawing room manners and barn-door morals, 'Spare-rib-aldry' or 'function' (to use Farrukh Dhondy's expressive term) would perhaps be an apt description of most of De's novels.

De seems to tell her female readers, 'Women of the world, unite; you have nothing to lose except your virginity'; while her message to men appears to be: 'Remember your member and forget the rest; for the penis is mightier than the sword of the heart or the head.'

De's novels do offer glimpses of what she could have achieved, had she set herself higher literary aims; but then, low aim is apparently a far better fame-winner, social gainer and money-spinner, whatever the musty old proverb may say.

On Khushwant Singh: *The Company of Women*

Singh's semen syndrome worsens in *The Company of Women*. In his Prefatory Note he tells us that an apt title for the novel could be, 'The Fantasies of an Octogenerian.' Another equally apt title could be: 'Phallic Frolic.' The protagonist, Mohan Kumar, is a businessman, whose only asset seems to a member of equine proportions and prowess. His (mostly horizontal) career may be summed up as: 'He came, he undressed and he conquered.' This Alexander of Adultery, Caesar of Sex and Napolean of Nudity finally contracts AIDS and dies in bed — the scene of his many tempestuous truimphs.

On Salman Rushdie

Rushdie's main assets are a vaulting imagination which often makes the bizarre its business; a carnivalesque sense of the comic; and an irrespressible love of word-play. When these powers are under perfect artistic control, and are geard to meaningful central concerns, he produces his better work. On the

other hand, when his imagination runs amock, when his sense of the comic overcomes his sense of propriety (an occupational hazard for every comic writer — 'The clown in me trips me awfully,' Bernard Shaw once confessed), and when his word-play descends to the level of compulsive jesting, he seems to fall back on puerile puns, juvenile jokes and worn-out witticisms.

On the *'New Poetry'*

In addition to the work of some promising young poets, there is that huge crop of verse (to call it 'poetry' would be the mis-statement of the Millenium) which seems to be growing all the time, like wild grass in the narrow field of Indian English literature. In 17th century Maharashtra, the noted saint poet, Ramdas, had lamented the 'weedlike growth of verse' in his age. A similar complaint can be made with far greater justification in the case of Indian English literature both of yesterday and today. Most of these versifiers can best be described *a la* Oscar Wilde as 'the incorrigible in full pseudo-poetic pursuit of the inconsequential.'

On Nirad C. Chaudhuri

One wonders whether Chaudhuri's ultimate significance does not lie in that he was perhaps a latter-day representative of the ancient Indian intellectual tradition — a conclusion which might, of course, have shocked his Hindu-baiting mind.

Chaudhuri represents two characteristic features of the great Indian intellectual tradition. If the ancient Indian *Rishis* took all knowledge for their province, so does Chaudhuri; he was a modern Indian *Rishi* born two thousand years too late.

Secondly, Chaudhuri's indefatigable iconoclasm is equally typical of the same tradition. Plurality has always been a basic Indian value; hence even in the hey day of the major Indian philosophical systems, there flourished a shatteringly unorthodox school, like *Carvakamat*, which rejected all the postulates of these systems, and boldly advocated hedonism. In his defiant dissent, Chaudhuri thus strikes a chord which is characteristic of the age-old Indian intellectual symphony, in which there is no note, however discordant, that does not have its proper place and rationale.

On The Relationship between Indian English Literature and Indian Regional Literatures

Indian English literature and the Indian Regional literatures have more in common with each other than the purblind zealots in either side seem to think. They are both an expression of the Indian psyche, and a native sensibility. The regional writer need not debunk his Indian English brother as a rootless wretch, a bastard booby battened on British butter, or a 'bat on the banyan bough.' Nor must the Indian English writer dismiss his regional brother as a country cousin, a petty provincial or a servile subaltern.

Years ago, a slender sapling from a foreign field was grafted by 'Pale hands' on the mighty and many-branched Indian banyan tree. It has kept growing vigorously, and now an organic part of its parent tree, it has spread its own probing roots into the brown soil below. Its young leaves rustle energetically in the strong winds that blow from the western horizon, but the sunshine that warms it and the rains that cool it are from the Indian skies; and it continues to draw its vital sap from 'this earth, this realm,' this India.

