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# POINTS OF VIEW

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# CHARACTERS' STAGE DISPOSITION AND MOVEMENT IN *HAMLET*

S. Viswanathan

## I

It has come to be recognized that it is as though Shakespeare's mind's eye (rather Shakespeare the director's eye) was able to envision the word, line, passage, scene and play, and all these cumulatively, would appear and enact on the stage, even as he composed them. The ensemble at every point comes to be shaped in the writing process with a sense of the probable response it would evoke in the spectators. There lies the intensity and intricacy of Shakespeare's creative process.

While recognizing this, we should not assume that such a mode of creation entails a fully predetermined design in all its details and total effect as it forms in the playwright's mind in the pre-composition stage, gets imprinted and thus reproduced in the actual writing. That will be to ignore a most important factor, the truth that great creative art such as Shakespeare's is an outcome ultimately of a two-way process of interchange and dialogue between the artist and his medium in this case with all its resources and possibilities of suggestion. It is not the simple imposition of a prefabricated ready-to-use material, a sort of full-fledged Minerva, with all her panoply coming to be set down on the page. In the intensely creative and highly imaginative and at the same time cognitive art of Shakespeare conception and presentation or execution are indistinguishably interfused. The two turn out to be synchronic and synergical processes. The artistic design itself takes full shape and flesh and blood in the artist's encounter with the medium. One of the contributions of F.R. Leavis's literary-critical endeavour was his tireless emphasis on this crucial, but often ignored truth about Shakespeare of what he called the 'exploratory—creative' activity. In other words, Shakespeare explores and exploits the possibilities of his composite medium which is both oral-aural and visual. The medium includes not only language, diction, poetry, verbal imagery and resources

such as rhetorical *topoi*, but also the various means of visual theatre. The stage features and details are very much part of the medium, and Shakespeare handles these latter in the same 'exploratory-creative' manner as he does words. It may be called a process on the whole of simultaneous discovery and imaginative invention. This factor has to be borne in mind when we study Shakespeare's handling of theatrical and stage features and devices for communications to see Shakespeare whole we have to see the plays as drama.

One kind of envisioning on Shakespeare's part is what marks his visualization in anticipation of where, in which part of the stage, his actors as characters will station themselves either as a group or individually and how they would move about on the stage vis-à-vis one another; in actual performance; an uncanny anticipation of these details is implicit in the text, and it serves as inbuilt direction. A reference to stage setting and movement of characters is encoded in the text. *Hamlet* is a play where this particular feature of the stage process serves some key function. It may be interesting to consider how certain features of stage placement and movement operate in the play and the additional piquancy that these details lend to be developing drama and its situations. The eeriness of the nocturnal ambience with which the play opens on the castle battlements is underscored by the circumspection with which the characters arriving on the scene are viewed, and their identity ascertained by Marcellus who has been on night guard, especially in the dark of the late night. The dark ensemble of the scene is a fitting prelude to the advent of the Ghost and also to the ensuing, unfolding tragedy of the play. The Ghost specializes in swift motion, and so Horatio Macellus and Bernardo have to move quickly to keep pace with it. The Ghost repulses all attempts of Horatio to establish communication with him and with its agility in motion sails away. It would communicate only with Hamlet who also has to make agile stage movement to reach out to it.

In the first royal court scene (1.2), Hamlet's positioning of himself by itself marks him off from the rest, and this is his first appearance in the play. For one thing, he is the one who continues

to be attired in black and still in mourning for his father. He is very much an outsider there. Claudius transacts state business with practical efficiency dealing with the challenge and threat from the Norwegian Fortinbras appropriately. He is perhaps only right in dealing with state matters first, but after that he attends to Laertes and his request for permission to go to France rather than to Hamlet. It is a sign of his distanced attitude to Hamlet, 'a little less than kind' in Hamlet's phrase. Hamlet's way of response to the solicitations of conventional consolation made by Claudius and the Queen reveals what Hamlet explicitly discloses in his first soliloquy, the gnawing of his heart by the fact of the all too hasty remarriage of his mother with his uncle who is no patch on his dead father and hence a totally unworthy choice. It should be noted that this is much before Hamlet has the revelation from the Ghost of his murder by Claudius.

The two scenes of Polonius's interaction with Laertes and Ophelia, and with Reynaldo whom he sets to spy on Laertes in France, involve some interesting actor movement; especially of old Polonius. Polonius enters (1.3.50) as Laertes is leaving Ophelia after his adjurations to her not to encourage Hamlet's love advances, as the prince is beyond her status and bidding farewell to her. Polonius enters and covers the distance from the door to the spot where Ophelia is, and even as he walks towards them impatiently commanding Laertes to leave immediately without delay as his ship is ready to set sail. But curiously he goes on to detain Laertes to give his set of commandments of worldly wisdom, even as Laertes takes his blessings and starts to go. Perhaps it is as he walks forward he delivers his commandments, and in all probability, moves a little forward to face the audience and delivers his lay sermon as though addressing the spectators as much as he does Laertes. Such implicit directional hints and clues abound in Shakespeare. In 2.1. where Reynaldo meets Polonius, Polonius gives him elaborate instructions on how to keep watch on Laertes and report on him. He delivers his guidance to Reynaldo clumsily as he seems to forget the thread of his own discourse with its indirect, crooked ways and course. Perhaps he does not keep stationary as he speaks and moves wobblingly to and fro. Finally, he seemingly lets go Reynaldo

only to go after him to call him back to make last-minute reiterations of his point. All this lends his behavior even though he is the chancellor of the king a comic touch.

The two Ghost scenes, 1.4 and 5 are marked by telling stage positioning and movement of characters, especially Hamlet and the Ghost; when the Ghost arrives soon after midnight, it beckons Hamlet as if it wishes that he go with it to a 'removed place'. Hamlet is only too ready and eager to go and defies his companions including his friend Horatio who try to stop him from accompanying the apparition. And his companions rush after Hamlet. But he leaves them behind. This necessitates the vacation of the stage at the closure of the scene of the interview with the Ghost. As soon as the Ghost makes the shocking revelation and bids Hamlet to remember it, implying that Hamlet should avenge the murder. Only after this, and the temporary departure of the Ghost, Hamlet is joined by his companions. He makes them swear on his sword (used as a kind of cross) that they would not reveal the meeting of Hamlet with his father's ghost. The Ghost from its underground station (the under stage) joins Hamlet in enjoining upon them to swear. Hamlet immediately announces that he and his friends would shift their ground. The Ghost quickly moves to the spot underneath their new ground, provoking Hamlet to call the Ghost 'old mole', with his capacity for such swift burrowing to be *hic et ubique* like the deity.

At 2.2.167, apparently the King and the Queen have to make a hurried exit as Polonius bids them, 'Away! I do beseech you ...' (l. 168) as Hamlet has already entered pensively reading a book. This possibility led Dover Wilson to postulate the idea that Hamlet had overheard Polonius's plan to 'loose his daughter' to Hamlet so that he and Claudius could then watch the encounter between Hamlet and Ophelia from their hiding. According to Dover Wilson, Hamlet behaves and speaks the way he does to Ophelia deliberately so that he could fool and also warn Polonius engaged in his 'lawful espials'. But Hamlet's meeting with Ophelia has to wait till 3.1. Before that much happens by way of his having with him Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern his school-fellows, and the players, who have arrived to perform at court. Hamlet seizes the opportunity

provided by this, to initiate through a play by them the plan of his revenge action, by making sure of Claudius's fratricide. Hamlet's meeting with Ophelia is an intensely dramatic episode with Hamlet questioning the 'honesty' of Ophelia who is taken for the nonce to represent the painted Jezebel and an object of antiwoman invective. Particularly the repeated movement of Hamlet to and fro Ophelia, clearly implied in the text of the scene, is to be noted. It is a sign of his distraction. Especially striking is his quadruple leave-taking of Ophelia, as it may be called. Each of the four leavetaking addresses to Ophelia Hamlet ends with an iterated emphasis on his injunction to Ophelia, 'Get thee to a nunnery' or 'to a nunnery go!'. Each time Hamlet makes as if to go, but comes back some paces to admonish Ophelia, to drive the nail fast. It makes his action take on a pathetic hue, which fact is confirmed by Ophelia's lament over his condition.

O what a noble mind is here o'verthrown

The courtier's, soldier's scholar's eye, tongue and sword.

[Incidentally, it is an use of an unusual figure of speech, which occurs only two times in Shakespeare, here and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It goes by the name of *yatha-sankya* in the Sanskrit *alankaras*, but is rare in English.]

As Hamlet goes to meet his mother in her chamber, he comes across Claudius in the posture of penitent and private prayer, a secret prayer though, on his knees. Hamlet's momentary impulse to kill him now, as his guilt has been shown up through 'the Mouse-trap' play, is promptly checked by himself. He stops short, though, with the thought that he should not be sending Claudius to heaven by killing him at his prayer. He would rather kill him in one of his habitual revelries, so that he goes to hell. He withdraws his drawn sword at the last moment.

## II

In the latter half of the play, though movement of characters is not as pronounced as earlier, significant positioning of characters onstage makes a considerable contribution. In the play scene, Hamlet expresses his preference to sit with Ophelia when his mother asks him to join her. And he lays his head on Ophelia's lap. As almost

a stage exigency of Shakespeare's theatre where dead bodies on the stage had to be physically removed at the close of the scene, Hamlet lugs away the body of Polonius accidentally killed by him so that there is a clearing of the stage for the scene next. When Rosencrantz and Guildenstern come to Hamlet and try to fish out information about where Hamlet has kept the body of Polonius, Hamlet fobs off them with his sallies and quibbles and runs away from them like mad, crying 'Hide fox, and all after!'.

At 4.5., the Queen and Horatio enter together. The closeness, for the first time, of the Queen to Horatio is an indication that the mother now regards Horatio as the *alter ego* of Hamlet, now that her son has been packed off to England. When Laertes in an outburst of grief leaps into the grave of Ophelia when she had just then been buried. Hamlet also leaps into it declaring that forty thousand brothers could not make the sum of his own love for Ophelia, and challenges Laertes. They are close to exchanging blows, and have to be separated.

The foppish and obsequious Osric, the landed gentleman of the country choosing to be a lackey of the king at court, makes his entry to Hamlet and Horatio at the moment when Hamlet has made his solemn resolve to act to carry out his plan of revenge, makes his entry movement with an affected gait and with an excess of genteelism, and gives Hamlet the message that he should have a fencing match with Laertes, on behalf of the King, to settle the King's wager. The fencing match itself involves a number of quick and agile thrusts forwards and backwards on the part of both Hamlet and Laertes.

Thus the sampling we have made of the playwright's setting of the disposition and movement on the stage shows that Shakespeare almost instinctively orders these so that these make their intrinsic contribution to the texture, to the immediate dramatic moment and also to the overall structure and dramatic progression of the play. It shows that the playwright, man of the stage and theatre that he was, could while writing envisage in a single act of the mind as it were the shape and pattern the individual moment on the stage will take and the impact it would make, and how it will set the

movement and direction of the play. All these shape themselves out, as Shakespeare exploits the possibilities that suggest themselves. It is a full exploration of all the resources of theatrical communication, aural-oral (words and poetry) and visual. It is not for nothing that Ezra Pound said in his dictum about drama that it is characters moving about on the stage, speaking words.

In such an analysis as has been undertaken here, the final impression should not be left at the level of analysis alone. It has to be complemented by a synthesis. It should lead to some perception of the total dynamics of the play as a whole. Otherwise, it would be something like the naming of parts of an intricate machine which does not show how it works and what makes it go. The details of character positioning and movement should help us to better understand and appreciate character, situation, action and movement of the play, and how positioning and movement contribute to the evolving of relationship between characters. That is, analysis should implicitly facilitate our apprehension of the play as one which is much that of a whole with its parts as we can conceive it to be.

The inlaid directorial signals in the text of the plays should claim the first attention of directors who produce the present-day performances. It requires a habitual attunement on their part to these directions. But, unfortunately, they often seem either to miss these directions or deliberately choose to ignore them and introduce directions for stage placement and movement on their own.

# NAMES IN LITERATURE FOR WRITERS IN INDIA

Leonard R.N. Ashley

The question of names is an interesting one.

Graham Greene, *Travels with My Aunt*.

Names are wonderful things, from the magical power of divine names to the fads in given names in various times and places. We all have names and name everything that we want to include in our reality. Herodotus claimed that there was an ancient tribe with no personal names — I cannot believe him — but even they had to have names for things and places. Proper nouns function in ways sometimes quite different from ordinary words. Therefore it is fitting and necessary to have a branch of linguistics called onomastics (the study of names). This study can range from religion to advertising, from culture to commerce. The Bible says it all began with Adam ("Clay") given power to name the animals, given dominion over them, for to name is to claim, as you see with placenaming and placename changing. Since Babel the world has seen many languages; about 6000 are now in use and at least that many, probably more, have been invented and used and become extinct.

We try to decipher old languages, preserve current languages if we can, and make a study of languages. In the US, the American Dialect Society was founded more than a century ago, back when American was considered a dialect of British English, as the name suggests, and a little over more than half a century ago a group of scholars broke away to found the American Name Society (ANS). ANS exclusively studies placenames, personal names and naming, the names of all kinds of things from science to commerce, and this writer has been especially interested in what is called literary onomastics, the study of how names of all kinds function in literature.

The study of names has been around a very long time, perhaps antedating the Greek who said "the beginning of everything is the study of names," but it was the nationalism of the nineteenth century that gave the biggest boost to the study of toponyms (placenames) and extended the subject beyond the interest of antiquarians and, a name coined in the nineteenth century, folklorists. Probably because the Europeans, starting in earnest earlier

than the US, produced national gazetteers and other works earlier than America has, Americans tend to think of toponymy as more important, more academic than any other kind of name study. Still other factors, however, must be taken in account for the full story of placenames, including the cultural baggage connected with them, the sociodynamics they reflect, the names and the motives of those who bestowed the names, and so on. Placenames, as Kelsie B. Harder always stressed, have to be studied historically, and culturally as well as linguistically, both diachronically and synchronically. We must study placenames as we study other names of all sorts, including brandnames and tradenames and nicknames and aliases and much more, with an eye on behavior as well as on linguistic change, cultural patterns, the lexicon, affective use, incidence, associations and reputations and evocativeness, etc. It is basically a very complex business, although the US government's Department of the Interior is essentially interested in one name for one place, unique in each of the states, spelled without apostrophe for the convenience of computers and determined by government officials who will change placenames if the residents insist, as a utility for many purposes from mining to military defense.

Literary onomastics undertakes to capture and comment upon such periferal but significant accretions and must deal with even more deliberate and artistic word choices. The artistic aspects have been too often dismissed out of hand by the geographers and cartographers concerned with placenames in terms of settlements and geographical features. They have considered that looking at names in literature is not serious literary criticism but simply a sort of hobby, like the collecting of "funny names" that one may encounter in the telephone book, no more scientific than philatelic. The fact is that literary onomastics is partly scientific and partly humanistic. Criticism is an art and a science, like the practice of medicine. It requires experience, observation and thought, and it yields insights into human psychology as well as into the ways of human communication. Criticism is itself captured by its time and place. It is a cultural product commenting on the culture, reflecting tides of taste and even enduring national characteristics.

In fact, although some other nations have surpassed the US in the study of and the publication of information regarding placenames, the US leads in the field of literary onomastics, although it also flourishes in Canada, where the journal *Onomastica Canadiana* is found, in Britain, where there is a Royal Society of Literature but the Royal Society is scientific whereas the Académie Française is like some other state institutions in Europe literary, not dedicated to science. Of course linguists are engaged in science and though the ANS from the beginning until fairly recently met with the more literary Modern Language Association annually — it still presents a couple of panels there each year at MLA — but of late has joined the ANS annual meeting to that of the Linguistic Society of America, largely to look more scientific despite the fact that trained linguistic scientists, rather than teachers of language and professors of literature remain by far the majority of ANS members.

The ANS journal *Names*, in a fairly recent effort to dispel the idea that name study is trivial because of the subjective element in criticism, has placed more emphasis on the scientific (including the sociological and statistical) approaches to name study, but over the nearly six decades of its existence *Names*, like onomastic journals in other countries, has published many articles on various aspects of names in literature. The ANS for almost two decades conducted an annual Conference on Literary Onomastics (energetically led by Grace Alvarez-Altman), literature has been since the start a feature of the *Names Institute*, and there have been a number of articles in journals of criticism and popular culture and other scholarly publications. There has not been much input from psychology or anthropology or ethnography, etc., and only a couple of books on the theory of names, despite the recent great popularity of Theory in US universities.

Early on, in this present writer's experience, the way that names were usually dealt with in scholarly papers was often rather trivial... A scholar simply chose a single work of literature (usually fiction, less often drama, practically never poetry although the evocative power of names is probably most evident there) and proceeded to deal, more or less, with the names chiefly in terms of etymology

or as what the Germans call *redende Namen* (significant names). So-called significant names, of course, were almost the rule in the baldly didactic literature of yore. Those canonical works included Shakespeare's *Benvolio* and *Malvolio*, wishing well or wishing evil, Ben Jonson's *Volpone* (Fox) and *Mosca* (Fly, carrying the contagion of deceit), Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Young Goodman Brown* who loses a wife named Faith, and Herman Melville's narrator who refers to *The Bible* and says "Call me Ishmael". Today obviously didactic names are few. Today realism calls for names appropriate in quite different ways and such obvious pointers are usually avoided, but we still encounter a *Billy Pilgrim* in the novel as well as a *Mr. Zero* in a play. Too obvious a trick like that, as with the names in the old *Morality* plays and melodramas and allegories in prose and verse, tend to distance the reader from the text. They are thought now to make the author intrude too much into modern texts of which he is, in the minds of modern critics, not the all-controlling dictator of meaning but simply the person who provides the text which the audience or reader takes and remakes in their own ways. Very often the modern reader or watcher of action on stage or screen does not care about the names and does not wish to have the writer play games with them. So the modern reader of *Dickens* may fail to notice the point that *Oliver Twist* is "all of a twist"=very twisted, or even that the son of Mr. and Mrs. Bates must be according to Victorian rules, though he is never called that in the *Dickens* novel, *Master Bates*.

Every now and then, we might say, a writer may put some *jeux* in just for himself or for a few extra clever readers but modern taste in general does not like either the obviously didactic or the cutely obscure except in certain kinds of poetry (now basically the poet talking to himself and more for decipherment than delight of the average person). Modern readers have increasingly been subjected to the determined and increasing intrusion of the author in *propria persona* into the text, experimental fiction having perhaps become a sort of a branch of what we called since Hunter S. Thompson, Jr., and the younger Tom Wolfe of *Mau-Mauing the Flakcatchers*, gonzo journalism, but on the whole name games are supposed to

pass unnoticed by the general run of readers, whether the writer uses real names of relatives (as Albert Camus does in *The Plague*) or real names he has collected (Dickens used to make lists of useful names he found in the newspapers) or more or less disguises real people under invented names in a roman à clef (Eugene O'Neill put together the forenames of two of his homosexual associates, Charles Demuth and Marsden Hartley, for the name of a character in the play *Strange Interlude*) or makes up our of whole cloth character names and placenames (Merrygreek, The Pathfinder, Grover's Corners) and even commercial names (H. G. Wells' Tonobungay, a nostrum).

Whatever he invents, the writer almost always has to work within the limitations of his language. The works of James Joyce or David Foster Wallace are much admired by a few but scarcely imitated, and most writers in English do not have the skills in foreign languages dead and alive to be able to what Tolkein or even Kilping could do. True, for science fiction we may get names such as *vril* (like krypton something powerful) and we encounter languages such as Klingon of *Star Wars* or the Russian-influenced future British slang of Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*. Whole languages can be made up and have their own grammar and syntax as well as vocabulary. Burgess invented a Proto-Indo-Eupoean for *The Quest for Fire*. The film *Avatar* and futuristic novels have created whole worlds. In that case there is little for the average literary onomast to talk about, not unless he is also a trained linguist and even then his readers may not be interested on semantic details.

Naturally, however, some scholars look for sci-fi texts to discuss which are worth considering on some other bases or are rated as more serious than most science fiction and which permit critics to detect and dramatically disclose any striking playing with names. Samuel Butler's *Erehwon* is *Nowhere* as is that name of a snob, Mr. Bons, in the famous short story by E.M. Forster called *The Celestial Omnibus*. Literary critics enjoy wordplay, even if it is only fug in Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*. In fact, literary onomastics is almost the last bastion of old-fashioned emphasis on literary skills and connoisseurship.

Literary onomastics may not work so well on broadcast material, of course, because name tricks go by faster in broadcast media than on the page, where one can linger over a mot, a joke, a clever twist. On the other hand, the immense popularity of the likes of television's *The Wire* and other series has caused the programs to be made available in boxed sets of discs, so the work can be examined carefully and repeatedly. Moreover, popular films are now also available not only on hand-held devices for "streaming" but also on DVDs for watching over and over.

Now something more personal than usual, but it will assist you to understand what you may face if you take up literary onomastics—and encourage you to do so. My own interest in name study began way back in the 'sixties when printed texts were dominant. Onomastics was then dismissed by stodgier academics as less serious than (say) the voice leap in linguistics or suffixes in the Anglo-Saxon chronicles. I published then more pages in the journal *Names* than anyone else and I read half a dozen papers a year at various regional and national conferences of names scholars. I had come from writing about Shakespeare and other classics to have also an interest in name study in popular culture. Looking back, I see that I have written about names in connection with movies, plays, detective novels, major television shows and other works however ephemeral. I found them all culturally significant because they reached much larger audiences than the kind of books that academic usually talk about.

Freed by tenure and rank, one can go beyond still another comment on the already well explained names in the standard authors to say how names are working in a popular novel and film such as Thomas Harris' *The Silence of the Lambs*. Let us take a moment on that. It is a well-crafted thriller that takes on a more intellectual nature if you look closely enough at tricks played with names and with, for instance, a horrific plot device borrowed from a popular novel that has unarguably become standard. I mean the escape of the Count of Monte Cristo from the Château D'If.

I tell you my experience with literary onomastics to suggest that times have changed and that now you are much more able to

publish on the subject. Like popular culture, literary onomastics has become academically respectable, or at least as respectable as Literature and Film, in which very few academics know enough about filmmaking to write intelligently but do so anyway. You can learn about literary onomastics and profitably practice it. Try starting with the titles of literary works. Borrowing titles or doing what Americans call a riff on them is a minor if interesting onomastic habit. Another trick involves the title whose meaning conveys no message until somewhere deep inside the work. Explain such titles to readers. Such titles may have caught their eye but tell you nothing of the nature of the work except perhaps that the genre is comic novel, spy novel, adventure novel, etc. Some writers may use a title as a kind of brand: Sue Grafton does the likes of *A is for —*, *B is for —*, etc., and John Sanford has 17 novels each with *Prey* in the title. By the way, best-selling novelists often see their name on the cover in larger letter than the title and when a TV movie is made from such a blockbuster it is likely to be called the likes of *Danielle Steele*.

Names in literature can, the way the trend for what we call product placement in films do, economically characterize at least for the initiated. Names can drive the plot, and not only in detective fiction which we call the whodunit. Does your dictionary have *whodunit*? You need to know the everyday language as well as the word choice in the novels of Anthony Burgess, who presents us with many unusual words, or Kipling, who in his short stories peppers us with words from India, a specialized vocabulary. Names can set the tone. They can create the atmosphere. They can build suspense. Terms of address can reveal relationships. Names can familiarize or distance the reader. They can create the favored US sense of learning about technology or business or law or police work or whatever as we are being entertained. Names do much more than merely designate. Even the absence of a name can be significant or *Mother* or *The Woman* can try for some universality. Names can be comic or satirical (satirical names are fun to deal with). Names can be deliberately ludicrous or, as the British say, spot on. What is the correct name for a lower-class schoolboy who has managed to be admitted to an Oxbridge college (and why do we have a word

such as *Oxbridge?*), and what are the credible names for his higher-class fellows? What is the exactly right name for a New Jersey Jewish housewife of middle age and middle class and what did she name her daughter? What is the right name for a textile company in Mumbai? Get it right and the reader may not even notice but get it wrong and the local reader will detect that something is vaguely wrong. If you want to write more didactically you have to choose names for everyone and everything that say as clearly as possibly and for the largest possible readership exactly what you are determined to convey.

Writing in India, as some readers here do or may wish to do, for Indians and for a larger international readership because India's English opens to her writers a vast global readership, and India's leading writers in any of the subcontinent's other languages will inevitably find translators, you have initially to put your finger right on the particular aspects of the culture and its coloration, but you can get past criticism if what you say or the way you say it happens to coincide with your reader's opinion. You may have to cope with readers who have never been to India but have a traditional, even a mythological, view of India based upon literature's fancies rather than facts ancient or modern. Always you must strive to convey what you want to have accepted in the face of your readership's preconceptions. You must write simultaneously and utterly believably to your countrymen and to foreigners. You must meet readers more than half way. You must translate them, in the old sense of move from place to place, from their world into the world of your story.

It is true that in verbal translation non-English names are not translated into English, and thereby sometimes a character or caste or plot or joke or other factor is lost, like the nag's name Rosinante in the Spanish of *Don Quixote* as critics keep repeating endlessly), but in the original and in any translation all the names of persons, places, or things work or fail to work to deliver the writer's message. The originally intended message is always important even if the critics of today regard the text as pretext and declare that "the author is dead" and the text is remade by each and everyone who

encounters the text. It is incontrovertibly true that so long as writing is communication the authorial, and we used to authoritative, message is first if not foremost. Authors like any artists never quite convey absolutely everything that they envisioned but their personal message and their personalities must if they are to be distinctive and admired strike the reader as much as possible and carry strikingly across societies, across oceans, across languages and cultures, across time. In a multicultural world, writers' work is cut out for them, never easy but crucial if people and peoples are to be able to understand and value each other's ideas and ideals. We have as human beings the great gifts of speech and writing.

I encourage you to undertake to capture and convey Indian culture, in all its aspects, at all its social and historical levels, to your nation and to other nations. I suggest that you take from this short essay on a huge subject the desire use names of persons, places, and things Indian as a literary technique in new literature and for criticism of existing literature old and new, to describe and to glorify your nation and to speak to other nations, to Indian families and to the family of mankind, for passing pleasure and ideally for lasting and universal benefit. Some writers of India have done this already and have won international approbation. But not nearly enough. There is work for Indians to do. You can and should do what needs to be done for yourselves, and for the rest of us. Tell us about names in your Indian classics and in your vibrant modern culture. Give us the fullest understanding of names in all your literature, high culture and popular culture. Acquaint us with the achievements of Indians in time past and time present and call on Indian writers to create for the future and explain for us all what the names and naming practices mean and what they achieve. Let us have a school of Indian literary onomastics.

