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ON THE MATERIAL BIAS OF CULTURAL POLITICS

S. Viswanathan

There has been a new kind of emphasis in several varieties of postmodern criticism on contemporary material factors, that is, on sociopolitical and socioeconomic factors, often on local developments of this sort, attendant upon works of literature and drama of the past, in different ways such as, for example, in cultural materialism and new historicism. Such allotropic modifications or sometimes mutations of cultural politics may be viewed either as evolving or as rising in reaction, healthy enough, against not only the New Criticism, phenomenology etc., but the structuralist and deconstructionist approaches which marked the initial shift into the postmodern. Such cultural political criticism in its well-conceived attempt to set free literature from the prison-house of language and to establish the intercommunication between the word and the world came to uncover the ways in which either the material conditions of the times of the work, as in cultural materialism or certain local phenomena or sociopolitical or sociocultural particularities as in new historicism work themselves into the texts. The theorists of modernist New Criticism in their day in their own way grappled with the problem of the paradoxical relationship between the text and the world, between the heterocosm of the one and macrocosm of the other, and tried with different degrees of success to open a window though not exactly a door between the words on the page and the circumambient universe. Some critics of that period expounded their brand of socioculturalism. For instance, F.R. Leavis and L.C. Knights, though they fixed their attention on particularities of imagery, diction, tone and movement in the text, in the poetry, related their findings in this respect to supervening and what they felt to be informing moral and sociocultural values. But the difference between the socioculturalism of such moderns and that of the postmodern is roughly this. Whereas critics of those days diagnosed factors regarding the sociocultural ambience of the work as a general ethos or at best a particular milieu of the moment and more significantly worked their way out from the inner details of the text to the world

of its times, the cultural political critics of the present as a rule in their manner of procedure start from the sociocultural or political particularities of the period and go on to track and tease out their operativeness in the text.

The difference from their modernist forbears these recent critics register runs parallel to their difference from the older historical scholars who addressed a variety of backgrounds for the work in question. The cultural or material particularities which the recent critics concern themselves with foreground themselves in the work in their view. According to them they do so because these extraliterary, material or local sociopolitical particulars as much as the works of art are part of an active, ongoing common process of circulation of sociocultural energies. The older sociocultural critics were exactly wary of any such commonalty between art, artifact and fact and their quarrel with the historicists of those times was that they tended to make a simple one-to-one correspondence between these. The older critics could not envisage any such idea as in the metaphor of a circulation of energies, and thought in terms of at best a bidirectional, and paradoxically indirect, intercommunication of cultural energies. Quite often recent commentators on critical history have held that the 'social mission' of critics like Leavis in effect contributed to the consolidation and promotion of conservative if not reactionary values. It has also been held against New Critics that their 'contextualist' preoccupation with the verbal icon of the text and its inner literary qualities resulted in the promotion of an apolitical, almost dilettantist shutting out of the realities of the sociopolitical situatedness both of ourselves in our world now and of the text then. If perhaps the Chicago neo-Aristotelian Ronald Crane in mid-twentieth century first underscored the need to isolate the premises and presuppositions of the critics criticized, a good many postmodern critics relish tracing the implied political presuppositions and orientation of the writers or the critics they discuss by relating writer or critic to their contemporary political-historical realities. It often leads to critics identifying, exposing and excoriating the bias of one another. There is no end to this game of hunt the bias.

We may grant the premise that the material conditions of pro-

duction affect the nature, intent, purport and effect of literature or art and that the works are in a sense imbricated in the same material factors in the world around them as other artifacts and social constructs in the realm of ideas also are. Should there not be, however, some criteria in choosing and measuring of the relevance, of the material realities to be invoked in relation to the work in hand as well as in the proportion of attention to be accorded to these? At times it happens that the critic may choose factors of doubtful or remote or oblique relevance while missing out to that extent on material realities closer home to the business and bosom of the work being considered. A good deal of new historicist and cultural materialist criticism of Renaissance English drama has failed to avoid such a risk. For the critics generally seem either to neglect or even ignore or at best only insufficiently to take into account the material circumstances of the theatre, its stage and staging and their role as the material medium of drama in the theatrical transaction. A second question about the critics' way of proceeding is in relation to the estimation the critic makes, so to call it, of the operativeness in the work of the material factors brought up. Such cultural material as may be incorporated in the work undergoes transformation in the active chemistry of the processes of a play or poem and acquires and radiates new and multiple levels of signification at once moral and aesthetic and cultural political. The critic may not be sensitive to such possibilities in adequate measure.

We may now briefly consider the consequences of cultural political comment that invokes material factors in relation to three sample test cases — some views on the Shakespeare plays, on a couple of Milton works and on a Keats poem. In the ensuing discussion I shall refrain, if only for convenience, from naming names of critics.

There is no denying that the advent of new historicism and cultural materialism made an important difference to our understanding and study of Renaissance English drama and poetry. Also that was the area in which cultural political criticism first proved itself. Subsequently it came to be applied to not only later periods of English literature but other literatures and also cultural history. Cultural politics

views the theatre and drama not so much as a cultural and social institution but as a sociopolitical one in that guise, often used by the powers that be, the court and the Establishment, as a means of covert negotiation, cultivation and consolidation of power in several ways. While one group of these critics, the new historicists, would stress that the theatre, through its representation of both power, on the one hand, and nonconformities with it, and resistance to it, on the other, in their interactive encounter, functions in effect as both an agent and an instrument of display and affirmation of authority through an elaborate stratagem. This is one of tacitly allowing limited space and scope for the play and release of energies adversarial to it and by that means more or less exorcise the tendency to rebellion by laying the ghost so to say. The other major group of cultural political critics, the cultural materialists, as a rule, find in such a representation of both power and resistance to it in Renaissance drama exactly no such technique of taking the 'guilty' spectator by surprise in which process the spectator is first led to be complicit with nonconformities only to be surprised again into being complicit with the centre of power and authority which thus has the best of the opportunity of releasing and then controlling and containing the instinct of protest. What these latter critics find exemplified in the plays is rather an incorporation of the voice of resistance and rebellion against authority and the *status quo*, an oppositional or radical stance in several ways, against discriminatory attitudes of class, hierarchy, race, gender and nation and exclusivities based on these considerations. According to both the schools, the material social and political realities closely impinge on and shape the drama of the time.

However, insofar as the cultural material factors go into the making of the plays and emanate in their impact, they get across to the spectator in and through their realization in theatrical communication. Rather, the material realities from and around which the ideas spring, as they become part and parcel of the dramatic conception and expression, enter a different status or mode of aesthetic-cultural rather than material existence. What is more, when they emerge in the total theatrical language of staged drama, they

often enough acquire many-levelled, complex suggestive force, this often of a teasing ambivalence. It is this last quality which generally gets slurred over in the critical delineations of dramatic effect which cultural politics makes with its now and then proclaimed virtue of taking sides with boldness. One can understand such a stance as a reaction to the predecessor critics' fascination for ambivalence. But the quality cannot quite be wished away and has to be come to terms with.

To take an instance, there is the widely known example of the reading of the *King Henry IV* plays to the effect that Prince Henry deliberately indulges Falstaff and other tavern company by playing a sort of Machiavellian cat-and-mouse game with him only to reject him squarely at the appropriate moment. He does this in such overall fashion that its dramatic rendering comes through to the audience as a camouflaged synecdoche of a controlled release and subsequent containment of their own instincts of deviance from normality and the rule of order when they witness a play with its dominant themes of rebellion and non-conconformity. A safety valve release is thus given to such instincts on the part of the audience in a vicarious way as the prince in the play directly experiences such a process. Such a view of the play's effect may be called a psychological political cultural reading. The critic would also stress that such subtle engineering is accomplished in the play through its dramatic and rhetorical allurements so smoothly that the audience submit themselves to the operation unawares. The implication is that they find themselves in a state like that of anaesthesia and accept it all. Such an effect may be possible. But it looks more likely that the theatrical conception and impression conveyed of the Prince Hal plays is such that the response involved a participatory engagement, with occasional calculated disengagement, by virtue of certain imaginative relationships evoked in the spectator in dramatic theatrical terms with Hal and Falstaff. That is, the play is Shakespeare's invitation to his audience to look at *his* presentation of both Hal, already a legend exemplifying the wild prince and his reformation, and his boon companion Falstaff created anew in the play. Besides the chronicles of Holinshed and more so of Hall, the

ballads, narrative poems and popular lore about Hal, Shakespeare uses as his point of departure the theatrical tradition of plays on the Hal legend of which the extant one, a play Shakespeare knew and used as his immediate jumping pad, is *The Famous Victories of King Henry V* (printed 1594). Shakespeare's representation is a re-presentation or a different presentation that is more likely meant by the dramatist to be savoured with the relish of a certain knowing connivance by the spectator on the basis of his acquaintance with the Hal legend. A mindfulness of the theatrical tradition and of the conventions and physical circumstances of staging will alert us to the rapport both playwright and character can establish with the responsive spectator. Prince Henry's 'I know you all...' soliloquy towards the beginning of the play stands eloquent testimony to such a conception and manner of procedure on the playwright's part.

> I know you all, and will awhile uphold
> The unyok'd humour of your idleness.
> ... ...
> ... ...
> I'll so offend, to make offence a skill,
> Redeeming time when men think least I will.
>
> *King Henry IV*, Pt.1 (1.2 195-196, 216-217)

This is a soliloquy the Prince speaks when alone on the stage after Falstaff and Poins leave. Most probably, Hal moves forward on the platform stage close to the audience and speaks addressing them. When he says, 'I know you all...', ostensibly the 'you' refers to his companions who have just left the stage, but in the theatre it is effectually a personal address to the spectators. In sum, the utterance implies the prince telling them 'you all know me.' The air of familiarity, though not without an admixture of condescension, surrounding the address, a 'direct self-explanation' in the convention of soliloquy, forges an intimacy between prince and audience which extends itself as a licensed intimacy between the spectator and Falstaff in parallel with the Hal-Falstaff relationship. It is all made possible by Shakespeare's play on the audience's familiarity with the tradition. The 'still-vex'd question' of the rejection of Falstaff can hardly be satisfactorily answered. But it may find some explanation in the theatrical conception and manner of procedure and the psy-

chology of audience response on the lines outlined in the foregoing. The point is that the audience is knowing enough in this sense and participate in the dramatic game which is a theatrical rather than political game. The political implications are included if anything to be not only subsumed but surpassed in the dramatic theatrical experience.

Oppositional readings have been offered of Shakespeare's plays and their episodes and situations by way of relating these to contemporary developments, incidents and events of social discontent and uprising. Some plays have been related to the London riots of the early nineties of the sixteenth century and the Midland food riots of the first decade of the seventeenth century. Also the enclosure of the commons by the landlords in the late sixteenth century and the early seventeenth and its considerable impact on rural economy with its denial of traditional grazing rights to farmers has been instanced as a material factor finding its echo in the plays and sometimes its whole image. Also certain links have been between the plays and the then new enterprises of colonization and overseas trade. Among other such factors invoked in cultural politics are certain contemporary social alterations such as the rise in the number of bastards born or economic developments such as the establishment of joint stock companies, let alone the older critics' adducing of the advent of the 'economic man' or the 'acquisitive society' and the appetitive tendency, and of the new gentry *vs.* the old, the court *vs.* the city, and the country *vs.* the city. All these new material factors brought up in a major way in contemporary cultural politics may have a relevance to the plays and to our understanding of these at this hour of day. Some of these factors may lend a new colour, and some a new dimension, to the plays. But whether the factors brought up are more peripheral or more central needs to be considered more carefully than is the wont amidst the enthusiasm for such ideas.

Sufficient allowance needs to be made for the probability that the very nature of the dramatic enterprise would encourage if not dictate the dramatist's accommodation of certain developments, attitudes and social stances. For example, Shakespeare would seem

to exploit the possibilities of confrontation and encounter and thereby harness the energies released in such quarrels (to use a Keatsian reminiscence) to supply some of the energies of his drama. Also, if Shakespeare creates opportunities for the oppositional 'popular voice' to register itself as for example through the plebeians like the 'great toe of the commonwealth' in *Coriolanus* or Caliban in *The Tempest*, he does so primarily for the dramatic thrill of the socially still, small voice speaking up and speaking out. The accommodation of the social sense for the rights of that voice comes in as secondary as it may do.

More importantly, cultural politics does not sufficiently reckon with two major characteristics or informing features of the Shakespearian theatre. It is not sufficiently sensitive to the multiple awareness or consciousness at several levels or what has been called the 'multiconsciousness' on the part of all the parties to the dramatic transaction, the spectators, the actors and also the playwright. It is this quality which made response at several levels of reality possible or even necessary. To take an instance, it is this quality which would make the well known lines in *Julius Caesar* of Cassius and Brutus

Cassius: How many ages hence
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over
In states unborn and accents yet unknown.

Bruthus: How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport,
That now on Pompey's basis lies along
No worthier than the dust!

Julius Caesar (3.1. 111-116)

come across as a telling dramatic double-take primarily, and only in a secondary way as a colonial prophecy or as a prognostication of things to come of an anticolonialist writing back of the empire such as Julius Nyerere's Swahili version of *Julius Caesar* in the twentieth century. Furthermore, the inherent 'mulitconsciousness' of the English dramatic tradition as it moved from Elizabethan to Jacobean appears to have developed into a strongly and deliberately underscored dramatic self-consciousness or a sophisticated 'self-conscious theatricality.' Cutltural political criticism has not shown

the patience to attend to such nuances of deliberate theatrical play or display of artifice and the strong element of play with the conventions and exigencies of the stage sometimes blended with seriousness as in Shakespeare and sometimes not.