BLACK ENGLISH

S.D. Sharma

English Language exists in different varieties. Its speakers do also vary in their uses from one another. Moreover, every individual does not necessarily command the same range of varieties of English. Bernstein observes that linguists agree that no variety of language is inherently better than the other. They insist that all languages and all varieties of particular languages are equal. A standard variety of language is better only in a social sense; it has a preferred status it gives to those who use it for a certain social advantage. Quite conversely, non standard variety tends to produce the opposite effect. If the capital cities of England and France had been York and Avignon respectively, Standard English and Standard French today would be quite different from what they actually are, and speakers of R.P. and Parisian French would be required rather differently. Black English in the United States occupies a position of less privileged variety of English and its speakers are a disadvantaged class from three points of view — i.e., socially, aesthetically and cognitively/intellectually.

Bernstein, a noted social linguist, treats the elite use of language as elaborated code and the less favoured use as restricted code. Black English in the United States of America is a less privileged variety or restricted code. Whereas elaborated code makes use of accurate grammatical order and syntax, restricted code is often without these conspicuous embellishments. The elaborated code uses complex sentences that employ a range of devices for conjunction and subordination, preposition to show relationships of both temporal and logical nature, proper use of pronoun, objectives and adverbs. Bernstein terms this system of language as highly suffused with "possibilities inherent in a complex conceptual hierarchy for the organizing of the experience."[1]

Black English (BE) or Black English Verncular (BEV), or Non Standard Negro English (NNE) is a variety of speech used by the black residents, who live in New York city, Boston, Chicago, Detroite, and Ciatel. The speech of the blacks in these cites also resemble the speech of blacks in many respects. In one respect,

this similarity is the result of the relatively migrations of blacks out of the south, in an other, it is one reflection of long-standing patterns of racial segregation. Only now it is slowly changing patterns which have tended to separate the problem of the United States of America along colour lines.

Black English has certain phonological, morphological and syntactic features. For instance, words like ***thing*** and ***this*** may be pronounced as ***ting*** and ***dis***. ***Bath*** may sound like ***baff***, ***brother*** like ***brewer***, ***nothing*** like ***nuffin*** and ***thread*** like ***tred***. Likewise, ***big*** is pronounced as ***bik***, ***kit*** as ***kid*** and ***cup*** as ***cub***, because in all these sounds the final stops are devoiced. Hence, ***test***, ***desk*** and ***end*** may be pronounced without thin final consonant.

In Black English, the system of pluralisation is very confusing, for the plural of ***test*** may actually be ***tesses*** depending on the speakers, ***Carol***, ***Paris***, ***Protect*** and ***form*** may show loss of ***r***, and ***car*** and ***cart*** will nearly show loss of ***r***. As a consequence, ***your brother*** may become identical to ***you brother***. ***Cold*** may show loss of the final ***d*** (***col***) or ever loss of both ***l*** and ***d*** (***co***) because ***l*** after a vowel is often deleted. The result may be that ***bold*** and ***bowl*** become homophonous with ***bow***.

Homophones in Black English and in Standard English have different losses of homophones. For example, vowel may be nasalized and nasal and consonant may be lost: ***run*** and ***end*** may just be in the first case of ***r*** followed by nasal vowel, in the second case a simple nasalized vowel with no pronunciation at all of the final ***nd***. The djphthongs in the words ***found*** and ***find*** may be both monothonized and nasalized, and the words may lack only pronunciation of the final ***nd***. Consequently, ***find***, ***found*** and even ***fond*** may become homophonous, all pronounced with an ***f*** and a following nasalized vowel.

Black English is often termed as Inner-City English (ICE). Essentially, the term (ICE) refers to a variety of language, spoken by the residents of low income ghettos in large urban areas of the United States.[2] Although ICE is used by Latinos and Whites who live in these ghettos, it is stereotypically associated with American and African residents of ghettos. ICE has, of late,

attracted a good deal of attention from linguists whose investigations have shown very potential signs of growth. Labov, a great linguist, is of the view that Black English (BE) and Inner-City English (ICE) are not impaired variety of languages and they do not make their speakers handicapped.