You can take action. Found one or more new organizations and journals and write for their readerships and for the entire academic and popular press on onomastic matters large and small, choosing the best examples of how the names function to make the literature more artistic and more meaningful, how they can put feeling as well as fact into fiction. Find and examine the two volumes

of bibliography by Elizabeth Rajec (from K. G. Sauer) on literary onomastics to see what has been done — how little has been done concerning the literature of India, or at least how little of what has been done has been made known to scholars in the west. You do not require any really extensive bibliography here because you can google not only Rajec but literary onomastics or names in literature online. Perhaps you may even use, as I have suggested, one or more items in the appended select list of some of this present writer's own examples of literary onomastic analysis as template for an article or articles on some topic of Indian interest.

Write about how to title works, how to create characters that live, how to give a work style and meaning, how to move a plot with name techniques, how to bring literary work to impact on real life through the skillful use of naming techniques and, if you are a creative writer of prose or drama or poetry rather than a literary critic, learn how to use names most effectively not simply to decorate but to energize and perfect your writing. The tricks can be as clever as Dame Agatha's use of a handkerchief monogrammed for a Russian with an *H* where English would use an *N*. They can be complex. Let us take the character named Jame Gumm in Harris' *The Silence of the Lambs*. The odd name came from an error for *James* on his birth certificate. He perversely stayed with it, evidence of an anti-social attitude. It sounds the same as the name Jame (as with Jamie Curtis, for the forename is most common for females today — not Jaime in Spanish), and that created or reinforced a gender problem for our villain, which led to making him a serial murderer. In creating the bad guys in fiction you have to worry lest you be sued by real people with the same name.

You see now how much thought Harris put into a single name in his novel. He also plays with nicknames and false names in other instances and has selected the forenames of the principal characters with great forethought. Here is something for you to give some consideration to: how the name works when printed in a novel and how just hearing *Jame Gumm* in a film might create problems. Most of all, how fictional names are chosen and what effects they can produce. Jame's little pet dog is called Precious, it just happens.

See how names function? Carrying a little dog like that, says Matt Crowley in the play *The Boys in the Band*, is what a character regards as the "insignia" of homosexuality. The matter is very complex; the penological and psychological and other factors Harris juggles would be to a lesser author like juggling running chainsaws, but he pulls off a bravura stunt. Harris' character name solutions you may agree were ingenious, far more than is common in your usual detective story. Harris worked very hard on the background and the characters and even went to The Smithsonian Institution to get information on a major, if really hardly essential symbol in the novel, the Death Moth. Onomastic criticism benefits greatly from the great care that most writers put into the selection of minor details and major names — names which simply do not work as well or maybe at all when an author's work is translated from one language or culture to another.

You never can get everything across in any translation. A translator is a traitor, the Italian proverb goes. A case in point can be Tennessee Williams' *Belle Rève Plantation* in *The Glass Menagerie*. If one knows French the name can bring one to recognize that the place is merely a "pretty dream," just as clever as Williams changing his mother's name to Latin's Amanda to make clear that he loves her despite the sometimes rather cruel way he presents her, or the Italian's Laura (Petrarch's inspiration) which he chose instead of his sister's real name, Rose. That the character was once called Rose in a draft of the play is suggested by the fact that some "blue roses" (lovely but odd) imagery still remains in the final text. Elsewhere in the play certain names actually and subtly suggest that various persons are unsuitable for marriage because of their different religion. Name changes, from titles to character names and placenames often hold information about the workings of a writer's mind, if you can see the working papers. But a name drawn from Indian literature or in a language of India other than English cannot usually score in English because of Anglo ignorance of almost all foreign languages and their literary heritage. English-speakers are often a monolingual lot, us Americans notoriously. Still you people in India can do something, sometimes, and quite a lot often, even

for us limited, foreign readers as well as introducing a significant kind of literary scholarship right there at home. Moreover, a study of the names of all kinds can help you the better to understand all works, domestic or foreign. And literary onomastics can give you a specialty to distinguish your scholarship and yourself.

So why not get to work along those lines? For Indian and foreign use, compile and publish dictionaries with English translation of the personal names of India's various ethnic groups and languages. Compile a dictionary of names in Indian folklore and another of names in the religions of India and the sacred scriptures of India. Compile a gazetteer of Indian placenames with the meanings of the names in English translation, maybe even a list of the Indian names of plants and trees and herbs with English translations and be sure to give as well the folklore that goes with them. Publish studies of how names are used by important Indian individual writers, historical and current. With governmental and university support produce these and other useful reference works. Maybe they be created online by a sort of Wiki collaboration and certainly it would be nice to have them available in a digital format so that they could be constantly corrected or updated and widely disseminated. Bring out an anthology of critical articles about the use of names in Indian fiction and/or drama and/or poetry. Write articles about the use of names in the work of one author or even a genre such as Bollywood films. What do people abroad miss that is in those popular exports? Publish onomastic books for individual Indian states on the model of my *Cornish Names*, which was designed to show how the names of all sorts in a limited area could add up to a cultural sketch of the whole. Organize conferences on literary onomastics in India and be sure to publish the proceedings. Some of these projects can be commenced immediately. All will necessarily involve a great deal of work by Indian scholars. The main thing is to get going as quickly as possible on as many projects as are feasible and fundable. Every large city and every state in India deserves a study of its geographical names, from micronyms (small names) such as street names to the names of all inhabited locations and geographical features with, we may add, literary heritage

and folklore also described.

As always the rule for writers is do what you can and all you can. Literary onomastics is another string for your bow, as English says. What is Indian English for that? Maybe you ought to prepare collections of Indian proverbs and catch phrases, in English or with English translations. If you write in any kind of English you have to be aware of all the relevant dialects and levels of discourse and know that, for example, what the British call "a piece of cake" the Americans say is "easy as pie". What do you say in India for that? Writing Indian English for the British and Americans is by no means easy, more difficult I should think than my writing in American for Indian readers. There are, however, ways to do things. Some literary experiments pay off handsomely. Kipling concocted a rather florid English to suggest the style of Indians who were supposed to be speaking in Hindi, and Kipling frequently used an Indian name for something with an English equivalent to explain it. That was conveniently excused by the fact of diglossia in a raj where both Anglos and Indians each knew a little, sometimes a lot, of each other's language. Kipling deftly and convincingly created a sort of literary Anglo-Indian voice, as it were, but it passed for an authentic voice. You can find your own voice, which is what all the best writers always have to do. In that voice you can apply the techniques of literary onomastics. It appeals to those who want to understand the underpinnings of narratology and to those who just like to relax with a crossword puzzle or a detective novel. Indeed literary onomastics resembles the detective novel in that there is not only something to be discovered but there is some triumph for the very intelligent who, at the *dénouement*, can crow "I told you so!" and some triumph for the critic-explainer who gets from the reader of literary criticism a question like "why didn't I notice that?" Play the name game. You and your readers will both enjoy it.

I trust you will excuse the fact that the only bibliography I append is a select list of some of my own work on this topic. I hope by this to suggest the continuing attraction the topic can hold to those who become acquainted with it and I hope also to hear of some of your work on the same topic soon.

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## **HOMO PICTOR OR HOMO SIGNIFICANS : THE SELF AND THE TEXT**

**K.B. Razdan**

The advent of postmodernism as an invasive phenomenon breeds its own discontinuity. The triangle-cum-interactive creative axis, involving the author, the text and the reader, itself underwent a deconstructive transition vis-à-vis the “tergiversations” of mass society. The degree of aesthetic and philosophical depth, explicitly as well as implicitly, “centers on the enigmas of literary change” (Ihab Hassan, 1985:2). Literary change like history itself continues to remain, as Ihab Hassan says, “an engorged abstraction, another god that failed” unless grounded in some apprehension both personal and universal. Personal apprehensions entertained by readers have failed to exorcise the “ghosts” of subtraction and metaphysical mystification which label certain texts as desperate transactions of desire. In such an atmosphere of uncertainty and everchanging sensibility, the very question as to who should have the power to determine a particular work as worthy of being read or taught becomes a viscous, flexible issue, intermixing assent and dissent. Postmodern textuality communicates its texture as devoid of values and despite this, innovative writings as texts or theories not only teach but imbue readers with a “liberating” essence. It is this very essence which makes such a text as a language of the self or the self in language. Old traditional, conformist and institutionalized textuality refuses to acknowledge an ontology of the new or a politics of innovation...” (Ihab Hassan 4). Be it the multiplicity of creation or the rubric of interplay and interpenetration, it is the same pyramid which comes into reckoning: author-text-reader syndrome. Keeping all these nuances in mind, the changing history of literary terms and texts confirms the irrational genius of language besides making us admit that there certainly is a “will to power in nomenclature, as well as in people or texts” (Ihab Hassan 7).

The condition of knowledge in highly developed society has been described as the *postmodern* condition. Jean Francois Lyotard, in this context has observed that in defining the term *postmodern*

what comes in is "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Jean Francois Lyotard, "The postmodern condition," *Literary Theory: An Anthology* ed. Julie Rivkin and Micheal Ryan 509). According to Lyotard, "incredulity is without doubt a product of progress in the sciences but that progress in turn presupposes it." Metanarratives as texts pose a challenge to the reader as the narrative function loses its functors, "its great hero, its great danger, its great voyager, its great goal" (509). The postmodern human self and the deconstructive postmodern text disperse will, perception and absorption in clouds of narrative language elements. A metanarrative becomes a kind of lettered nebula with every bit of cloud generating "pragmatic valencies specific to its kind" (519). Lyotard's argument that the two statements "the door is closed" and "open the door" denote two different things as two autonomous sets of rules, reflecting different kinds of relevance and competence, can as well be applied to the reader-text nexus. For example, when we say the text is closed and open the text, these also connote two distinct paradigms of reader-text relationship. Opening a text can be deciphered as establishing a legitimacy of the discourse within its narrative. Every text reveals a language game played with itinerant rules, which have to be specially understood by the reader. Every text itself is a "game of science", "a game of aesthetics," even "the game of Praxis". Sociological, psychological, and scientific writings have always communicated a social bond which is linguistic, woven with multiple threads. These threads intersect "like a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses and of houses with additions from various periods..." (511). Texts across diverse genres like novels, plays, stories, travelogues, biographies and autobiographies have added to respective textual trunks a multitude of new branches and blossoms. This is what in textuality has created the logic uni-totality, in other words a synthesis governed, shaped, and determined by the authority of a metadiscourse involving knowledge and experience. Not only this, radically divergent interpretations and readings kept on evolving across different periods and ages. In this context, the postmodern condition imposes a "Dangerous Supplement" like "The End of the Author and The Beginning of Text."

Ihab Hassan once remarked: "Surely Orpheus is no monster of Hubris. All the cults we associate with his name blend word and flesh into the dance of existence." In this context, it would be unavoidable to mention Hassan's monumental work. *The Dismemberment of Orpheus : Towards the Postmodern Literature*, which focuses upon the story of the fate of Orpheus, the legendary Greek musician and poet, who was dismembered by Maenads. According to Hassan, the narrative of Orpheus provides a way of understanding what he sees "as the deliberate disarticulation of the traditions of literature by the generations of writers since 1941" (Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* 109). Texts written in modernism-cum-postmodernism generally conform to the "literature of silence", a literature which consents to dismemberment, and yet continues somehow to sing on the 'Lyre without strings'. (109). The text-reader relationship, now, is not and cannot be a simple one. Silence is not simply an absence of utterance but involves a number of meanings from "refusal to subversion". Ihab Hassan rightly argues that the principle of silence can be found in the alienation from reason, from society, from nature and history alike. A host of texts, written during modernism from late 1950's onwards, indulge in repudiation and subversion of language, convention and artistic form. Such texts disturb the reader besides dismantling his consciousness by turning him in upon himself. Works written like Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* (1958) and *Nova Express* (1964), Kurt Vonnegut's *Cats Cradle* (1963), *Breakfast of Champion* (1973) and *Hocus Pocus* (1990), W.H.Auden's *The Shield of Achilles* (1957), T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Murphy and Molly*, Joseph Heller's *God Knows* and *Closing Time*, and earlier Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. The list can be endless. All these works comprising fiction, poetry and drama indulge in sheer "exploration of ecstasy, trance and other extreme states of feeling, the turning of consciousness in upon itself, as well as in the intense awareness of imminent apocalypse" (Ihab Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Towards the Postmodern Literature* 13-14).

Presumably, it is precisely for this very reason that Hassan

visualizes the beginning of the modernist "will to unmaking" in the works of Marquis De Sade, French writer and philosopher. Sade's works reflect the 'dialectic of transgression' which moves toward infinity. In the Sadian text, the true spirit of his self is "preapic" and continuous denial "(Ihab Hassan 46-47). In the works of Dadaists and Surrealists this traditional denial bubbles up repeatedly. In late modern and postmodern texts the contemporary Orpheus gets continually engaged in the process of unmaking and dismemberment. Yet the text sings and sings without break, against all the odds in the affirmation of "a new creative force, infact in destruction" (Steven Connor 110). Modern and postmodern writers have written their texts as works characterized by the looping together of unmaking and heroic recreation (110). Texts by authors like Samuel Beckett and William Burroughs pose a challenge to the reader as such works indulge in Kafkaesque fashion in a "remorseless sexualizing of aesthetics which is paradoxically obsessed with the need for literature to purify itself" (110). For instance, in *Naked Lunch*, the narrative uses the word. Similarly, in *Nova Express* the author counterposes a question, "what imprisons thee in time, in body, in shit? And the answer is: it is the word which imprisons thee in time, in body, in shit. Here, the expression word is used in a dual sense both in sense of God as well as in sense of the printed text and all the words which constitute a particular text. Likewise, in W.H. Auden's the "Shield of Achilles", the concluding stanza goes like this :

Haephestos hobbled away  
 Thetis of the shinning breasts cried out in dismay  
 At what the god had wrought  
 to please her son  
 The iron-hearted, man slaying Achilles  
 who would not live long.

"The Shield of Achilles" is a poetic metanarrative, a hypertext, extremely difficult even for a conscientious and adept reader to understand and negotiate. The poem has a complex intercalary structure and an aesthetic ambience of "Exhaustion" and "Silence". The textual poetic problematics in "The Shield of Achilles" can be understood from the fact that the entire poem uses Thetis, the mother of Achilles, as the narrator, with the poet himself donning this role

in the intercalary stanzas. The poem not only reflects the myth-making technology of W. H. Auden based upon a fusion of contemporaneity and antiquity, but also involves the fundamental syntagm directed against the myth of the perfectability of modern man. Thetis acts as the bridge, the creative receptacle which connects the Athenian, Hellenic civilization with contemporary times. The Homeric Achilles presents a direct ironic contrast to the modern Achilles, who is none else than contemporary man armed with his scientific and technological arrogance. "The Shield of Achilles" qualifies as an anti-narrative with the persona of Achilles functioning on a dual plane: as a "Master Code" and as an "Idiolect".

Similarly, William Burroughs's *Nova Express* (1964) and Kurt Vonnegut's *Time Quake* (1997) as novelistic texts, allure the reader with things like 'play', participation, and 'process'. Both these works also involve the principle of 'totalization' and 'synthesis', in other words to emphasize upon a dire need of the human self, a need related to authenticity, the depth and the transcendence implicit in human consciousness. William Burroughs and Kurt Vonnegut have produced texts as fiction which, vis-à-vis the novelistic requirements of plot, characterization, theme, and imagery, tempt the reader with a kind of Dionysiac virus bordering upon the extremes of eccentricity and self-dissolution.

*Nova Express* displays the Apocalypse as revisiting an addicted mankind. Burroughs's own experiences as a drug-addict spill across the text thereby putting the reader and his self in a tizzy. The very title signifies an urgent message about the entire planet as being "developed terminal identity and complete surrender" (*Nova Express* 19). Burroughs himself, his text and the reader constitute a triangle and the novel compels attention irrespective of some nexus of assent and dissent. *Nova Express*, as an innovative text, contains within its language, characters and incidents a 'liberating essence,' which restores us to the "multiplicity of creation". An aggressive non-traditional "Dispersal" challenges the very authority and the status of the reader to pass any kind of judgement on what the novel presents and signifies. Things like the Nova criminals and Nova conflict upset the reader's conscience. After all who are the

Nova criminals and what is the conspiracy? These criminals are none else than the committed and active disruptionists and destroyers, tearing apart the very fabric of man's culture and society. Among these Nova criminals, we also have the gang-lords and mafia-dons. It is these people, who, in the present day world, organize and execute the world of crime including drugs and drug-addiction. The Nova conspiracy unfolds as the game of con-manship, in other words the nefarious acts of swindlers and charlatans, which includes scientists, researches, doctors, engineers, and the police administrators. While negotiating the text of *Nova Express*, an increasing complexity of narrative, character and action unfold nine cut-ups. These cut-ups are a part of Burroughs's cut-up and fold-in technique. In this context, the characters assume carny-world identities and voices besides becoming versions of Burroughs's actual identities, past and present. The reader is into real trouble while encountering characters like Uranian Willy (the reformer addict), the subliminal kid (the rebel technician of the cut-up), Inspector Lee (the observer who exposes the truth), Hassan-Sabbah (the man whose vision comes from drug and linguistic experiments) and finally the Mob members. Burroughs himself becomes the addict hustler and creator of his own victimization. The roles played by these different personages in *Nova Express* are roles that Burroughs himself has played in life. The real problem comes when the reader has to contend with, and understand how, the novel structures its narrative on a merger of autobiographical experience, and a cosmic mythology created out of cultural materials, both popular and literary. Climatically, *Nova Express* unfolds an implication that cosmic is personal, history is fiction, life is art, and autobiography is legend.

Kurt Vonnegut's *Time Quake* (1997) can be defined as a brilliant and innovative compendium, an arresting remix of some of the author's earlier works and some new personages, especially from his own family, including himself. The structural and narrative technology employed in *Time Quake* makes the novelistic text a heady-mix of fiction, biography and autobiography, Metafictional self-reflexivity, coupled with detotalizing totalization, make *Time Quake* a hybrid work. The text presents an act of subtraction and metaphysi-

cal mystification, desperate transactions of desire located in larger discursive contexts. The real challenge comes to the reader when the author himself states in the "Prologue":

I had the time quake zap everybody and everything in an instant from February 13,2001, back to February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1991. Then hard way, minute by minute, hour by hour, year by year, betting on the wrong horse again, marrying the wrong person again, getting the clap again. You name it!  
(*Time Quake* xv)

These words clearly signify that *Time Quake* cannot be labeled as a simple work of fiction but a highly procreative and challenging piece of literary production, in which the reader is made to savour an interesting relationship between the author's life and his imagination. Vonnegut's mind simply races on a winged existential chariot, making his main weapons as humor, honesty of purpose, generosity of spirit and, above all, enough courage to enjoy the art of living and existing. What the author depicts as his main priority in *Time Quake* is the turbulence, the anarchy and the fragmentation of contemporary human culture and civilization. Kurt Vonnegut, writing *Time Quake* at the age of seventy-four, thinks that he has had enough as a writer and the quintessence of his creativity as a novelist has now to be given a proper adieu. The postmodern condition in *Time Quake* signifies ontological questions, questions of being. Such questions include, what is a world? How many worlds are there, of what kinds, constituted in what way? How do these worlds differ, and what happens when they interact or collide? What is the mode of existence of a text, and of the fictional world it projects, how are such fictional worlds made, and how can they be unmade? What can be the consequences of the making, unmaking and the proliferation of fictional worlds, the worlds we think about and live in? Last, but not the least, what about the special relevance to the real world? All these issues get unfolded in *Time Quake* as a hypertext which challenges the very competence of the reader to keep pace with the narrative that stares in the face. For example, Vonnegut's legitimation of the time quake comes in these words rendering the textual narrative as a kind of heteroglossia:

The time quake of 2001 was a cosmic charley horse in the sinews of Destiny. At what was in New York city 2:27 p.m on February 13<sup>th</sup> of that

year, the Universe suffered a crisis in self-confidence. Should it go on expanding indefinitely? What was the point? It fibrillated with indecision. May be it should have a family reunion back where it all began, and then make a great big BANG again.... (63)

Vonnegut's words become a kind of hypodiegetic narrative involving a story within a story, a narrative embedded within a framing narrative. The degree of aesthetic and philosophical depth is there for the reader to comprehend, be it *Nova Express*, *The Shield of Achilles* or *Time Quake*. All these and similar other texts denote the extension of the principle of minimal departure to textual worlds through postmodern rewrites. It becomes quite obvious that postmodern imagination has made texts as productive playthings for games of subversion and self-reflexivity. The reader has to possess the ability to conceive and understand variety of conditions, cultures, and, above all, the nature of narratives. Yet the question still remains: how can texts be used as tools of empowerment to negotiate and encompass the unsettling changes we witness in writings related to fiction, poetry, drama, and even in the context of economic and cultural changes?

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## **BRITISH NOVELISTS' VARIED CRITICAL RESPONSES TO TOLSTOY: SOME OBSERVATIONS**

**K.K. Sharma**

In the present paper an attempt has been made to examine the impact and impressions, positive and negative, created by Leo Tolstoy on his contemporary major British novelists such as Henry James, Somerset Maugham, E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence and Joyce Cary. A born genius, nourished and nurtured to blossom fully by his dedication to intellectual and moral pursuits as well as by the positive facets of his ambience, he left his indelible stamp on the intellectuals and artists of his time the world over.

A sensitive and inquisitive mind, Tolstoy himself was the product of the numerous factors prevalent all around him in his shaping years. Undaunted by the loss of his mother and father at the tender age of two and nine respectively, he could acquire fairly good education and could establish a very good educational institution to impart sound education to the peasants in his estate; and despite his periodic indulgence in profligacy and dissipation, he could cultivate and propagate high moral and social values. Even as a teenager he could frame some invaluable "rules of life" — viz. early to bed and early to rise, moderate eating, walking for an hour at least, doing everything possible for himself, etc. — to lead a regular and balanced life for attaining happiness through high standards of physical, moral and intellectual activities. Thus, he was determined to lead a truly meaningful life.

An intellectual glutton, Tolstoy read abundantly and was immensely profited by it in his creative, moral and social pursuits. Some of the distinguished writers he happened to peruse were Pushkin, Sterne, Dickens, Thackeray, Balzac, Stendhal, Beranger, Rousseau, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Ostrovsky, Griboyeder, Turgenev, Pisemsky, Plato, D.N. Begichev and others. These authors helped him to propound a clear-cut literary creed as well as a moral and social vision. Obviously, he learnt a lot from these writers, thus equipping himself fully to create outstanding fictional and non-fictional works.

Relationships are of vital significance in everyone's life, and this was true of Tolstoy too. The deaths of his parents in his early life, and of his sister, daughter and son in his later days lent sombreness and maturity to his vision of life. But more than anyone or anything else, his changing relationship with his wife Sofya — precarious and happy in the beginning and very bitter in the later part of his life — was of vital consequences. It was she who was a constant source of inspiration and hard work during the long period of several years when he was immersed in the writing and final finishing of his masterpiece, *War and Peace*, and it was she alone who was squarely responsible for his leaving home stealthily once for all and meeting his tragic end at an unknown stationmaster's house.

Despite his unbearably miserable life, Tolstoy's fame as creative artist — fictionist and dramatist —, socio-religious thought-provoking writer, literary critic and educationist touched the pinnacle of glory. This is evident from the unprecedented acknowledgement of his greatness in the form of the massive bulk of messages that he received from the stalwarts of the different countries of the world on his eightieth birthday. Small wonder the great English fictionists of that period were struck by his genius and reacted almost automatically and compulsively to his writings in accordance with their own predilections and prejudices. A close study of their variegated critical response to him is, indeed, immensely interesting.

In fiction criticism, it is common parlance that Tolstoy is one of the greatest novelists of the world of all times and that his *magnum opus*, *War and Peace*, is the greatest novel of the world. But this almost universally accepted literary judgement was arrived at not as naturally and smoothly as it appears to be, particularly in England. The early British response to him was not favourable and encouraging. George Meredith and Thomas Hardy perhaps never mentioned him in their expository writings. Henry James, his contemporary, who swayed the British and America fictional scene for about three decades from 1881 onwards, both as theorist and practitioner of the art of fiction, denigrated *War and Peace*, together with *The Newcomes* and *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, as "large loose baggy

monsters" ("Preface to 'The Tragic Muse,'" *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces* 84), and, along with his disciple Joseph Conrad, refused to take him seriously (Donald Davie, "Introduction," *Russian Literature and Modern English* 2), while both of them adored Turgenev. The most influential literary critic of the later nineteenth and the earlier twentieth century, George Saintsbury, admitted only Turgenev as an outstanding Russian novelist, ignoring Tolstoy's genius completely. No wonder when *War and Peace* first appeared in English in three volumes in 1886, being translated from the French, it was reviewed adversely in the *Guardian* on February 16, 1886: "...the whole is told with a sort of persistent weariness, an air of sarcastic unbelief in men and manners and causes, which seems to reflect the Nihilism of the author in every portion of his work." Again, Maurice Thompson dismissed derisively Tolstoy the man as well as the novelist as early as 23 July 1887 in the *Literary World* of Boston:

Tolstoy is a rich man who prefers to live in brutal vulgarity, a man who pretends to hate riches, but clings to all his cash; a heartless theorist, who pretends to believe that no evil should be forcibly resisted; who makes a pretence of shoe-making in order to attract attention to himself; who dresses like a clown for the same purpose, and who writes novels as dirty and obscene as the worst parts of Walt Whitman's 'Leaves of Grass'....