That the dramatic tradition could accommodate within itself a self-consciously parodic use of conventions and materials of staging such as properties and evolve itself thus from the traditional 'multiconsciousness' is one more illustration of the pattern of change and continuity at once often manifested in aesthetico-cultural traditions. Such continuity alongside and despite change is what makes the cultural tradition which can be regarded as the base of Renaissance English drama and theatre. It is precisely such continuity wiht a difference which gets to be discounted in a good deal of cultural political comment. Such criticism with its material bias holds that the advent and phenomenal flourishing of the commercial theatre in Renaissance London entailed a total commodification of the culture of the theatre and drama as an institution. According to these critics, the replacement of the medieval and earlier sixteenth century popular, noncommercial theatre by the professional, commercial theatre as a marketplace meant that the older cultural values associated with drama and theatrical response underwent a transformation into material values. But such undue emphasis on drama and the theatre obeying the marketplace calculus reckons without a vital factor. It is that however pronounced the economic and the social shifts and redirections of values, a certain unity of cultural values in the community and a certain community of sensibility cutting across differences can often and does persist and endure in some fashion.

Classics in drama and in poetry as among religious texts, being what they are, have evoked a great variety of interpretative response from age to age and also sometimes within an era or epoch, at times bewildering and staggering. Milton's *Comus*, starting with a question of its genre and the historical circumstances of its composition and performance, has elicited an astounding range of reading on the following lines. It is a masque at the end of the masque tradition making a radical difference to it in the process. It is not so

much a masque in spite of its original title 'A Mask presented at Ludlow Caste' as a pastoral drama or a Platonic drama or a dainty entertainment and graceful compliment. It is a transcendental poem which explores and expounds the mysteries of virginity, chastity and magic of two kinds. It is a reinterpretation of the Homeric Circean myth. It is the first major poetic adumbration by Milton of his grand theme of temptation. It is virtually the first introduction of the Italian form of the opera in England and in English with its music by Lawes and so on. Amidst all this variety of views, some new historical material dating from the time of writing and performance of the poem around 1634 came to light some decades ago. It reveals certain scandals and subsequent trials relating to the homosexual behaviour and other moral lapses of the close kindred of the Earl of Bridgewater at whose inauguration as Lord President of Wales Milton's poem was enacted as part of the celebration. Scandals about the family must have been in circulation at the time. The suggestion is that Milton might have, the blot on the family's escutcheon in mind, meant the poem with its theme of the Lady's defence of her virtue against the assaults of Comus' temptation a vindication of the virtue of the family. In the process it could act as an oblique exhortation to virtue to the family. All the same, such a finding would make only a minimal difference to the poetic experience of the poem. True, it adds to our idea of the circumstances surrounding the poem and gives these a touch of experience which would complicate the picture as in the old early nineteenth-century tradition that the germ for Milton's narrative was that the Lady, Alice Egerton, had a mild girlish scare once when left alone by accident by her two brothers in the woods near their home.

Similarly, it was suggested some decades ago that when Milton wrote his classic plea for the liberty of expression *Areopagitica* he had in mind the Levellers, the Diggers, the Ranters and other such semi-underground sectarian groups of the time and the scope they should also have to publish their views through pamphleteering as they were doing. This shows an aspect of Milton's intellectual personality and the sympathy he had with the Levellers though he did not subscribe to their views and though also he would not grant this

freedom to the Roman Catholics. But the finding, again, makes only a minimal difference to our response to *Areopagitica*. Another such finding relates to Ben Jonson's major masque *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*. It is the suggestion that he composed this famous masque performed at court to please the King, James I who had recently written a treatise on the pleasures of hunting a favourite pastime of his and promoted the game, and hence made the masque an exemplification of its main theme that virtue need not scorn such delights. The masque with its use of the Herculean myth as reinterpreted in Renaissance mythology and with its hieroglyphic connotations is such that its theme and its development of it are far greater than such occasions suggest for it, while at the same time one may readily grant that masques always are a tribute to the monarch or the patron. In general, the attribution of such new-found motivation often of a material orientation for the composition of certain texts will work either positively or negatively, depending upon the reader's point of view. The findings mentioned afore would not seem to make *Comus*, *Areopagitica* or *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* any the lesser or our understanding of these much different.

A striking development is that cultural political criticism has come to find not only sociopolitical implication thitherto unsuspected but sociopolitical comment in a poet like Keats. We may take the instance of the telling lines from his 'To Autumn'

> And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
> Steady thy laden head across a brook;

from stanza 2 of the poem, which reads

> Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
> Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
> Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
> Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
> Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
> Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
> Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers;
> And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost-keep
> Steady thy laden head across a brook;
> Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
> Thou watchest the last oozing hour by hour.

What Keats brings in in the image of the gleaner, critics suggest,

is a cameo of the poor deprived villager whose state of distress drives her to rely for bare subsistence on the laboriously picked pieces of grain from the harvest field. These commentators would see the lines as Keats' glancing comment on the lot of the rural poor in the wake of the rigorous Corn Law enacted in 1815. We can find an apt parallel to such a reading of Keats' lines in the sociopolitical construction which some art critics put on a well known painting, Jean Francois Millet's 'The Gleaners' (1857). In this picture of a harvesting field scene, prominently and impressively foregrounded are three gleaning women of middle age in the postures of leaning and bending as they ever so sedulously look for and pick up the grains. In the background in distant perspective are displayed all the goings on of the harvesting and garnering of grain and hay, winnowing etc. and the rich store of harvest. The painter Millet with his mind, eye and heart on what he insisted on calling 'the human side' of things would have denied that he intended or envisaged any sociopolitical criticism in the picture. The portrait is a celebration of the energy of human effort and of the dignity and sturdy grace of labour, with its simultaneous suggestion of muscular vigour and graceful absorption of the figures in the foreground set off by the tiny hazy figures in the distance in the background also at work on the threshing floor.

Keats' gleaner image as an autumn vignette is similar in its effect. The gleaner, with her burden, whatever store of grain hand-picked hard she balances on her head while in the act of crossing the brook, could hardly be made to carry a further load of cultural political meaning. The figure frozen astride the brook is an evocation of movement and stillness, and is thus a remarkable 'gest' (to borrow an expression of Walter Benjamin's). The image is one in a succession of visualizations of autumn figures which connote fruit and harvesting. The poem is a celebration of autumn as fullness and of its harvest, carrying as it may do, as a subtle undertone the more common traditional poetic signification of autumn as old age, the 'yellow leaf and the sere', the stubble of the harvested field; Keats may have been subconsciously aware that ripeness of age and the bringing home of the harvest of his poetry were not to be

his lot. But the adoration of autumn as fulfilment is the informing principle of the poem as a whole and in its details.

There is no denying the potential use and value of historical material findings brought up by research sometimes arduous and archival and/or observations from that angle, in relation to works of literature for our understanding and enjoyment of these. Different modes and methods of historical scholarship in the past came up with material focus and findings which had a certain applicability in this regard to a greater or less extent according to the nature of the texts in question. For example, close on the heels of the 'New Bibliography' in the study of Elizabethan drama, scholarship came up with findings about the actual practices in the Elizabethan printing press and in the printing of plays. This shift of emphasis in bibliographic matters from playwright and playhouse to the printshop as it were had its impact on the editing and textual studies of the plays. But once again increasing emphasis in the recent years on the idea that the play-text is the outcome of a theatrical collaboration in which the playwright is of course the main factor has brought the theatre back into the bibliographical picture in an important way.

Generally speaking, we cannot in Berkeleian fashion deny the reality of the material. In interpretation, the suggestive meaning will include the real meaning. In allegory the primary or real sense should not be missed out on in the quest for other levels of meaning. For that matter the symbol has ways of partaking of reality. We have to accord material facts, factors and circumstances involved in a work of art or literature in the process of its making or its impact their due place. But, as pointed out earlier in this essay, insufficient recognition of the process of transformation the material factors undergo results in reductionist criticism, whatever the ingenuity or novelty displayed in the connections the critic makes between the material factors and the work concerned. To put it another way, the material factors once they enter a work of art or literature shade off into aeshetico-cultural and moral values and to that extent the material may be said to enter a state of immateriality.

COLONIAL LANGUAGES AND CULTURAL HEGEMONY

Nilufer E. Bharucha

Languages are value-laden constructs. They can never be neutral or benign entities. Most social communities experience a strong sense of bonding with their languages. They are an integral part of their self-image and excite strong emotions. De Valera the Irish Nationalist had once said: "Take away my life but not my language." It is in this context that this paper considers colonial languages and cultural hegemony today. The focus of the paper is on English as a colonial language, the cultural hegemony that attended upon its introduction and use during the colonial period in India and the continuation of this situation even in postcolonial times.

English language education was introduced in India by the British colonialists. In the pre-structuralist era, the study of a language meant the study of its literature. So in Colonial India, English language and literature were inextricably linked and this in turn had a bond with culture. These bonds between language, literature and culture were used overtly and covertly by the colonists to establish the ideological basis of imperialism. This nexus between colonialism and English studies has been much researched in recent times by Postcolonial critics such as Edward Said, Chris Baldick, Gauri Vishwanathan, Terry Eagleton and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan. These critics have investigated how English literary studies in the British colonies served the purpose of both social reform and social control of colonial subjects.

Through the agency of this control the colonists laid the textual foundations of imperialism and wrote their Empire into existence. Empires are won by territorial conquest but have to be consolidated through the far harder battle for the hearts and minds of the conquered race. It is through texts, literary and non-literary, that they are then written into existence. The cooperation of the colonised becomes essential in the first instance and acts as a validating force in the second case.

As the Marxist philosopher, Antonio Gramsci has put it: "Cul-

tural domination works by consent and can precede the conquest by force." The foundational theorist of Postcolonial studies Edward Said in his path-breaking book, *Orientalism*, has shown how the Europeans, especially the British and the French, prepared for their imperial existence by amassing knowledge on the lands they coveted and in his opinion invented the Orient. Having thus empowered themselves with knowledge about their prospective subjects they set about conquering them. Once the territorial conquest was completed began the cultural domination, which now inevitably included the privileging of the colonising culture.

The supremacy of a colonising group often manifests itself in two ways:

1. Through political/military domination.
2. Through intellectual and moral leadership.

The British followed both these paths in India and established their political and military domination and cultural hegemony — the latter through the introduction of the teaching of English to the Indians.

The history of British colonisation in India goes back to the early seventeenth century when Sir Thomas Roe presented his credentials as representative of the East India Company at the court of the Mughal Emperor, Jehangir. However, the actual cultural domination of India and the so-called 'civilizing mission', through which the British justified their colonial forays, began only in the nineteenth century — that age of high imperialism.

In the early years of colonisation, before the definitive Battle of Plassey in 1757, when the British became the Paramount Power in India, after the defeat of the French, the colonisers did not worry overmuch about the education of Indians. Instead, they were the ones who imbided Indian culture and learnt Indian languages. This state of affairs came to an end when the English Parliament began taking a greater interest in the affairs of its most lucrative colony and began looking askance at the supposedly decadent lifestyles of its representatives there. Also by this time the British were no more traders in India but the rulers and had to evolve a style suitable to this enhanced status. This was also the time in Britain when notions of 'Englishness' were being put in place, a certain rational-

ity, order, morality which was supposedly in contrast with the now realised barbarity of its Indian possession.

The Charter Act of 1813, which renewed the East India Company's licence to rule over India for another twenty years, demanded a new sense of responsibility that included an interest in the education of Indians. This act also opened up India to missionary activity. This brought into play two competitive groups within India, one which supported English language education — the Anglicists — and those who wanted Indians to be educated through Indian languages — the Orientalists. The battle between these two groups raged for decades until it was settled in a rather magisterial form by Thomas Babington Macaulay's pronouncements on the relative merits and demerits of English and Indian languages and cultures.

Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education of 1835 is regarded as the most crucial document in the history of English language education in India. This historic Minute recommended to support English education in India and simultaneously withdraw support to Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic educational institutions in India. Macaulay hoped thus to create a class of Indians who would be brown in race but English in taste, culture and morals. He argued that such a class of Indians would serve as intermediaries between the British rulers and the vast masses of India.

According to Macaulay, what was also the determining factor in the advocacy of English education, was that 'English is better worth knowing than Sanskrit and Arabic.' Moreover, 'the natives are desirous to be taught English.' This document sets out in absolute terms the superiority of English and underscored its practical uses too. The way was thus cleared for the devaluation of not just Indian languages but also the culture that had given rise to them and the subsequent hegemony to be enjoyed by the coloniser's language and culture. A hegemony that did no automatically die with the Empire — for cultural colonisation often outlives decolonisation.

When English literature was introduced as a prime area of study in India, it was already an established construct. The seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had seen the consolidation of British nationalism and a concomitant in the national lan-

guage and national culture. However, English Literature was still not recognised as an academic discipline. The traditional Oxbridge universities were not prepared to consider English Literature as a subject worthy of serious study. The project of turning English Literature into an academic subject was an experiment that was undertaken in the laboratory of the imperial colonies — beginning with India. Thus a national literature was turned into a universal construct, invested with high aesthetic and even moral values.

Unwittingly Macaulay's Minute received much support from the Anglicists. However, what the Anglicists wanted was not what Macaulay's Minute thrust onto India — i.e. a liberal/humanistic study of English Literature, but a full membership of the world of science and technology — made possible through the medium of the English language. The motivation from their point of view, for the study of English, would be instrumental and not integrative. This was not to happen and while at one level English made it possible for some Indians to join the colonial administrative service as Babus — clerks, at another level it also gave rise to emulation of Western models, leading to acculturation and the creation of a colonial elite.