Morphological characteristics of Black English are numerous. However, one characteristic of making find *t* and *d* unpronounced is very common. For instance. ***I walked*** may sound ***I walk***, because there is no overt signalling of past tense. There is, of course, no signalling of the third person singular in the present tense, resulting in a form like ***I bow.*** Syntactically, Black English (BE) or Inner-City English (ICE) has special uses of ***b*** or lack of ***b*** (the zero copula), as in a contrast between ***He nice*** (he is nice right now) and ***he be nice*** (he is nice sometime). The negatives of these sentences would also be ***He ain't nice*** and ***He do not be nice*** respectively.

Equally interesting, in Black English, is the use of zero copula. Linguists like Labov have justified the lack of zero copula in Black English. ***He is nice*** in Standard English is equal to ***He nice*** in Black English. It must be noted well that the ***zero copula*** is rarely found in the speech of whites, even among the poor Southern Whites. Labov argues that the loss of ***zero copula*** in Black English can be correlated with the strength of group membership of certain black youths in Harlem, member of gang ***Jets.*** In fact, Labov establishes the fact that the core members of the ***Jets*** use forty-five percent zero copula, secondary members forty-two, peripheral members twenty-six percent and lames twenty-one percent.[3]

A lot of academic debate has taken place on whether Black English is a variety of English or just a creole. Whereas such eminent linguists as Kurath and McDavid argue that Black English has no characteristic of its own, Stward, Delard and Rickford maintain that Black English is creole,[4] a variety of English, which originated quite independently of Standard English. As such, Black English has features that are typical of creoles, particularly the ***zero copula***, the same residual of Africanism and certain style

of speaking, rapping, sounding, singnifying, rifting and fancy tale, which certainly look back to an African origin.

Labov finds great potentials in Black English. He is of the view just as speakers of Cockney English and Newfoundland English have special rules to produce their unique variety, so the speakers of Black English have their special rules.[5]

Whether Black English is good or bad, the fact remains that it has come to stay in the United States. The Americans, in general, recognize this variety of English. While corresponding to the speakers of Black English, they also recognize the limitations and the strengths of Black English. As such, this relationship between Black English and Standard English may be characterized as a ***diglossic*** one.

In India, there are a number of varieties of English which do have similarities of Black English. In fact, formation of Indian states on linguistic basis is one obvious reason why a medley of varieties of English does exist in this country. Even General Indian English (***GIE***) appears to be no ultimate solution to stop non-standard trend of English. However, to envisage the use of only GIE in a vast country like India seems rather impossible. The types of Black English in India do exist and are bound to exist with glaring regional angularities and apparent territorial pressures and pulls of the tongue. The more we try to remove these deformities, the more they appear. English is, therefore, a necessary evil and it will certainly serve our necessities but with its own evil patterns and designs. This is a great fact whether we accept or ignore it and that, too, to our own disadvantage.

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[2]Ibid., p.334.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Adrian Akmagian, *et al, Linguistics: An Introduction to Language and Communication* (USA: Prince-Hall International, 1995), p.268.

[5]Op.cit., p.336.

BOOK REVIEWS

JOHN UPDIKE, *GERTRUDE AND CLAUDIUS*

(NewYork: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), pp.212.

Maqbool Hasan Khan

Gertrude and Claudius, John Updike's recent fictional success, has nothing but the look of a conventional Shakespearian offshoot; it is not just a contemporary version of Victorian musings on the imagined past of Shakespearian heroines, something that seeks to relate to and illuminate certain "crucial" or interesting parts of the play. Aiming at a deeper encounter while visualizing a "prequel" to *Hamlet*, Updike derives his imaginative sustenance from Shakespeare's sources — tactfully changing the names of his dramatis personae in order to invest them with different, a little unfamiliar, identities. The prototypes of Shakespeare's characters come out of the pages of Saxo Grammaticus and Belleforest and gradually evolve, as the novel moves towards its close, into the figures we have known. The resemblance is not only with those in Shakespeare's play alone but also with elements to be found in the pages of Updike's previous fiction. The gradual transforming process no doubt brings us close to a deeper appreciation of Updike's "battered" (his own word) faith in whatever one is still capable of believing; at the same time, it marks the area where the Updike world with its apotheosis of the quotidian impinges on the imaginative and reflective range enshrined in *Hamlet*. Updike has not only gone back to the pre-*Hamlet* parts of the Hamlet saga — to Gertrude's girlhood, her marriage to the elder Hamlet, her dull though dutiful life with her husband, her seduction by Claudius, her awakening into a sensuality she had never known during her decades of married life with her first husband — he also seeks to re-write the characters and events in the play though from a standpoint radically unlike that of Hamlet and probably also unlike that of Shakespeare.