However, notwithstanding this early neglect and rejection of Tolstoy in England and America, D.H. Lawrence expressed boldly his views on Tolstoy in his letters and critical writings which became publicly known only after 1925. His first opinion about the strengths and weaknesses of the Russian novelists, including Tolstoy, is contained in his letter written to Catherine Carswell on 2 December 1916 which was first published in 1932 in *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence* edited by Aldous Huxley. In this letter, he remarked: "They have meant an enormous amount to me; Turgenev, Tolstoi, Dostoievsky — mattered almost more than anything, and I thought them the greatest of all time." (*The Letters of D.H. Lawrence* 383-84). But in 1948 E.M. Forster came out vigorously with the assertion that Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is indubitably the great-

est novel of the world: "Most people agree that Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is the greatest novel that Western civilization has produced" ("Our Second Greatest Novel?" *Two Cheers for Democracy* 226). And then within a span of few years only, Somerset Maugham, in the similar vein, pronounced his following widely known verdict after which Tolstoy's great novelistic genius could not be questioned:

I think Balzac is the greatest novelist the world has ever known, but I think Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is the greatest novel. No doubt with such a wide sweep, dealing with so momentous a period of history and with such a vast array of characters, was ever written before, nor, I surmise, will ever be written again. It has been justly called an epic. I can think of no other work of fiction that could with truth be so described. (*The World's Ten Greatest Novels* 25)

The emergence and acquiescence of Tolstoy as one of the foremost fictionists and the writer of the greatest novel of the world in the fourth and fifth decades of the present century cannot be attributed to the perceptive critical faculty which E.M. Forster or Somerset Maugham was endowed with. The fact is that it was Virginia Woolf, a singularly original novelist-critic of the current century, who for the first time could measure and reveal the astonishing depth and breadth of great Russian novelists, including Tolstoy. E.M. Forster, Somerset Maugham and many other later British novelists and critics only reiterated, elaborated and explained what she had pronounced repeatedly on Tolstoy in her essays, reviews, sketches, letters, diary, etc. Her cogitations on Tolstoy's fictional art are scattered in the volumes of her expository writings such as *The Common Reader* (Series I and II), *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*, *The Moment and Other Essays*, *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays*, *Granite and Rainbow*, *A Room of One's Own*, *Contemporary Writers*, *Moments of Being*, *Books and Portraits*, *A Writer's Diary*, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf* (4 Vols.), etc. She not only wrote about his writings, but also published and translated his works into English. In the letter written to Lady Robert Cecil in June 1920, she informed that the Hogarth Press was bringing out Tolstoy's *The Table Talk* (*The Questions of Things Happenings: The Letters*

of *Virginia Woolf*, Vol. II 432). Again, she collaborated with S.S. Koteiansky on two books, *Tolstoi's Love Letters* and *Talk with Tolstoi* by A.B. Goldenveizer which were published by the Hogarth Press in 1923 (573). Then, her letter to Vanessa Bell, written on Christmas Day, 1910, reveals her keen interest in Tolstoy's book, *What I Believe* (*The Flight of the Mind: The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. I 442).

Of these British fiction writers, Henry James, who is generally regarded as the pioneer of modern English fiction and is called, to quote Leon Edel's words, "a Shakespeare of the novel," (Preface to *Henry James — A Life* xiv) read Tolstoy carefully, thought about him seriously and wrote about him incisively. James was a theorist of the novel with his own fixed and well thought-out notions about it, evolved under the puissant influence of French masters like Balzac, Flaubert and Stendhal who laid special stress on form. Consequently, James has an obsession with form and believes that form is content and content is form, and that it is form which "holds and preserves" (*Henry James Letters*, Vol. IV 619) and imparts a genuine meaning to the subject matter. This leads him to pass his nasty judgement on some of the great works of fiction, including Tolstoy's *magnum opus*, *War and Peace*, by proclaiming them as "large loose baggy monsters." Likewise, he feels that the great Russian was primarily for "home consumption" ("Turgenev and Tolstoy," *The House of Fiction* 170). In his well-known critical essay, "Turgenev and Tolstoy", he makes some brilliant comments on Tolstoy's two fictional masterpieces, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, and admits him to be "a great writer" (170), but he considers Turgenev a greater fictionist and calls him "the novelists' novelist" (171). The reason is that he perceives in Tolstoy's books a delineation of the vastness of life with utter disregard for form and proportion. Of course, by implication he eulogizes the Russian genius for his amazing ability to present the whole human life as far as possible. While James's great friend Turgenev could discern the wonderful presentation of both the inner and the outer life in the writings of his illustrious compatriot, he completely failed to see this extraordinary aspect of his creative genius because of his too much care for method and technique, notwithstanding the fact that Tolstoy was no less than

a truly conscious artist like James, as is borne out by the truth that he revised *War and Peace* a number of times in order to impart the presentation of vast life the best possible meaning and form. Then, he considers Zola's *La Debacle* a better work than *War and Peace* so far as form is concerned. However, he evinces good critical perception when he declares the Russian's epical novel much more universal than that of Zola. Apparently, he obliquely highlights the universal and epical genius of Tolstoy. Also, he shows how *War and Peace* is a yardstick to measure the greatness of a work when he puts the work of his favourite Zola beside that of Tolstoy. In his famous article, "The New Novel, 1914", James advises his younger contemporaries to cultivate Tolstoy's skill of portraying life in all its depth and breadth, but at the same time they must avoid his way of divorcing matter from manner. His faulty prejudice and critical sense are apparent when he laments Tolstoy's failure in giving an artistically meaningful shape to the vast subject matter in *War and Peace*, but extols such ordinary novels as Hugh Walpole's *Duchess of Wrexhe* and Compton Mackenzie's *Sinister Street* for possessing the commanding idea and structural wholeness ("The New Novel, 1914," *Selected Literary Criticism*, ed. Morris Shapira 368). What we infer is that James downright condemns Tolstoy's works for shapelessness and looseness since technique and presentation are all-important to him, but these are of a little value in comparison with the convincing portrayal of life in its wholeness. In a word, to James architectural excellence and craftsmanship are of utmost significance for the novel as a work of art, whereas to Tolstoy the faithful and meaningful presentation of humanity in all its dimensions is of much greater importance than artistic excellence; while the former cannot tolerate the gulf between matter and manner, the latter is not very particular about it. Naturally, James's assessment of Tolstoy suffers from personal bias and lacks critical detachment.

Like James, Somerset Maugham is enamoured of French fiction masters — Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert, Maupassant and Goncourts —, but, unlike his senior contemporary, he is one of the greatest admirers of Tolstoy. As early as 1941 in his book, *A Writer's Notebook*, he declared him to be one of the four greatest novelists

the world produced, the other three being Dostoevsky, Balzac and Dickens (*A Writer's Notebook* 305). In his widely read book, *The World's Ten Greatest Novels*, he asserts that *War and Peace* is the greatest novel and Balzac the greatest novelist of the world. In direct contradiction to James, he repeatedly affirms that the Russian possesses an inborn instinct to marshal his material in "the most effective, dramatic and interesting" manner (45). Then, he spotlights his wonderful power of creating a large number (say about five hundred) of living characters marked by immense variety — a power possessed only by few novelists such as Dickens and Balzac. Also, he accentuates his portrayal of "broad humanity" and the universal appeal of the matter he deals with. He points out that notwithstanding the historical and temporal background of *War and Peace*, this novel will never lose its appeal because it is centred around war and peace — the two subjects which have been man's obsession ever since the beginning of human race —; war is an innate, basic human instinct, while love, hate, life, death, fellow feelings, etc. are the dominant features of peace-time life. Unlike James, he rightly feels that life is characterised by "arbitrariness and inconsequence", and thus even a great artist's faithful presentation of it may make his work suffer from an external shapelessness, though not from inner form or logic which is more meaningful and worthwhile than outer form. Maugham points to the significance of culture fiction — fiction which every well-bred man likes to read — like that of Tolstoy as it infuses the reader with joy and "fruitful energy" (*Teller of Tales* — "Introduction," *Selected Prefaces and Introductions of Somerset Maugham* 103) which is the aim of every great artistic creation. Further, his writing is greatly enriched by "the power and fullness of his personality" like that of Milton or Balzac (104). In fact, much of his greatness depends on the artistic articulation of his repressed instincts and day dreams. In *War and Peace*, Pierre, Natasha, Prince Andre and others record the sublimation of his suppressed sex desires, spiritual quests, renunciation of the world, etc. Maugham's originality as critic is evident not only in his estimation of *War and Peace*, in sharp contrast to James's opinion of it as "large loose baggy monster", as the greatest fictional work of the world, but also

in his observations on *Anna Karenina* and *Resurrection*. Differing from a critic of the stature of Matthew Arnold who considers *Anna Karenina* "a piece of life. A piece of life it is" (*Essays in Criticism*, Second Series 152) — a realistic representation of life — and many others who have accorded it wholehearted adulation for its thematic treatment and formal excellence, he believes that in spite of its original and powerful portrayal of life, it is "a little hard and dry" (*A Writer's Notebook* 143). As regards *Resurrection*, he asserts that it is a weak work on account of its apparent moral propaganda, but Tolstoy, by dint of his extraordinary gifts as artist, invests it with some outstanding artistic virtues such as realistic and poetic effects of nature, and remarkable characterisation, especially that of minor characters painted with distinct individual traits in just a few lines (160). In short, Maugham attributes Tolstoy's greatness to such rare qualities as his prodigious creative fecundity, his picture of the whole life and civilisation of his age, his immaculate understanding of men and manners, his grasp of good and evil, his vigour and vitality, his powerful imagination and observation, his wonderful knowledge of human nature imbued with sympathy and intelligence, etc. These extraordinary merits of his mind and art amply compensate "the natural inadequacy of the form", indifference to language and expression, and the deficiencies of his personality from which his writings suffer (*The World's Ten Greatest Novels* 117).

About two decades before Maugham's assertion that Tolstoy is one of the few greatest novelists of the world and *War and Peace* is the world's greatest novel, E.M. Forster, surely a more competent and established critic than Maugham with a comprehensive study of fiction like *Aspects of the Novel* to his credit, declares Tolstoy to be a master novelist, greater than any English fictionist. He ascribes much of the Russian's greatness to his power of comprehending and dispassionately portraying the vast panorama of life — life in its depth and breadth. As a matter of fact, he paints much more than the life in time, goes further than the life by values and takes into his scope space in its vastness. He possesses a rare sense of space which, to quote Forster's words, "is the lord of *War and Peace*, not time" (47). Forster accentuates Tolstoy's unique

power of creating real people with contradictions which are true to life. Consequently, his men and women are living human beings, and not masked skeletons. Another commendable feature of Tolstoy's art of characterisation is his capacity to create immortal characters who live two lives, life in the novel and life eternal. His immortal creations — Natasha, Anna Karenina, Andre, Nicollay and others — are not only true to life in the book but also live in the memory of the reader for a long time, while Virginia Woolf's major characters — Clarissa Dalloway, Rachel, Mrs. Ramsay and others — live only in the books and do not haunt the reader's memory ("The Early Novels of Virginia Woolf," *Abinger Harvest* 127-28). However, more remarkable than this is the fact that *War and Peace* is the only novel which has a kinship with the highest form of music, the most difficult type of rhythm like that of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, for it possesses the effect of expansion — a kind of opening out —, and not of completion, leaving us to a larger existence than what is possible at the time (*Aspects of the Novel* 170). Contradicting Henry James, Forster states that *War and Peace*, notwithstanding its epical enormousness, its presentation of a vast panorama of life, is artistic as well because of its meaningful form, its laudable "architectural unity and pre-ordained form" ("Our Second Greatest Novel?" *Two Cheers for Democracy* 227). In fact, Forster is so much overwhelmed by Tolstoy's fictional genius as reflected in his *magnum opus*, *War and Peace*, that he begins and ends his famous Clark lectures published under the title *Aspects of the Novel* with a reference to it. Not only this, he regards it as one of the three greatest books of the world, the other two being Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and also asserts that "*War and Peace* is the greatest novel that the western civilization has produced" (226). But what is strange and unpalatable about Forster's evaluation of Tolstoy is that he has based his judgement only on *War and Peace* and three short stories, evincing his complete ignorance of novels like *Anna Karenina*, *Resurrection* and *The Kreutzer Sonata* by not referring to them even once in *Aspects of the Novel* — an incisive full-length study of fiction — and the large body of essays he has published in *Two Cheers for*

*Democracy and Abinger Harvest*. Still, I feel that his cogitations on Tolstoy are generally balanced and help us in acquiring a better understanding of the great Russian's mind and art.

One thing particularly worth noting in this context is that decades before E.M. Forster and Somerset Maugham's well-founded opinion that Tolstoy is the creator of the best novel of the world, Virginia Woolf brought to light the Russian's greatness in the twenties of the last century, and thus she was perhaps the first to assign him his due high place in the literary world. Around the year 1920 she made strong statements in favour of Tolstoy's extraordinary creative genius in her two famous critical essays, "Modern Fiction" and "The Russian Point of View". She points to Tolstoy's and other eminent Russian writers' deep interest in inner life and saintliness in the form of their unfathomable love and concern for the suffering humanity, and hence calls them spiritualists as against the materialists like John Galsworthy, Arnold Bennet and H.G. Wells who are interested only in the outer reality of life ("Modern Fiction," *The Common Reader*, First Series 185, 193). She begins "The Russian Point of View" with the assertion that Tolstoy is the greatest novelist of the world simply because he is the author of the inimitable *War and Peace*. Then, she points out the exceptional merits of Tolstoy — viz. the quality of familiarity and his power of looking at everything from the external to the internal; universality as the world depicted by him is just like the one we inhabit; richness in everyday life experiences and culture; acuteness of senses and intellect, capable of perceiving and comprehending everything, internal or external, animate or inanimate, thus possessing God-like omniscience; and mingling of absorbing pleasure and excruciating pain and fear ("The Russian Point of View," *The Common Reader*, First Series 229-30). Since Virginia Woolf considers lifelike character-creation as the soul of fiction writing, she has the highest possible praise for Tolstoy because of his power of creating living characters marked by amazing variety and complexity. She demonstrates how Charlotte Bronte's men and women are repetitive and almost lifeless in contrast to Tolstoy's vigorous and many-faceted living characters. Such creations of Tolstoy enable him to re-create the vastness of

life, nearly as vast as the universe itself, with utmost truthfulness and integrity, thus presenting "a certain looking-glass likeness to life" ("Phases of Fiction," *Granite and Rainbow* 136). Exceedingly interested in psychology and judging Tolstoy by her psychological interpretation of life, Virginia Woolf finds him simply outstanding. She believes that everyday human life is constituted of moments of 'being' and 'non-being' — moments of profound revelation/realization called 'epiphany' by James Joyce, and moments of commonplace experiences. Tolstoy is great in that he succeeds in delineating both the moments of being and non-being, and he is a perfect writer as he attaches equal importance to both the aspects of life, both the moments of 'being' and 'non-being'. Furthermore, Virginia Woolf holds that Tolstoy is such a great writer because he is a highly deliberate craftsman who regards the novel as a work of art which is evident from the fact that he revised and re-wrote *War and Peace* several times in continuation in order to impart a meaningful, best possible shape to it. However, like a true critic, she does not hesitate to pinpoint Tolstoy's blemishes. She lauds his saintliness but laments the absence of natural joy in the comic side of life in his works, the grandeur of the earth, the pleasures of the body and the inner workings of mind. Also, she points to the structural flaws which are obvious in his novels owing to his delineation of the world in its vastness, resulting in the cracks in his books caused by his endeavour to present vast space and long periods of time. Even a novel like *Anna Karenina*, which stretches over a space and time much narrower than that of *War and Peace*, is not free from structural weaknesses ("The Cinema," *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays* 171). Lastly, she is not happy with him because of his contempt for women in his later novels like *The Kreutzer Sonata* and *Resurrection* (*A Writer's Diary* 109).

Though out and out original in every respect, D.H. Lawrence is an extremist to some extent, and thus his approach to Tolstoy is glaringly marked by contradictions and hence strikingly different from that of any of the British fictionists so far scrutinized. Also, unlike them, he has not written any article exclusively on Tolstoy, and yet the observations he has made on him in his expository

writings — especially *Study of Thomas Hardy*, "The Novel", *Fantasia of the Unconscious and Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, letters, etc. — form a greater corpus than that of any one of them. Clearly, he is irresistibly attracted towards the great Russian's genius and consequently has discussed him time and again. On the one hand, he calls him one of the three "greatest writers of all time" (the other two being Turgenev and Dostoevsky) (*The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, Vol. III, ed. James T. Boulton and Andrew Robertson 44) and "a great creative artist" ("The Novel," *D.H. Lawrence: A Selection from Phoenix*, ed. A.A.H. Inglis 169), but on the other hand, he describes him as "Old liar" (162) and "claw-biting little Leo" (171). While explaining the three main qualities of the novel in his brilliant essay titled "The Novel", he frequently refers to Tolstoy to illustrate his view. For instance, he asserts that the novel should necessarily be "quick" and admires wholeheartedly Tolstoy for his skill in creating characters saturated with "quickness" (166). But as regards the third requisite of the novel, i.e. it should be "honourable", he avers that the author of *War and Peace* is dishonourable because he presents fat, unpleasant Pierre as an important and desirable person, who, in reality, is not pleasant and desirable even to the author himself (169). A novelist is honourable when he is true to everything in his work — moral purpose, characters, his own character and his passionate inspiration. Moreover, Tolstoy does not grant actual freedom to his characters because he has a definite philosophy of his own which affects his creations. Further, Tolstoy was very lecherous, but would condemn others indulging in lust, thus exposing himself as dishonourable. Also, he, according to Lawrence, fails to transcend his ego and his belief in the absolute. Then, what is appalling in Tolstoy is that the didactic purpose becomes explicit in his works, despite his endeavour on the contrary. Little wonder *Anna Karenina* and *Resurrection* are outright rejected by Lawrence because in them the moral intention is not only over-emphasized but also alienated from the passional inspiration, and more than that the author does not offer us a candid criticism of the ill-effects of morality. Again, Lawrence denigrates Tolstoy for his worshipping the human male, "man as a column of rapacious and

living blood" (170), and all the more for this because he could tolerate Lenin and Stalin for changing the Russians into Bolsheviks, and despite being the creator of such rebels as Vronsky and Anna Karenina, he could timidly acquiesce in Bolshevism (170). Thus, we notice that Lawrence's reaction to Tolstoy is a unique amalgam of extreme admiration and denunciation.

Unlike the English novelists, discussed above, Joyce Cary, the youngest of them, admits that Tolstoy is one of his masters. Obviously, he refers to him again and again in his non-fictional writings, especially the prefatory essays to the Carfax edition of his novels and the six Clark lectures published in book form entitled *Art and Reality*. Moreover, he is the only one who has reacted sharply to the Russian's concept of love and marriage with special reference to women, as presented by him in the novel, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, and has brought out an interesting creative work, *The Moonlight Sonata*. Cary illustrates his views on art and the novel from Tolstoy. He points out that every great artist, like the eminent Russian, has the origin and beginning of his work in his intuitional grasp of something new about the universe, in a "sudden subconscious recognition of the real" (*Art and Reality* 14). This new awareness of some facet of the world becomes clear to him through the process of reflection and experience/knowledge, and becomes his theme. Cary points out that the artist has to seek for an appropriate expression to explore and communicate his intuitive idea/feeling and its true impression on him. He explains all this through Tolstoy's comments on the origin and creation of *Anna Karenina* (85). Taking a stand, different from that of any of the five writers already examined in this paper, Cary believes that a writer must focus on theme seriously and consistently without making it light in any way or subservient to any other issue. This leads him to state that if a novel is very wide in scope, the weaker it is in power and significance because its focus on theme gets diverted and this is the reason why *Anna Karenina* is more powerful than *War and Peace*, and *The Kreutzer Sonata* more than *Anna Karenina* (115). Cary, differing from Lawrence, approves of Tolstoy's idea of art for the sake of moral purpose, and not for the sake of aesthetic pleasure (18). He highly

admires Tolstoy's concern for morals as evinced in his creative works as well as non-fictional writings including *What Is Art? And Essays on Art*. The fact is that a writer's work embodies his meaning of life which is essentially moral, and thus it preaches the reader in one way or another and inculcates in him the sense of right and wrong. But Cary opines that art should not preach openly, and that is why Tolstoy's *Resurrection* is a bad work as it fails to conceal the author's intention of instructing the reader. However, it does not mean that the artist ought not communicate a message or moral; what Cary wants to stress is that the author should convey the message garbed in experience. In other words, a work of art should not be a vehicle of propaganda, but should preach implicitly. If it preaches directly, it is a bad art like *Resurrection* or *The Kreutzer Sonata* ("My First Novel" 638). As a matter of fact, a good work should state a case, but should not pass a judgement. Even a character like Tolstoy's Peter in *War and Peace* is undesirable, for he states the case/argument, in detail, and not a case/argument (Prefatory Essay to *Castle Corner* 5-6). Again, he avers that the genuineness of an artist lies in presenting the experience, and not the concept as Tolstoy does in *The Kreutzer Sonata* which is a poor work of art due to this reason. It is interesting to note Cary's critical comments on Tolstoy's use of allegorical device in *Anna Karenina*. The British novelist-critic feels that allegory is not true to life, for it imposes a definite moral meaning on human conduct in a world characterized by uniqueness but beyond generalisation — a world inhabited by free souls who are opposed to mechanism which allegory indulges in. A cut and dry use of allegory in a key scene in *Anna Karenina* in which the mare is made to represent the feminine principle as conceived by Tolstoy is unconvincing; on the other hand, Lawrence's *St. Mawr*, which is quite close to allegory, is, in Cary's opinion, undoubtedly a great artistic success. What is wrong about Tolstoy is that he manipulates to lend a meaning to the mare scene without any reference to the context (*Art and Reality* 159-60). In a word, Cary makes critical comments on Tolstoy's fiction mainly from the standpoint of intuition, theme, form, morality and allegory, and hence his approach to him is narrow and limited.

To end, it may be inferred that the above-discussed modern British fictionists, with the exception of Henry James, were irresistibly fascinated and influenced by Leo Tolstoy's art and ideas in their own unique ways, usually differing from one another. One thing overtly common about them is that they are unanimous in their vociferous acknowledgement of Tolstoy's greatness. However, Henry James, seniormost of them, is very critical of Tolstoy's novelistic art for want of form. But he is certainly not fair in his judgement which is marred by one-sidedness — the consideration of form — and personal prejudices. Somerset Maugham and E.M. Forster are just the opposite of James, and they shower all praise on Tolstoy without any reservations. Their approach is also, to some extent, imbalanced. Virginia Woolf's unrestrained admiration for him is based on her predilection for the inner life and saintliness as opposed to the concern for sheer external life dubbed materialism by her. Apparently, hers is a restricted, incomprehensive view of his genius. Differing from her and others, Lawrence is original and unique in his observations on Tolstoy. His opinions embrace the extremes of praise and disparage; he repeatedly refers to his greatness, but at the same time does not hesitate in condemning him because his novels are not "honourable". True, he perceives both the sides of his art and ideas, the pleasant and the unpleasant, the high and the low. The views of the last novelist — viz. Joyce Cary —, examined in this article, are not as profound as those of Virginia Woolf and Lawrence; he does not delve deep into the illustrious Russian's creative genius.

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## **ECOLOGICAL NICHE AND ANTHROPOCENTRISM: A STUDY OF A.K. RAMANUJAN'S POETRY**

**Shakuntala Kunwar**

The Indian poetry in English, after the Independence, reflected an awareness of the nature and the need to preserve our physical environment. The niche within the ecosystem is the 'space' the species occupies. The term 'niche' in this context suggests "a clever neatness of fit" (Patricia Waugh 535), or a symbiotic relationship between the different species and the various conditions of the nature. The conditions are not static; they are likely to fluctuate and the niche may suddenly disappear. In Dilip Chitre's poem "The Felling of the Banyan Tree" we may find an intense concern towards the imbalance of the nature and the sense of an impending disaster with the possible disappearance of the ecological niche (Gokak 722). The poem is an expression of the poet's grief over the cutting of the Banyan tree which is very old and the immediate impact of this act is that the insects and birds are rendered homeless. The words like "slaughter" and "terror" convey that the tree is being cut intentionally. This also reveals man's greed leading him towards such destructive act which will ultimately affect the ecosystem. In this context, Anton Chekhov has rightly observed:

Man has been endowed with reason, with the power to create, so that he can add to what he has been given, but upto now he has not been a creator, only a destroyer. Forests keep disappearing, rivers dry up, wildlife become extinct, the climate is ruined, and the land grows poorer and uglier every day. (Chekhov 27)

In the poems of A.K. Ramanujan we may find a deep concern for the exploitation of nature causing imbalance in its various conditions. His poetry seems to have a fairly substantial ground for "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty and Fromm xviii). He seems to be observing even the minutest creatures like earthworms, flies, mosquitoes, and so on. In "The Striders" Ramanujan efficiently presents the concrete New England water-bug image:

.... This bug sits  
on a landslide of lights

and drowns eye-  
 deep  
 into its tiny strip  
 of sky. (3)

The motion, the physiological character and the habit of the insect sitting on the surface of water of a stream are portrayed in precise, poignant and suggestive manner. With legs like hair the striders seem to be weightless but their motion is like the "ripple skin of the stream", and they gaze at the piece of the sky above as if meditating deeply like prophets. We may find a biocentric view of the poet which recognizes the small species or "The non-human world as having value independently of its usefulness to human beings, who have no right to destroy it except to meet vital needs" (Waugh 536). The poem evokes visual image in the mind of the reader and enables him to consider the existence of such a small creature. Another poem in *The Striders* shows a very deep concern for nature:

The twirls of their hisses  
 rise like the tiny dust-cones on slow-noon roads  
 Winding through the farmers' feet.  
 Black lorgnettes are etched on their hoods,  
 ridiculous, alien, like some terrible aunt,  
 a crest among tiles and scales  
 that moult with the darkening half  
 of every moon. (4)

This poem suggests the journey of the snakes and behaviour of human beings towards them. It shifts from the rural Indian location to the urban western background, and vice versa. In a state of paranoia the sister's knee-long braid held by a score of clean new pins remind him of the scales of a snake. It may be seen from-ecological perspective as the elegance of the skin of the snake tempts man to use the animal to fulfil his undue desires, thus causing destruction. At the same time we may also interpret it in terms of deep ecological concern which "demands recognition of intrinsic value in nature" (Garrard 21). In a wider context it leads us towards a notion of "environmental degradation and the exploitation of human beings" (Waugh 536). Thus, it extends a kind of awareness of what

some of the human beings do to animals in terms of exploitation, and other human beings do against their fellow human beings whom they, directly or indirectly, consider as their 'others'.

In "A Poem on Particulars," Ramanujan pinpoints the greedy ambitions of human being and the growing mass-consumerism causing damage to the environment. How simply an orange with lots of seed gives birth to so many trees but human beings destroy them for their use. Even the packaging is so attractive that it tends to promote consumerism which reveals human greed to exploit nature even beyond vital needs. On the one hand, we see that the poet shows his serious concern for the future of the orange tree as, in the materialistic pursuit, no one is bothered about its life, while, on the other hand, it also has anthropocentric appeal as it suggests that we should also care for the coming generation of human beings, and should not destroy them for our use. We may find this appeal here :

But  
 every one of these  
 had an absurd, almost human  
 umbilicus  
 at the top  
 where once the Tree  
 had poured its  
 future  
 from forgotten roots  
 and possessed it close,  
 to feed  
 this Fall-minded  
 pot-bellied  
 bud  
 till it rounded  
 for our baskets. (54)

Hence this clearly reveals that niche within the ecosystem, here in the case of orange the local 'niche', is feared to be waning away.