The Hindu College Calcutta, now known as Presidency College, played an important role in English Education in India. It was a symbol of the fledgling Indian middle classes' desire for modern western education under the umbrella of Hindu supervision. This was a compromise — Western education on Indian terms. Established in 1816, by 1828, the college had 400 boys on its rolls. Its sister college — the Sanskrit College — had to close down soon while the Hindu College flourished. On offer to the students was a curriculum that provided a study of Greek, British History, Grammar, Arithmetic, Geography, English Literature and Bengali. This selection did not undergo much change even when officially patronised by the British Raj in the decades that followed before and after the cataclysmic events of 1857.

So while the Indians, such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, had been 'desirous of learning English' as a vehicle of modernity, the colonists pursued their own hidden agendas of social control and acculturation through English studies. In spite of this, however, the study

of English did expose the colonial elite to liberal ideas and sowed in their minds the seeds of first resentment to the Raj and the covert and finally open challenge. Ironically thus the Calibans who had been taught Prospero's language did not rest content with merely cursing him in it but set about ousting him through the agency of their own tool of social control and cultural hegemony. Once English became the medium of education in India, it became a language that was appropriated, amplified and synthesised. It thus became a tool of subversion and resistance.

English also became a vehicle through which the colonial elite expressed themselves creatively and in the words of Raja Rao became the language of their 'intellectual make up.' Rao wrote this in the preface to his first novel *Kanthapura* in 1938, but Indians had begun writing in English as early as the first half of the nineteenth century beginning with Henry Derozio in 1827. Derozio was the first in a long line of Indians who wrote poetry, fiction and drama in English or translated their own work into English — Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Toru Dutt, Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo Ghose, Sarojini Naidu, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Nissim Ezekiel, Ramanujam, Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh to name only a few.

Interestingly, this wide ranging literature in the colonial period was definitely in a subordinate position to the literature of England and even the mighty Tagore had required the patronage of W.B. Yeats to come to the attention of Western readers. This did not change much in the early years after decolonisation and it is only with the fiery debut of Salman Rushdie with *Midnight's Children* in 1981 that Indian Literature in English has achieved a high visibility. Yet even now, in the land of its birth there are academics, scholars and general readers who continue thinking that it is in some ways not as good as canonical English literature or even contemporary British literature.

The reason for such thinking could be that, through all these complex manoeuvres and political pirouetting the colonisers succeeded in keeping English literary texts above the turbulent waters

of socio-cultural pride and nascent nationalism. As a result, the English Literary text remained the pristine repository of abstract universal values, as dear to the coloniser as the colonised. This de-linking of English Literature from ideology and the temporal context meant a very subtle but effective indoctrination of the colonised subject — the assertion of the ultimate superiority of a nation which had produced such a 'splendid literature.' Herein we have the reason for the earlier mentioned continuation of the veneration of the coloniser's literature and language, even in independent India. More than 50 years after the colonial yoke was politically shaken off, many Indians still carry the colonial hangover and the brown man's burden which makes them automatically privilege the White Man/ Woman and his/her judgement, culture, writing and of course consumer goods, above that which is/are of Indian origins. So the Empire is Dead, Long Live the Empire.

Going back to Macaulay's Minute of 1835 — it was followed by Wood's Despatch of 1854 which formalised the link between English education and jobs in the colonial administration. 1857 to 1887 were years in which the universities of Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Lahore and Allahabad were established. These universities were modelled on the new civic university in Britain — the University of London. They were affiliating, rather than teaching universities. Actual teaching was done at various colleges affiliated to the universities. The universities examined and awarded degrees.

These were also years of High Imperialism, in which the ideology of imperialism was refined and established as an unshakeable truth by which the colonisers governed the less fortunate and less advanced races. The imperial ideology of the governance of inferior races by the superior races, the imparting of he benefits of Western civilisation to savage degraded peoples, the so-called element of trust, high-mindedness, British fairplay and justice became the cornerstones of the colonial order.

So the colonial theory of political, then socio-cultural and finally moral superiority, which had begun in the early years of the nineteenth century flourished for nearly a century, till the 1920s, when M.K. Gandhi's brand of non-violent resistance to Empire and

all it stood for began to assert itself. Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement and the savage colonial backlash exposed it as a sham. The kid gloves then came off and what emerged from the ruins of the ideological facade was a grim determination to cling to a colony that had provided the basis of Britain's prosperity, had underpinned its Industrial Revolution, had provided the money for the construction of its grand mansions and above all enabled it to flaunt its status of a premier imperial power. By the 1940s even this determination was not enough to continue the project of Empire and Britain's disorderly, almost cavalier retreat from India, after pushing it into the blood-bath of the partition, is one of the most sordid chapters in the history of colonisation.

However, this sudden decolonisation did not automatically mean the demise of imperial ideology. The broad, psychological contours of colonisation, its debilitating economic consequences, its doctrine of cultural supremacy, as we have already noted, continue to be experienced in postcolonial India. What also survived the demise of Empire was its premier imperial construct — its vehicle of social control — the English Language and Literature.

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TRANSLATION IN MULTILINGUAL CONTEXTS

T. Sai Chandra Mouli

Multilingualism is a characteristic of Indian culture. It is observed that many developed countries are perceived as monolingual states since they tend to become dominantly monolingual. In the West, it is felt that multilingualism leads to fragmentation. K. Sacchidanandam declares: "... the British with their monolingual and monoreligious culture were unable to comprehend the multilingual and multireligious culture of India."[1] True, Multilingualism has been the very stuff of our nationalism. Indian literary cultures remained polyglot until the modern type of education entrenched itself. Pandit Nehru rightly believes that languages by themselves can not be destructive. In fact, it is not recognition but non-recognition of languages that has led to divisive agitations.

Translation has played a very crucial role in reconciling the interests of various groups. India is viewed as an area enriched by translation activities. Most of the Indians are multilingual, to say the least bilingual. Many epics and classics in Sanskrit have been widely translated and eagerly accepted by Indians. Thus, it can be stated that translation activity is a part of Indian psyche.

In the modern world patronage has emerged as a dominant factor in deciding the shape and future of translation. The publishing houses, universities and funding agencies extend patronage to translators. It is they who determine the parameters of what is translated, just as they fix parameters of what is published. This in turn logically leads to the crucial role played by the audience. It is very well-known that the nature of audience determines the norms and strategies of translation. In a multilingual nation like India translations are rendered for the audience within the country and outside. English with its historical and cultural reference to India is best suited for the purpose.

It is felt that the fundamental value of multilingualism, as an amazing source, presents one with different perspectives and insights. Consequently, it enables one to reach a more profound understanding of the nature of human mind and spirit. The fundamental value of a common language, as an amazing world source,

presents one with unprecedented possibilities for mutual understanding leading subsequently to greater international cooperation. The first principle fosters historical identity, promoting a climate of mutual respect. The second fosters cultural opportunities promoting a climate of international intelligibility.

A language acquires a genuinely global status when it develops a special role which is recognized in every country. Generally, this helps us in two ways. First, a language can be made the official language of a country; it can be used as a medium of communication in such realms as government, the law courts, the media and the educational system. To forge ahead successfully in the society, it is essential to master the official language. Such a language is often described as a second language because it is seen as a compliment to a person's mother tongue/first language. The role of an official language is best illustrated by English, which has now acquired very special status in more than seventy countries.

A language can also be made a priority in a country's foreign language teaching, even though this language has no official status. Thus, a language can be the sole official language or it may share the status with other languages. Many countries proudly acknowledge a language's status in their constitution (eg. India), while some make no special mention of it (eg. Britain).

A language becomes an international language for one chief reason: political power of its people, especially the military power. Economic power supported by the new communication technology enables the language to maintain its hegemony and expand further. The international status of English today is the result of two factors: the expansion of British colonial power that reached its acme towards the end of the 19th century and the emergence of United States as the leading economic power of the 20th century. It is the latter factor which overwhelmingly tilted the scales in favour of English, which has acquired the status of a global language. English is widely used in areas covering international relations, the media, the press, advertising, broadcasting, movies, popular music and international travel, international safety not excluded. In the field of education and communication English has conclusively proved its

emergence and acceptance as a global language.

Translation can be viewed as a process as well as a product. The theory of translation as a process, (the theory of translating) involves a study of information processing, which encompasses perception, memory, encoding and decoding of the messages. The theory of translation as product requires a study of the text not just by means of the traditional level of linguistic analysis, i.e. syntax and semantics. Knowledge of stylistics and recent advances in text linguistics and discourse analysis also help. Pragmatic aspects of communication are also important in translation and translating since communication depends on common cultural knowledge.

A Western visiting a country, where performance arts predominates, might as well interpret a lack of Western type of painting galleries as evidence of lack of culture. To do so would be to overlook the importance of other cultural expressions and the possible links with the visual arts. For example, an educated Westerner, who sees a painting of a woman holding an apple next to a man under a tree, recognizes this as a visualization of a scene from *genesis* in *Old Testament.* The interdependence and cross-fertilization between different expressions of culture is very strong in the East. For example, Pattabhi in his Telugu poem "Police"[2] states:

BharatanaatyabaaDucunna
Prasaanta prakaasa mukhanbutooDa
Natarshi cuuDaamaNi laaga
Kanipistunaa Du,
Drivarlandari kaLLaceetan
PujjimpabaDi, gowrawimpabaDi !

This is translated as

(i) Face calm and bright
Like the venerable sage of Dance,
Honoured and respected
By the eyes of all those who drive
(B.V.L. Narayana Row, "The Policeman")

i(i) Looking verily like the Great Natarishi
Performing 'Bharatnatya' with the most serene and sombre face.
(V. Kondala Rao, "Police").

Translation (i) aptly chooses the expression "the venerable sage of

dance" implying the sage Bharatha the author of *Natya Sastra.* Translation (ii) retains 'Natarshi' as it is.

Culture and culture specifics are generally regarded untranslatable. In one culture one is expected to ask a person's profession. In another it is considered rude to do so. In one society one is judged by the wittiness of conversation over dinner. In the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh during wedding bouquets it was considered a cultured practice to sing songs and recite famous stanzas from classics and stage plays. Now we cannot expect the same kind of response and appreciation for the same.

Critical analysis of the translated texts of the Telugu poem "Police" is attempted here.

(A) Cohesion

In the original text, generally some references, laagaa, antaa, moostaru,etc., are used to glue the expression in the surface level. Most of these are translated competently by B.V.L. Narayana Row as 'like, 'all' and 'like'. V. Kondala Rao also translates these as 'like' and 'entire'.

'NatarshicuuDaamaNi laagaa' is translated as

(i) 'like' the venerable sage of Dance (B.V.L. Narayana Row)

(ii) 'like' the great Natarishi (V. Kondala Rao)

And 'Rahadaari Traphphikkantaa nilcipoowagaaa' is rendered as:

(i) all traffic to a stop (B.V.L. Narayana Row)

(ii) the *entire* road traffic come to a halt (V. Kondala Rao).

(B) Explicitation

According to Shoshana Blum-Kulka, "The process of interpretation performed by the translator on the source text might lead to a Target Language (TL) text which is more redundant than the Source Language (SL) text."[3] Blum-Kulka's term 'explicitation' can be accounted for the kind of translation process where implicit co-textually recoverable (Source Text) ST material is rendered explicit in (Target Text) TT.

For example

NataraaTTu laagaa natamDukuuDaa
Mrityunjaya nrutyambunu
SalpuycunTaaDu satatamu

is translated as

(i) The Divine Dancer
dancing his conquest of Death [B.V.L. Narayana Row)

(ii) Like the Nataraja, who is engaged in an eternal dance
for the life to go on non stop [V. Kondala Rao)

Text (ii) is a clear instance of explicitation, keeping the target audience in view.

(C) Specification

The term specification refers to shifts involving expansion or substitution.

For example

Hastaala nandammugaa drippcu
Eemaa yapuurwa drusyam ?

is rendered as

(i) His arms moving in a flash
are a sight to see (B.V.L. Narayana Row)

Here 'His' is in tune with the 'Divine Dancer' mentioned earlier.

(ii) What a scenic-scene it is to see him suddenly wave his hands
This side and that verily like a performing dancer (V. Kondala Rao)

Text (ii) is a good example for 'expansion'.

(D) Intentionality and Acceptablity

The intention of the poet Pattabhi is very well conveyed in the translated texts. V. Kondala Rao states: "...the poet immortalizes the policeman, the real serviceman who plays his all-busy role in heat and cold."[4] The poem reminds us of the 'postman' of Tilak. V. Kondala Rao perceptively remarks: "We hardly lend an eye of admiration for the man who is always standing at the cross roads showing the way for the people stranded at the 'crossroads', and to him who checks the people who have a tendency to cross the 'uncrossable.'"[5] Here, crossing the uncrossable immediately reminds the Indian readers of the '*Lakshmana Rekha*' of the *Ramayana* and the subsequent suffering one has to endure for violating the inviolable. Perhaps, the Western audience and those who know all about the 'fall of man' understand the significance of the limits and the line of demarcation.

The two translated texts competently convey the real intention of the poet in the SL Text.

(E) Informativity

The SL text is quite informative. There is not a redundant word

or expression. It addresses to any one who seeks a proper and plausible philosophy of life. Hence, it sustains the interest of the audience. They are exhorted to contemplate on the crucial and selfless service rendered by the policeman. This is very well brought out in the translated texts, sustaining the curiosity and interest of the target audience.

(F) Intertextuality

The references to Natarishi, Nataraja and the dance performed to sustain and regulate all human activity as mentioned in the source language text are very well conveyed in the two translated texts. 'Lakshmana Rekha', 'Fall of Man', 'Dance of Nataraja' exemplify instances of intertextuality. Translations are aptly rendered.

(G) Regulative Principles

As for the regulative principles (efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness), both the texts (TT) are adequate and the competence of the translators is highly commendable. Excellent balance is maintained between efficiency and effectiveness. Both the texts are informative and readable. 'Vyanjana' or 'Vakrokti' so well portrayed by the SL text is very well translated by B.V.L. Narayana Row. V. Kondala Rao tends to expand and resorts to explicitation to drive home the poet's view in SL.