This last probability (though one would not like to insist too much on this in view of the possibility that more than a single *Hamlet* could be extracted from the Shakespearian text) stems from the fact that the dominant trend in the century that has just

ended was disinclined to view the protagonist as victim. To question Hamlet's credentials as the ideal of Renaissance humanity may no doubt now be generally regarded as acceptable but to say that Claudius represents ordinary nature that can never be transcended and therefore may be used to debunk his opposite is apparently going too far with Wilson Knight and Count Madariaga and the numerous other detractors of Hamlet who feel too embarrassed in the presence of the Romantic glorification of his nobility. Updike, however, has something significant to say by substituting Claudius's mask of theartical villainy with the physiognomy of everyday life and by shifting the focus away from the complaining son to the aggrieved mother.

The Hamletian figures in *Gertrude and Claudius* have different names in different parts of the novel. The names were modified by the authors of the various literary texts that contained the evolving Hamlet story. Hamlet himself is Amleth in Part 1, changing to Hamblet in the second part and acquiring the familiar Shakespearian name in the final Shakespearian part of the novel. The un-Shakespearian father of Gertrude is Rorik (as in Saxo) and Rodericke (as in Belleforest). Saxo's Horwendil in Part One evolves into Belleforest's Horvendile in Part Two and is greatly different from the father figure (as the Ghost) in Shakespeare's play. Similar transformations take place with regard to Gertrude (Gerutha, Geruthe), Claudius (Feng, Fengon) and Polonius (Corambus, Corambis). All this is fascinating, suggestive as it is of a change of identity — Harry Angstrom at different stages of his life.

What strikes us as aesthetically the most rewarding and delightful element in this characteristic Updike novel is its investment, within a brief span, of life material with an unusual ordinariness, and it is this element that forms a kind of challenge to Shakespeare's play. This and its treatment of sensuality as part of lived experience give to the novel an unusual touch which elicits for its gripping drama a credibility that only fiction can give to life.

Gerutha is a girl of seventeen in Part 1, and is forced to marry Horwendil by her father, Rorik. Horwendil has all the virtues that a father would look for in his son-in-law except for the fact that the virtues are all public. Gerutha's main objection is to the fact that

Horwendil lacks subtlety. Horwendil probably never learns that sensuality is, when not utterly sinful, that which is stolen out of legitimacy and affection — a truth that is so remarkably borne out by Updike's fiction. Dullness, however, does not entice Gerutha out of devotion to her husband to whom she remains faithful till she is forty-seven, Horwendil sixty-one, and her eventual seducer, her borther-in-law, Feng, is almost sixty. The seduction of this pre-Shakespearian Gertrude is not easy. The prelude to the stolen hours of lust has something of the quality of Othello's tales of voyages to distant lands: the newly-kindled spirit of the Renaissance that breathes through the Shakespearian play in the words of the protagonist here permeates Feng's account of his travels in the South — lands where a new questioning and intellectual curiosity was leading men into strange realms of thought and experience. The widening of mental horizons therefore prepares Gerutha for the inner voyage of discovery. The Seducer figure in the novel is radically different from the one in the Prayer scene in the play: without the least trace of Claudius's sense of guilt he justifies himself with reference to the "old Norse rule (which) is, what you cannot hold is not yours." He took from his brother "a property he didn't know he owned — territory he had never plowed." "You were a virgin to unbridled love," he tells Gertrude in self-exoneration(p.179). The "ordinariness" of this tale of seduction has its "ordinary" though genuine sense of unease on Gertrude's part: "And, though she felt this as not entirely true, it was true enough to rest on, and they fell asleep in unison"(p.179).