Many serious ecologists distinguish themselves from the environmentalists, as shallow approaches emphasize the "instrumental approach to nature, arguing for preservation of natural resources only for the sake of humans" (Garrard 21). Ramanujan's case seems

to be different, as the poem "A River" reflectively draws our attention towards the river "Vai kai" which flows through Madurai, the ancient city of Tamil culture. Ramanujan's artistic secret lies in his combining the visual and the conceptual. The river is projected in its two extreme stages: one when it is dry and the other when it is in spate. In fact, in this poem we may observe the symbiotic character of nature which excludes the possibility of any human interference in its transformation or change from one stage to another — both negative and positive. The river in summer is described thus:

Every summer  
 a river dries to a trickle  
 in the sand,  
 baring the sand-ribs,  
 . . . . .  
 the wet stones glistening like sleepy  
 crocodiles, the dry ones  
 shaven water-buffaloes lounging in the sun. (38)

This dryness of the river is juxtaposed to its swollenness during floods which is an exciting prospect. Ramanujan is critical of the opinion of the old and the new Tamil poets who "sang only of the floods" (Ramanujan 38) and the considerable devastation caused by the flooded river. The spiritual and emotional sterility of the poets is conveyed when he mentions them singing only "of cities and temples" while

... no one spoke  
 in verse  
 of the pregnant woman  
 drowned, with perhaps twins in her,  
 kicking at blank walls.... (39)

The new poets were no better as they "still quoted the old poets" (Parthsarthy 39). The ironic tone of the poem is revealed when we deviate from the reflective level to the introspective level. One can perceive the contrast between the dry river and the river in flood reflectively, whereas introspectively one can identify the metaphysical subtlety and artistic emotion of the poet's concern for the human suffering.

Ramanujan's poetry closely monitors the relation between the

nature and the human body and examines the impact of culture and time on this relationship. The interaction of body with the natural world is skillfully worked out in poems like "Love Poem for a Wife and Her Trees" and "Looking for the Centre." The poems can be read as narratives of deep ecology since they reject the image of the 'human-in-environment' and look at organisms in a relational sense, as caught up in a field of intrinsic relations. Ramanujan maintains that physical reproduction occurs in the branches of "family tree' with their roots in heaven, and branches in the earth." In this context ecocritics have looked to a variety of philosophical sources for the ways of resisting the nature/culture dualism and re-embedding human beings in nature. Val Plumwood in *Environmental Culture* argues that

. . . developing environmental culture involves a systematic resolution of the nature/culture and reason/nature dualisms that split mind from body, reason from emotion, across their many domains of cultural influences. (3)

In the poem "One More on a Deathless Theme," included in *The Black Hen*, Ramanujan further works out on the ideal of 'the body-nature nexus'. The body, after death, returns to nature:

Everyone in this street  
will become cold, lie under stones  
or be scattered as ash  
in rivers and oceans. (210)

Apart from this correlation between 'body' and 'nature', Ramanujan also points out that 'time' and 'culture' form an integral part of human life:

Time moves in and out of me  
a stream of sound, a breeze,  
an electric current that seeks  
the ground ...  
.... Mornings brown  
into evenings before I turn around  
in the day. (220)

Ramanujan's poetry, as is clear from the foregoing discussion, does not seem to accept ecological orthodoxy. Nature, for environmentalists, is to be preserved in its diversity. His poem "Ecology" reveals Ramanujan's true concern for the ecological niche. After "the first rain" (124) of the season he always observes the blossoming "three Red Champak trees," (124) even from a mile's distance

while returning homewards. Despite the problems and inconveniences caused by these trees, like the mother's "first blinding migraine" due to "street-long heavy-hung yellow pollen fog of a fragrance," they would not be prompted to "cut down a flowering tree" (124). The tree being "seeded . . . by a passing bird's providential droppings" (124) is also to be preserved for its significance in terms of faith.

Moreover, it seems likely that any given concerned individual will probably have both eco- and anthropocentric attitudes at different times, under different conditions. It also reflects that "[w]here institution and science clash, the former typically wins out, so that scientifically informed attempts to manage ecosystems, for example, are seen as part of the 'problem'." (Greg Garrard 23). In some of the poems of Ramanujan we come across such corner-stones of deep ecology. Hence in his poetry we find the various ways in which niches are created in the ecosystem and the chain of dependency that links even the creatures that seem most distant from each other. Here, we find a shift from a human-centred to a nature-centred system of values attributed to deep ecology.

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## THE INHERITANCE OF KIRAN DESAI: A STUDY OF LITERARY AFFILIATION BETWEEN *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN* AND *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS*

Iffat Maqbool

Literary influence is a strange matter: from the moment of its inception in the writer to its final transmission to the reader, the literary text is an exciting site that involves myriad questions of imagination, borrowing, interpretation, etc. The interrelationship between texts or intertextuality provides a rich understanding of how texts may never ultimately be pristinely "original". The field of intertextuality has seen some insightful contributions from T.S. Eliot in the form his pioneering essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" or Harold Bloom and his equally ingenious *The Anxiety of Influence* thesis. The innumerable ways in which literature gets written and then re-written makes intriguing study, prompting various theories of literary interdependence ranging from fond celebration to hilarious subversion, from homage to pillage, imitation, parody, sequel, revision, continuation, the wish to either imitate or to "speak better". The tactics therefore vary. Arnold Wesker writes in his preface to *The Merchant*: "I'm unforgiving, unforgiving of the play's contribution to the world's astigmatic view and murderous hatred of the Jew." At the same time he also admits: "I revere Shakespeare, am proud to write under [his] shadow". Whether the intention of the secondary text is to deliberately reopen the ur-text in order to "correct" the gaps and omissions (*Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys) or to annex the territorial space of the prior text from which it derives its primary fodder, the intertextual connection is a dynamic one. This paper posits that Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) is a rewriting of Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) and falls within the latter category.

From its publication and winning of the Booker prize in 2006, *The Inheritance of Loss* by the "budding" writer Kiran Desai has attracted public attention. That it managed to fetch the Booker for its writer while the book of which it is almost a sequel remained shrouded is one of the ironies of the world of writing and publishing.

Any reader reasonably familiar with the novels of Anita Desai will at once recognize the all too familiar "atmosphere" — the lonely house in the hills, the equally isolated protagonist, the brooding, melancholic musings and psychological realism at its subtlest. It is interesting that a novel so derivative of the Anita Desai oeuvre should at once catch the attention of the jury while the original was so endlessly ignored over the years. The sense of an eternal poise, a stasis that pervades even though scant attention is paid to external movement. A psychological novelist par excellence, Anita Desai's writings reveal her sure craftsmanship and subtle technique making her novels the quintessential poetic novels that have ever been composed by an Indian writer. To Kiran Desai the Anita Desai world becomes the perfect setting for a modern day *Clear Light of Day* or *Bye Bye Blackbird* making *The Inheritance of Loss* not only a secondary novel but also the epitome of what Harold Bloom called 'The Anxiety of Influence', the frustrating inability/incompetence faced by a first time writer as he/she struggles against the omnipresence/omniscience of the father (in this case mother) figure. The novel also becomes an intriguing case of Intertextuality in Indian Writing in English, more so because the precursor text and the offspring text are determined biologically as well as literally, the nexus between the accomplished mother figure and the cosmopolitan celebrity offspring.

Kiran Desai herself makes the point by "dedicating" the novel to her mother and renews the debt in her Booker acceptance speech: "To my mother I owe a debt so profound and so great that this book feels as much hers as it does mine." Salman Rushdie, astute as ever, notices the bond between the two books: "...*Fire on the Mountain*....a novel to which her daughter Kiran's *The Inheritance of Loss* owes an immense artistic debt." (Rushdie 2). An exploration of this "debt" is a rewarding enterprise: it reveals the fascinating interplay between what in theoretical terms is identified as the posterior text and the anterior text and the various strategies that are adopted by a latter writer to invoke the literary universe of a former one and at the same time make renewed combinations that ultimately make it "new".

In many of her interviews, Kiran Desai pays due acknowledgement to the strong presence of the literary mother figure: "All my life, I've grown up hearing her talk about writing and literature and books...." When asked which of her mother's books influenced her own novels, Kiran Desai points to *Fire on the Mountain*: "I think it was probably *Fire on the Mountain*. It was close to my life as a child because we would always go up to the hill stations for the summer.... Now when I see my first book and even my second book, I see the influence of that early book. I knew this actual setting, this actual place and it worked." A novel like *Fire on the Mountain* may well be identified as a foundational text for Anita Desai studies, chronologically as well as stylistically. Here is the solitary private universe, the ill-at-ease (woman) protagonist, the haunting, shadowy details, the lyrical symbolism, etc. Kiran Desai, prime literary successor, borrows what is most essential — setting and character — and relocates these thirty years later in her "own" novel, deftly adapting it to current postcolonial discourse, immigration, identity, colonization and globalization.

In the ur-text, Nanda Kaul, an embittered and isolated wife of a former Vice-Chancellor, has retreated to the Hills of Kasauli and lives a highly private life of seclusion and introspection with only an old cook for company. Far from social pressures and duties, the elderly woman guards her privacy zealously: "Everything she wanted was here... in Kasauli... in this quiet house. It was the place, and the time of life, that she had wanted and prepared for all her life.... She wanted no one and nothing else. Whatever else came, or happened here, would be an unwelcome intrusion and distraction" (*Fire on the Mountain* 3). Her placid existence is soon threatened by the arrival of her great-granddaughter, Raka, and Nanda Kaul finds it hard "to converse again when it was silence she wished, to question and follow up and make sure of another's life and comfort and order, to involve oneself, to involve another" (19). Her reduced and radiantly single life unwelcomes the child visitor at first but soon the older woman feels drawn towards the girl, mainly because Raka is a born rebel who silently challenges Nanda Kaul in the realm where the latter had thought she excelled — the realm of indifference: "Raka

ignored her ... so calmly, so totally that it made Nanda Kaul breathless. She eyed the child with apprehension now, wondering at this total rejection, so natural, instinctive and effortless when compared with her own planned, willful rejection of the child" (47). The novelist further states: "If Nanda Kaul was a recluse out of vengeance for a long life of duty and obligation, her great-granddaughter was a recluse by nature, by instinct....she was born to it, simply" (48). The novel unfolds with great psychological depth the growing tense bond between the two equally troubled relatives. The achievement of this remarkable novel lies in its chilling climax when Ila Das, Nanda Kaul's garrulous friend and social worker, is raped and murdered by a villager whom she stopped from marrying off his daughter at a very young age.

The disturbing climax intertwines the three feminine threads of the novel: the willful Raka has "set fire to the mountain", symbolic of the flames that engulf all three in the end. Almost rewritten by Kiran Desai in 2006, *The Fire on the Mountain* is metamorphosed into *The Inheritance of Loss*. This time it is an old, embittered Judge who lives in the hills of Kalimpong in an aging, decaying house Cho Oyu with an aged cook and a dog for company. Nanda Kaul has now become the misanthropic Justice Jemubhai Patel, the cook remains, but the author shrewdly deals with the theme of migration and cross cultural interface by inventing a son for the cook, Biju the typical illegal immigrant to America working in Indian eateries and labouring his way to bread and butter. Raka has her successor too in orphaned Sai who reaches Kalimpong to live with her Grandfather from a convent after her scientist parents die in a car crash in Moscow.

It is interesting to note how Desai junior deftly utilizes the zeitgeist of the Mother-precursor-writer to retell a story, setting it in the India of the 1980s – Sai alias Raka is now an adolescent girl who falls in love with her Maths tutor Gyan, who later provides much of the political matter for the novel when he shuns the "snobbish" Sai to volunteer for the "Gorkha cause", the demand for a separate homeland for the Gurkha Nepalese, a movement much in vogue in the 1980s India. Sai, never quite bonding with the egocentric, mis-

anthropic grandfather, finds a friend in the cook, a direct borrowing of the Raka-cook relationship in *Fire on the Mountain*: "... Raka hung about the kitchen for Ram Lal to finish his work....every evening...the two would sit together by the hamam....watching the eagles soar and glide soundlessly in the gorge and out over the plains, they talked dreamily"(76).

As a sequel to *Fire on the Mountain*, *The Inheritance of Loss* is what Rama Kundu identifies as being "set in the same literary universe and continues elements of the original story, including characters and settings" (Kundu 83). However, Kiran Desai manages, especially during the latter part of the novel, to set herself free of the master paradigm to which her novel owes its genesis. Firstly, she enlarges the theme of addressing the problems of the poor people living on the hillside, hinted at by her mother in the original novel. The cook's son Biju works for the Americans, and through him Kiran Desai reveals the family's poverty and their dreams of Biju making enough money so that the cook would retire and would have a daughter-in-law to serve him food and grandchildren to 'swat like flies'. Kiran Desai paints a poignant portrayal of the cook's dreams of a better future through his son, while the son shifts jobs and basements in a land that never quite owns him: "...once,...on his bicycle, he [Biju] began to weep from the cold, and the weeping unpicked a deeper vein of grief-such a terrible groan issued from between the whimpers that he was shocked his sadness was so profound" (*The Inheritance of Loss* 17). Kiran Desai reveals the heart of darkness of cultural interplay between nations ruthlessly. Biju finds no solace whatsoever in many of the jobs that he changes or the people he meets, and the Indian students and the restaurant owners are as lost between identities as he is. The issue of national pride and foreign-ness is conveyed through a skillful use of punctuation in scenes like the one describing Biju's fear of the immigration office: "They put down the phone hurriedly then, worried that immigration had a superduper zing bing beep peeping high-alert electronic supersonic space speed machine that could

Transfer  
Connect

Dial

Read

Trace the number through to their  
Illegality" (126).

The novel interestingly engages with the notion of illegality in its various shades: the illegality of immigrants, the illegality of a borrowed identity, the illegality of cultural domination, and the illegality of "occupation" by a bigger power. Kiran Desai exposes the "dirty rodent secret: ...it was horrible what happened to Indians abroad and nobody knew but other Indians abroad"(138). Biju passes through a traumatic odyssey from painful recognition of his position as an outsider to the American milieu to his realization that "his country called him again". He smells his fate and his horrific journey back to India when he almost gets killed by armed guerrilamen swarming the mountains of Kalimpong till his final reunion with the aging father. All this is a breathtaking feat of literary skill that puts the reader on edge, and therein lies Kiran Desai's individual talent.

The other theme of insurrection in the hills of Kalimpong, the demand for a separate state for Gorkhas is etched finely but fails to sustain itself fully. It provides for some serious appraisal of the North East and its demands for autonomy in the face of years of misrule and neglect. Kiran Desai's novel makes an explicit connection between the personal and the political through Gyan and Sai as they find themselves caught in circumstances over which they have no control. Gyan spurns Sai, her privileged life and everything she stands for and enlists for the "cause". Life in the hills changes suddenly from complacency to fear as the "boys" take over.

The streets of Kalimpong resonate with "Jai Gorkha", "Victory to the Gorkha Liberation Army", and Gyan feels himself drawn "into the making of history". The narrative however brilliantly espouses the "Gorkha" cause and their exploitation by years of misrule and exploitation by New Delhi but do the volunteers "unleashed Bruce Lee fans in their American T-Shirts made-in-China-coming-in-via-Kathmandu" have a perspective beyond this moment (157)? Gyan begins to loathe Sai's "Englishness", her knife and fork habits while he himself eats with "slurps and smacks", and her elite "tiny social

stratum" outside which she can not converse and in a moment of weakness he betrays Sai by informing the boys of the guns, the absence of liquor in the cabinet, the lack of a phone and there being nobody to call for help. As the GNLFF boys go on a rampage of violence and pillage, including stealing the Judge's guns, the residents of Kalimpong witness the extent of perversity that the heart is capable of as the town is engulfed in the flames of political turmoil.

The ending of the novel, like that of its precursor text, is its ultimate achievement: the various strands of the novel represented by different characters come together in a masterstroke of storytelling. The Judge realizes his inhuman treatment of his innocent wife, a martyr to his complex-ridden Anglicized personality. The novel is imbued with multiple sorrows: the judge's, Sai's at a romance rudely interrupted by the politics of the day, the cook's increasing worry over Biju's long deferred arrival, Biju's pain at finally reaching the home he had left for a "better life", bereft of all luggage and money because of the courtesy of the GNLFF men whom he pays to get to Kalimpong. Desai underscores the borrowed/false identity motif of which the Judge and Sai are perfect examples, and makes Biju the mouthpiece of an indictment of Empire, colonial servility, the immigration experience and the experience of those the immigrant leaves behind.

Huddled in a GNLFF jeep, driving through landslides to get "home", Biju realizes: "This was where his father lived...where they had hatched the plot to send him to America, and Biju had, in his innocence, done just what his father had, in his own innocence, told him to do. What could his father have known? This way of leaving your family for work had condemned them over several generations to have their hearts always in other places, their minds thinking about people elsewhere; they could never be in a single existence in one time" (311). Sai steps out of her world of National Geography to realize: "The simplicity of what she'd been taught wouldn't hold. Never again could she think that there was but one narrative and that this narrative belonged only to herself, that she might create her own tiny happiness and live safely within it" (315). The ending,

however, belongs to the glorious reunion between Biju and the cook. Biju, dressed in a grotesque ladies nightie after the GNLFF rob him of his belongings "without his baggage, without his savings, worst of all without his pride. Back from America with far less than he'd ever had" (318), finally arrives at the gates of Cho Oyu and Sai, and witnesses father and son "leaping at each other as the gate swung open" (320). The novel offers a final redemptive epiphany in brilliantly etched language: "The five peaks of Kanchenjunga turned golden with the kind of luminous light that made you feel, if briefly, that truth was apparent. All you needed to do was to reach out and pluck it" (324)

*The Inheritance of Loss* then manages to tell its own story despite the strong literary presence of the posterior mother-text. In fact, literature is an echo chamber operating through ages, "reverberating with tremors of past or prior utterances, and which can thereby reward a sensitive approach to the text with the thrill of recognition" (Kundu 2). The interrelationship between the mother-daughter literary duo could further be explained in terms of the hypotext and hypertext; while Anita Desai is a deceptively quiet writer, Kiran is a little more showy as a writer. To end, Kiran Desai fully exploits the hidden possibilities of the manifest text and adapts it creatively to current themes, forging in the process a 'new' articulation.

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## **A WISH-FULFILMENT FANTASY: SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *LUKA AND THE FIRE OF LIFE***

**Nasreen**

The publication of *Luka and the Fire of Life* (2010) reiterated the fact that Salman Rushdie is a great novelist, a true master of the art of storytelling. He is one of the best contemporary writers of fables. His *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* was written as a gift for his first son, and *Luka and the Fire of Life* is actually the story of Haroun's younger brother and it is a gift for his second son on his twelfth birthday. It contains eight chapters having different titles congruent with one another in meaning and impact. The first chapter 'The Terrible Thing That Happened on the Beautiful Starry Night' transports us to the city of Kahani in the land of Alifbay with Luka and his two pets, a bear named Dog and a dog named Bear. Luka's search for the Fire of Life to awaken his father from a deep sleep begins from here and passing through various kinds of magical worlds and magical objects he reaches the world of his wish and fulfillment in the last chapter, 'The Race Against Time'.

Luka the brain child of Salman Rushdie is the son of a story teller Rashid Khalifa. He is an unusual character with unusual companions. When Luka was twelve year old he persuaded his father to take him to the circus GROF (Great Ring of Fire) but Rashid Khalifa denied because of the miserable conditions of the animals and the cruelty of the Ring Master Captain Aag who was quick to anger and slow to laugh. Rashid was taking Luka home from school listening to Luka's pluses and minuses when they saw circus parade going on its way. The sight of the droopy cockatoos in their cages and the sad dromedaries humphing along the street, a mournful dog and a doleful bear touched the generous young heart of Luka. Seeing the Grand Master Flame he shouted at the top of his voice, "May your animals stop obeying your commands and your rings of fire eat up your stupid tent" (*Luka and the Fire of Life* 3). Luka's curse had worked. The Great Rings of Fire were ablaze. A dog with a tag reading Bear and a bear with a tag reading Dog came to thank Luka. They stayed with Luka and thrilled him with their song and

dance.

Luka, a wonder boy, was born when Haroun was eighteen year old and his mother Soraya forty one and his father fifty year old. Khalifa Rashid could not believe and had a question for Soraya, 'At our age, what is the meaning of a wonder like this'? and the proud mother in a prophetic and unbelievable tone calmed him down, "We appear to have brought into the world a fellow who can turn Back Time itself, make it flow the wrong way and make us young again" (8). Luka grew up left handed. Soraya was a little bit worried but Rashid remarked that he was almost ambidextrous. Luka was happy with his friends. Suddenly Rashid Khalifa fell asleep and nobody could wake him. Luka was too shocked and unhappy and was wide awake that night. Suddenly he heard the sound of beating wings. He saw seven vultures flying down towards him. Boss Vulture carried pouch around his neck carrying a message from Captain Aag, "Dreadful black – tongned child, disgusting witch boy, did you imagine I would do nothing in return for what you did to me? ... it will come back to smack you in the face. Or, on this occasion, is perhaps an even more satisfying act of revenge, it poleaxes someone you love" (2). It was a sleeping curse on his father. Luka also saw a man in the lane of his residence who was an exact copy of Rashid Khalifa but this Rashid Khalifa could be seen through, not clearly but murkily. Luka's head began to spin. He was Nobodaddy who had taken Luka in to the World of Magic where Luka met with Bulbul Dev, the Ogre, Bear the dog and Dog the bear all wanting to break the spell that bound them. Nobodaddy told Luka that The Fire of Life burnt at the top of the Mountain of Knowledge. He spoke to Luka: "You want me, your detested Nobodaddy, to fade away, while your father becomes himself again" (33). Nobodaddy told Luka that nobody in the entire recorded history of the World of Magic had ever successfully stolen the Fire of Life. But Luka was firm, determined and enthusiastic. He asked Nobodaddy to show him the way to the Mountain.

Nobodaddy took Luka, Dog and Bear to The River Silsila. There Luka saw the Old Man of the River who liked riddling. Luka had a tough time with the Old Man who declared that if Luka lost he would have to blast himself permanently. The Old Man asked many inter-

esting questions which were answered skilfully by Luka. The Gate Keeper unveiled the gate and Luka could see an elegant flight of stairs leading down to the river's edge. Nobodaddy led the boy, the Dog and the Bear down the Bund to the left bank of the River of Time. Punch bounced up towards the travellers who squeaked in happy anticipation. Bear and Dog were half excited, half terrified by Luka's battle against and victory over the Old Man of the River.

Luka met the 'Fire Bugs', a white rabbit Argo, Elephant Bird and Elephant Duck. With Argo Luka passed through a strange land. They felt hungry but suddenly he saw Border Rat who asked "Papers", and Luka emptied his pocket full of cards, airplanes, orange sweet, etc. Border Rat unlocked the grille and allowed the travellers to pass through the other side. "A world of warning," he said, "Here in the Respectorate we expect visitors to behave." Nobodaddy led them to the Restaurant. Luka saw there all the rats singing and dancing. One of the rats asked Luka, "Do you believe that two and two make five?" Luka said, "That's just nonsense." It offended the Rats very much and they cried 'Black Mark'. The travellers fled in fear and reached in an unusual land of Oh-Tee-Tea whose denizens are Otters and their Queen is Sultana, but because she is the most brilliant and sharp tongued abuser, everyone calls her the 'Insultana'. Luka come to know that Insultana's name was Soraya. Time stopped. Bear, Dog and Nobodaddy were as stiff as waxworks. Luka and Insultana swooped down on king Solomen's Carpet *Resham*. This young queen had the name of his mother. She said, "You guessed my name which stopped Time. So here I am. 'What do you want?'" Luka pointed to the golden ball atop the Rat house dome. She asked Luka to aboard the carpet. She promised him to join him in his adventure: "... four levels that I can enable you to skip. But after that we will just have to take things as they come." She said to Luka, "... this silkin flying carpet can do many wondrous things, but it cannot fly through the Great Ring of Fire" (92).

*Resham* with all the travellers began a journey towards the Mists of Time. They reached the Limits of Memory. Luka saw the Great Stagnation and on the side of the Mists of Time the river had expanded into a gigantic swamp. With the help of Soraya the Heart

of Magic lay revealed, lit up by the Dawn of Days. Into the Heart of Magic Luka saw Mountains whose locks stood out from his head like wrathful orange serpents. He shouted, "Cook them Grill them roast them, blast them, toast them..." (124).

Here Luka also met with Nuthog. The dragon actually called Juldibadal and was Magical Chameleon. Captain Ag commended Nuthog to "fry these thieves alive". Luka was frightened. Nuthog unleashed an immense flame that wrapped itself around Captain Ag, and when the flame died, there was no more Captain but just a small pie of angry looking ash. Nuthog sisters on the flying carpet flapped their wings experimentally and found, to their great pleasure, that they could fly again. "'We too will help you,' said Badlo-Badlo the changer, and Bahut-Sara and Gyara-Jinn nodded their assent. The Insultana Soraya clapped her hands in delight. 'That's more like it', she rejoiced. 'We have got an army now'" (125).

Passing through a number of magical activities making magical creatures their friends by tricks, they reached to Alim, a guard of The Fire of Life. The siren of The Fire Alarm raised which indicated that someone was trying to steal the Fire of Life and all the residents of the Heart of Magic were rendered capable of seeing intruders until the All-Clear sounded indicating that the thief was caught. The whole world of Magic was on Red Alert. Even the mermaids rose from the waters singing siren song to lure the foul intruders to their doom. Luka, hiding with his companions behind the rhododendron bushes, had the feeling that the thicket was shrinking and dwindling away. His heart was breaking and he was getting scary. Luka noticed the change of Gyara Jinn and the song of Ra represented through symbols. The Bear sped into the Fire Temple and returned a few seconds later with a burning wooden brand between his teeth, ablazed with the brightest, most cheerful, most attractive, and most hopeful fire Luka had ever seen. The Dog grabbed the burning wood from Bear's jaw and plunged it into the Ott Pot whereupon the little Ott Potatoes began to burn with heart-warming optimistic cheeriness.

The wind dropped, the carpet landed, the Wind God disappeared, and Luka was home, in front of his very own house, in the very

place where he first heard Dog and Bear speaking, where he first met Nobodaddy and embarked on his great adventure. Rashid Khalifa lay in his bed asleep with his mouth open. His mother shouted, "What is This? A playground? A Circus? What?" Without any reply Luka popped an Ott Potato, glowing with the Fire of Life into his father's open mouth. To his amazement, it dissolved instantly. Luka saw little tongues of fire dive down into Rashid's inside. After a moment everyone saw the colour return to Rashid's face, after which a glow of health spread across his cheeks, and the monitor by the bedside began to drum out a firm, regular heartbeat. Rashid's hands began to move. Rashid sat up, stretched, yawned, and gave Luka a funny, inquisitive look. He told Luka that he was dreaming and saw Luka adventuring into the World of Magic with his companions to steal the Fire of Life. Luka said, 'May be so and may be no.'" Khalifa family was happy and relaxed. All of them were singing and dancing on the roof of their home on a cool night."