In conclusion, it may be stated that translations are highly desirable in multilingual contexts for understanding subcultures and forging the emotional integration of people. No wonder translation studies assume greater significance and relevance today.

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AN UNUSUAL 'MUTINY' NOVEL: J.G. FARRELL'S *THE SIEGE OF KRISHNAPUR*

M.K. Naik

The bounty of the Mutiny (i.e. the Great Indian Mutiny of 1857, described as either 'Sepoy Revolt' or the First Indian War of Independence', according to one's political and racial persuasion) has always been a rich source of fictional material to Anglo-Indian novelists. In fact, 'Mutiny' novels have been written and are still being written, for well over a hundred years and more. Probably the very first novel of this kind was *The Wife and the Ward or A Life's Error* by Edward Money, published just one year after the final quelling of the Mutiny in 1858. And one of the most prominent Mutiny novels of the twentieth century is J.G. Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973).

The average Mutiny novel before *The Siege of Krishnapur* seemed to follow a well-established pattern. Adventures of various kinds formed the staple of the plot. Heroism was of course the monopoly of the British characters. It could be displayed not merely in performing glorious feats of arms, but also in embracing martyrdom unflinchingly, women and even children making a distinct contribution in this area. The villains were naturally the natives, except for a very small minority of those who were loyal to their British masters. Treachery and cruelty came naturally to the Indians; the cruelties perpetrated by the British were either ignored or glossed over, as a natural reaction to native perfidy. There was usually the siege of the British Residency, heroically defended by its meagre garrison; splendid feats of courage and valour were performed in the true spirit of 'Britons shall never be slaves', until finally the British army arrived just in time (unless the novelist preferred a tragic ending, which, however, was very rare, and in fact, unthinkable as unedifying).

The Siege of Krishnapur breaks this traditional mould and adds a new dimension to the century old 'Mutiny novel'. Farrell's narrative is ostensibly about the siege by native rebels of the British Residency at Krishnapur situated on the dusty plains of north India. After a few months, a relieving force arrives and the siege is over. A deromanticising touch is added towards the end: "It is surprising

how quickly the survivors returned to the civilised life they had been living before" (p.341). The only difference is that they now have occasional nightmares.

Not only does Farrell seem to be bent on not telling a story of adventure; he gives an ironic colouring to descriptions of improvised ordnance and its effect. First, thick bits of paper are fired from the cannon; they fall like a snow-storm on the besiegers and foil them. All this paper is from Government records. Farrell wryly adds: (these documents) "had certainly proved more useful than most" (p.235).

Later, ammunition is improvised out of electrometal figures in the Hall. "Of all the heads the most effective of all had been that of Shakespeare's; it had scythed its way through a whole astonished platoon of spoys advancing in single file. The bard's success in this respect might have a great deal to do with the ballistic advantage stemming from his baldness" (p.332). The head of Keats, on the other hand, had not been equally effective. Flying erratically, owing to its wild locks, it only kills a fat moneylender and a camel standing at some distance from the field of action (p.332).

But in spite of its generally anti-romantic tone, *The Siege of Krishanapur* is far more than merely a spoof on the romantic Mutiny novel. It is essentially a study in human nature, and of how people react to crises and how in that process they are compelled to re-examine their beliefs and convictions, sometimes quite drastically. Collector Hopkins, for instance, has "devoted a substantial part of his fortune to bringing out to India examples of European art and science in the belief that he was doing as once the Romans had done to Britain" (p.31). He has great faith in statistics, which he describes as "the ordering of a chaotic universe ... statistics were the leg-irons to be clapped on the thugs of ignorance and superstition, which stangled truth in lonely byways" (p.186).

Hopkins is a good Christian, but the sight of a naked sadhu makes him say, "One can't but help admire the rigour with which they (the Hindus) pursue their beliefs.... Few Christians follow the true (path) with as much zeal. Indeed, this renders the conversion of the native very difficult, for beside this ascetic, he sees the

Christian priest living in a comfortable house, with a wife and family ... and I fear he is not impressed .... What use is it if we bring the advantages of our civilization to India without also displaying a superior morality?" (p.82).

As Collector Hopkins leaves Krishnapur for the last time, he "experienced more strongly than ever before the vastness of India. He realised then, because of the widening perspective what a small affair the siege to Krishnapur had been, how unimportant, how devoid of significance" (p.341). His last impression of India is of two men drawing water from the well with the help of two bullocks: "He knew that the same two men and two bullocks would do this everyday, until the end of their lives" (p.341).

When he returns to England, the Collector is altogether a changed man. He has now become thoroughly disillusioned in respect of what he had been believing in fervently all along: the civilising mission of the British in India, the doctrine of progress, so dear to the Victorian mind, and the power of ideas in shaping human life. He resigns from Fine Arts Committees, the Antiquarian Society, and the Society for reclaiming beggars and prostitutes; he has lost his interest in crop rotation. "He took to pacing the streets of London, very often in the poorest areas, in all weathers, alone, seldom speaking to anyone, but staring as if he had never seen a poor person in his life before" (p.342).

At the end, the novelist describes a meeting between Hopkins and Fleury, a young man who had been in the siege with him. Fleury asks him about his collection of sculpture and painting and Hopkins tells him that he has sold it all, adding: "Culture is a sham. It is a cosmetic painted on life by rich people to conceal its ugliness." Fleury disagrees: "No, culture gives us an idea of a higher life to which we can aspire .... No one can say ideas are a sham." "'Oh, ideas...,' said the Collector dismissively." The novelist's final comment is: "Perhaps, by the end of his life in 1880, he (Hopkins) has come to believe that a people, a nation, does not create itself according to its best ideas, but is shaped by other forces, of which it has little knowledge" (p.343).

Another character which undergoes a sea-change as a result

of the Siege-experience is young Louise. The Collector observes the change in her, as the siege progresses: "From this pale and anaemic-looking girl who had once thought only of turning the heads of young officers, and whom the Collector had considered insipid, he now saw a young woman of inflexible will-power emerging" (p.331). She now becomes a devoted nurse to the ailing; and she is no longer particular about her dress or appearance.

Young George Fleury is also a better man, as a result of his Siege-experience. Initially, he is a man about town, whose clothes, the last word in fashion, had become the talk of the city. The son of a Director of the East India Company, young George is a typical dilettante. He is "of a meloncholy cast of mind, the victim of the beauty and sadness of the universe" (p.33). For him, India is "a mixture of the exotic and the intensely boring, which made it, because of his admiration or Chateaubriand, irresistible" (p.24). As the Siege goes on, Fleury is compelled to discover "the manly pleasures to be found in inventing things, in making things work, in getting results, in cause and effect" (p.330).

Farrell also dwells on the effect the long siege has on the collective psychology of the besieged: "Gradually, a new fatalism took hold of everyone. Some of those who did not possess a faith in God, which was proof against all adversities, now saw that the great hope of a relief force reaching them, which had buoyed them up, was an illusory one; even if a relief came now, in many different ways it would be too late ... and not only because so many of the garrison were already dead; India itself was now a different place; the fiction of happy natives being led forward along the road to civilisation could no longer be sustained" (p.244).

There is a highly symbolic episode on page 331, when the Collector examines the holes in the walls of the Residency made by bullets and shells. He suddenly discovers that the walls are not marble after all; they are only stucco, made of lime and sand. This is probably symbolic of the fact that the Siege experience removes the veneer of culture and civilization, manners and customs, faith and belief, to expose the raw human nature underneath. Thus, as the Siege continues, food becomes an obsession with everyone.

"Even the children talked and schemed about it constantly; even the Padre ... could hardly fall asleep without dreaming that ravens were coming to feed him" (p.303). When a food auction is held, Rayne, who is in charge of supplies, tries to corner them, by bidding by proxy. The ruse is discovered and it is decided to distribute the food equally. And there is another revealing episode where Louise, given a poultice of flour for a skin-complaint, eats it instead. Further on, there is a general dissatisfaction at the idea of equal distribution of food. Those with stores in their possession start guarding them jealously. Soon an unofficial barter systen comes into force, a handful of pearls are traded for a bottle of honey or a box of dates. People became conscious that "they were eating the equivalent of a diamond brooch, or a sapphire pendant" (p.2). Fleury, the man about town, has his own way of solving the problem. He just sits reviewing in his mind "the outstanding meals he had eaten in the course of his existence. What a fool he had been to waste so much time being 'poetic' and not eating" (p.293).

At the same time, the way people behave during the Siege also reveals the fact that certain basic and deeply ingrained attitudes are so obstinately persistent that they cannot be changed under any circumstances. For instance, when the Siege begins, the ladies grumble about there being no servants to carry out the daily chores. Again, Mrs. Rogers, the wife of the Judge, refuses to join the 'rabble' at the dining table; the problem is soon solved when the women divide themselves into groups, formed strictly according to their social status.

The Collector's reaction to these feminine troubles is also characteristic of the Victorian view of woman as 'lesser Man', which even a thinking man like him shares apparently unquestioningly. Musing over the problem, he observes: "Crowding them together like this has a strange effect on them (the women).... It seems to excite their feminine nature.... Women are weak, we shall always have to take care of them, just as we have to take care of the natives; no doubt there are exceptions... (but) even a hundred years from now... it will be the same. They are made of a softer substance. They arouse our desire, but they are not our equals (pp.169-70).

The equating of women with the natives in the Collector's musings is again typical of the Nineteenth century British view of Indians. 'Half devil and half child,' the Indian was weak, temperamental Caliban whom Providence had placed into the safe and generous hands of the Englishman, whose bounden duty it was to play Prospero to him. Harry Dunstaple observes: "You have to be careful thrashing a Hindu ... because they have weak chests. You can kill them" (p.70). Harry is no doctor, but his father is one and has told him, "...it's a thinness of pericardium" (Ibid). Indeed, so convinced is the Collector of British superiority that he makes his children wear velvet flannel and wool even in hot weather since "they had a position to keep up" (p.61).

The Collector has moments of great sympathy for the hapless Indian: "How it could ever be the 150 million people living in India could ever have the social advantages that made young people like the Fleurys and the Dunstaples, so delightful, so confident.... Can it be that the Indian population will ever enjoy the wealth and ease of the better classes?" (p.208). But somehow, this sympathy has not led to appropriate action. On the contrary, we are told that "When the Collector piously gave to the poor, it was to the English poor by a fixed arrangement with his agent in London; he had accepted the fact that the poverty of India was beyond redemption" (p.152).

Nevertheless, The Collector does stress the need to understand the point of view of the Indian. When the river rises in flood, the Magistrate suggests the construction of the embankment, and is irritated when the natives sacrifice a goat to the river instead. Collector Hopkins comments: "Even after all these years in India, Willoughby (the Magistrate) does not understand the natives. He is too rational for them. He can't see things from their point of view, because he has no heart" (p.91).

The Englishman, however, is not solely responsible for the yawning gulf between him and the Indian, who too takes an equally jaundiced view of him, though it is for different reasons. Farrell mentions a bazaar rumour according to which, because so many British young men were killed in Crimea, there was nobody left in England to marry the girls. "So, they are now going to be brought

out here and forcibly married to the native land-owners; their children and the land they own will then become Christian" (p.64).

The fear of ritual pollution and losing caste as a result of it is indeed an obsession with the Indian. This results in a bizarre situation when, at Sunday School, European children are asked to give sugar fruits to native children, who have been converted. But many of them "considered themselves to be Hindus as well, indeed primarily, and had no intention of being defiled" (p.124) and so they throw the sweets away. Similarly, Sikh soldiers decline to drink water from the European well, and dig another one for themselves (p.332). In another revealing incident Fleury is shocked when he sees the servant breaking the glass which he had been given to drink from, and asks in sheer exasperation: "How could one respond warmly to someone who regarded your touch as pollution?" (p.77). And his description of Hinduism as 'a mixture of superstition, fairy-tale, idolatry and obscenity repellent to every decent Englishman in India speaks volumes for the ignorance of the English man about the culture and thought of the land which he had been governing for generations.

Towards the end, there is an interesting incident, which seems to have symbolic overtones. It shows the Collector sitting on chair with one front leg missing. Now, if he waved his arm for emphasis, he found himself in danger of falling down. "Since the chair discouraged emphasis, it also discouraged strong convictions. It had once even gone so far as to empty him on the floor for voicing an intolerant opinion on the Jesuits. So, now he was gradually coming to see that there were several sides to every question" (p.328). Farrell's achievement in *The Siege of Krishnapur* lies in that he has highlighted 'several sides' of the question of the Great Indian Mutiny and the many ramifications of its meaning, not only for its own time, but for our time as well.

"WRITING A BODY THAT OVERFLOWS": RECONSTRUCTING DRAUPADI IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

Ranu Uniyal

Women writers have made a significant contribution to women's movement. Women's movement in India is as such influenced by Western ideology just as much as the other areas of knowledge and learning. Also the movement itself was born out of multiple concerns in relation to women. It is not to be viewed as a single unified whole but it is important to acknowledge plurality within its fold. And yet one would like to focus on the issues which are specified to Indian women. Within the traditional fold we still look at the images of Sita, Parvati, Lakshmi, Durga, Saraswati and Annapoorna as the essential role models for Indian women. Chastity, Beauty, Prosperity, Power, Knowledge, and Justice are some of the virtues we cherish and aspire for in our women. In literature attempts are being made by women writers to reinterpret old myths and reinvent new images by looking at them from a woman centerd perspective. Writing has for long been a man's prerogative. Women were great story tellers — simply as mothers and grandmothers. There were few who could read and few who could write. And women who wrote did so in private. It was never publicly acknowledged. Writing for women came much later as many other crafts.