The climactic act of murder is removed from the realm of premeditated evil with its single-minded motive aiming at usurpation; it acquires in the novel something of the self-justification of an improvised eventuality. Horvendile comes to know of the relationship. He talks to his brother in private threatening public disgrace to Geruthe, death to Corambis and exile to Fengon himself. The eavesdropping and not-so-innocent Corambis plots the death of the King with Fengon, and Horvedile dies amidst circumstances that are not much different from those in Shakespeare's play. The murder has little of a theatrical emblem about it, is hardly a crucial act of tragic, irreversible, dimensions as in Shakespeare;

it is more the inevitable outcome of tensions generated by a secret and long-standing sense of superiority on Fengon's part, by his self-imposed years of exile avoiding thereby a sense of inferiority due to a status of subordination, and by his recent seduction of a woman who shared his contempt for the man he had outwitted. The novel lacks a Ghost to have the murder skewed in the direction of the young Prince's self-pity and indignation.

Hamlet indeed is an invisible presence in the novel right from the beginning. Horwendil is conceived in a way that would eventually justify Gertrude's fear of her son. His public virtues, his successful enactment of the Kingly role, his similar presentation of a "correct" though inherently blank face as a husband, and his inner, private emptiness disguised as social amplitude all lend themselves to the generation of an image in his son's mind that, in its asexual inhumanity, would make his dealings with life the sinister and essentially impoverished affair it finally became. The common (though hardly satisfactory) name for this is misogyny. Gerutha has problems with her child Amleth and complains to her husband about it. She goes to the extent of discussing it with her maid (who, incidentally, is the source of Shakespearian Hamlet's philosophy of a divinity shaping our ends). What gradually enhances Gertrude's fear of her son is the fact that he makes her feel ashamed. Comparing the young Prince to his father she says: "Now little Hamlet has it, that same gift...of making me feel dirty and ashamed and unworthy" (p.165).

Gertrude finds Hamlet's behaviour intolerable after her husband's death (unaware as she is of the fact of murder). Her complaint is : "He wanted me to *die*, to be the perfect stone statue of a widow, guarding the shrine of his father for him for ever, because it has his childhood sealed up in it also. Adoring his father for him is a kind of self-adoration. They were two of a kind — too good for this world"(p.166).

What Hamlet suffers from, in the novel and by implication in the play too, is a fear of life, of being. Again, Gertrude has it clear in her mind: "...even me he views disdainfully, as evidence of his natural origins, and proof that his father succumbed to concupiscence"(p.178). There is a basic dissociation, a hiatus

leading to the absence of a wholeness of being in Hamlet's stance towards life. Gertrude tells Ophelia: "To justify the demands of their bodies they must exalt the object of those demands into a goddess, an unlikely sublime, or else treat her as a piece of muck"(p.183).

The novel ends at the point where the play begins, and so this remarkable treatment of a medieval saga, though it does not take us to the Shakespearian climax, brings us to the heart of the dilemma in post-Renaissance sensibility. A hypothetical older resolution posited the ideal of the unity of being, something perhaps that was only a logical, never an existential, possibility. Updike seems to disclaim any such resolution of the problem — at least within the purview of this novel. Hamlet is more of an attitude, a moral stance than a character in the ordinary sense, and as such he represents, in the novel, the final, irrevocable disjunction, the tension that would never cease from urging us to question the bases of being. Hamlet would be an incorrigible prig, like Harry in *The Family Reunion,* were it not that he is for the society at Elsinore a sinister embodiment of rejection.

JOHN E. ABRAHAM, *THE POETRY AND SHORT STORIES OF MANJERI ISVARAN: A CRITICAL STUDY*

(New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2000), pp.152, Rs.400.00

Susheel Kumar Sharma

It is heartening to note that the university dons are gradually shedding their colonial past and have started evaluating their own authors who have not been given due recognition at the international level because of lack of authentic and proper criticism on their work. Criticism of our authors is needed both with the help of western cannons as well as our literary theories. Manjeri S. Isvaran is one such litterateur who has largely been ignored by critics. Prof. Harish Raizada praises Manjeri S. Isvaran's art and work in *The Lotus and the Rose,* while M.K. Naik in his *A History of Indian English Literature* laments: "The most productive of Indian English short story writers, Manjeri Isvaran, the poet, has not yet

received the recognition due to him since most of his books are now out of print"(p.178). Thus, John E. Abraham's is a valuable contribution, a long awaited full-length study of Manjeri Isvaran.