The novel demonstrates the range of Rushdie's genius, the evolution of his narrative technique, and his vision from history to idealism and religion, and from social-realism to magic realism. Rushdie's experiment in style enables him to bring out in this novel something exotic, pleasurable and readable. His imagination abounds in religion, race, myth, culture, wisdom and life. The structure of the novel involves a member of chapters moving freely back and forth through the more distant past and recent past, distant present and recent present of the story's current action happening in the World of Magic. Mythical and magical stories are told side by side through mythical and supernatural characters moving on different planes of time. All the chapters are well connected through a single thread of Magic.

Luka, the main character in the narrative, is not an ordinary child. He is endowed with some extraordinary power like Salim Sinai in *Midnight's Children*. Other characters like Rats, Dog, Bear, Elephant, Duck, Nuthog, the Memory Bird and others have also extraordinary power and capacity to emphasize their contribution to the development of the plot. As a matter of fact, they are Luka's natural companions with supernatural powers to help Luka in his

wish-fulfillment process. The most striking feature of this novel is Rushdie's exercise of his brain to use symbolic language, particularly in Chapter Seven 'The Fire of Life' (169-185). The symbols represent the song of Ra, which is translated by Gyara Jinn. It has given a special charm to the storytelling process and created a sensation to thrill the readers and to take them into the whirlpool of joy and suspense.

"Fiction, especially, is not only an aesthetic enjoyment for readers but also acquires power in the hands of a competent writer. It generates a scope for change and development. It becomes powerful as well as pleasure giving", remarks Indira Bhatt in *Creative New Literature*, Series 56 (Foreword ix). Undoubtedly, it is Rushdie's exclusive power to tell stories, some times magical, sometimes real depending heavily on myths, legends, fables and religion. This is quite evident from his two stories *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* and *Luka and the Fire of Life*, where he has drawn characters like Haroun, Rashid Khalifa and Alim, and the picture of a flying carpet *Resham* from the storey of Aliflaila. It is the powerful trait of Rushdie to maintain the form and content of the novel while telling a story which is fantastical, didactic, magical and pleasure giving. He does not intend to leave the reader in the world of magic but dwells upon a definite purpose, as in *Luka and the Fire of Life* he has delineated the character of Luka, an extraordinary child, born unexpectedly in the old age of his parents, who is moved by the sight of his father who has gone into a deep sleep, and is determined to wake him without knowing the 'HOW' of it. His determination is answered by the magical appearance of seven vultures carrying the message of Captain Ag and Nobodaddy who reveal the World of Magic and Mystery and lure the tender heart of Luka to steal the 'Fire of Life' to awaken his father. Luka's adventure is rewarded in the end after passing through the heart breaking scenes, circumstances and horrible but fantastic levels of magic and spell created by supernatural elements.

Gifted with a powerful imagination, Rushdie here provides a cluster of stories rich in effect and sensation. As a matter of fact, the novel transforms 'Sorrow' into a 'Life-giving Pleasure' and leaves

a deep impact on the world of fables and fiction. It is a work of fiction where Rushdie tells us a delightful story which instructs us 'to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield'. It is not merely a children's classic but a work of superb craftsmanship with several strokes of magic, and it can be read as a narrative saturated with fable, fantasy, adventure and allegory. Rushdie's literary imagination takes him into the world of fables where he is credited to create the character of Luka, a boy of high definitions and high expectations whose extraordinary traits of adventure are actually allegorical of the novelist's successful quest for the creation of a New Brave World of his own style, aspiration and interest.

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# TRAVELS IN LALGOLA: THE TRAVAILS OF BANKIMCHANDRA AND THE WRITING OF *ANANDAMATH*

Banibrata Mahanta

The raised roads highlighted the flood-prone nature of the countryside that we were entering. As the Ambassador wound its way to Lalgola in Murshidabad, right on the Bangladesh border, what struck us was the visible underdevelopment that was evident all around. Small thatched houses with fluttering patches of plastic on their roofs and on the gaps that were doors and windows, bare fields, unclothed toddlers, interspersed with the occasional mini water-purification plants that removed arsenic and made the groundwater fit for drinking. As we drove on, the evident poverty of the outskirts gave way to the mandatory narrow serpentine roads of another small town that seemed unable to handle its transition to modernity — crowded with shops peering askance into them, houses of the newly-moneyed eating into the spaces meant for sidewalks, smoke-belching trucks honking for right of way behind tongas and rickshaws that seemed oblivious to the change that had taken place all around. A couple of ATMs and numerous 'chowmin-and-roll' stalls later, we entered the precincts of the Lalgola police station to park our car (the only place in the whole bazaar where it was possible to park it) and negotiated our way through the crowded vegetable market to the only lodge in town — our shelter for the night.

Santanu, a close friend and my companion for the trip, and I had debated long and hard before we embarked on this trip. Would it be advisable to chase a lead about the origins of Bankimchandra Chatterjee's *Anandamath* being grounded in real life incidents and characters in Lalgola, based on a few blogged articles, newspaper reports and supplements,<sup>1</sup> and a brief reference to this hypothesis by Julius J. Lipner in his translation of the novel?<sup>2</sup> What made us go ahead in spite of the uncertainties was that if this hypothesis was true, we would be looking at the first temple of the "motherland in the form of the nurturing Goddess": Bharat Mata (151).<sup>3</sup> Would we actually be able to locate the origins of the icon which became a

rallying-point for the freedom movement in the country? If we were unsure earlier, entering Lalgola made us more circumspect. We felt that the 'rocking' six-hour journey to Lalgola in the vintage Ambassador was probably not going to be worth it, especially when two memorials in Naihati and Chuchura in West Bengal were already contesting for the honours of being the 'actual' place where *Anandamath* was written and *Vande Mataram* was composed.

A couple of hours later though, across the table with Kishan Chand Bhakat, Assistant Teacher of Mathematics at the Mahendra Nath Academy High School and a recipient of the National Award for Teachers given away by the President of India, both of us sat enthralled like a couple of breathless *Da Vinci Code*-readers. On that cold December night, Bhakat did a Robert Langdon as he narrated his alternative hypothesis about the origins of *Anandamath* and *Vande Mataram*. Bhakat's 'thes(h)istory', a mixture of facts, research, local lore, word of mouth and hearsay – coupled with his personal sense of the whole thing – seemed to unravel layer after layer of connections that made it seem believable that the novel did have an evident connection with Lalgola, as did Bankim himself.

### I

Bhakat premises his thesis on evidence that is part historical and part anecdotal, the latter based largely on the local lore that was passed on to him by his father Baldeo Bhakat, which he later painstakingly researched. He fondly traces the origin of the story to the incidents that his father recounted, which he later found corroborated through research. The story begins on 15 December 1873. Bankimchandra, then a Deputy Magistrate posted in Berhampore, the district headquarters of Murshidabad district, was insulted and manhandled by one Lieutenant Colonel Duffin as he was taking a shortcut across a field where a group of Englishmen were playing cricket.<sup>4</sup> Raja Jogindra Narayan Ray, zamindar of Lalgola, was one of the many distinguished citizens who were watching the match and hence was witness to the unsavoury incident. A case was filed on Bankim's insistence, and there was a lot of popular sentiment for him, as Bankim was the first Bengali to be offered a job in the Civil Services. However, a settlement was effected just before the

hearing, and Duffin apologized to Bankim in public. *The Amrita Bazaar Patrika* of 15 January 1874 reported: "It appears that the colonel and the Babu were perfect strangers to each other and he did not know who he was when he affronted him. On being informed afterwards of the position of the Babu, Col. Duffin expressed deep contrition and a desire to apologize. The apology was made in due form in open court where about a thousand spectators, native and Europeans, were assembled." Bhakat says that the resentment that this incident might have caused among the English was the reason that Bankim, fearing physical harm, took three-months off from his job immediately afterwards. He spent these three months as the guest of Raja Jogindra Narayan Ray with whom he had become friendly during the course of this unfortunate incident. The veracity of this historical incident links Bankimchandra Chatterji and Lalgola, and is the basis of Bhakat's contention. During these months that he spent incognito in Lalgola, Bankim went around the whole area, and the novel recreates many of the places, characters and incidents that he came across. In his article titled "*Anandamath: Sthan, Kaal, Patra*" Bhakat puts forward his view that most of the setting, major characters and portions of the song Vande Mataram are the outcome of Bankim's stay at Lalgola Palace complex.

The rivers, forests, villages and temples are all shown to have been based on actual sources. Bhakat uses textual quotations to illustrate particular parts of the Lalgola area and its surroundings in which the forest scenes are set. The cluster of temples around the Lalgola Palace is similarly shown to be the basis for the complex of temples in the novel, and the tunnels and passageways are also identified by Bhakat. The river Kalkali, which runs to one side of the Palace, is onomatopoeically referred to by the author in his description of the river in the novel. Bhakat contends that if Bankim could rely on and acknowledge his debt to two books – W W Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal* and G R Gleig's *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Hon. Warren Hastings* – for historical details, it is equally possible that the characters and landmarks in the novel are not entirely fictional, as eminent historians and commentators like J N Sarkar and R C Majumdar have held.

“Bankimchandra was amazed to see the temples of Jagaddhatri, Mahakali and Durga in the dense forest adjoining the Palace. These three temples on the banks of the Kalkali river and adjacent to or within the Lalgola Palace complex caused his incendiary imagination to flare up, and the worshipped idols of the presiding deities of the temples were re-created in his imagination as models for the past, present and future of Bengal as the three incarnations of the mother goddess— ‘Mother-as-she-was’, ‘Mother-as-she-is’ and ‘Mother-as-she-will-be’,” says Bhakat.<sup>5</sup> But the temples of Jagaddhatri and Durga seem impossible to identify. The traces of the former are completely wiped off, while the latter just beside the temple of Mahakali is a renovated structure housing a raised bare platform on which the idol of Durga is worshipped once annually in autumn and then immersed. The Mahakali temple is still there, and some of the hidden passageways and tunnels can still be identified, but only just so. Most of the evidence of these tunnels and passageways are being plastered and filled up in the course of the standardized restoration work that has been undertaken by INTACH.<sup>6</sup> And the one behind the sanctum sanctorum is being used as a drain.

The Mahakali temple still exists and intrigues the discerning observer. Bhakat claims that the temple inspired Bankim. What is equally evident is the fact that Bankim also inspired local folklore. To the right as we enter the temple is a wall painting of Bankimchandra with a copy of *Anandamath* in his hand alongside the mural images of other illustrious personalities associated with the temple. On top of the *jagmohan* (assembly hall for the devotees) of the temple is a small triangular structure holding up the tricolour, which is evidently a much later addition. Certain aspects of the existing Kali temple do seem to fit in as parts of a puzzle. The first point to be observed is that none of the four hands of the idol of Kali in the temple have any arms. The second important point that intrigues the observer is that the two lower arms of the goddess are clasped/ chained together, and there are several chains across the idol itself. The third unique feature of the idol is that this particular image of Kali is accompanied by the proportionately smaller folk-artistic idols of Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartikeya and Ganesha (not easily identifi-

able by the uninitiated), suggesting that this idol is not Kali herself, but an incarnation of the goddess Durga. All these three points make this idol unique. The form of Kali signifies desperation and anger, while the two clasped/chained hands as well as the two empty hands symbolize her helplessness. The four accompanying idols act as psychological prompters to a devotee in his fit of transcendental meditation to visualize the dark shackled goddess in her splendid and opulent incarnation of Durga along with her children.

There is a reference to an idol of Vishnu further on in the novel, the model for which may have been the Vishnu temple in the Palace precincts. Bhakat informs us that Vishnu was the dynastic deity of the Lalgola zamindar family. He then goes on to identify various villages, events and incidents in the novel with real life situations in and around Lalgola. Finally Bhakat claims that the major characters in the novel were modelled after important people in the Lalgola palace, and in one instance, after Bankim himself.

Bhakat's claims about the genesis of the novel need to be examined in greater detail. There is no doubt that it throws up a fresh academic dimension which contests the accepted belief that the novel is entirely a work of imagination, or that it is set in Birbhum district, and to that extent, deserves to be followed up.

The veracity of Bhakat's most sensational claim, pertaining to the authorship of Vande Mataram, also needs to be investigated. He claims to have possession of certain shlokas from a book in the family of Kali Brahma Bhattacharya, who was the 'rajguru' of Raja Jogindra Narayan Ray's clan. These shlokas have an uncanny resemblance to the opening stanzas of Vande Mataram up to "ripudalvarinim mataram". Is it possible that Bankim sourced the initial stanzas of his enduring song from here? This may sound bizarre, but Bhakat points out that when it was published in *Banga Darshan* (Chaitra 1287, 555-6), the lines from the beginning to "ripudalvarinim mataram" were placed within quotes (but not the entire song), and significantly, "mataram" is spelt as "matarang". After this 'mistake' was criticized by quite a few scholars, Bankim changed the spelling from "matarang" to "mataram", and also did away with the quotes in later editions, effectively wiping out any indication of

borrowing. Based on these observations, surmises and documents, Bhakat claims that the song is an adaptation and reworking (at least in parts) of some shlokas and chants that were already in circulation, and the 'authorship' of the song may not be attributable solely to Bankim. The last word on this subject, claims Bhakat, has not yet been said.

## II

It was getting late, and Bhakat had to cut short his narration. Almost three hours and a half and many cups of tea later, as we stepped out of his house into the chill of the December night, Santanu was struck by the irony of the situation. The Lalgola Palace complex, which now houses the only open-air correctional home in the state with its hundred-odd inmates, allows (being motivated by the new philosophies of prison management, psychology and sociology) its prisoners complete freedom to lead normal family lives and earn their living by working in and around the town, whereas just across the road, just a few metres away, the first incarnation of Bharat Mata remains perpetually in chains at the site of the actual composition and narrative backdrop of Bankimchandra Chatterjee's *Anandamath*.

## NOTES

1. That the novel is set in Birbhum is stated clearly in the first four editions of *Anandamath*. In subsequent editions, this reference to Birbhum is deleted by the author. The question dealt with here is whether Bankim had a specific location in mind when he set the novel in Birbhum. It could easily be possible that he transposed the topography of another region on Birbhum, considering that he talks about artistic license: in the third edition, Bankim clearly says: "[A] novel is a novel, and not history." When planning the trip with Santanu Niyogi, Asst. Professor of English in Raniganj Girls College, Raniganj, who took care of the logistics for the trip, all we had to move ahead on were a couple of articles published in weblogs. Bhakat's hypothesis was one of the reasons we travelled to Lalgola, the other being the desire to document the idol which, if the hypothesis held, would be the idea behind Bankim's conception of Bharat Mata, the iconic symbol of nationhood and nationalism which has endured to this day.
2. Julius J. Lipner, evaluating Bhakat's hypothesis, writes: "Some of the evidence is impressive.... But the argument on the whole is largely cir-

cumstantial, with little or no scholarly backup. Where the characterization is concerned, Bhakat's thesis seems overly speculative, and one gets the impression that he writes with more than half an ear cocked in the direction of local folklore. Much of the case requires proper scholarly documentation" (39), and would differ slightly from Lipner here. Bhakat does not write "with more than half an ear cocked in the direction of local folklore". It is the other way round. He has painstakingly attempted to research the truth behind the local folklore of the region which has been passed down through generations, and fascinatingly has been able to corroborate parts of it through scholarly documentation.

3. This and all subsequent quotations from the text of *Anandamath* are from Julius J. Lipner's translation of the novel.
4. Bhakat backs his claims with documentary evidence. He is in possession of a news item published in the *Amrita Bazaar Patrika* dated 8 January 1874 which reports: "We are grieved to learn from *Murshidabad Patrika* that Babu Bunkim Chander Chatterji, the Deputy Magistrate, while returning home from office on the 15<sup>th</sup> December last, was assaulted by one Lieutenant Colonel Duffin on the Berhampore Cantonment and received several violent pushes at his hands. It appears that the Babu was passing in a *palki* across a cricket ground where Mr. Duffin and some Europeans were playing. This was deemed a great *beyadubee* on the part of the Babu and Mr. Duffin felt himself fully justified in chastising him with blows." The subsequent reference from this newspaper is also from Bhakat's dossier of evidences on *Anandamath*.
5. Bankim's sacralization of the land and his equating it with the mother goddess in a primarily Hindu religious rubric became the basis for many subsequent depictions of the nation as mother.
6. In 2008, the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) received a grant of \$63,000 through the US Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation for the restoration of historical monuments in and around the Lalgola Palace complex.

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## SOCIAL REALISM IN SHASHI THAROOR'S *THE FIVE DOLLAR SMILE*

Ambuj Kumar Sharma

Primarily the short stories of Shashi Tharoor were written for magazines like *Junior Statesman*, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, *Eve's Weekly*, *Youth Times*, *The New Review* and *Cosmopolitan* when he was in his adolescence and childhood. His objective was to entertain the readers of Indian magazines in English as he states: "I wrote essentially for a specific audience — the readership of Indian magazines in English language. Most of these stories do not aspire to do more than entertain." (*The Five Dollar Smile* 10). He has amplified those aspects of modern Indian life which are still relatively ignored in more serious writing. He has also depicted the village life in his stories like 'The Village Girl' and 'The Death of a School Master'. In *The Great Indian Novel* Tharoor has used the mythical mode to depict the social reality of life through *The Mahabharata*. In his stories he has not used myths and fantasies to explore the social realities. In the preface to one of his stories, 'The Boutique', he comments that the depiction in the story is based on social reality he experienced himself: "*The Boutique* depicted an ambience I had felt at first hand, and it is practically social realism — I had a very specific basis for every image, every face every article of clothing, every character in the story" (27). As far as the social realism is concerned, 'The Boutique' is not an exception, for most of his stories are based on it. The most remarkable and striking feature of his stories is the fact that most of them were written in his early teens. 'The Boutique' was written when Tharoor was merely fifteen, and his very first story came out when he was six. Ever since his childhood Tharoor observed minutely every incident which he later on portrayed artistically in his fiction. Apropos of this he writes:

Finally as I become a teen ager, I started trying to depict the world I knew, and saw around me. Improbable fantasies about distant lands seemed suddenly less interesting than writing about people like myself and the things that occupied our minds. (12)

Tharoor was not cordial with the critics who blamed that Indian writing in English was artificial and un-Indian and that they lacked

Indianness. They found rural India missing in Indian English literature. Tharoor disagrees with those who feel that the poor village farmers and pitiable school teachers constitute real India and the people living in the big cities of India are alien to the Indian life:

I am surprised to still hear suggestions that there is something artificial and un-Indian about an Indian writing in English. Those who lend this charge (usually in English) base themselves on a notion of 'Indianness' that is highly suspect. Why should the rural peasant or the small-town school teachers be considered more quintessentially 'Indian' than the pun dropping collegian or the Bombay socialite who is as much a part of Indian reality? (12)

Though he admits that his stories cover a small part of India, yet he holds that his depiction of urban life is very much Indian in its essence: "Indian is a vast and complex country in Whitman's literary phrase, it contains multitudes. The world depicted in these stories is a very narrow slice of it, but it is Indian for all that." (12)

The first story entitled 'The Five-Dollar Smile', which is the very title of the collection of fourteen stories, is concerned with the international aid to the poor children. The story is characterized by Tharoor's first hand handling of the matter which he experienced as a UN official. The protagonist Joseph Kumaran represents a community of the world-wide poor children. His situation is universal — he could easily be an African, Latin, American and Indo-Chinese child and the story would not change. At the age of seven he looks rather smaller as a result of malnutrition. Fighting against all the odds, his mother dies in child birth, but he survives without any permanent damage. Tharoor has portrayed a true picture of the agony of a hungry child longing for food when Joseph is kept away from food for the sake of advertisement in the poster:

'But I want to eat, Sister' Desperation pleading in his voice. He knew what could happen if he was too late. There would be no food left for him: it had happened before. And today was his favourite day, with crisp *papadams* in the kanji gruel. He had watched the cooks rip up and fry the *papdam* from behind the kitchen door, and he'd tried to get to the table early so he wouldn't miss out on his share. (15)

The protagonist in 'The Boutique' is the son of an employee of the city's leading newspaper. Tharoor himself was the son of a news-

paper executive in Calcutta. The story appears to be the firsthand experience of the fictionist himself. Whatever he experienced as an adolescent, he depicted in his fiction. In this story the lower middle class mother and her son are looked down and ignored by the lift-man, the waiter, the sales girl and the 'sophisticated mod'. When they go to attend the opening ceremony of a boutique, Plaza Longue, with the invitation card, they are treated as aliens because they are putting on ordinary clothes. The lift man looks at them dubiously and disdainfully:

From his manners it was clear he wasn't very impressed. *Amma* in her plain cotton sari with her slightly graying hair done up in a traditional way at the back, clutching the initiation card as if for security and looking very plain and rather proletarian ; me in my loose kurta that fell awkwardly from bony shoulders, in narrow trousers. That went of fashion five years back, sporting an unshaved underchin, looking more unkempt than dashing. (27)

When *Amma* wants to purchase a jacket in black leather and takes it off the hanger, the sales girl warns them not to touch any of the articles there. When it comes to other guests, she allows them to touch all the articles. The mother complains against the discrimination: "'Here', she was saying in a loud shrill voice of complaint, 'I thought weren't supposed to touch the clothes'" (31). In this story Tharoor has alluded the class discrimination embedded in the Indian society. The lift man, the waiter and the sales girl belong to lower stratum of Indian society, but they do not hesitate in discriminating between the middle and the upper class people.

The stories like 'How Bobby Chatterjee Turned to Drink', 'The Simple Man' and 'The Other Man' are full of fantasy and imagination. Tharoor has deliberately kept the first of these stories far from the reality as an homage to P.G Wodehouse as he mentions in the preface to the story: "*How Bobby Chatterji Turned to Drink* is consciously different in style and infant. It is also deliberately, as divorced from reality as lives of its protagonists are from the world around there a charge laid frequently at wodehouse's own door" (33). In 'The Simple Man', Tharoor has meticulously delineated the frustration and agony of an unsuccessful novelist named Southey. He narrates a fictitious story of Mamta and Karan. Then, Meera in 'How

Bobby Chatterji Turned to Drink' and Mamata in 'The Simple Man' are the girls who never existed. 'The Other Man' is based on jealousy of the unknown and is different in theme and treatment from the other stories in this collection.

In most of Tharoor's stories, the locale is big cities of India, but in a few he has depicted the countryside of Kerala which he visited annually. 'The Village Girl' is an example of vivid portrayal of the village life. He was fascinated by the serenity, tranquility, greenery and beauty of the land as he himself says:

In depicting such a character I felt out much that this world really evoked (and still invokes) for me- green paddy fields and unpolluted air, endless card games, succulent *idlis* and *dosas* that never quite tasted the same elsewhere, laughing girls cheerfully picking voice out of each other's, hair swaying palm trees against a twilit sky.(43)

The protagonists in the story are Sunder and Susheela. Sunder is the prototype of Shashi Tharoor himself who studied in Delhi University. Like Tharoor, the male protagonist goes on a compulsory annual visit like 'the migratory birds'. Sunder compares Susheela, the female protagonist, to *behenjis* of Delhi University who have been vividly described in the story in these words:

At Delhi University the term of its members was *behenjis* (respected sisters), an ironic reference to the fact that no one in his right mind would try to flirt with one. They wore floral-patterned *salwar-kameez* with nylon *dupattas* and scarlet polish was forever flaking off their nails. They also chattered in the buses in Hindi or Punjabi and spoke English, if at all, in an accent you could have ground *dal* with. (43)

*The Village Girl* is nearly flawless in its description of the Kerala village life. As a teenager he was quite familiar with the traditions and culture of his father's native place. By dint of his penetrating eyes, Tharoor has been able to draw a contrast between the urban society and rural life. He has shown the ignorance of the masses in the story. Narayani Amms in the story represents the general attitude of the village people who feel that girls' higher education spoils them:

It's all this education these girls are getting these days. All they know about right and wrong is what they need to pass their exams. Nothing else I tell you, Kamla, it is all the fault of this communist government. The comment they insisted on free and compulsory education, I could see it coming....

(47-48)

Susheela's father is a village school teacher and he too feels that a girl should be an expert in house work. He does not allow Susheela to have higher education. For him, his son's education is very important even though he has 'failed twice'. The girl who has done well in the exams is not given a chance for higher studies. Tharoor has deftly shown Susheela's anguish when she answers Sunder's question:

'I – no, I am not going to college', she replied in a low voice looking down at floor as if ashamed of her answer. 'I did well in my SSCL, but my father- he does not believe in college education for me'. She shook her head violently. 'It is not his fault, he can only afford the fees for one child and my brother is more important, he is doing B.Sc. in agriculture. Everyone says the future is in that. It is costing a lot, my brother has failed twice already, and there are the hostel fees and all. What is a girl going to do with a college degree anyway, my *Amma* says, will it help me make better *idlis* for my husband? (52)

Though Susheela is eligible for university scholarship, but she is not able to submit her application form because her father, a school teacher, does not put his signature on it and tears it up.

Albeit, Susheela is a village girl, but she is visionary, ambitious and has some dreams to fulfil. In the beginning, Sunder compares her to a *behenjis* of Delhi. But as he comes close to her, he thinks about her differently. When Sunder unconsciously touches her breasts and finally has physical relationship with her, he feels ashamed and guilty of the sin he has committed. But surprisingly Susheela thanks him twice after that episode and she emerges as a bold satisfied woman: "She had taken the first step from the yard to the porch and the moonlight suddenly bathed her face. It was lit up in the radiance of dreams fulfilled, and her smile was no longer that of a nervous girl, but of woman who had touched happiness she had not expected to be hers."(55)

Tharoor points out the racial differences in the story. When Gopan Nair's daughter divulges the fact that she loves a *muslim* boy, her brothers give him a 'good beating'. There are also references to early marriage and dowry in the story. Susheela is engaged to a drunkard and bad looking man, the father of a two year

old girl child because his family does not demand any dowry.

As a teenager Tharoor was an atheist like several others belonging to his age group. But as he grew older, he became a believing Hindu but with limitations. He could never conciliate his beliefs with some of the evils prevalent in Hinduism particularly casteism and hypocrisy: "But I could not reconcile my beliefs with the venality and irreligiosity of much of much of organized Hinduism, nor with many of its cultural manifestations, in particular the caste system" (56). The central idea of 'The Temple Thief' is opportunism and deceit. Raghav is a temple thief and steals idols from the temples. Although he is a thief, still he is not an atheist: "Not that Raghav was or ever had been, an atheist; religion had been in his blood stream ever since he could remember. But crime was an economic necessity...If God could fill his belly by divine action, Raghav was surely justified in using God to fill his puRse- and his belly....(56). After finishing his odd job of stealing, he always prays Lord Shiva and feels that lord would forgive him for his crime because he steals 'to keep his bread buttered'.