This paper examines the myth of Draupadi and its socio-cultural and literary implications in the works of Pratibha Ray and Mahashweta Devi. Both these writers have recreated images of Draupadi as a woman. The story of Draupadi, the beautiful wife of five Pandavas, is an excellent example of a woman deified and a woman destroyed. It is a retelling of the story by the two women writers, Mahashweta Devi and Pratibha Ray. Draupadi explodes the myth of a submissive and subservient woman. In each of their works she emerges as a strong force, representing the alienation and fragmentation of the age.

Ray's Draupadi is a well groomed, princess Yajnaseni — born out of fire. Intelligent and educated, beautiful and wise, she is

forever bound by law — that is the law of submission. As a first person narrative the story speaks of her marriage against her wishes to the five Pandavas. And yet she continues to respect and revere each one of them. In love with Krishna, she surrenders herself to his wishes and agrees to marry Arjuna. Pratibha Ray's Draupadi tells her story and forces the reader to focus his attention on her trials and tribulations. It is a story of a woman in love. It is a story of a woman who sacrifices herself for the integrity of her family and people, but gets little in return. Her life is offered in the form of a prayer to Krishna — her *sakha*, her soul-mate. In a letter addressed to Krishna she speaks in her own voice; in the end is her beginning. It is with great compulsion when speaking her mind has become a necessity. As suggested by Helene Cixous: "It is by writing, from and toward women and by taking up the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus, that women will confirm women in a place other than that which is reserved by the symbolic, that is in a place other than silence. (Cixous, 1976:881). Ray's Draupadi lays bare the circumstances of her being and becoming. "She draws her story into history." (Cixous, 1976:881). She relives her past in her letter addressed to Krishna. As we focus on the famous disrobing scene it is important to bring out a few specific signifiers — the menstruating woman follows a certain code of conduct — during this period she does not face her husband, keeps her distance from him, wears a single piece of cloth, keeps her hair untied and lives in seclusion and it is one such day when Pandavas lose her in a game of dice. She is forcibly brought into the court, a space dominated by men. Dushashana drags her and pulls her hair and brings her infront of all the members of the court. Status of a prostitute and a slave is accorded to her. And in the discouse of man she has no right to ask or question this status. Resisting ridicule and shame, she questions. In her paper R. Sunder Rajan argues:

> Her question: did Yudhistar stake her before or after he lost himself, is never answered, because it is unanswerable. Alf Hiltebeitel, the noted Draupadi scholar regards it as a feminist question since : "it challenges the men to consider... their lordship over and "ownership" of women in contexts of patriarchy. For him it is a "class action appeal" by Draupadi on behalf of women as a group which "calls into question two kind of male lordship: that

of kinship and family, and that of the dharmic politics of kingship in the sabha or men's hall" (R. Sunder Rajan, 1999:335-336.). (A Hiltebeitel, "Is the Goddess a Feminst? Draupadi's Question," *American Academy of Religion: Annual Meeting*, Chicago, November 1994, cited by Rajan in her paper).

Her questions are silenced with a counter-logic. Since she has violated the law of one husband for a woman and is dependent on many husbands, hence the status accorded to her is that of a prostitute. It hardly matters whether she is clothed or unclothed. Polyandry makes her an easy target in public. She refuses to plead for mercy and this is an affront to male sexuality and power. Draupadi demands justice and gets silence in return. Her questions remain unanswered. Her anger and fear are to no avail. *Dasi, Dasi, Dasi,* is all she is. What becomes apparent in the entire episode is that woman is merely an object, a possession, and her wish is never taken into consideration. If on one hand she is the honour and the integrity of the family and the state, on the other hand men do not hesitate in putting her integrity at stake. And the state too can do little to protect her from the ignominy of shame and loss. Law and *dharma*, legal system and state fail to protect her. The interesting bit is that while the mythological Draupadi had Krishna as her saviour, Ray's Draupadi too is saved by Krishna from complete humiliation and he pledges to destroy her enemy. Mahashweta Devi writes the story of Draupadi from a different perspective. She is neither a princess nor a *kulvadhu*, she is a poor, illiterate, tribal woman who resists oppression of the high caste landlords by joining the rebellious section of the rural population. In the story she is described as "the most notorious female. Long wanted...." In Gayatri Spivak's terms Mahashweta Devi's Draupadi is "not romanticized." She is Dopdi. She is walking slowly "with some rice knotted into her belt. She never responds when she hears her own name" (191). In her rewriting of the Draupadi story Mahashweta Devi brings out the easy disrobing of the central protagonist once she is captured by the police. Unlike Draupadi from the *Mahabharata* who was saved from complete humiliation by Lord Krishna, tribal Dopdi has no saviour, is repeatedly raped, insulted and humiliated by many men. Committed to her husband even after his death, she becomes a victim of the male hegemony. Filled with a sense of outrage at the injustice

done to her, she does not herself wish to be clothed; she refuses all clothes. Once her modesty has been outraged she refuses to cover herself. In her gesture of refusal and her laughter is her painful but tragic defiance of the male gaze: "What more can you do? Come on, counter me — come on, counter me — ?" (196). And for once Senanayak is seen terrified of the 'unarmed target.' Here we are witnessing an emergence of a female body badly bruised and hurt and yet capable of fear. Draupadi's abject refusal is a significant departure from the usual norms. In this refusal lies the pain of 'unbecoming' and it also signifies the courage of being. Unarmed, unclothed, underprivileged woman is able to give a voice to her unspoken grief through this gesture of defiance.

In both the cases as well as in the original Draupadi myth we see an extreme form of male subjugation and oppression. A desire for freedom of choice, a desire for learning and the ability to resist meet with sexual harassment in public. Mahashweta Devi's Dopdi is an aberration, an anathema, and hence incapable of saving herself from physical violence. As we look at the socio-historical background of the story we can see how it is linked with the Naxalbari peasant rebellion of 1967 in which the peasants and the tribal cultivators joined hands with the intellectuals to resist the govt-landlord nexus for greater freedom and reform. The central character is an activist, practices monogamy and is forced into a situtation or rape by many men.

Between 1970 and 1971, the tensions between East and West Pakistan led to a conflict within India. The Naxalites emerged as a severe threat to the *status quo*. Majority of them constituted a distinct section of the rural population. Many of them were apprehended, put in police custody and dealt with severely. And it is this period that constitutes the background of "Draupadi."

Draupadi is supposedly well connected with the fugitives and is their comrade. She lives with an awareness: "What will they do if they catch me? They will counter me. Let them.... When they counter you, your hands are tied behind you. All your bones are crushed, your sex is a terrible wound. ...proud of her forefathers. They stood gurard over their women's blood in black armor, (her's)

was the pure unadulterated black blood of Champabhumi." (192-93). Conscious that like her husband Dulna she too would not 'lose any one else's life' she sends out a warning to the other comrades.

"Make her. Do the needful" (195), says Senanayak and disappears. Make her, teach her a lesson, counter, put her in place, are certain specific verbal codes which deserve to be read as sexual devices deployed to silence women forever from the movement, be it social, cultural or economic. Each of these women had resisted inequality and injustice. Mahashweta Devi's Draupadi is trapped in a wider nexus of caste, class, colour and sex. It is the conclusion of her story that brings out the element of triumph for Draupadi. Draupadi is a victim but her self-conscious refusal accompanied with laughter comes across as a final blow to the Burra Sahib, the Senanayak. With one rapid stroke she challenges male supremacy and brutality: "What's the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man? There isn't man that that I should be ashamed. I will not let you put my clothes on me" (196). This refusal amounts to a complete rejection of the masculine order. In her refusal lies her achievement for she is able to shift the matrix from being a victim to a victor. In her dissent is her rejection of and challenge to male identity and sexuality. It can also be viewed as her obstinate attempt "to blow up the law, to break up the truth" with laughter (Cixous, 1976:888). Unlike her tormentors who wish to put on a mask of 'bhadra lok' once the night is over, Dopdi can see the inanity of 'Propriety'; she becomes "that person capable of losing a part of herself without losing her integrity" (Cixous, 1976:888). Dopdi is a tribal woman in the short story by Mahashweta Devi. In a sustained movement against the landlords and the government she too is involved with her husband. She challenges the existing order, is apprehended and finally disrobed. The body of the woman lies 'made up,' bruised and abused. It is the conclusion of the story which adds to the final act of liberation. Unlike the ancient Draupadi she does not seek help from the existing patriarchal order, for there is none. She seeks revenge on her own terms. It is this challenge to the male authority which becomes a significant gesture in the story. The challenge comes in the form of laughter.

As a significant attempt to 'write herself' Pratibha Ray's Draupadi provides a rich discourse on women's speech. The place of 'woman' in language and the question of a feminine relation to language are gradually becoming significant to women's writing. Attempts are being made to explore the difficulties and contradictions inherent in a specifically female way of writing, 'writing the body.'

Mahashweta Devi points out in an article "Untapped Resources" (Seminar, July 1989, pp.15-19) how she uses the oral tradition for interpretation of events — the folk songs, beliefs, myths and social laws of the tribal and non-tribal people — for these form the rich sources of Indian culture. Local customs, rhymes and proverbs can be reinterpreted in order to bring about a consciousness for change. As part of her effort to explore this aspect of Indian culture, she has had to experiment with language and move out of the Sanskritized Bengali prose, at times using even slang and four letter words. "The living language of the common people, (she asserts) tribal or not is a must for my kind of literature. This richness of language has not been exploited enough" (Jain, 1991:37).

As a social activist and a writer Mahashweta Devi draws on day-to-day experiences of ordinary people and much of her writing is inspired by true events, newspaper reports, and is based on real lives, real people. By focusing on the oppressed and those on the margins she has made an invaluable contribution to the weaker sections of the society. Most of her protagonists are *Dalits*, tribals, bonded labourers and women.

In the context of disrobing of Draupadi in the *Mahabharahta* it has often been pointed out that her snide remark at Duryodhana and her singing laughter in the past were responsible for her humiliation in public. It is this very laughter that evokes fear and awe in Mahashweta's story. It beomes a potential threat. It seems she has mulitplied one into many and is strong enough to confront the enemy. Unlike Senanayak and his entourage, she is brave enough to face the men who raped her at night, and unclothed her in broad daylight.

Both the novel and the short story were originally written in Bangla and Oriya. The two texts have been translated in Hindi and

English and are examined as a disguised critique of sexual identity. While the short story reflects on the socio-political events, the novel is a first person narrative reflecting on the need for a woman's voice. As a celebrated heroine of the *Mahabharata*, Draupadi is admired for her courage and criticised for her laughter. By rewriting her story attempts have been made to relocate some important issues pertaining to women's movement in writing and its style of transmission. Is the figure of Draupadi in modern literature a 'free representation' or a deviation from the original? Each of these works focuses on the anguish of the woman disrobed and her transformation from an object of voyeurism to a woman who challenges, who counters and confronts the male gaze.

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CHAMAN NAHAL'S *THE WEIRD DANCE* : AN ANALYSIS

Ambuj K. Sharma

Like his predecessors, Nahal has also depicted the different shades of life in his fiction. His *The Weird Dance*, a collection of thirteen short stories, is full of varieties of human emotions and thoughts. The title of the collection is, as a matter of fact, convincingly meaningful. Life in itself is a great mystery, full of strangeness and uncertainties. Through his short stories, Nahal has tried to explain to his readers the 'Weird Dance of Life', full of mysteries and uncertainties. He feels that it is a difficult task to go deep into the minds and hearts of people, and that the assessment of human emotions is a puzzle difficult to sort out. He considers life full of monotony and dullness where peace is like an oasis. He writes at the beginning of the short story, "The Silver Lining":

> It is difficult to assess the range and quality of human emotions. Those with smiling, evergreen faces may have worm like griefs gnawing at their existence and a dull, idiotic-looking person may be blissfully happy. Life is a strange, humdrum affair, where even a few moments of peace snatched should probably be gratefully acknowledged.[1]

In his short stories, Nahal has depicted human relationships in different forms and colours. In "The Ideal Match," he has depicted the relationship between a distinguished father Raisahab Kanwal Kishore and his twenty-five year old daughter Bela. Raisahib, a retired shrewd civil servant and a distinguished figure of Dehradun, was a strong person of about sixty years of age. He was magnanimous, well-behaved and a generous host, always found in the company of two or three young men in his favourite restaurant. His purpose of inviting the young men to the parties was the search of a suitable match for his only daughter Bela Rani, well-versed in dance, music and art. After knowing all the details about the young men, a few of them could have the chance of meeting Bela Rani while others were 'elbowed out' without having a glimpse of the young lady. Even after a very long hunt for the suitable match for his young daughter, Raisahab could not reach any conclusion, with the result his only daughter started showing her age. She was fed up with his father's

enthusiasm for a 'vigorous search'. No young man could pass the acid test of Raisahib and his 'Bela Beti' remained unmarried even at the age of twenty-five. Raisahib often declared that he did not marry the second time as he did not want to 'surrender' her to the stepmother. The coming of Shrimati Ashtami Bai into the life of Raisahib shattered all his claims about his immense love for his daughter. The story ends with his marriage with Srimati Ashtami Bai and his unmarried daughter Bela Rani was surrendered to the care of a stepmother. The story is full of irony — may be it is the irony of life or of circumstances.