The book has been divided into five chapters. The first chapter, "The Sacred and the Profane," the lengthiest one in the book, deals with Isvaran's use of Hindu religion and rituals in various forms like myths, cultural beliefs, fables and folk tales, ceremonies and references to Hindu gods and goddesses. John opines that Isvaran uses Indian myths for illustration, contrast and juxtaposition. Isvaran is also presented as a critic of superstitions ("uncanny ways of worship," p.34), though his attitude to women and family was conditioned by the requirements of Hindu dharma. The second chapter entitled "Social Criticism and Reformative Zeal" attempts to establish Isvaran as an unbiased critic of society. The technique to achieve this is the use of satire which is "Juvenal [sic] in tone" (p.41). John E. Abraham holds that "it is not necessarily the business of a writer to make constructive suggestions." Who else's business is to suggest alternatives if not the writer's? Or does John consider a writer to be devoid of ideas or does he consider constructive programmes to be the sole territory of only social scientists or politicians? Any person who is doing a loud thinking criticising the existing system should also suggest some viable alternatives otherwise he is not performing the duty of a responsible intellectual. However, John has discussed Isvaran's attitude towards political ideologies and political parties; political stalwart like Mahatma Gandhi; British education system prevalent in India; social issues like Caste System, Sati and Feudal System of Land Ownership; prostitution; Cinema artists; Fourth Estate and law and its practices.

"Method, Technique and Language" is the third chapter. John E. Abraham has tried to establish Isvaran as an artist who synthesised the western and the eastern methods of writing short stories. Among several topics discussed are 'Isvaran's Concepts of Form and Technique,' 'Different Points of View,' 'Old Method of Story Telling,' 'Scenic and Panoramic Methods,' 'Mystery and Atmosphere,' 'Lyricism,' 'Dramatic [qualities],' 'Moralization,'

Ominiscient Narration,' 'Stream of Consciousness Technique,' 'Montage Technique,' 'The Contrasted Moods,' 'Journalistic Approach,' 'Use of Symbolic Images,' 'Appropriate Titles,' 'The Technique of Juxtaposition,' 'Contrast' and 'Repetition and Parallelism.'

The fourth chapter, "Illusion and Reality," deals with Isvaran's middle class south Indian sensibilities, realism, images and characters. John proves that internal conflict is more important to Isvaran than external conflict, though he has not used stream of consciousness technique quite often. To highlight Isvaran's sympathetic insight into human affairs, John discusses his women characters and children. Besides topics lilke 'Nature,' 'Wind, Fire and Water,' 'The Sun, the Moon and the Stars,' 'Death,' 'Sensation of Silence,' 'Sound' and 'Love as a Good Trait' are also discussed in the chapter.

'Conclusion,' the last chapter of the book, opens with the following sentence: "Manjeri S. Isvaran is one of the foremost creative writers in Indian English literature of the forties and fifties of this century" (p.129). The book has been published in 2000 A.D.— forties and fifties are yet to come if the twenty-first century has begun. Actually, the book is a revised version of the thesis. Naturally, this type of error is there because of the time lag between the submission of the thesis and the printing of the book. The chapter presents a neat summary of the discussion in the earlier chapters.

The book is a pioneering effort, which explores a neglected territory. It is a significant contribution to the body of existing scholorship of Indian Literature in English because of a sustained and sane interpretation and evaluation of Isvaran's works. The book also has an appendix of the author's interview with Mrs. Annapurana Isvaran — the wife of Manjeri S. Isvaran — that sheds a lot of light on Manjeri the person and the artist. Dr. John displays a fairly good command of English and his style is simple and lucid. A useful bibliography of not only the books consulted but of the related information is also given. The printing and binding of the book are good but it is priced comparatively high.

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POINTS OF VIEW

Declaration under Section 5 of the Press & Registration of Books Act, 1867

1.	Place of Publication	Ghaziabad
2.	Periodicity of Publication	Biannual
3.	Printer's Name Nationality Address	K.K. Sharma Indian KH/127, New Kavi Nagar Ghaziabad--201 002
4.	Publisher's Name Nationality Address	K.K. Sharma Indian KH/127, New Kavi Nagar Ghaziabad--201 002
5.	Editor's Name Nationality Address	K.K Sharma Indian KH/127, New Kavi Nagar Ghaziabad--201 002
6.	Owner's Name	Mrs. Kuhu Chanana KH/127, New Kavi Nagar Ghaziabad--201 002

I, K.K. Sharma, hereby declare that the particulars, given above, are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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