The Brahmin priest is an example of opportunism and surreptitiousness. He appears to be a holly priest and delivers harangue full of holly teachings to Raghav, but there is a vast difference between his appearance and reality. He evangelizes Raghav when he feels sorry about what he does. However, the story ends with a shock and surprise to the readers when Raghav leaves the sack containing the idols stolen by him, and the Brahmin takes the sack on his back surreptitiously and disappears into the darkness.

'The Professors Daughter', 'Friends' and 'The Pyre' are the portrayal of the author's experiences as a Delhi University student. He wrote 'Professor's Daughter' when he was thousand miles away from Delhi. Though the factionalist claims that the story is far from the actual life, yet it seems to be based on his experiences as college student. As the writer himself genuinely fears: "In its depiction of the preoccupations, ribaldry and callow obsessions of collegians, it also risked being quickly ascribed to real figures on Delhi University campus, though in fact every occurrence and line of dialogue in the story is wholly fictional" (70). Professor Chhatwal in

'The Professor's Daughter' is a whimsical, orthodox teacher. He uses the same old class notes and dictates them to the students. When he sees the hand of his daughter, Jasvinder, in the hands of Harbhajan Singh in his own house, he starts trembling with rage and beats her up till the ruler is broken (81). The merciless beatings of the only daughter of professor Chhatwal on a trivial matter is the climax of the story. Here Tharoor has realistically painted the picture of a discontented teacher and father.

'Friends' and 'The Pyre' are again the recollections of the author's own college days in Delhi. 'Friends' is the story of two friends, PM and Vicky Vohra (VV). In the beginning of the story one feels that these two friends are inseparable and their friendship is everlasting. Both of them are made for each other and are together through thick and thin. As usual a girl, Rekha, comes between them and they are pulled apart. 'The Pyre' deals with the serious theme of death. It is worth noting that this story was written when Tharoor was merely seventeen. In such an early age no one thinks about the ultimate end. The death of his two friends in accident compelled him to write this story on such a serious theme.

'The Solitude of the Short Story Writer' is not based on Tharoor's own personal experiences. It is "deliberately devoid of empirical realism" (130). In this story Tharoor has explored the 'world of American fiction' (130). The next story titled 'The Political Murder' was written during the period of Emergency imposed by Late Mrs. Gandhi in 1975. Gobinda Sen, a member of West Bengal Legislative Assembly is murdered. Inspector Nayar is given the responsibility to solve the murder case. He solves the case and does not get any promotion for eleven years, while sub-inspector Jacob manages to get a promotion to the post of Deputy Commissioner of Police due to his political connections. Unfortunately, inspector Nayar is a devoted officer but does not have any political links and does not like to stoop:

'Look at the way they reward the talent in this bloody force,' I said bitterly. 'Take a man like me, knows his work, doesn't lick any asses- so no promotion in eleven years. And you, Jacob- respectful, well behaved, but you couldn't spot a clue if it hit you in the face- and it's I who've got to salute you. (111-

112)

In this story Tharoor has shown the practical aspect of success through the character of Jacob who later on preaches inspector Nayar: "May be you should start paying a little more attention to politics instead of playing Sherlock Holmes all the time. Then you'll become deputy commissioner one day" (113).

'The Death of School Master', like 'The Village Girl', is based on the writer's recollections of his annual visits to Kerla. It is more like his own story. Although it is a work of fiction, but it is based on Tharoor's on Family history:

For all that it is fiction, however, the story is firmly underpinned by my own family history. The Schoolmaster of the story is largely based on my maternal grandfather, a gentle and sensitive man I knew as 'Papa'. I recall him sitting on the front porch in his spotless, white *mundu* with a copy of *The Hindu* in his hands, oblivious to the squabbling children around him, of whom I was probably the loudest.(143)

To conclude, Tharoor has dealt with different shades of life-love, hate, loss, hypocrisy, deceit, sycophancy, pride, immorality, ego, etc. He has also referred to some social evils like early marriage, the dowry system, unmatched marriages and caste system. Most of his stories are saturated with social realism, but some of them are deliberately kept away from realism. Even as a teenager, Tharoor could look into some mature subjects like death, hypocrisy, deceit, loss and honour. The majority of his stories are about urban life but a few like 'The Village Girl' and 'The Death of a School Master' depict Kerla village life realistically and vividly.

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## **GHETTOIZATION OF IDENTITY: PARADIGMS OF VIOLENCE IN SHASHI THAROOR'S *RIOT***

**Sweetly Bandopadhaya**

The contemporary focus on the theme of identity permeates the very core of human existence and raises polemical issues of representation, certitude, exclusion and inclusion. It foments collisions of race, gender, class, caste and communities, and serves as a fertile ground for atrocities and violence committed across the globe. Lives at individual, social, national and international levels are continuously forged and re-forged by their engagement with multiple aspects of violence. This paper examines the conundrum of the sinister forces of violence and the often conflicting and competing ideas of identity. Also, it uncovers in Indian context the subtle interplay of the forces of cultural and structural violence in transforming the collective and individual experiences of suffering.

Shashi Tharoor in the novel *Riot*, published in 2001, articulates his response to the growing communalisation of Indian political and civic discourse, through various perspectives salient to Indian political, communal, religious, civil establishments and through the voice of a young American idealist Priscilla Hart. He talks about his ideas in an interview to *The Hindu* :

“A lot of what I am trying to explore in this novel involves collisions of various sorts. Collisions between individuals in terms of both love and hate; collisions between cultures — there are collisions of various sorts. And in a riot what happens of course is the ultimate collisions of violence. But violence which involves both peoples saying this is who we are and this is who we are not.” (2)

The plot of the novel owes its conception to two diverse incidents of violence in two different continents: an account of riot witnessed by an IAS officer on duty Harsh Mander in remote obscure place in the state of Madhya Pradesh and an episode of racial violence in South Africa, which claimed amongst its unfortunate victims, the life of an American girl working with NGO. Compounding the difficulty of researchers in investigating the occurrence of violence in Indian context is the baffling range of affiliations involved in the dynamics of identity formation and the conflict potential embedded

in it. The writer eloquently brings to fore this dilemma when Lakshman, the District Magistrate of Zailgarh, itemizes it for the benefit of the American social worker Priscilla Hart: "I am an administrator not a political scientist, but I'd say there are five major sources of division in India — language, region, caste, class and religion"(42). The spilling over of historical and mythological, personal and social, and political and religious spaces into each other complicates the scenario and creates undesirable friction which lends momentum to conflict and is one of the cultural blocks of violence in India. Tharoor also experiments with multiple narrative forms to grapple with the nuances of Indian identity and in the process lays bare the dynamics of violence: cultural, structural and direct. The present paper attempts to locate the entrenched codes of structural violence in the socio-political fibre of the constitutionally secular society, which culminates into riot, the central crisis of the novel. It also in process interrogates the cultural complicity towards legitimizing and sustaining such acts of violence.

The small inconspicuous town of Uttar Pradesh, Zailgarh, is the stage on which the plot of the novel unfolds. The town is the microcosm of Indian civil-political establishment, with a district magistrate Lakshman in charge of administration and chief of police Gurinder Singh at the summit of power. Both hail from different communities, yet believe in the essentially secular constitution of India. Although at the apex of the administrative body with access to immense power, these two seem to be unfavorably pitted against the bastion of communal arsonists like the rightist Hindu leader Ram Charan Gupta and his cronies at the one end, and Ali the petty Muslim government servant and his posse at the other end of the spectrum.

A detailed study of the novel locates structures of violence encoded in usage of language and the manipulation of the cultural codes generated and communicated in it. The multiple versions of the ballads of Ghazi Miyan in rural Uttar Pradesh are no longer viewed as benevolent example of Hindu-Muslim syncretism. In volatile ambience of mutual distrust any vestige of religious syncretism is viewed with suspicion and becomes a site for contention.

The lopsided perspectives of both Mr Hart and Mr Diggs ghettoize Indian identity and culture into a monolith and perpetrate cultural violence as they block out the complexities and internal divisions that exist in the vibrant fabric of its society. The extent to which a foreigner can misinterpret the local social customs and moral codes which clash with their perception of life is demonstrated by the clandestine affair Priscilla carries with Lakshman the district magistrate who has a full-fledged family with a wife who is distant and a child whom he adores. By violating the sacrosanct space of traditional Indian marriage, she displays her utter disregard for the values of social commitment, accountability and responsibility. The affair reverberates with the rhythms of conflict for her and Lakshman both. It earns the indignation of the local virulent Hindu leader, and her own assistant, Kadambari. She earns the wrath of both Hindu and Muslim communities and pays with her life in the communal clash between the two. The tale of other characters Fathima Bi and Sundari interconnects with, and intersects, her saga at one or the other point of time with the experience of violence as the common factor.

Tharoor posits Priscilla Hart, the idealistic young American volunteer with N.G.O. organisation HELP-US involved with developing population-control awareness amongst the women of Zalilgarh, as the central protagonist. The novel begins with information of her death in the communal strife that engulfs Zalilgarh. Her extraordinary journey to the Indian heartland with a vision to create a difference in the lives of rural and poor Indian women she hardly understands, translates to cultural transgression and breeds aggression and hatred in the community she precisely tries to help. Kadambari the extension worker and her assistant remarks to her mother:

"You see Mrs Hart," she observed, "this is the real issue for women in India. Not population control, but violence against women. In our own homes, what good are all our efforts as long as men have the power to do this to us? Your daughter never understood that." (249)

She tries to empower the bucktoothed little woman Fatima Bi who lives an extraordinarily deprived life in a ghetto in the Muslim quarter with her seven malnourished children and abusive husband Ali who refuses to use protection and beats her up at the slightest

pretext. But her attempts to help Fatima Bi is viewed as intrusion by Ali in his personal life. He just stops short of physical violence when he shouts at Priscilla and Kadambari. Priscilla struggles to break the malevolent cycle of domestic violence perpetrated on the hapless woman. The intricacies of the composite structures of violence woven in the mores and discourse of Indian society frustrate her simplistic quest for solution. The framework of joint family structure, economic dependence and gender bias interpreted through the sanitized cultural codes of socialization, internalization and routinization sustains perpetuation of exploitative patriarchal, communal and religious value system. It fetters the responses of women towards any single approach taken to ameliorate their wretched condition.

Xenophobia ghettoizes her identity into the bracket of a 'foreigner' the 'other' and alienates her from the society and people she works with. Categorised as a busybody foreigner, she is rendered invisible and thus vulnerable to the forces of violence. Kadambari, her assistant, is reluctant to accompany her in her sojourn to the Muslim basti in response to the distress call from the eight time pregnant Fatima Bi. The government machinery probing the causes and casualties of riot categorise her death as just another unnecessary casualties of the riot. Ultimately she is the most unlucky and unlikely victim of the insidious codes of cultural violence.

Hierarchy and exploitation, which are fundamental to social structures, normalize violence. Violence is born of and gives birth to fear, anger, loss and power. Fatima Bi the beleaguered wife of Ali, and Sundari, sister of Kadambari and the victim of dowry violence, both belong to different communities, but are victims of similar patterns of cultural socialization and subjugation. Ali, the husband of Fatima Bi, hails from a minority community subject to suspicion and hate, and serves in the lowest rung of government service. He projects his repressed need for domination on his helpless wife, and holds complete control over her life. Priscilla records this in her letter to her friend Cindy (160).

The story of Sundari resonates with the same pattern of exploitation, physical, physiological and psychological, that is legitimised

by the cultural codes of obedience, docility and subjugation to the values of patriarchal society. She is burnt by her abusive husband and in-laws for not producing a male heir and not securing enough dowries. The insidious rightists ideologies seep into the cultural mainframe through the discourse of chastity, sanctity and family values and spreads an exclusive notion of identity to sustain the flux of cultural violence. The failure of the state apparatus to address the multiple forms of violence, and the measures taken by them to protect the socially marginalised target group/people, amount to violence. After failing to persuade the slogan raising militant mob of Hindus from passing through the Muslim quarters of the town in their journey to Ayodhya to demolish a mosque and rebuild the Hindu temple, Gurinder the S.P. and Lakshman the D.M. decide to contain the Muslims in their ghettos to prevent the Hindus from insinuating and engaging them with violence (131). The dereliction of police in deterring and punishing the perpetrators of violence is another ramification of violence for the victims.

Meta narrative of cultural/religious purity espoused by Ram Charan Gupta and other rightists leaders is a way to cope with the fractured and diffused sense of identity at the wake of traumatic independence and partition of nation. These grand narratives, however, stifle other contending mini narratives of people like Prof. Sarwar about the richness of Indian identity and erode the vibrant plurality of Indian ethos. He remarks:

"They are coming for the Muslims now, and I must speak out. But not because I am a Muslim. Only because I am an Indian, and I do not want them to come for any other Indians. No group of Indians must be allowed to attack another group of Indians because of where they are from, or who they worship, or what language they speak." (184)

Coercion, brutality and violence are employed as a means to this end. In an edited volume on violence Das and Kleinman discuss this phenomenon (Das and Kleinman 2).

Tharoor's characters like Gurinder, his old father, and Md. Sarwar, despite accepting their multiple roles and identities, do not wallow in confusion over their priority of allegiance amongst the identities they choose to define themselves. In the tragic Sikh

massacre that followed the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards, countless innocent Sikh lives were lost in blind retaliation by the angry mobs. Gurinder loses his brother and young nephew to the mindless fury of blood thirsty mob. His old father comes to his rescue.

The whole point about India is that this is a country for everybody, and everybody has the duty, the obligation, to work to keep it that way. To fight to keep it that way. I did not bring you up to give up so easily, Gurinder. You have a job to do. You have sworn an oath of office to do it. A Sikh's oath is his sacred duty, Gurinder. You don't have the right to give up on your country. (197)

The speaker invokes Gurinder's Sikh identity only to bolster his arguments on the importance of the role it plays in fostering his more inclusive and broader Indian Identity. Md. Sarwar stresses on a similar point when he underlines his notion of identity the way he perceives it to the journalist Diggs. The detailed analysis of the novel reveals that mere passive acceptance of multiple identities and plurality is not much potent in dismantling the invasive configuration of cultural violence; in fact, the cracks along the faulty lines of mosaic identity widens at the times of conflict and stress rendering it vulnerable to the structures of violence. The most inclusive identity at the top and others following the same order create scope for tolerance and space for acceptance of difference without involving the self in violence. For a stable and safe society, the people who cohabit in it should be in harmony with their multiple perceptions and complex roles within, to appreciate and tolerate truly the same outside.

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## **RAAGDARBARI : A SOCIO-POLITICAL STUDY**

**M. Priyadarshini**

Like every great Indian politician he loathed politics and made jokes at the expense of politicians. Like Gandhi he took no post in his political party...but in the matter of the Co-operative and College his hand had been forced and he had agreed to it being forced. (*Raagdarbari* 29)

*Raagdarbari*, the first satirical novel by Shrilal Shukla, published in 1968, received the highly prized Sahitya Academy Award in 1970. He is at his best in capturing life in an ordinary North Indian village called Shivapaljanj. He became much popular after the publication of this excellent work of fiction. The theme of the novel is centered round a realistic portrayal of the Indian village life (quite similar to the one portrayed by Prem Chand), characterised by politics, social realism, exploitation, economic and social helplessness because of deep-rooted faith in culture, etc., in independent India. The whip of satire falls on the illegal use of political power for the satisfaction of one's own ego, falsehood, hypocrisy and manipulation. Superficial idealism darkens the real idealism. The blurred truth is not the part of fancy and imagination in the world of fiction but has been observed and experienced by Shrilal Shukla very closely. It is not the mere exercise of wings of his imagination, but the realization of truth, and his frustration and dissatisfaction with ineffective and corrupt police force, and political and social intrigues occurring at various levels — cultural, economic, legal, moral, etc.

Actually, the novel is Shukla's laboratory for his experiment with 'truth' where 'truth' is degenerated and then adapted and mutilated by the politicians and local leaders along with some common people associated directly or indirectly with an air of pride, trying to conceal their falsehood under the protection of the so-called influential people engrossed in material attainments, forgetful of earth's real crust. The vast canvas of India and Indian is painted with falsehood mockery, sarcasm, hypocrisy, illusion and disillusion. As a matter of fact, the writer has been successful in probing and portraying the reality because he was in Indian Administrative Services and could have the firsthand knowledge of the working of government machinery in the village and the town alike. Not only this, our

educational and medical professions have been almost demolished and mocked at by the author. Mark the two extracts cited below:

...the country has to produce engineers and doctors. They will only truly be engineers and doctors when they go to America or England, but some initial work — the take off stage is to be done here. That was the kind of work being done by the Changeable Vidyalaya Intermediate College. (*Raagdarbari* 15)

Khanna Master was a history teacher but at this time he was teaching an intermediate class English. (20)

The title "Raagdarbari" itself reveals the political emphasis of the plot. Raagdarbari is one of the most difficult raags of Indian classical music but Shukla has taken its meaning literally, "the melody of the court." It refers to the tune sung by the courtiers of a village politician Vaidyaji who is the "raja" of the court — Shivpalganj. Vaidyaji is the most famous personality of this village. In the novel Vaidyaji is present everywhere in the mad pursuit of economic advantage and political power, unmindful of the grim realities lashing at the high idealism of the bureaucrats. The following three pieces from the novel bear witness to it:

Sometime later he began to distinguish like objects in the twilight on the sides of the road. These were women sitting in rows, talking contentedly and at the same time relieving themselves. Below the road there were heaps of rubbish.... A curtain of smoke drifted in front of Rangnath's eyes. All this meant there was no denying that they had come to a village, Shivpalganj. (7)

Just outside the gate constable on duty — no doubt in order to be in a position to keep constant watch at night — was asleep, propped up against a pillar. (9)

The sub-inspector continued in the same tone, bribery theft, dacoity — now they've all become the same. It's Communism. (10)

Shivaplaganj is dirty and unhealthy physically, morally, educationally and economically. Vaidyaji is the most influential personality of this village. He practices Ayurveda. He offers medicines for all kinds of maladies without cost. He is a brahmin by caste and projects an image of the servant of the suffering humanity. Indeed, he represents the class of exploiters who are fearless in the mission of exploitation. He had served the British and made his future from transactions of land and from lending money at a very exorbitant

rate of interest, but very intelligently he had disposed of his landed assets and taken off his identity as a landlord before the land reforms in the state of Uttar Pradesh could affect him, and moved to Shivapalganj where he could wield his power through his cronies, best represented by his elder son Badri, a wrestler.

Vaidyaji's home was nearby. Outside the bhanga would be ground and ready. Badri would drink it, bathe, tie a good loincloth round his waist, pull on a kurta and settle down in style in the sitting room. (43)

Vaidyaji rules the village using his city connections and the muscle power of his followers. He is the Chairman of the governing body of the Intermediate college and the Managing Director of the Co-operative Society.

In the novel we have a very pathetic picture of the social protesters who become helpless in removing Vaidyaji from the Chairmanship of the college; on the contrary, he succeeds in forcing the opponents, who are keenly interested in rooting out the wrong doings of Vaidyaji's henchmen — the college principal and his followers — to resign. He appoints Badri as his successor and the Managing Director of the Co-operative Society only to divert the attention of the protesters from the misuse of the funds of the Co-operative Union by his men in connivance with the concerned government officials. Even the Thakurs could not muster courage to protest against Vaidyaji; they are incapable of dislodging him. This is clear from the election for the Head of the statutory village council or the Panchayat. Vaidyaji's nominee Sanichar, a worthless candidate, defeats Thakur candidate for the post. It is, again, a kind of sheer mockery. He is just Vaidyaji's instrument to fulfil his own dreams and desires. The following conversation between the two is enough to understand the reality of the situation.

"Listen, Mangal Das, this time we want to make you the head of the village Council."

"Sanichar's face contorted. He folded his hands in supplication, his body thrilled, tears sprung to his eyes. He was like a neglected, third grade, village-level party worker with venereal disease who receives an order appointing him the chairman of a medical council.

'.... Aree, no Maharaj! It is enough that you have considered this unworthy creature worthy of such a thing! But I do not deserve this honour!'" (106)

He is poor, illiterate and unworthy roaming aimlessly but perfect in intrigues and in manipulating the situation. He understands all the ifs and buts of Vaidyaji, and so he has attached himself to his camp and spends most of his time hanging around Vaidyaji's house doing menial work. He admits that he is a mere representative of Vaidyaji who argues that 'true' democracy will come only when the low cast man holds the highest office as head of the village council: "Yes, brother, its democracy. Everywhere things work like this in democracy" (107). As a matter of fact, Vaidyaji's Shivapalganj is in the grip of corrupt and indolent village level officials. People drink and create unhealthy atmosphere. Women are confined to the walls of their houses and have no social identity. Class and caste games and played for political purposes.

The condition of the untouchables is deplorable. They are used as the 'fighting' force' by the influential persons. People know the name of Mahatma Gandhi and appropriately a Gandhi Memorial Platform has been constituted but they are unaware of the ideas and ideals of Gandhi. Nobody knows about Gandi's emphasis on moral values, principles in politics, feeling of brotherhood, etc. People only know about different kinds of cheap slogans, advertisements, city pulp-magazines and trendy Hindi film songs.

However, Vaidyaji's second son Rupan Babu is a character with positive traits and good conscience. He enjoys the situation and sometimes makes prophetic comments:

"Don't start these British habits here. If eighty percent of people began to confess their crimes, then by tomorrow you'd only have two out of your ten constables left to go on duty. The rest would be in the lockup." (115)

There are some colourful characters like Badri and Chote wrestlers who inhabit Shukla's world of humour. In the novel they repeatedly appear as caked with mud from the wrestling pit, smelling strongly of their latest mustard oil massage. They are fond of *bhang*, and thus represent a facet of the reality of Shivapalganj or we can say peeling out certain layers of the social reality. The society in *Raagdarbari* is a male dominated one. The narrative satirises the distorted values marking the political life of the period. The aim of the novelist is not to reform but to ridicule the existing social and

political system deeply rooted in the very existence of the human beings. There is little possibility of any modification or improvement in the thoughts and feelings of the people, for corruption penetrates into their innermost recesses and does not seem to leave them at all. This realistic presentation of the crude and seamy side of the socio-political life of the post-independent India is, to a large degree, is the result of the author's observant eyes as part of the Administrative Services.

To impart veracity to the picture of the socio-political life, the writer makes a brilliant use of words from different languages such as 'galatfahmi', 'Kaurilla-brand justice', 'motor-wallahs', 'paanwallah', etc. The description of malaria eradication programme is worth citing in this context:

" .... After the father, they took my blood, poured it into a machine and looked at it. Now look at this, father, what a wonder it is of this Black Age – here I am, an Indian, and I go and catch an English disease.... Two men went to every single house and wrote on the front of each one, prayers to the Goddess Malaria with ochre in English letters. It was the influence of those letters father, which chased the mosquitoes away." (264)

The above extract ridicules the lack of intelligence, experience and understanding of the public officers. Use of English in a village situation by the Britishers reflects a deep intellectual colonization; it brings out the gravity and significance of the situation in a comic vein. Shrilal Shukla often uses language-borne situations for the purpose of satire. He frequently plays with traditional words and idioms.

Ranganath in the novel is the only character who is very sensitive to the appropriate use of language. He looks at a colourful advertisement of a patent medicine, which has images of Gandhi and Nehru, and criticizes passionately, 'I feel like beating the painter a hundred times with a shoe.' Ranganath is a research scholar and nephew of Vaidyaji. A room has been allotted to him to study and take rest as and when he likes. Certainly, "... his presence provided Vaidyaji with the constant opportunity of remarking politely, if only our young people weren't so completely useless, we elders would not have to shoulder all these burdens of responsibility" (46). Ac-

According to Vaidyaji's advice, Rangnath changes his routine, but the sole amendment he makes is to replace study with enjoying the company of the ganjahas in Vaidyaji's sitting room. Vaidyaji is pleased to have an educated man to sit next to him and to introduce him to the visitors.

Shukla makes a direct comment on Indian psyche through the character of Rangnath who in just a few days begins to feel that Shivapalganj is like the great Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata*. He notices that the Indian genius for manipulation and manoeuvring exist in an unrefined form in Shivapalganj in abundance. The novelist uses biting satire to protest against the failure of the ruling classes to keep their promises for the cause of genuine social uplift and virtues. He never hesitates to use his satirical voice at the appropriate moment to make his realism more universal and effective, especially to describe crudeness, stupidity, vulgarity, etc. For instance, he writes: "He had tied a belt quite tightly round his middle so that his shorts did not fall down over his fat belly, and his stomach area was thereby divided more or less into two equal parts." (185).

True, *Raagbarbari* is both a literary masterpiece and a social document. Power has become a monopoly of the exploitative classes and has failed to develop a fair society. Shukla admonishes the intelligentsia who only talk of reformation and transformation of the society. No doubt there is no escape from the social reality, but it must be confronted purposefully with higher intentions. V.K. Baranwal and Bijay K. Jha's comment on *Raagdarbari* is appropriate to quote here: "The world of Shivapalganj turns before our eyes like a kaleidoscope – revealing, squalor, wealth, poverty and the hunger of a myriad characters who employ and means at their command to attain their ends." (*Masterpiece of Indian Literature*, Vol. I, ed. K.M. George (454).

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# REPRESENTATION, NARRATION AND APPROPRIACY IN SAADAT HASAN MANTO: SELECTED STORIES AND KHALID HASAN'S TRANSLATION

Raihan Raza

Ideally speaking a translation should give the sense of the original. It should not appear to the reader that he is reading a translation. Needless to say, this demands a lot of linguistic competence on the part of the translator. He should be equally fluent in both the Source Language and the Target Language. When the translator translates, he enters the realm of art – the realm of form and feeling. The Target Text exhibits the translator's final decisions. The decision making process, the selections and rejections are not revealed to the reader of a translation. But this process of selection and rejection has been at work in the creation of the Source Text as well. While translating, the translator has to constantly make judgments. The literal versus free controversy in translation is thought to be as old as translation itself. Translating at the basic lexical level or undue emphasis on surface structures leads to the deeper meaning of a text getting lost. It is generally acknowledged that there are no hard and fast rules in translation. However, while translating literature, it is not fruitful to remove the translation activity from the social context in which it has been placed in the Source Text if faithfulness to the Source Text is one of the aims of the translation. Translation can be defined as a communicative process, which happens in a social context. It is believed that a translation can be author-centred, or text-centred or reader-centred. The translator must decide which out of these three happens to be his priority. Khalid Hasan in his Introduction to *Saadat Hasan Manto: Selected Stories* states:

In translating Manto, I have tried to retain the bite and sharpness, no less than the infrequent but moving lyricism of his style, to capture the essence of his style – or perhaps I should call it the sound of his voice. However, like all translators, I am painfully aware that all translations are approximations of the original, at best. My only aim, if not my ambition, was and has been to bring the work of one of the greatest writers of Urdu prose to the attention

of as large an audience beyond the subcontinent as possible. (xiv)  
 From this it can be concluded that Khalid Hasan's priority is a text-centred translation. It is from this point of view that his translation should be examined.