"The Little Italian" is about the war days of 1944 when the Italian prisoners were kept three miles away from Dharamsala, a valley like 'a complicated chessboard' from there they could not escape so easily. Keeping this fact in mind the prisoners were allowed to roam unescorted by the authorities. In this story, Nahal has portrayed the hypocrisy of the Italian prisoners who used to sell their things — wristwatches, pair of shoes, woolen socks, fountain pen, etc. to the needy customers. Though they were quite comfortable in the camps but they pretended that they were in the dire need of money to meet out their necessary requirements. They used to win the hearts of the needy customers by playing with their emotions and were able to sell their items at the minimum price of three rupees — an average market price for a woman. The little Italian was also able to get three rupees for a fountain pen from the narrator after telling his cock and bull story about his wife and the son and also about his bad habit of consuming tobacco. The narrator was shocked when he witnessed the little Italian the second time, selling his socks, using the same device of playing with the emotions of the people in the name of his poor wife and son and selling them for three rupees once again. The story is also the revelation of the debauchery of the Italian prisoners who were able to entice the poor hill women and used them as objects of physical pleasures by paying three rupees.

"The Silver Lining" is the story of Promodni, a sweet and charming girl who looked 'a miniature jungle queen' in "half-sleeved jersey, jeans and high boots" (25). She was deaf and dumb and it was a matter of deep sorrow and humiliation for her parents, Mr. and Mrs.

Bhandari. This fact was shared with the narrator, Mr. Dhanda, by her parents when he beckoned the girl and she became self conscious, shook her head and stood where she was. When he called the girl second time, she repeated the same gesture, with tears in her eyes in addition. Mr. Dhanda felt extremely sorry for the humiliation caused to the innocent girl and her parents. Keeping in mind the anguish and agony of Promodni and her parents which they faced almost daily, Mr. Dhanda suggested them to have bits of paper typed, and to handover one of these chits, duly sealed in corner, to every visitor. The text of the chit ran thus: "Our daughter is deaf and dumb. You may hurt her by trying to be friendly, too soon, as she can neither understand nor reply to your kind words. You are requested to please give her time to approach you and make your acquaintance. Thank you" (27). The suggestion worked and the girl and her parents heaved a sigh of relief. In the meanwhile a young man of twenty-five David came in. The end of the story is quite interesting and remarkable. David, heedless of the chit which he went through, darted towards the girl making her parents annoyed and astonished. And only after a few moments the girl was sitting on his lap and was laughing. Both the girl's parents and Mr. Dhanda were flabbergasted when they discovered that David was deaf and dumb like Promodni and agreed to accept Promodni as his first pupil. In "The Silver Lining" Nahal has, through his deep study and understanding of human behaviour and human nature, suggested that the appearance may belie the reality. In the beginning Mr. David appeared to be a heartless and emotionless person, but he ultimately proved to be extraordinarily magnanimous giving Mr. and Mrs. Bhardari all happiness.

"Metamorphosis" is an account of the relationship between son Gopi Nath and his parents Mehta Dina Nath and Rukmani Devi. The tension welled up between the father and the son on the issue of the latter's marriage with Promila, a Christian girl, against the conventional religious faith. Before his fascination for Promila, Gopi Nath was a beloved son and was only interested in his studies and tools. He was the ideal son and was the centre of his father's discourses. Though Gopi Nath was a devoted son and he heeded his father's vehement opposition to Promila as his daughter, he could

not wriggle out of her web of bewitching charms. It was an unbearable shock to Dina Nath and he became almost insane at his son's recklessness. On the other hand Gopi Nath, often going through the Christian scriptures "could not find a word which contradicted what he had been taught at home from his childhood" (36). He discovered that both the faiths — Hinduism and Christianity — taught 'love' and 'love' was the biggest gift of God to man. He felt disturbed by the great pain caused to his parents by his decision of marrying a Christian girl, but he was sure to be forgiven by them. The metamorphosis started when at a function a youth was 'instantaneously electrocuted' by touching a high voltage wire. Dina Nath was so much spellbound and stunned by the death of the young technician that he thought it was Gopi Nath lying before him. He realized that he was unnecessarily cursing his son: "'why, what was his sin, after all?' He questioned himself. Wanted to marry into another religion? And why not? It was not a rape or a murder or some thing worse.' .... 'No, no, let Gopi marry whom he wants'" (43-4). The end of the story is 'disheartening' and unexpected. Nahal has shown the conversion of a devout father who surrendered to the happiness and love of his son, but the son could not believe the genuine words of his father.

"The Release" is based on the husband-wife relationship. Milkhi Das is a cruel and 'inconsiderate' husband, while his wife Rani is a typical peasant woman — 'shy', reserved', 'assertive', self-confident and centre of attraction of the village people. Milkhi Das, a jealous and cruel husband, always maltreated his wife and would beat her mercilessly. Their neighbours often witnessed the 'wild scenes' between the two. Rani's fascination for village men also aggravated Milkhi Das's wrath and he treated her even more harshly and unkindly. Taking the advantage of the well-known bitterness between the husband and the wife, Bashir Ahmad, the village wrestler and the "champion of Rani's gallery of lovers" (53), was able to woo her. As the atmosphere of the village was non-communal, Rani did not resist Bashir Ahmad's advances and allowed him to make her 'the mother of two children. This fact is revealed towards the end of the story. "The Release" appears to be true to life. In our every day life such cases are quite common when people take the

advantage of the inharmonious relationship between the husband and the wife and ruin their family life.

"Neighbourly Love" is the story of neighbourhood. Mr. Ram Bihari had an unpleasant experience of neighbourhood. In spite of his best efforts to be cordial with his neighbours, he was not able to please them for reasons unknown to him. Lala Kanta Prasad, his shy wife Shrimati Janki Prasad and equally shy daughter Shakuntala were the new neighbours of Mr. Ram Bihari. Like Rai Sahib Kanwal Kishore of "The Ideal Match", he was also in search of a suitable match for his 'rather ugly and stupid daughter. Ram Bihari was informed that Lalaji was against neighbours getting married to each other as he had bitter experience of the recent marriage of his elder daughter Urmila with an aeronautical engineer against his wishes. Lalaji's grudge against a neighbour carrying away his daughter alerted Mr. Ram Bihari. In the beginning, Mr. Ram Bihari felt good in their company. He was offered the numberless lunches and dinners and was also given two pullovers in the winter by Shrimati Janki Prasad. He was flabbergasted and stunned when Lalaji abruptly asked him to marry his daughter Shakuntala and also took the one-sided decision of his marriage with her. It is an irony of circumstances that a man, who was deadly against the neighbours getting married to each other, offered his own daughter to marry his neighbour. When Ram Bihari rejected the proposal, his neighbours stopped conversation with him and found fault with him.

"The Weird Dance" is the most significant story and the collection has been appropriately named after it. The title of the story is significant as it evolves and symbolizes life itself, which is full of mysteries and strange episodes beyond man's apprehension. Romesh Chopra went to the remote villages of Himachal Pradesh to solace himself with the blessings of nature as he felt 'dismayed and stupefied' with the 'deformities' and crude realities of life. Though he was always ignored by his friends, he never reacted to it. But in his heart of hearts he felt infinitely bored with life. The sudden death of the family friend, Major Gajey Nath, his wife and two daughters, his college friend Lata's becoming ugly due to severe smallpox, and his Office Superintendent's flirting with maid servants infused into him frustration, alienation and disappointment. But he felt bewildered and

dismayed when he found the 'same weird dance of life' in the simple lives of the village folk. To his astonishment, they were not good-hearted and pious. Though he avoided the meaningful looks of Jhoomka, his landlady, and other girls of the village, he was charmed by Jhoomka who was "graceful in figure and extremely fair" (74). He was overwhelmed, amazed and puzzled when Jhoomka, just after the death of her son, slipped into his bed, embraced him and clasped him, breaking all the barriers of resistance from him. However, he concluded that perhaps death and sex were equal partners in the great rhythm of life; these were the "two unnatural things to happen to any man, whether he asked for them or not... at any time... at any place... death and sex... sex and death" (79).

"The Lonely Path" is a story of Ramakant Sagar, his wife Prabha and his mother-in-law Durga Bai. Strangely enough, he developed sexual relationship with his own mother-in-law, a middle-aged woman. Ramakant continued that relationship for a fairly long time on the insistence of Durga Bai. In the beginning he realized the he was undoubtedly the biggest sinner alive and it was almost like sleeping with one's own mother. But, in due course of time, he felt that he was doing nothing wrong. He held Prabha responsible for that sinful act: "It was Prabha's error that it had started, if only she had been slightly considerate of his feelings! If only she had looked after his needs! It was all her fault, really!" (88). Nevertheless, he considered it the filthiest thing. Naturally, he tried to get some peace in the company of a holy man who preached: "No one else can guide you, sirs, the guide is in you.... You alone can find a solution to the host of problems facing you. It is a long path, but things will clear up and answers will come to you provided that righteousness is the primary and ultimate end of man." (82). Unfortunately, before he could report the matter to Prabha, his mother-in-law blamed Ramakant and charged him of making dirty suggestions to her and started wailing. Prabha became hysterical and burst out in anger. To develop a sexual relationship with her own son-in-law and to blame him for everything makes Durga Bai an unpardonable sinner. Undoubtedly, in this story Nahal has brought out some hidden and dark realities and deformities of life through his penetrating and deep insight.

Naresh Kumar, basically a technical assistant in the National Archives and lover of all subjects, wished to write a true story in "A True Story". "He wondered why none had taken events from actual life and put down them as they were" (93). But, in spite of his best efforts, he could not find interesting plot in real life full of dullness. Incidentally, his encounter with Aruna brought some interest in his life. He was baffled by the liveliness of her sparkling eyes, felt enamoured of her charms, and was ensnared by her magnanimity. When he straightforwardly proposed to her for marriage, the girl, to his great surprise, agreed to it. After the marriage he realized that "here was an adventure, an incomparable romance in real life, ending happily. He was happy to find 'potentialities' in life 'for wonderful tales'" (104). "A True Story" conveys us the message that life for man is a drab existence without the company of woman and *vice versa.*

"Mother" is a story of two bachelor friends, Janak and Prahalad. Janak Kumar Bhatia, a representative of Tehran Oil Company, was frivolous, irresponsible, immature and superficial, while Prahalad, a university teacher and the narrator, was quiet, shy and reserved with an endless passion for books. Both of them loved long walks. They went to Rishikesh, a famous religious-cum-tourist place on the foothills of Himalayas, and stayed there in a rest house. A couple also stayed at the same rest house in the adjoining room. Janak was baffled by the ravishing beauty of the young woman who was in the advance stage of pregnancy. Nahal has contrasted the two friends in the story as has been mentioned earlier. Janak wished to sleep with the pregnant young lady and said, "It would be fun sleeping with a pregnant woman!" (112). He felt that "women were good for only one thing. And that's the bed" (114). The two friends were surprised to listen to the way the man addressed the young woman by the word 'mother' a number of times. They were also overwhelmed by their love which was pure and spiritual. The story took a serious turn when the young woman had premature labour pains and died. It was a tremendous shock for them. All the dreams and promises of the couple were burnt with her body. The story ends with the metamorphosis of Janak who now became extremely 'morose' and married to a young lady after six months. On the other hand, Prahalad

became a 'disbeliever'.

"Lala Dwarka Das Dhingra" is the story of an ill-tempered, vain, arrogant, cynical and obstinate lawyer of New Delhi. Here the narrator is his nephew. Lala Dwarka Das was about fifty-five. As an advocate he was a big failure, but he was well off and had various other sources of income. When the narrator was about thirteen, his parents were killed during the partition. Dwarka Das took the responsibility of his care. But, contrary to that, he "quietly swallowed a large share of his father's property in cash and kind" (126), and the narrator was converted into a domestic servant who was always shouted at and bullied mercilessly. He did not allow him any education and imprisoned him in the four walls of his house. He also ill-treated his wife. The narrator, who was mercilessly exploited by Lala Dwarka Das, took a terrible revenge by seducing his eldest daughter Dayamanti and by "fathering the child of her" (136). He also decided to do the same with his other two daughters, Daropadi and Dayavati. Apparently, the story is centred upon exploitation and revenge, and also upon immoral and abnormal relationships — the uncle exploiting his own nephew, and the nephew having sexual intercourse with his own cousins.

The next story in the volume dealt with the hollowness and exhibitionism of Sardar Beant Singh Kanalia, a college lecturer. He became the cause of jealousy and envy for the majority of the college teachers because of his success, popularity, achievements and his 'pretty and buxom wife' (139). On the other hand, he possessed an inherent weakness of shallowness, hollowness and showing off which irritated and annoyed the other college teachers who always desired to see him in trouble. When he was bitten by a scorpion, nobody felt concerned about him and they unanimously said: "Good. It'll do him some good" (140). When there was some rift between the husband and the wife, all his colleagues felt relieved and welcomed his misfortune. Everybody was sad at the sudden death of his wife, but they were all disappointed and shocked to find him a 'dignified widower' — once again an object of envy for them. The story is full of the reality of life where every success in envied and every achievement is greeted with annoyance and vexation and

every failure is welcomed with cheers. Also, it satirizes sardonically the modern society which is soaked in evils like envy, pride, jealousy, shallowness and hollowness.

"The Watch," the last story of The *Weird Dance,* is a tale of the immortal love of Mrs. Chaturvedi for her 'prospective' husband who died twenty years back. The watch, which was stolen by someone out of six hundred ninety nine people on the ship, was a token of eternal love for her lost husband and was a priceless gift for her. In the beginning, all the fellow passengers considered her an 'enigma' as she did not mix-up with anyone. Nobody on the ship knew the agony of her heart till she herself narrated her tale of woe to them. The last part of her speech went directly into the hearts of the people when she said: "If you have ever loved anyone genuinely in life, or if any one has given you love, do please find the watch for me and bring it back to me.... I feel very, very miserable" (149). But, unfortunately, the watch was never recovered. The story is about a of rare and genuine love between a man and a woman, a love which was spiritual and eternal and did not fade away even after twenty years of the death of her would be husband. Besides, it is the revelation of the declining moral standards and values of people.

To sum up, Nahal's *The Weird Dance* reveals the variegated aspects of life. With his penetrating and deep insight, he has not only tried to entertain his readers, but has also made an effort to enlighten them. He has realistically depicted love, sex, emotions, sentiments, anger, jealousy, envy, vanity, hypocrisy, immorality, morality, devotion, pathos, hatred, revenge, etc. in his stories which lack in humour, but are full of irony and satire. Human relations are based on falsity, hypocrisy and doubts which breed disappointment and frustration in people. The fictionist has skilfully incorporated all these facts of life in these stories.

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[1]Chaman Nahal. *The Weird Dance* (Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1985), p.23. All subsequent references to this work are to this edition and have been absorbed in the text by giving page references in parentheses.

EXPLORATION OF THE INNER SELF: ANITA'S DESAI'S *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER ?*

Alka Rani

Anita Desai's fiction is primarily concerned with the individual's psychological motivations, frustrations, sense of failure and keen awareness of the futility of existence. It focuses on the intangible realities of life, and explores the inner depths of the human psyche, the chaos and turmoil inside the mind. Small wonder her *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* — a masterpiece belonging to the beginning of the period of maturity — is surely a commendable attempt at probing deeper into the extraordinary inner life of its protagonist, Sita. As the very title of the novel suggests, this is a novel born out of frustration. The question mark at the end of the title is a question mark with universality about it. Boredom, frustration and a sense of being a misfit, a lack of communication between man and man, between husband and wife, between mother and her children, a vast difference of approach towards life and art, a gulf between two persons, experiences of the same thing, the same kind of life, the same city, the same house and the same island — this is the real subject matter of *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Prior to this, so many Indian novels in English have tended to deal with Indian life and society and looked like a file or a procession of scenes from Indian life meant for the foreign reader. But Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner* and Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* mark a clear-cut departure from the old trend. In these two novels, the writers have tried to explore the inner being, the inner self of their major and minor characters.

Sita, the central figure of Anita Desai's novel, is a hyper-sensitive lady, a mother of four children with the fifth in her belly whom she does not want to see the light of the day because she feels that this world is not suitable for existence: "She had refused to give birth to a child in a world not fit to receive the child. She had the imagination to offer it an alternative — a life unlived, a life bewiteched."[1] She feels so disgusted with the tiresome, fast and artificial world of Bombay that she wants to go back to the life she

came from — the life at Manori island, a life lived in the wilderness of hills.

The novel is divided into three parts. The first begins with monsoon and the excitement caused by the news of the Memsahib's coming to Manori. Moses is wearing a new lungi, for his memsahib has sent him twenty rupees for preparations to be made for her arrival. The memsahib comes with her two children — Menaka and Karan, daughter and son respectively. She has come to the island with a faint hope that the magic of her late father would help her in preventing the birth of the child in her womb. She does not want to give birth to a new child because it means a lot of pain to herself and also because the world is not fit enough to have it. Strangely, she wants to keep the child perpetually in her womb. The two children are not able to adjust themselves in the beginning. The moment Menaka feels that they are to help themselves, she remarks that they should have brought at least one servant with them.

Sita has come to Manori to escape from the madness and violence of city life: "'I think,' she said, going back to the suitcase and the filling of it, 'What I'm doing is trying to escape from the madness *here*, escape to a place where it might be possible to be sane again.' .... 'It's all a madness — the boys acting out that scene from the film they saw, fighting each other on the floor; Menaka and her magazines and the way she's torn all those drawings of her's I'd kept so carefully....'"[2] Sita wants to be away from violence — blind and meaningless — and escape to a place where there is no violence. Menaka's tearing of her pictures is clearly indicative of the modern generation's total disregard for art and culture, and of the coldness of science that has benumbed the warmth and compassion of art and culture. When Sita tries to protect a baby eagle from hungry crows, Menaka views this effort of her mother as "purely ... to embarrass her family."[3] Later, Menaka, significantly enough, shows a desire to be a medical doctor while her mother appeals to her to take up art as her occupation since she can paint so well. But the daughter maintains that she paints out of boredom, not out of an urge to create good art. Importantly, Sita's approach to art is in sharp contrast to this view. She says that she longed to be a great

artist in her early life, but she could not become one because she could not paint as well as Menaka can. There are two diametrically opposite attitudes towards art here. Sita is a lover of art, whereas Menaka is a lover of science, cold medical science which dissects animals. While a small scratch on Karan's leg can upset Sita so much that her whole being trembles with anxiety, Menaka is calm and indifferent to all this.

Sita is not only at odds with her children and the society around her, she is also unaccommodating in the joint family of Raman, her husband, and Deedar, her father-in-law who was a childhood friend of her own father. After a few months of married life, she starts feeling bored with the ways of joint family and detests it: "Like elephants, she thought — eating grass, shifting from foot to foot, swaying their trunks, small-eyed, eating."[4] This isolation from the rest of the family induces her to start smoking and talk provocatively which cannot be tolerated by the family for ever. She feels so much disgusted with their well-fed stolid selves, that they cease to be anything except animals eating vegetation and spending their lives as a meaningless existence:

> "They're nothing, they're nothing," she stormed in her room, when suffocated by their vegetarian complacence, the stolidity of the well-fed, and since she could not grow used to them as in the beginning he had hopefully urged her do, and he had begun to suffer from appalling, inexplicable backaches. her husband sighed and moved to a small flat where they lived alone.[5]

But here also she finds no relief from the people she has tried to escape from. They continue to come here also and this is unacceptable to her. Their aggresiveness is an affront to her own living nerves.

Sita is interested in what her husband is not interested in. While returning from Ajanta, they meet a hitech-hiker foreigner on their way. He is deathly pale and ugly. But she is fascinated and months later when Raman asks her why she has once more brought up the subject of the hitech-hiking foreigner, she blurts out: "'He seemed so brave.'"[6] When he remarks that it seems that she would have liked to know him better, she instantly avers: "'I would like to travel like that myself....'"[7] This plunges them into a state of tension that lasts till tension is no longer possible and dies of itself. This is considered as infidelity by Raman and it is the cause of tension.

The difference of taste, mental attitude and mental make-up is at the root of all this tension.

Sita had come to the mainland — Bombay — with Raman because she felt that it would give her safety and security. But life at Bombay disappointed her:

> She had not realized then that living there would teach her only that life was a crust of dull tedium, of hopeless disappointment — but a thin crust, a flimsy crust that, at every second or third step, broke apart so that she tumbled in, with the most awful sensation, into a crashed pile of debris. She had no longer the nerve or the optimism to continue. No, she refused to walk another step. She would turn, go back and find the island once more.[8]

The lives of Babaji, Jivan's father, Sita and her children can be interpreted as representative of three successive generations. Babaji belongs to the older generation which believed in Gandhi and the naturalness of life: "'No, I will have no madness here. I can prove that machinery is not essential to civilization, even that it is inimical to civilization. For Indian civilization, I think it is fatal. Gandhi taught us that.'"[9] The second generation does not believe so much in naturalness as in comfort like Raman and creativity like Sita. But the third generation believes in violence and destruction. It takes pleasure in destroying things just as Menaka and Karan take immense delight in destroying the sand structures that they build with their hands on the shores of Manori island. Her two sons take pleasure in fighting like two characters in a film. Sheer destruction is the only thing that gives joy to them. For Menaka, art is nothing but nonsense and absurdity. Her beautiful paintaings are the product of her boredom — they are meant only to kill time — ; creation of art does not give any pleasure to her as it did to her mother. Every generation is different from its preceding generation. What interests the last generation is destruction — dissection of rabbits and other animals in laboratories: "'I can't stand nonsense. It's boring.' ... 'And art is nonsense?'"[10]

When Sita has no cigarettes left in her stock and Miriam, Moses' wife, makes a slim cigarillo, she says emotionally to her children who sit and watch with interest as she drags on that cigarillo with a white passion of satisfaction: "...' when I am on my death bed, hold one of Miriam's cigars under my nose. If I don't leap up to

snatch it from you, you can coolly go ahead and burn me.'"[11] Menaka gets angry at this display of emotionalism by her mother. She goes away from that place because she hates her another for being theatrical and the mention of the mother's death has no effect upon her: "Menaka — the calm, reasonable scientist to be — this Menaka loathed her mother's proclivity for drama, for theatre, for emotion, with more bitterness than any other suffering relation of hers. Being her daughter, she felt most disgusted and hurt by it."[12] For Sita art is a means of self-improvement, whereas for Menaka it is nonsense. Sita believes that if she had been a good sitar player, she would have been a sensible woman and not like the one as she is now. But for her daughter art is all absurdity and boring.

On the mainland one expects security, but Sita feels insecure and lonely there because it has a lot of violence everywhere. Contrary to it, on the island with all its wildness she "never felt alone or unsafe."[13] This feeling of security and not being alone makes her refuse to go to the mainland when her husband comes to take Menaka to be admitted to a Medical college in Bombay. Going back to Bombay means going back to violence and insecurity, coldness and loneliness whereas living on the island means living in safety and being sorrounded by others.

The action of the novel is centred upon Sita and her children's coming to Manori from Bombay and going back to Bombay in the end. What the novel aims at is the revelation of the inner self of Sita — a sensitive, tormented and lonely wife of Raman who is easy going and a typical bourgeois. Her inner self reveals itself like a flower displaying its inner colours in bright sunshine.

The action of the narrative moves backward and forward. In the first part "Monsoon" we are told about the small incidents which take place in the life of Sita. Earlier, the novelist has already told us about Sita's decision to go to Manori. The incidents related in the first part serve as the hayrick and the fire comes when Raman asks her, "Where shall we go this summer?" The second part entitled "Winter" deals with the past — the childhood of Sita spent with her father, Baba, and her brother, Jeevan, on the island. The last section, again named as "Monsoon", deals with Sita's life on the island

and her husband's visit to Manori and their departure. The action is on the mental plane, and the novel is a brilliant prychological study of the mind of a sensitive woman.

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[1]Anita Desai, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1982), p.139.

[2]Ibid., pp.35-6.

[3]Ibid., p.41.

[4]Ibid., pp.48-9.

[5]Ibid., p.49.

[6]Ibid., p.52.

[7]Ibid., pp.52-3.

[8]Ibid., p.58.

[9]Ibid., p.67.

[10]Ibid., p.117.

[11]Ibid., p.107.

[12]Ibid., p.109.

[13]Ibid., p.127.

GIRISH KARNAD'S *TALE DANDA*: PRESENTNESS OF THE PAST

Mukesh Ranjan Verma

Tale Danda is the second play of Girish Karnad, after *Tughlaq*, in which he has used the history of medieval India to depict the situation of contemporary India. In *Tughlaq* he had taken up the rule of the fourteenth century Sultan, Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, to describe how idealism, unsupported by practical realism, could lead a society to chaos. The play was hailed for its contemporary relevance. U.R. Anantha Murthy notes:

> Another reason for *Tughlaq's* appeal to Indian audience is that it is a play of the sixties and reflects as no other play perhaps does the political mood of disillusionment which followed the Nehru era of idealism in the country. (143)

Tughalq also showed how religion exerted a negative influence on society if it was politicized, a theme which has become increasingly important for India today.

When Karnad came to write *Tale Danda* he realised that not only religion but also the caste system was threatening the fabric of Indian society. He writes in the preface to the play:

> I wrote *Tale Danda* in 1989 when the 'Mandir' and the 'Mandal' movements were beginning to show again how relevant the questions posed by these thinkers were for our age. The horror of subsequent events and the religious fanaticism that has gripped our national life today have only proved how dangerous it is to ignore the solutions they offered.

To present his theme Karnad goes back to history. The period this time is 12th century A.D. and the scene is South India. During the two decades ending in 1168 A.D., the city of Kalyan was the centre of a powerful social and religious reform movement led by the poet saint Basavanna. The movement known as Lingayatism of Vira-Saivism aimed at the abolition of the caste system in Hindu society and tried to propagate free thinking and devotional worship in place of ritualistic worship of God. This brought the followers of this sect, known as 'sharanas' in conflict with the orthodox upper-caste section of society. Abetted by a political intrigue, the conflict ended in terror and bloodshed.

The bane of the Hindu society since ages has been the rigid

stranglehold of the caste system on it. Describing it M. Sarat Babu writes:

> The social deformity in the Hindu society took the form of 'caste system.' The Hindu society consists of four recognized classes called 'Varnas' and one unrecognized class called 'avarnas' They are Brahmins (priests, poets, teachers and ministers) Kshatriyas (kings and warriors) Vaishyas (tradesmen) Shudras (craftsmen) and the Panchamas (menial workers). Shudras and Panchamas toil and produce wealth which people of higher classes enjoy. According to a Hindu myth, the four recognized classes emanated from the mouth, the arms, the thighs and the feet of Brahma, the God of Creation respectively. Such myths and literature created and perpetuated by Brahmins, seek to justify the social hierarchy and sanction their superiority. (45)

Once conceived on a very rational basis as this division was based on 'Karma' (profession) where a Brahmin could become a Kshatriya or Vaishya or Shudra by changing his profession, it become ossified when the concept of 'karma' was replaced by 'janma' (birth) where one remained a Brahmin or a Shudra if born in the family of one. Thus it lost its dynamism and acquired distortions which were dogmatic and often cruel and inhuman. If forced one to follow the profession of one's forefathers even when one wanted to change it. In *Tale Danda* Haralayya, a cobbler, says:

> My wife and I became 'sharnas', gave up meat and alcohol and our ancient gods. Now when our children ask us: 'Why then are we still stitching the same old scraps of leather?' what can I answer? If my son decides to change his vocation will the weavers accept him? Will the potters open their ranks? (141)

The kind of stratification and the implied assumption of the superiority of one caste over another has often resulted in caste conflicts, all the more so in the last few decades. Since this social stratification was sanctioned in the name of Hindu religion there has been religious reform movements going back to as early as fifth and sixth centuries BC when Jainism and Buddhism started originally as a reaction against the evils of Hindu religion. Vira-Saivism or Lingayatism of 12th century Karnataka which preached simple unritualistic worship of Lord Shiva was one such movement. It drew all sections of society in its fold including Brahmins, as Jagadeva and Madhuvarsha in the play. Orthodox Hindu religion has always

regarded such movements as a threat to its existence and has done its best or worst to counter it as was the case with Jainism and Buddhism. The sharanas of the 12th century Karnataka also became a victim to its wrath.