In Saadat Hasan Manto's stories the representation and narration move hand in hand and in the best of them they coalesce. Narratives must be studied at the level of stories about characters, actions, events, and settings as well as at the level of narration. The act of narration organizes the story in a particular way. This paper attempts to study some of the best stories of Saadat Hasan Manto, one of the world's greatest story writers.

Manto's stories are concerned with sexuality, India's struggle for Independence, the communal flare up and inhuman rioting, the motherland caught in the frenzied trauma of partition, the plight of the weak, the displaced, the marginalized and the social rejects. Manto's vision is liberal, secular, true and realistic. Representation and narration are his forte. A few deft sentences and the entire trauma and travail of partition and victimization stand revealed in stories like 'Colder than Ice' and 'The Return'. In 'Colder than Ice' such is the closure that the vanquisher becomes the vanquished both literally and metaphorically. The reader is shaken and sensitized to one of the worst forms of brutality, namely, rape. At the level of both representation and narration, this story is second to none in the world:

. . . . Is there a woman in this?

He nodded his head in assent, his pain obvious from his face.

Like a wild and demented creature, Kalwant Kaur picked up Ishwar Singh's kirpan, unsheathed it and plunged it in his neck. Blood splattered out of the deep gash like water out of a fountain.

.....  
 'Kalwant, jani, you can have no idea what happened to me. When they began to loot Muslim shops and houses in the city, I joined one of the gangs. All the cash and ornaments that fell to my share, I brought back to you. There was only one thing I hid from you.'

He began to groan. His pain was becoming unbearable, but she was unconcerned. 'Go on,' she said in a merciless voice.

'There was this house I broke into... there were seven people in there, six of them men whom I killed with my kirpan one by one... and there was one girl... she was so beautiful...I didn't kill her...I took her away.'

She sat on the edge of the bed, listening to him.

'Kalwant jani, I can't even begin to describe to you how beautiful she was . . . I could have slashed her throat but I didn't . . . I said to myself . . . Ishr Sian, you gorge yourself on Kalwant Kaur every day . . . how about a mouthful of this luscious fruit!

'I thought she had gone into a faint, so I carried her over my shoulder all the way to the canal which runs outside the city . . . then I laid her down on the grass, behind some bushes and . . . first I thought I would shuffle her a bit . . . but then I decided to trump her right away . . .'

'What happened?' she asked.

'I threw the trump . . . but, but . . .'

His voice sank.

Kalwant Kaur shook him violently. 'What happened?'

Ishwar Singh opened his eyes. 'She was dead . . . I had carried a dead body . . . a heap of cold flesh . . . jani, give me your hand.'

Kalwant Kaur placed her hand on his. It was colder than ice. (22-

24)

The psyche of both Ishwar Singh and Kalwant Kaur stands revealed to the reader. Kalwant's jealousy, greed and lust, and Ishwar's deceit, greed, lust, crudity and communalism interact, facilitated by the anarchy that has set in and threatens to tear asunder the fabric of society. The final image of Ishwar Singh attempting to rape a dead girl without realizing that she is dead (so blind is he due to his lust and hatred), emerges as one of the most powerful and abhorrent of images of all times. The behaviour and language of Kalwant Kaur and Ishwar Singh is in keeping with the situation and social stratum that they are placed in.

At the level of translation Khalid Hasan has adhered faithfully to the Source Text and succeeds remarkably in communicating the feel of the original. But in translation, the title, however, loses much of its bite. 'Colder than Ice' is no match for the original title in the Source Language, which is 'Thanda Gosht'. The title in the translation does not communicate the feeling of the fleshiness of the flesh and its travails. That the title in English lacks the appropriateness of the original title in Urdu exposes the limitations of translation, and not the limitations of the translator Khalid Hasan, in this case.

Another great story written by Manto is 'The Return' where the narration is so masterful that right at the end of the story one real-

izes that those who were perceived as the harbingers of hope are the real aggressors and rapists. The young girl Sakina had become so conditioned to being raped that even in a semiconscious condition she exposes herself the moment she hears the words 'open it'. The words 'open it' are used in the context of the window:

The doctor, who had switched on the light, stared at Sirajuddin. 'I am her father,' he stammered.

The doctor looked at the prostrate body and felt for the pulse. Then he said to the old man, pointing at the window, 'Open it'.

The young woman on the stretcher moved slightly. Her hands groped for the cord which kept her shalwar tied round her waist. With painful slowness, she unfastened it, pulled the garment down and opened her thighs.

'She is alive. My daughter is alive,' Sirajuddin shouted with joy.

The doctor broke into a cold sweat. (53)

All that Sakina now knows is that she has to submit, and all that the father understands at the given moment is that his daughter is alive, but the doctor, with the objectivity of a detached person, is the one who understands the full implications of all this. The title of this story is 'Khol Do' in the Source Language, that is Urdu. 'Khol Do' should have been translated as 'Open It'. Khalid Hasan's substitute 'The Return' does not have as powerful an impact as 'Open It' would have as a title.

At the level of representation and narration a story that is highly commendable is 'The Last Salute'. In a nutshell, this story is about divided loyalty. Immediately after the partition of India, two soldiers, Subedar Rab Nawaz and Ram Singh, who hail from the same region of the undivided motherland, face each other as combatants. They are not able to accept each other as enemies, but the fact remains that the two countries to which they owe allegiance now are at war, fighting over Kashmir. Ram Singh is fatally wounded by Rab Nawaz as a consequence of his own foolish excitement at realizing that he faces Rab Nawaz, an old comrade from the 6/9 Jat Regiment from Colonial times. Rab Nawaz is duty bound to shoot the enemy, which he does, but the profusely bleeding Ram Singh is nursed and comforted by him. Rab Nawaz also contacts Major Aslam the platoon commander over wireless and requests him to send medical help

urgently. The dying Ram Singh talks of old times, "their village, their childhood, stories from school, the 6/9 Jat Regiment, its commanding officers, affairs with strange women in strange cities" (188). The two still appear to be comrades who have a common heritage at a level and respect each other in spite of the fact that at another level, that of religion, their heritage is dissimilar. Both the similarity and dissimilarity are significant here, since India was partitioned along religious lines. Rab Nawaz affectionately tends the delirious Ram Singh. The climax is reached when Major Aslam arrives and bends over Ram Singh calling his name. Vacillating between consciousness and delirium, Ram Singh recognizes Major Aslam, an old 6/9 Jat Regiment officer, under whom he had served for years under the British government in undivided India. Mustering all the strength of his dying body, Ram Singh raises his arm and salutes his ex-commander:

With one great effort, he raised his arm and saluted. A strange look of incomprehension suddenly suffused his face. His arm fell limply to his side and he murmured, 'Ram Singh, you ass, you forgot this was a war, a war . . . ' He could not complete the sentence. With half-open eyes, he looked at Rab Nawaz, took one last breath and died. (189)

With this salute the border between India and Pakistan is reduced to a travesty. Here, it stands defined as a farcical line that makes a mockery of the two-nation theory as a solution to the communal divide that had been fed by vested interests and finally erupted in the form of the demand for the partition of the motherland along communal lines. This story has been written by Manto with great sensitivity and translated by Khalid Hasan with equal dexterity.

Saadat Hasan Manto's representation of Mozail, a young Jew in a story entitled 'Mozail' is easily one of the most poignant of all the characters that figure in his short stories. She is first presented as coquettish, unfaithful and prejudiced against Sikhs. But, with a turn in events, there is a quick reversal and her actions prove that she is a faithful friend, a human being par excellence who willingly sacrifices herself in order to save the beloved of her Sikh friend. As she lies dying, naked and in acute pain, she refuses the turban with which Trilochan, her Sikh friend, tries to cover her up since it is only an external manifestation of the Sikh religion and Trilochan's belief

in his religion is just skin deep. Presenting a Jew in a positive light is often problematic for Muslim as well as Christian writers, but Manto, with his secular credentials, has no such problems. It is also noteworthy that Manto allows the character of Mozail to reveal herself through action which is the hallmark of a great writer. This story has been well translated by Khalid Hasan so as to bring out all the subtleties and nuances involved both at the level of language and culture.

'Toba Tek Singh' highlights both the pain and the complications of the partition of India. First, in a light and humorous vein it describes how it was decided by the officials of both India and Pakistan that the way in which prisoners were exchanged, lunatics residing in lunatic asylums in both the countries would be exchanged as well. All Hindu lunatics were to be sent to India and all Muslim lunatics in Indian lunatic asylums, whose relatives had migrated to Pakistan, were to be sent to Pakistan. The lunatics in a Pakistani lunatic asylum ponder over this vexed issue and the result is many a wise crack at the expense of the sane on both sides of the border, exposing chinks in the two-nation theory. But the lunatic that one empathizes with is Bishen Singh, a native of Toba Tek Singh which is now a part of Pakistan. He does not want to migrate to India, since it is Toba Tek Singh which is his native place and this is now located in Pakistan. At the climax of the story Bishen Singh stands in no man's land between India and Pakistan refusing to budge. The exchange of lunatics continues throughout the night with Bishen Singh standing erect in no man's land but just before sunrise he screams and falls down, deprived of his identity, and cut off from his moorings, on a piece of land that like him has lost its identity and belongs neither to India nor Pakistan. In this story Manto delves deep into the psyche of man through the reactions of the insane and demonstrates that identity is a complex issue which cannot be bestowed upon or snatched away by simplistic solutions. 'Toba Tek Singh' is the handiwork of a master craftsman and Khalid Hasan's translation does justice to it by translating it with the sensitivity that is needed for such a subject matter.

In the story entitled 'The Assignment' Manto again exposes the ugly world of communal violence wherein the faint glimmer of

hope that appears in the form of Santokh Singh is immediately extinguished exposing a bleak landscape full of bloodshed and humiliation for the weak and the isolated. Frenzied human beings who are a blot on humanity, run riot, destroying the innocent and the helpless. Santokh Singh first appears to be a sensitive man who respects his dead father's wishes carrying *sewain* as a present for Judge Abdul Hai. The young sardar braves the riots in order to fulfil the promise made to his dying father. But a few deft sentences and in a complete reversal he is exposed to be a man who is indifferent to the fate of the person who was his father's benefactor and to whom his father Gurmuk Singh was so grateful that he spoke of him as a god. Though Santokh Singh is fully aware that Judge Abdul Hai, old and paralyzed, along with his seventeen year old daughter and ten year old son would be humiliated and butchered, yet he makes no effort to protect them and goes away fulfilling the promise he made to his father in letter but not in spirit. The horrific reality of the riots that tore to shreds the fabric of civilized society due to the division of India on the basis of religion is brought to centre-stage by an artist whose calibre is at par with the greatest narrators of all times. Khalid Hasan has translated the story so effectively that the climax retains its element of surprise and one vividly imagines the cruelty that is about to be unleashed on the hapless judge and his family.

A number of stories that portray the true character of the marginalized, the social rejects are included in Manto's masterpieces. In the story 'It Happened in 1919', the nobility and martyrdom of a waster Thaila, the son of a prostitute, is contrasted with the ignoble and lustful behaviour of his two sisters revealed at the end in a deft manner. The impact is strong. Whether it is Saugandhi a small-time prostitute or Mozail the well to do Jew who is a nonconformist or Mummy a procuress, all are revealed to be capable of finer feelings and have a sense of honour and a feeling of compassion for others. Here, as elsewhere, Manto's narrative technique is of a very high order.

Looking at Khalid Hasan's translation from the point of view of product and process, it becomes clear that he has, while translating

the titles of stories, not indulged in literal translation, where to his mind literal translation is not in keeping with the main thrust of the story. However, while identifying the main thrust of a story like 'Hatak', not as insult but as a woman's life, he misses the point and seems to be of the opinion that it is only a woman who can be insulted that way and not a man. Most of Manto's master-pieces bring to mind the adage that brevity is the soul of wit, and is the essence of Manto's writings, lending them a unique sharpness and focus. The stature of Manto as a short storywriter is comparable to world-renowned storywriters such as Maupassant, Tolstoy, Gorky and Chekhov. Khalid Hasan's translation exemplifies a good knowledge of both Urdu, the Source Language, and English, the Target Language, as well as understanding and empathy with the subject matter and with the original author. Though, on the whole, Khalid Hasan succeeds in preserving the content and style of the original text in Urdu, which is his professed aim, yet he faces difficulty in some cases in establishing equivalence at the level of titles. Translating 'Hatak', which means insult in Urdu, into 'A Woman's Life', is a case in point, as highlighted earlier. But, on the whole, Khalid Hasan the translator succeeds in effectively translating the stories of Saadat Hasan Manto creating a true image of the Manto world, throbbing and pulsating with life. Khalid Hasan in his Introduction to *Saadat Hasan Manto: Selected Stories* has pointed out that he wishes "to bring the work of one of the greatest writers of Urdu prose to the attention of as large an audience beyond the subcontinent as possible" (xiv). From this it can be concluded that his aim is a composite translation where the reader wishes to share the pleasure he gets in reading a text with others. This translation surely accomplishes this.

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**KAKUGAWA'S *BREAKING THE SILENCE* :  
A TRIBUTE TO THE SUFFERERS OF  
ALZHEIMER'S AND THEIR CAREGIVERS**

**R.K. Singh**

Despite the striking achievements of science and technology, the problems of human life and destiny have not ended, nor have the solutions been seriously affected by scientific knowledge. Alzheimer's disease, which currently affects about 10% of people over 65 years of age and 50% of those over 85 years of age, has no cure. As many as 5.3 million Americans are now living with the devastating disease. According to a study, unless new treatments are developed to decrease the likelihood of Alzheimer's disease, the number of individuals with Alzheimer's disease in the USA may rise to 14 million by the end of the year 2050.

Read against this background, Frances Kakugawa's book, a mix of poetry, story and practical guide, is a recognition of the services rendered by the professional and voluntary organizations that seek to minimize the pangs of Alzheimer's sufferers as well as the sufferings of their near and dear ones. It pays tribute to caregivers who have been untiringly working for creation of a world without dementia, stroke, or cancer just as it seeks to help them endure the innumerable crises of caregiving.

*Breaking the Silence: A Caregiver's Voice* merges Frances Kakugawa and her poet-colleagues' varied experiences with a broad human perspective, engaging both mind and heart. The caregivers seek to share their compassionate spirit with a sense of gratitude to all those who help the victims of Alzheimer's disease negotiate their mentally vacant existence. They are not only aware of the sufferers' substantial loss of brain cells or progressive decline in their ability to think, remember, reason, and imagine, or their language problems and unpredictable behavior, confusion, or loss of sensory processing, but they also know well how the Alzheimer's victims suffer a sort of living death, becoming a mere body stripped of its humanity. They have been witness to caregiving family members of increasingly confused and helpless sufferers themselves

often becoming the disease's exasperated and exhausted victims:

Is she the mom who nurtured me?  
 Is it the dementia playing havoc with my mind?  
 Or is this really my mom? I don't know.  
 ('More Glimpses of a Daughter and Mother')

and

I am torn between two needy factions.  
 Mom unaware, daughter pushing all boundaries  
 Both out of control.  
 ('The Sandwich')

For Frances Kakugawa, caregiving is a mission even as the memory and image of her Alzheimer's struck mother persists in her life as a "loud presence". She gives voice to many caregivers who are ever worried about their loved ones not even able to carry out the simplest tasks and/or are completely dependent on others for their care. She expresses the very haunting fear of death:

Is she breathing? Is she alive?  
 Is she finally gone, freeing me once again?  
 I continue my sentinel watch.  
 ('Unspoken Mornings')

Frances not only articulates their fear but also learns to negotiate it by boldly facing it as part of life. In fact, she turns the metaphor of death as integral to life, be it in the form of "an ache of emptiness", "unfulfilled dreams", or "unlived moments". In her deeper silences, she explores the very meaning of life:

A second gust of wind  
 Lifts another fistful of ashes.  
 Be still and listen.  
 ('Song of the Wind')

It is hearing the inner silence, which is something meditative, Biblical, and spiritual. It is awaking to the self, the Holy Spirit, the Divine Himself. When the soul peaks into silence, human becomes divine. She sounds earnest and exceptional, seeking harmony with the highest ideals, irrespective of chaotic personal experiences. As Setsuko Yoshida says in 'Can I?' :

Poems by Frances this morning  
 Reveal the feelings of 'divine'  
 In caregiving.

In fact, as women poets, Frances Kakugawa and her caregiver

colleagues (Elaine Okazaki, Linda McCall Nagata, Eugene Mitchell, and others) present a feminine and yet very humane perspective to the dementia-related illnesses. Jason Y. Kimura, Rod Masumoto, and Red Slider, though male poets, demonstrate the 'Prakriti' or 'Yin' aspects in rhythm with other contributing caregivers' sensibility. They variously turn the Alzheimer's into a metaphor for the loss of language, the loss of memory, and the loss of voice. Their poetry, often brief and personal, and rich and insightful, becomes a means to communicate the sufferers' loss of feeling, love, dignity, honor, name, and relationship; in short, their isolation, or threat to living itself:

All my life I have lived  
 With crayons in one hand,  
 Filling in spaces,  
 Spaces left by departed lovers, family, friends,  
 Leaving me crayons smashed against walls  
 Creating more grief than art.  
 ('Empty Spaces')

They also use the metaphor for challenge to survive, to exist, without fears and anxieties:

I am woman,  
 Suppressed,  
 Dying.  
 ('Nissei Woman')

and

I am not merely heaven, man and earth  
 Rooted by cultural hands.  
 Sift those sands. Yes!  
 I am free!  
 I am tossed into the winds.  
 I shed my kimonos.  
 I spread my legs.  
 I am free.  
 ('Lesson #3')

and

When I am 88  
 I will still be woman,  
 Yes!  
 ('When I am 88')

and

I am still here  
 Help me remain a human being  
 In this shell of a woman I have become.  
 In my world of silence, I am still here.  
 Oh, I am still here.  
 ('Emily Dickinson, I am Somebody')

They convert the Alzheimer's into a search for reprogramming the mind, the thought, and the attitude to overcome the irreversible suffering and helplessness. As Frances very feelingly asserts, it is the search for

...the same umbilical cord  
 That once set me free  
 Now pulls and tugs me back  
 To where I had begun.  
 There must be hidden  
 Somewhere a gift very divine  
 In this journey back.  
 ('Mother Into Child, Child Into Mother')

They are true to themselves as they voice their search for the whole. With an empathetic awareness, they disclose their innate goodness, trust, and compassion to make a "symphony of truth." At the core of their musing lies a desire to integrate themselves, to live in time as well as in eternity:

What other path is there  
 Except the divine  
 Where love, kindness, compassion,  
 Help me discover little pieces of myself  
 That make me smile  
 Bring me such quiet joy  
 At the end of each day.  
 ('Bless the Divine')

They reveal the working of the primal impulses of the human soul which rises above the differences of race and of geographical position. In short, they give vent to the thought of all people in all lands.

As poet-caregivers they cope with their tensions, fears and anxieties through introspection, and accommodate their inner and outer conflicts, sufferings and celebrations through imaginative in-

sight. They mirror the broad social or familial conditions as well as their own personal states with perceptions that are often different from those of the male poets (or male caregivers). Their quest is for real reality vis-à-vis degeneration, privation, insecurity, helplessness, anonymity, and death. They search for life and live with awareness of what lies beneath the skin of things around, the psycho-spiritual strains, the moral dilemmas, the betrayals, and the paradoxes:

Why do you say I am sacrificing  
 Good years of my life  
 For caring for my mother,  
 When it shouldn't be a secret  
 That I am really living  
 In a way I have never lived before?

...

No, this is not sacrifice.  
 It is just reality.  
 I am really living  
 In a way I have never lived before.  
 I am living love.  
 ('What I Know')

Against the complexities of experiences, they demonstrate a sense of values such as love, faith, truth, tolerance, patience, peace, charity, harmony, humility, and healthy relationships. They tend to think intuitively and/or turn personal, inward, spiritward, or Godward, without indulging in intellectual abstraction. They write with poetic sensibility. Their metaphors and images reflect their inner landscapes as much as their responses to what they observe or experience externally. They are often reticent and honest in their verbal expressions, and their inner vibrations touch or elevate the readers' senses. As they create discourse of themselves as caregivers, they also sound committed to their home, family, children, motherhood, and neighborhood, often voicing their own vision and understanding which cuts across cultures and regions.

They seek to transcend their body or femininity and respect the woman in themselves, even if affected by the Alzheimer's environment. They turn inside out and reveal what is personal yet universal in their different roles as mother, wife, daughter, and feel the agony

of the spirit while trying to know "Who I am", or "How I should live, who I should be", or "What am I looking for? Why did I come?"

As they look back or reflect their present, they also voice the need for strong sense of togetherness vis-à-vis their inner conflicts, spiritual hunger, loneliness, or dependence. They sound challenging the Alzheimer's itself:

You could not rob us, though we forgot.  
 You could not erase us, though we could not write.  
 You could not silence, though we could not speak.  
 The stories, the laughter, the moments that passed  
 Into their keep, you could not steal  
 Into a night of silence.

('Hey Alzheimer's')

As they fill one with hope for ageing with grace and dignity despite the challenges of loss, they create an alternative motive and impulse for social action at a very personal level:

Through this deepest darkened night  
 I will hold the light  
 To take away all your fears.  
 Just know I will always be near.

('To My Mother')

There is an urge for changing the situation for themselves, or for being in peace with oneself. The poets and caregivers of *Breaking the Silence* seek to create a new culture as they rationalize how we ought to live in future.

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## INCARCERATED MOTHERHOOD IN TONY MORRISON'S *A MERCY*

Rashmi Gaur

### I

Tony Morrison has the status of a canonical author in American literature. Published in 2008, *A Mercy* is her 9<sup>th</sup> novel and is often considered to be a prequel to her Pulitzer prize winner novel *Beloved*. It exposes what slavery meant to a mother in early America and how it could change the ways this most fundamental relationship of nature could be unfolded. Set in the 1680s, when the American reliance on slavery as an economic engine was just beginning, *A Mercy* explores the ramifications of an enslaved mother's panic-stricken act – Florens, a black slave girl and one of the central characters of the novel, is offered by her mother to a stranger in payment for her master's debt in the hope that she might have a better life in an environment where a total void of options could define her life. The novel can be read as a fictional reinscription of history, and also as a psychological case study of the mother-child relationship. The poignant story of Florens and her mother provides intimate glimpses of the impassioned yet helpless rage, pain and sorrow of slave women and seeks to recover their "repressed" or "silenced" history. If Morrison had explored the aftershocks of slavery in *Beloved*, she has talked about the pre-birth pains of a nation in *A Mercy*, exorcising the dreams and nightmares of a chequered past. Like *Beloved*, it is also in many ways based on a "gruesome deed as an approach to illuminate the tortuous and intricate slave mother-child relationships, a bond that in many respects reflects the atrocious nature of slavery" (Buchhotz.net).

The ambivalent legal system of the pre-Civil war America and the harsh life-annihilating climate result in a social order where all things and all people are for sale. The 17<sup>th</sup> century America of the novel is elemental and brutal, denying human dignity to people, nullifying their dreams, disorienting their desire and forcing them to live without dignity, even without any hopes. The dismal diablerie of the novel's depiction can be compared with Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* in which Jurgis witnesses the breakdown of all human val-

ues, relationships and familial ethos when characters change into savage beasts because of the system and crumble helplessly like puppets filled with straw. Shorn of its ideological commitments and thereby the possibility of amelioration, *A Mercy* begins and ends with the tragic victimization of human beings. It can be viewed from different perspectives – with complex Biblical symbols and obvious feminist argument, it is a multi-layered novel moving in a cyclical, almost a prophetic manner. The present paper is an attempt to analyze the novel from the point of view of the mother-daughter relationship.

## II

Historically *A Mercy* is set before the story of *Beloved* begins. The story is based in 1680s, when American dependence on slavery as a major basis of her economic opulence had just started. The narrative clings to a specific time and a specific social malady therein, yet in its denouement the novel goes beyond the life in time and goes to include, in the words of Forster, “the life of values as well” (Forster 31). The story line of the novel is quite simple. It depicts the stories of four women – Florens, the slave girl at the center of the story; Lina, a Native-American slave, a survivor of a smallpox epidemic which had destroyed her tribe; an inscrutable wild child named Sorrow; and Rebekkah, the mail-order bride of Jacob Vaark, himself an orphan and poorhouse survivor. Vaark wanted a wife, “a certain kind of mate: an unchurched woman of childbearing age, obedient but not groveling, literate but not proud, independent but nurturing” (18). Rebekkah leaves England on a ship for the new world to be married to a man she had never seen. Distressingly, their children do not live – three sons die immediately after birth and the five year old daughter is killed by a horse kick. Vaark is still hopeful that Rebekkah would still bear more children, particularly a boy, who would “live to thrive” (19). He visits Senhor D’Ortega, a debtor, to recover his money. Unable to repay in cash, D’Ortega offers to pay in another currency – the slaves. Jacob winces when D’Ortega suggests that the slaves could be sold further to garner profits, “Flesh was not his commodity” (20). While inspecting the straight row of two dozen or so slaves, Jacob feels angry and nauseated, “... a passel of slaves whose silence made him imagine

an avalanche seen from a great distance. No sound, just the knowledge of a roar he could not hear" (20). On a whim, to silence D'Ortega, he offers to take a woman, the main cook, who has two children. The terrorized woman pushes her eight year old daughter Florens before him, "Please, Senhor. Not me. Take her. Take my daughter" (20). Jacob accepts young Florens in the hope that this new addition to the farm will help alleviate Rebekkah's loneliness. Florens's nameless slave mother has an intuitive feeling that Jacob may prove to be more humane than her own owner. When smallpox threatens Rebekkah's life in 1692, Florens, now sixteen, is sent to find a black freedman who has some knowledge of herbal medicines. Her journey is perilous, eventually proving to be the turning point in her life.

Morrison wants to dissociate race from slavery in this novel. In her discussions with Lynn Neary, posted on the net on October 27, 2008, Morrison says that she wrote the novel in an effort to "remove race from slavery." She notes that in researching the book, she read *White Cargo* by Don Jordan and Michael Walsh, and was surprised to learn that many white Americans are descended from slaves (net). Morrison remarks that every civilization in the world had relied on slavery, "The notion was that there was a difference between black slaves and white slaves, but there wasn't" (net). *A Mercy* depicts the beginnings of the slave trade, times when the white people were also traded as slaves or indentured servants. White unskilled laborers were brought to America under contract to work for an employer for a fixed period of time in exchange for their ocean transportation and expenditure on their maintenance. They were not paid any wages and indentured servitude was often not a guarantee to economic independence. This facet of American history has been rather unrepresented in literature. Morrison has taken it up in *A Mercy* through the characters of Willard and Scully, who stay at Vaark's farm even after his death. Willard was elderly and still working for his passage. His original contract of seven years had extended to twenty-one years. Scully was young. His mother was sent to the American colony for lewd behavior. After her death, her contract was transferred to her son. Morrison has also shown the presence of a white woman among the slaves who were being

sent to a tannery in the same wagon which was taken by Florens for her journey to the blacksmith's place.

### III

The description of the estate of Senhor D'Ortega exposes the hideous magnitude of slavery, particularly for women. He has a palatial home, vast farmland and traded in slaves. His vessels used all means to continuously maintain the supply of human cargo. Slavery became an integral part of the Southern states' plantation culture where soil condition was good for high value cash crops, such as tobacco, cotton, sugar and coffee. Whereas historical accounts mostly present the slave as the object of benign attention by the owners, fictional rendition graphically communicates the inhuman brutality of the system. In comparison to historical or ethnographic accounts, fiction provides a very different type of imaginative space from which to analyze such issues. Historical representation often provides snapshots. In actual living of life, issues often tend to become knotty by trying to find the middle ground necessary to cling to life. The medium of fiction allows to intricately construct these issues in terms of metaphorical complexity and narrative resolution, crafting a space of liberation and truth.

A comparison can be made with some other novels which document the trauma of slavery. *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly* (1852) by Harriet Beecher Stowe illustrates the reality of slavery through the story of Tom, a long-suffering black slave. The characters of Eliza, Emily Shelby's maid and Cassy, one of Legree's slaves, clearly indicate the trauma of slave mothers. Eliza runs away with her son as she fears losing her only surviving child. She is hunted by Tom Loker, a hired slave hunter. Cassy had to endure the separation of her son and daughter earlier when they were sold by Simon Legree, a vicious plantation owner. Unable to endure the hurt of seeing another child sold, she kills her third child. Harold Courlander's *The African* (1967) and Alex Haley's *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976) also describe the sorrows and sufferings of the slaves in a sensitive manner.

Comparison of *A Mercy* with *Beloved* also seems inevitable as both the novels take up the perceptive human visage of the slavery

system through powerful women characters. Victims of their masters' whims and aware of the total absence of any escape-routes, they still wished their children to somehow flee or break away from it. As in *Beloved*, motherhood and maternity are the dominant thematic motifs in *A Mercy* also. *Beloved* takes up these themes from the perspective of Sethe, a mother, and a slave in 'Sweet Home', a farm in Kentucky. Sethe realizes that definitions belong to definers. A victim of coercion, sexism and racism, she finds that the white man's fantasies of animal characteristics are played out on her human body, and a choke-cherry tree is imprinted on her back. Horrified, she manages to escape to the relative safety of the North, but her freedom lasts only for twenty-eight days. Her generic and deep-rooted fears about the safety of her children are not diminished by this experience. Determined to protect her children from a future which will unfold only as a repetition of her traumatic past, she tries to kill her children instead of surrendering them when she sees the Schoolmaster and the Sheriff approaching the house:

...when she saw them coming and recognized the schoolteacher's hat, she heard wings. Little hummingbirds stuck their needle beaks right through her headcloth into her hair and beat their wings. And if she thought anything, it was No. No. Nonono. Simple. She just flew. Collected every bit of life she had made, all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful, and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out, away, over there. Outside this place, where they would be safe. (*Beloved* 200)

Through shifting voices *A Mercy* also presents the helplessness of a mother who is forced by her circumstances to think that surrendering her daughter to a complete stranger would somehow safeguard the child.

#### IV

The act of mercy has different connotations for the mother and the daughter. Florens's nameless mother had been brought from Africa when her tribe was defeated. Along with other members of her tribe, she was kept under captivity and sold by Black people to White slave traders. After a transatlantic voyage on a cargo ship, she was sold to the Senhor who took her north to his tobacco plantation. The ordeal of the passage has been presented by Morrison in an epigrammatic yet effective manner, "I welcomed the circling

sharks but they avoided me as if knowing I preferred their teeth to the chains around my neck my waist my ankles”(162). Individual identities are also lost and merged into a race, “I learned how I was not a person from my country, nor from my families. I was negrita. Everything. Language, dress, gods, dance, habits, decoration, song – all of it cooked together in the color of my skin” (163). After arriving at the plantation, she realizes that African women were enslaved not only for their labor or sexual exploitation, but also for ensuring the flow of new enslaved people for running the plantations smoothly. Barbara Bush comments in her article “African Caribbean Slave Mothers and Children: Traumas of Dislocation and Enslavement Across the Atlantic World” that slavery, in Africa and the Americas, deeply compromised women’s reproductive role. She remarks:

The mode of reproduction, argues Claude Meillasoux, is a defining characteristic of slavery as the African enslaved woman’s womb was constrained by her essentially productive role. Enslaved women were ‘stripped of their sex’ and denied motherhood and mothers had their children taken away as captives. The African enslaved class was born of ‘a womb of iron and gold’, symbolising capture by force of arms, and the gold generated by purchase in the marketplace. Orlando Patterson conceptualized this aberrant ‘mode of reproduction’ in the harsher context of chattel slavery in the Americas as ‘natal alienation’, the denial of enslaved person’s rights to future and past through ancestors and children. (Bush.net)

The use of Black women as a reproductive tool has been described by Morrison in chilling tones. The sexual act becomes a chore to be performed. Soon after she was purchased by Senhor, Florens’s mother, along with two other slave women, was taken to a curing shed. It was dark and shadows of men sat on barrels, “They said they were told to break in. There is no protection. To be female in this place is to be an open wound that cannot heal. Even if scars form, the festering is ever below” (161). After the “breaking in” the overseer gave an orange to each woman and the men apologized as they were also ordered for the act. Florens’s mother thinks that it has been “all right” as the results were Florens and her brother. However, such climate affected the most fundamental relationship of the mother and the child in an adverse manner. The life of an

enslaved mother held no solace, offered her no hope, as far as the future of her children was concerned. Morrison has depicted this aspect in *Beloved* too, in which Sethe, like her mother, Baby Suggs, and all slave women, can never truly be a wife or a mother. In a plantation-owner's mind she is a breeder, biologically a female, but cannot expect any ideological kindness on account of her gender. A slave mother is treated only as a milking cow. The customs and rules regulating slavery in the southern states specified that a child inherited its status from the mother, rather than the father. These laws reversed the common laws of the patriarchal society and we have an example of how market forces could coerce patriarchy to violate its own rules. The absence of legal support created a situation in which the child-bearing capacity of a woman could be traded in the market as a commodity and the reproductive lives of enslaved women could be exploited without any qualms.

Florens's mother is homogenised as a racial group besides being the victim of male oppression. Helpless against the combined forces of capitalism and patriarchy, she finds some solace in religion. However nothing can alleviate her fears about the future of her daughter who "wants the shoes of a loose woman" and whose body is growing into womanhood (164). Her mother's attempts to keep her hidden from D'Ortega — in whom Vaark could sense something "sordid and overripe" even in his brief encounter (21) — have almost failed. When Vaark and D'Ortega walk through the shed, she is at the pump, singing a song about the green bird fighting then dying when the monkey steals her eggs. The song is symbolic as it suggests the images of a mother dying to protect her children. The novel clearly suggests that fight and death can have numerous meanings simultaneously. She gathers her children to stand in their eyes:

One chance, I thought. There is no protection but there is difference. You stood there in those shoes and the tall man laughed and said he would take me to close the debt. I knew Senhor would not allow it. I said you. Take you, my daughter. Because I saw the tall man see you as a human child, not pieces of eight. I knelt before him. Hoping for a miracle. He said yes.

It was not a miracle. Bestowed by God. It was a mercy. Offered

by a human. (164-65)

For Vaark, young Florens is a child. He does not assess her as a commodity. He is also not insensitive to the fear in the woman's eyes. He "sneered at wealth dependent on a captured workforce that required more force to maintain. Thin as they were, the dregs of his kind of Protestantism recoiled at whips, chains and armed overseers" (26). He wanted to prove that a fortune could be amassed by one's own industry. Because of these characteristics he neither takes Florens merely as a slave girl nor calculates her price in the slave market. Instead he laughs at the incredulous sight of "two little legs rising like two bramble sticks from the bashed and broken shoes" (24). His response is absolutely charitable and humane, "Jacob looked up at her, away from the child's feet, his mouth still open with laughter, and was struck by the terror in her eyes. His laugh creaking to a close, he shook his head, thinking, God help me if this is not the most wretched business" (24).

Jacob Vaark's denial melts before the desperate silent pleadings of the slave woman who smells of cloves and papers are drawn agreeing that the girl "was worth twenty pieces of eight" (25). Jacob's acceptance of the girl was the one chance, one mercy, her mother had prayed for; it was the only chance to save the girl from lascivious old Senhor and give perhaps a more humane existence to her. She can only hope that some time Florens will be able to understand that to be given dominion over another is a hard thing. Her futile wait – as she would never know what Florens understood or even how she managed to pass her days – resound with the desperate cry of a mother's heart, "Oh Florens. My love. Hear a *tua ma?e*" (165).

## V

Florens's mother had to cast her daughter off to save her from a repeat destiny of commoditized exploitation. However Florens is unable to exorcise her abandonment – for her it is a treachery, a betrayal, a duplicity, as her mother had obviously tried to protect her son by sacrificing the daughter. When she is taken for a journey to Jacob Vaark's plantation, she is only eight. Her memories and feelings during her growing and grown up years consistently point to her

distress, shock, ache and bitterness at this abandonment by her *minha ma?e*, "my mother" in Portuguese. Too young to comprehend her mother's constrictions, she subconsciously accuses her mother of being biased for her half-brother and holds her responsible for her unhappy life. The emotional complexities which she always carries within her make her distrust motherhood itself. When she realizes that Sorrow, another slave at Vaark's farm, is pregnant, she feels troubled:

But I have a worry. Not because our work is more, but because mothers nursing greedy babies scare me. I know how their eyes go when they choose. How they raise them to look at me hard, saying something I cannot hear. Saying something important to me, but holding the little boy's hand.

(6)

In her mind Florens constantly goes back to her mother, sometime in a mute appeal, sometime in defiance, and sometime to hold back her tears. Her mother becomes her reference point at different stages of her life. Even though she has been hardened by her own experiences, she still wonders why her mother had allowed — even suggested — her to be sold. Her first person present tense narration, showcases her agony and torment, "An ice floe cut away from the riverbank in deep winter. I have no shoes. I have no kicking heart no home no tomorrow" (156). Again, "I am become wilderness but I am also Florens. In full. Unforgiven. Unforgiving" (159). Her anguish dominates the narration and she feels a strange distress at her inability to make out her mother's parting words. Even when she imagines her mother's thoughts to give herself some solace, she cannot overcome her mother's criticism of her passion of wearing shoes, "I will keep one sadness. That all this time I cannot know what my mother is telling me. Nor can she know what I am wanting to tell her. Ma?e, you can have pleasure now because the soles of my feet are as hard as cypress" (159). Thus we see that through the portrayal of a succession of images, *A Mercy* presents the deeply complex and emotional relationship of a daughter with her mother. Readers unexpectedly tumble on to the mother's voice in the last chapter of the novel — a voice which suddenly presents a shift in the focus and readers intuitively comprehend the title and the story in a different light.

## VI

*A Mercy* is a sad, pessimistic novel; perhaps it could not be otherwise and therein lies its significance. It also possesses all the "signature elements" of Morrison's fiction as Shannen Williams has remarked, "love turned inside out, history flipped on its head, biblical references, folk wisdom, ghosts, and an old-fashioned bloody, heart-wrenching tale" (Williams.net). Morrison has hauntingly captured the emotional wreckage of those mothers who abandon their children to strangers or attempt to kill them. They do it out of love, a helpless love; and a hope, pale and faint, yet still a hope. These acts cannot be judged from the standards of white liberated motherhood. Morrison journeys back into the past to re-inscript the history. The multifaceted fictional narrative of her people's enslavement and its emotional complexities foreground the silenced or the repressed history of the early days of a country.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### BASAVARAJ NAIKAR, *THE HOLY WATER*

A Translation of J.M. Synge's *The Well of Saints*  
(New Delhi: Sarup Book Publisher, 2010), pp.xiv+56, Rs.200.00.

O.P. Mathur

Translation is a highly important literary activity, the multiple facets of which include not only the rendering of an important work into another language of the same country or into a foreign language — sometimes made more interesting by the translator's own interpretation of its meaning. Translation is also a means of promoting national integration and globalization overshadowing the world today, sometimes even promoting inter-cultural understanding and becoming a creative activity whereby the translator becomes a transcreator transferring some of the significant aspects of the life and culture of another culture into his own after making some necessary changes. In rare cases, the translator may discard even the garb of linguistic transference and transcreate as Basavaraj Naikar has done in his work *The Holy Water*, a 'translation' of J.M. Synge's *The Well of Saints* making it understandable in his own country. With his rich experience of translation, he has in *The Holy Water* made the unusual attempt at what he, perhaps in his humility, calls "cultural translation", but can be called a 'transcreation', from Irish English into Indian English, of Irish rural culture into the rural culture of Karnataka. As regards the different religions, Naikar has noticed that "the Christian religion could be easily translated into Hindu, especially Lingayat religion of North Karnataka which contains "the common man's belief in the miraculous powers" (8) of saints. He goes on to give details of the changes made in the names of persons and places in Synge's play into Kannada and then into English and changing its title into *The Holy Water*.

The central characters of Naikar's *The Holy Water* are Chennamalla and Chenni, a blind beggar-couple. A Lingayat Swami restores their eyesight by dropping the holy water of Jogibhavi, a well ('Bhavi' in Kannada) of the yogis or saints. Now that they are

no longer blind, both of them have to earn their living by working, and that too very hard in bitter cold under heartless people. Chennamalla, working under a cruel man named Manappa, expresses his agony in heart-rending words, almost bordering on the sacreligious: "It is better to remain blind and peaceful than to stare at the black clouds on that hill, and red-faced people like you" (25). During his blindness, he had fantasised about his wife Chenni as beautiful and having a melodious voice, mistaking a young girl Malli's voice to be hers. But now when he addresses that girl as his wife, he is abusively rebuffed and scorned. The tired and depressed couple with their old age and wrinkled ugliness is again brought together in love (41). In addition to passing a life of deep spiritual love, they also look forward to enjoying together the beauty of the rich variety of sound and fragrance in nature in place of the harshness and ugliness of human life. Chennamalla has already told His Holiness that in their blindness they could see "the beauty of the wide sky, hills and dales, big lakes and rivers, mountains and oceans with our own mind's eye" (48).

The contrast between routine vision and the higher and sensitive comprehensive vision of imagination is at the root of the play, as is the contrast between the people of Naragund and those of Harihara and Davanagere, both associated with the names of gods, and the names of Chennamalla and Chenni associated with the name of goddess Chennamma. Thus a 'vision' of the beauty of nature and the atmosphere of divinity, both Indian, pervade Naikar's rendering of the Irish play, in which 'human nature escapes the limits of time and place.' The appeal of both of the plays of Synge and its 'transcreated' vision by Naikar, is a pointer towards bonds that tie mankind together, rising above different social, religious and other controversies and disputes.

To end, the book under review points out the path of translation, generally neglected, especially of the work of a culture other than ours. This work is not a dull translation but an almost original 'transcreation' of a well-known work from one variety of English into another. In this respect it is *sui generis*, perhaps the only such work in Indian English literature.

**ROBERT F. FLEISSNER, *SHAKESPEARE,  
RELIGION AND BEYOND***

(Thorosare, N. J.: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 2010), pp.230, \$ 20.00

Iffat Ara

This book is a thorough study of Shakespeare's deep involvement in religion, his attachment to his family and friends and also his passion for dramaturgy. Shakespeare, the Avon genius, had natural scholarship equal to an Oxford University graduate. His mastery over Latin language from a tender age was amazing. His schoolmasters, namely Thomas Jenkins and John Cottoms, were also "Oxford men". It was Jenkins under whose influence Shakespeare read Ovid's *Metamorphosis*.

Robert F. Fleissner is of the opinion that religion is the basic framework of all the plays of Shakespeare but *Hamlet* and *Measure for Measure* are prominent in this regard. Also the author of this book has drawn parallels between Shakespeare's life, friends, relatives and the characters in his plays and sonnets. For instance, Hamlet is a name that Shakespeare got from his own son's name Hamnet and the tragedy itself is associated with the life of the author though there is a lot of controversy in this regard. In *King Lear*, Edmund is presented as a bastard and a traitor. The name comes from Shakespeare's brother whose son was also born out of wedlock. As Edmund in *King Lear* felt he was not given his rights and privileges so he asserted his natural right to do and get what he wanted. Shakespeare's own mother's real surname M. Arden was used to describe the Forest of Arden in *As You Like it*, an ideal world of perfection. Shakespeare's *Richard III* was named also after Shakespeare's brother Richard. Shakespeare highly esteemed his brother and therefore spent a lot of money on his funeral. The names Edgar and Edmund are associated with well-known English Kings hence it shows how Shakespeare was influenced by various men and sources as far as he himself and his characters were concerned.

Robert F. Fleissner thinks that Shakespeare did not stick to one faith but followed both the churches and drew inspiration from both sources wherever he found anything noteworthy. The author also believes that though Shakespeare was inwardly a Catholic yet

his plays, especially *Hamlet* and also *Henry VIII*, show his inclination towards Protestantism and symbolically he was Lutheran. A comparison between Hamlet and Martin Luther is made, for both were associated with madness and influence of some evil spirit in one way or the other. Both remained melancholic and depressed for different reasons. Since both indulged in rage, they also shared 'duality of human nature'. Also, both had a taste for wit and word-play. Both Luther and Hamlet were learned, manipulating and could make specific plans for their safety. Both were strong men, one opposing the entire Catholic Church and the other standing up against the whole Danish court. But as the famous Catholic saying is, "Once a Catholic, always a Catholic", Shakespeare also from inside always remained a Catholic.

There is another comparison made between Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. What is surprising is the fact that Doctor Faustus and Luther were famous alumni of Wittenberg and Hamlet was a student of that university. In both the plays the supernatural aspect was equally relevant. *Measure for Measure* reflects the old Morality play; it has classical and also pagan overtones, a marked feature of the Renaissance. It is full of religious imagery and the very title is associated with the Bible. The Duke, who plays a key role in the play, shuns all that is materialistic and accepts theological guidance. Angelo resembles a fallen cherub. Villainy in the form of violence is evident in *King Lear* when Edmund, the bastard, brings about destruction everywhere. Ophelia's mad songs reflect her hatred of men who deprive a woman of her virginity and it is asserted by Robert F. Fleissner that Ophelia is indicating her own unhappy experience in this regard with reference to Hamlet.

To conclude, one may again refer to Robert F. Fleissner's assessment that as Shakespeare got his knowledge of religion through Oxford background, he sometimes became a target of the attack of Catholics. The author further states very aptly that Shakespeare in matters of religion and faith as in all other things followed the guidance of his conscience and was never rigid in this regard. Shakespeare seems to suggest 'Know thyself' and discover 'the highest good' and speak the truth.

**RAJ RAO AND DIBYAJYOTI SARMA, WHISTLING  
IN THE DARK: TWENTY-ONE QUEER INTERVIEWS**

(New Delhi: Sage Publications India, 2009), pp. xxxiii + 264,

Rs. 350.00

**Kuhu Chanana**

*Whistling in the Dark: Twenty-one Queer Interviews* is perhaps the first book in India that records personal history of twenty-one gay men of various nationalities (Canadian, Shrilankan, etc), classes, cultures, castes and religions. Through the invigorating interviews of these men the book exposes the ambivalent contradictory positions pertaining to active/passive, bisexual/gay dichotomy, gay marriage, implementation of section 377, association of AIDS with gayism, same-sex rape, gay prostitution and multiple queer sex identities, such as hizra, koti, panthi and bicurious, etc. The introduction gives a Marxist analysis of the acceptance of same-sex love. The authors expose the mechanism of market forces that want the disposable money which gay people have by enforcing the idea of 'family' and sex surgery, and the possibility of test-tube baby along with the changed adoption laws that provide them tacit support.

The text opens with Hoshang Merchant's interview which revolves around academic discussions on Foucault's assertion that in ancient Greek culture it was not homosexuality but being passive that was considered derogatory. Also, issues pertaining to censorship on same-sex love are discussed in detail by giving references to the forcible burning of the Oriya novel on gay love entitled *Root and Fruit*. Similarly, there is an incisive discussion on oppression suffered by the Cuban writer, Reynaldo Arenas who had to rewrite his same-sex saga, *When Night Falls*, seven times from his memory due to continual destruction of the text. Both Raj Rao and Hoshang Merchant raise a pertinent question regarding the term 'gay writers'. According to them, someone who has not identified himself as a gay can not be called a gay writer, and therefore they reject both Makarand Paranjape and Vikram Chandra as gay writers. Furthermore, Raj Rao affirms: "for this reason, gay literature, like any other alternative literature, must formulate its own tools and critical vo-

cabulary by which it must be evaluated, in the absence of which it may emerge as aesthetically inferior" (xvii).

The next interview deals with a small town middle class teacher, Sushil Patil who talks about the lesser possibility of availability of gay encounters in a peripheral town. He also discusses the marginalization of women in gay world because many gay men are compelled to get married and subscribe to heteronormativity and in the process their wives are being victimized. This interview gives an insight into active/ passive and koti/ panthi dichotomy through a very thought provoking debate. There are also other gay men interviewed in the text who also affirm that a passive gay multiplies homophobic anxiety. Through the interview of the ward boy Mansih Pawar the issues of class and linguistic hierarchy are also revealed. Majority of gay support groups, such as Humsfar Trust and others, are of English speaking middle class people and the problems discussed there are in English and are primarily related to the middle class people. The interviews of ward boy and masseur bring forth the issue of 'homosociality'. Few professions are more physical in nature and hence provide more space for homosociality.

There is a lot of talk about the promiscuity and lack of permanent long term relationships in gay world, but interviews of Christopher Benninger and Ram Naidu mitigate this notion completely. They have been in a relationship for the last fifteen years. They raise questions pertaining to legalization of gay marriage, property rights and adoption laws. A HIV positive patient Narendra Binner states that he is able to lead a normal life with the help of healthy lifestyle and is able to maintain CD count without the help of ART ( Anti Retroviral Therapy).

Thus we see that this book is remarkable for its major interventions in the areas of gay rape, sec 377, active/ passive dichotomy, gay marriage, adoption laws, censorship of gay literature, effects of class dynamics and appropriation of gay activism by AIDS epidemic. It is of singular significance in that it is the first work in India that records the personal history of gay men without fictitious identities, unlike Ashwini Sukthankar's *Facing the Mirror*, and hence a must read for scholars of queer identities.

**ALEXANDER RAJU, *MAGIC CHASM:*  
A COLLECTION OF DOMESTIC POEMS**

(Kottayam: Dragon Publications, 2009), pp.82, Rs.100.00

O.P. Mathur

Alexander Raju's interests as a writer are spread over both fiction and poetry. His novel *The Haunted Man*, based on Emergency, has an interesting and purposeful method of narration. In his poetry he has attempted to annex almost two new areas for poetry — political in *Sprouts of Indignation* and domestic in *Magic Chasm*. The book under review deals with an evergreen subject of domestic life with its numerous situations and moods which, according to the poet, contain "thrills or shocks... not merely physical but emotional and psychological as well" (Preface to *Magic Chasm*).

Except for one poem 'The Interview' which embodies in a rather exaggerated manner the suppressed dissatisfaction in the apparently cheerful life of an Indian housewife, the book records the experiences, reactions and reflections of the husband. Many of the domestic realities, portrayed in this volume, are sometimes hidden revelatory of the couple's love life of both sensuous intimacy and distance — sometimes her finger tips "stinging [him] into ecstasy" and at other times feeling "Poles apart on the Same Bed" (26-7) or his feeling as 'Love's Prisoner' (28) who wants to be relieved "From the warm clutches of your love and to serve this world in mine own way" (28) and again returns to his 'darlings' (33) his wife and children, after resigning his job in the "land of the deserts" (33), some country in the Middle East. Later, misunderstandings again begin to crop up about their "useless frolicking" (38) leading to her scolding him and her skills to make him a slave (41), until "eventless their life goes on" (41) and her suppressed dissatisfaction now surfaces in 'The Interview' quoted above. The husband also begins to feel that his life is like that of a toy motor-car made by his little son (42). The little child is a driver of the life of his father also by making him interested in it, and in the very next poem addressed to his youthful son makes his father proud of his plentiful chest hair.

The poet now feels proud that his parents had made him live

independently with his family. Now he too has become middle-aged and acquired the usual diseases of high blood pressure and cholesterol. He now stops smoking and drinking, for he knows how pitiable the condition of widows and orphans in India is. Himself approaching old age, he sees his grandmother die, who, though a centenarian, has "A desire staunch to live on earth" (51). Human life is thus to be enjoyed, celebrated and, as far as possible, prolonged, for whatever happens to us after our death, oneness with God or becoming angels,

.... Yet for human beings,  
 Death is a permanent loss, my dear,  
 death is a permanent loss. ('Blues' 54)

The book is thus a celebration of domestic life, evolving from youth to old age with its lights and shades, ups and downs, which deserves to be reflected on. This is what the poet does in Part Two of the book, which does not deal with domestic life proper but is a random collection of thoughts about his life, death and after-life—what will happen to his body after death and also to his spirit which may just move about "freely on this planet, without the fear of time" ('Life after Death' 80). There is yet another type of life for him about which he is perhaps more happy — his becoming immortal by living through his progeny: "I can't die as long as you live!" ('Being Immortal' 82). He gives lessons to his progeny how to "eat, drink and be merry", but not without making their lives useless for the world. Another lesson which he gives to the whole world is equally relevant for his progeny:

Perfecting the given talent  
 Is your sole duty, and the fruit  
 Is nothing but the pleasure  
 Of just doing it.... ('Thoughts on Death' 73)

Through his domestic poetry tracing the chronological growth and the dilemmas of the family life of a man from youth to death and hereafter, Alexander Raju has displayed a new territory, not only for Indian English poetry but, in my extremely limited knowledge, perhaps for world poetry in English. I would indeed be happy to be contradicted and corrected on this point.

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## POINTS OF VIEW

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