A nation needs to go back to its history to learn from its past mistakes and avoid it in future. Karnad's *Tale Danda* is such a journey into history that brings forth issues equally relevant to our own times. The character of Basavanna in the play is modelled more or less on the historical account of this saint and philosopher who had assembled around him a congregation of poets, mystics, social revolutionaries and philosophers. Using the mother tongue of the common people they peached abolition of caste and gender discrimination and non-observance of Brahmanical teachings and rituals. They encouraged free and rational thinking and emphasized the importance of hard work. They dreamt of an egalitarian society where, as Basavanna says in the play:

> Some day the entire edifice of caste and creed, this poison-house of varnashrama will come tumbling down. Every person will see himself only as a human being. As a Bhakta. As a 'Sharana'. That is inevitable.... You know the most terrible crimes have been justified in the name of Sanatan religion. (38-39)

His preachings discard superstition. When Prince Sovideva, who suspects him of taking money from the royal treasury to spend on the 'sharnas', makes an inspection of the treasury, he finds no money missing from it. The followers of Basavanna take it as a sign of miracle and try to deify him. Basavanna is grieved at it. In response to the query from a follower as to how many miracles he has performed so far, he says:

> How many shall I say? Will eighty-eight do?
> Showing off my eighty-eight miracles
> my bhakti has become
> a carnival wardrobe.
> It's in such tatters I cann't find a patch
> large enough to hide my shame. (25)

Basavanna is against religious intolerence. When the news reaches him that at Maddur some 'sharnas' have occupied a Jain temple by force and are threatening to smash the idols in it and turn it into a Shiva temple, he is disturbed. Jagadeva tries to justify the

action of the 'sharnas' by saving that Jains always provoked them. What Basavanna says to Jagadeva is pertinent to our own times as well:

> Violence is wrong, whatever the provocation. To resort to it because some one else started it first is even worse. And to do so in the name of a structure of brick and mortar is a monument to stupidity. (29)

Basavanna not only believes in the freedom of the individuals to follow their conscience but also acts on it. He feels that the 'sharanas' should gather before the palace to seek the release of King Bijjala who is made captive by his son, Sovideva, but he refuses to order his follwers to do so. He says: "Ours is a spiritual brotherhood, a community of experience. To tell any 'sharana' what to do would be to insult him" (68). As a result he goes to the palace accompanied by only a few hundred of his followers who actually number nearly two hundred thousand. The acts as a signal for the orthodox forces to go all out for crushing them.

Karnad has presented Bijjala as a pragmatic king. He is not a man given to pretensions. He is aware that he might be a powerful king but his forefathers had been barbers and despite their marrying into royal families and bribing generations of Brahmins for proclaiming them Kshatriyas he still remains a barber in the eyes of his subjects. It is this fact that makes him realise the importance of what Basavanna and his follwers are doing. In a long speech to his queen, Rambhavati, he says:

> In all my sixty-two years the only people who leave looked me in the eye without a reference to my lowly birth lurking deep in their eyes are the 'sharnas': Basavanna and his men. They treat me as — as what? — (Almost with a sense of wonder) as a human being. Baravanna wants to eradicate the caste structure, wipe it off the face of the earth. Annihilate the varna system. What a vision! And what prodigious couage! And he has the ability. Look at those he has gathered around him: poets, mystics, visionaries. And nothing airy-fairy about them, mind you. All hard-working people from the common stock. They sit together, eat together, argue about God together, indifferent to caste, birth or station. And all this is happening in this city of Kalyan — my Kalyan! (15)

It is this realisation that makes him give protection to the 'sharnas'. He, however, has to pay for it, first with his crown and finally with his life, as reactionary forces prove too strong even for him.

The crisis develops when two 'sharnas' — one a Brahmin and the other a cobbler — decide to marry their children. They come to seek Basavanna's blessing. Basavanna, despite all his preaching against caste-system is nonplussed at this development. He knew that the society is not yet ready for this:

> Until now it was only a matter of theoretical speculation. But this — this is real. The orthodox will see this mingling of castes as a blow at the very roots of varnashram dharma. Bigotry has not faced such a challenge in two thousand years. I need hardly describe what venom will gush out, what hatred will erupt once the news spreads. (38)

He, however, has to acquiesce in it as the 'sharnas' are ready to accept the challenge and what is more, he has no answer to the question of a 'sharna' — "So how many generations have to roll by before a Cobbler marries a Brahmin ?" (44). The marriage passes off peacefully, mainly because the king gives it his protection.

It is this marriage that brings ruin not only upon the 'sharnas' but also upon King Bijjala. Othodox forces led by two Brahmin priests — Damodara Bhatta and Manchanna Kramita play upon the political ambitions of Prince Sovideva and bring about a palace coup in which King Bijjala is imprioned and later on killed. Thousands of 'sharnas' are killed in a spate of violence, and the remaining flee to save their lives. Basavanna, who had left the city earlier, dies a disillusioned man. The play ends with the official proclamation of King Sovideva:

> From this moment all 'sharnas' foreigners and free thinkers are expelled from this land on pain of death. Women and the lower orders shall live within the norms prescribed by our ancient tradition or else they'll suffer like dogs. (90)

Taking an example from our history, *Tale Danda* gives us a message loud and clear that unless we are ready to rise above parochial religious and social considerations we are doomed to suffer inhuman atrocities and bloodshed again and again.

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ARUN JOSHI'S *THE CITY AND THE RIVER* : A POST-COLONIAL READING

R. Deepta

Dennis Walder in his influential book, *Post-colonial Literatures in English, History, Language, Theory,* says: "... the purpose of post-colonial theory is to aid... critical understanding of a proliferating area of literary creativity, as well as the reinterpretation of texts from a newly aware positon."[1] In the present paper an attempt has been made to examine how far the fifth and final novel of Arun Joshi, *The City and the River,* lends itself to a post-colonialist interpretation. Written in the last decade of the twentieth century, the novel may be called an extended parable. But the question arises as to what extent it is a political parable.

The tension between the imperial centre and the periphery is the central metaphor of most post-colonial writings. *The City and the River* appears to be a fictional presentation of such a conflict between the Grand Master and his henchmen at the metropolitan centre and the boatmen and their supporters at the periphery. The city has three-tier social structure. At the top are the Grand Master and his circle of advisers who rule the city and live in the Seven Hills. Next come the brick people, the so-called educated intellectuals living in pink oval colonies. The boatmen or the nameless ones as they are called, because nobody knows their names outside their colonies, form the lowest stratum in the city. They live at the periphery of the city in squalid mud huts along the green banks of 'the River'.

Like "Son and grandson of Grand Masters,"[2] the 'elitist' Grand Master believes that he loves the city and rules it as best it allows him to rule. Living in comfort in a huge palace with cellars of gold, he feels the starved and half-naked boatmen to be "unreasonable and mutinous".[3] To become the unquestioned master of the city is his overriding concern. "The Era of Ultimate Greatness," which he declares with the help of the Astrologer, is one such attempt to become all powerful king of the city and perpetuate his hegemony over the city. In the name of controlling the *asuras* who disturb the

peace of the city, he settles his score with the boatmen who refuse to swear allegiance to him. He may be seen as having constructed a view of the boatmen as his 'other' and manipulating them on that basis to his own ends. Those who oppose him are sent without any trial to the Gold Mines "make-shift prisons" where it is "the domain of permanent night."[4] The Grand Master knows quite well that Master Bhoma, a supporter and leader of the boatmen, is no more than "a scrawny harmless teacher out of the mud huts."[5] He cleverly manipulates the so-called conspiracy of Bhoma to know the secret aspirations of his advisers and to realise his dream of becoming all powerful king. He sees to it that Bhoma is not arrestd nor his whereabouts revealed till he becomes the king, so that he can inflict untold sufferings on the people in the name of the 'conspiracy'. Once he realizes hsi ambition, he has no hesitation in wiping out Bhoma. Like a typical oppressor, he manipulates the cultural life of the society to suit his purposes. He uses the Festival of the River, an age-old festival which is celebrated as symbol of man's quest for Truth, to 'coronate' his son as his successor. These strategies of the Grand Master may, from one point of view, seem to arise from his 'colonial consciousness'"; but, in a more inclusive view, they exemplify the general pattern of the machinations of power, not specificlly 'colonial'.

The Grand Master's councillors are as ambitious and self-seeking as he is. Highly caste-conscious, they try, in their own way, to get maximum advantage out of the conspiracy. The Commissioner of Police, a low caste man himself, has no sympathy for the boatmen, but backs the Grand Master in his struggle for supremacy. The Education Adviser sees in the 'conspiracy' an excellent opportunity to overthrow the Grand Master or at least blackmail him. The Minister for Trade, a close relative of the Grand Master, suspects the Grand Master's hand behind the conspiracy. So, to protect his interests he signs two deeds of National Partnership with the Education Adviser and General Starch of the army. Bureaucrats like Dharma's father are no better. They are hand in glove with the corrupt elite. The machinations of the Grand Master and the sychophancy of his advisers have reminded many critics of the Emergency period in recent Indian history and on that basis they have judged the

novel to be a political parable.

Pitched against the corrupt Grand Master and his councilors are "the wretched of the earth", the oppressed and the marginalized boatmen who live in the periphery of the city. They may be said to represent the 'subaltern'; it is their sweat that brings wealth into the city and it is their blood that has saved the city from annihilation for ages. But they are always deprived of the basic necessaries of life by the Grand Master and are dubbed as 'conspirators' by him. Unlike the elite of the Seven Hills and the educated brick people, the boatmen have not forgotten their roots in the river and to the river alone they hold their allegiance. By stopping them from celebrating their allegiance to the river in the form of the Festival of the River, the Grand Master refuses them their cultural identity and thus their fundamental selfhood. In spite of these hardships imposed by the Grand Master, the boatmen refuse to accept the position of 'marginality' to which he tries to relegate them.

Under the tyrannical and humiliating rule of the Grand Master, the boatmen find themselves estranged from themselves as well as their city. The only respite they get from this humiliation is from Master Bhoma's joke about the naked king, which Shailaja's brother narrates to them. The joke gradually turns into "a chronicle of the city's humiliation"[6] and it is something like the boatmen's attempt 'to write back' to the centre. The Headman reflects: " After months of humiliation it was in the young bard's recitations that she and the other boatmen have at last felt some of their self-respect restored."[7] But the arrest of the Headman and the Professor and the Professor's death in the Gold Mines due to hunger strike, make them feel that they have become "orphans in an evil world."[8]

Merely voicing protest, as the boatmen soon realise, leads them nowhere. The sleeping protesters are massacred in the boat works. Desperate to free themselves, they seek the help of the shock brigades of the Education Adviser much against Bhoma's wish, only to be betrayed at the nick of the time. This does not deter them from their active resistance. They take up their bows and arrows to fight the automatic weapons of the Grand Master. Death does not frighten them as they know very well that it is inevitable. In fighting the

oppressive imperialism of the Grand Master, they find a good reason to die. The Grand Master successfully wipes out the protest of the boatmen. The three forces' combined attack of the Son which kills Bhoma and his friends also blows up the embankment of the rainfed rising river. The river engulfs the city, obliterating the thumping victory the Grand Master turned king has won over the boatmen. Such a course and ending of the novel, according to O.P. Budholia, presents "a political ideology which decolonizes the concept of the ruler and the ruled and the elites and the common poeple."[9]

However, the plausible post-colonial reading of the novel on the lines I have sketched may not be adequate as it takes into account only the political and social implications of the boatmen's rebellion. Foregrounded in the novel is a vision of life which goes beyond political and social issues and which explores "some fundamental truths about human life with its spiritual destiny."[10] The boatmen struggle against the Grand Master not because they want to regain their political freedom and social status which has been denied to them by the imperialist Grand Master. It is because the boatmen believe firmly that they are children of the river which is "a symbol of the divine mother. Or God Himself."[11] So, they profess their undivided allegiance to the river and believe that it cannot be shared with allegiance to man. The choice that is before them and the choice that they do exercise is not between two political systems or social patterns but "allegiance to God or to man."[12] The struggle between the boatmen and the Grand Master is not a struggle between different interests of different groups but more in the nature of a fight between 'Truth' and 'Falsehood'; for, the river to which the boatmen swear their allegiance is a symbol of 'Truth' and of God. The Grand Master who in his megalomania tries to force them to swear allegiance to him creates "an empire of falsehood."[13] He emerges as a "symbol of egoism, selfishness. stupidity."[14]

Indeed, one of the prominent issues raised in post-colonialist interpretation is the question of voice — whose voice does the narrative present. Using that criterion, we find that the narrative voice in *The City and the River* is unmistakably that of the Great Yogeshwara and the Hermit of the Mountain. Neither of them views the polarities between the Grand Master and the boatmen as one between the

'elitist' and the 'subaltern.' The Great Yogeshwara tells his disciple the Nameless One, "God resides as much in a Grand Master as in you and me. Is not, therefore, always room for hope?"[15] In other words, he asserts that all are equal in the eyes of God with potentialities to do good or evil by the choice that they make. That's why the Hermit is as much a friend and counsellor of the boatmen as to the Minister for Trade, Thus, 'the city' and 'the river' in the novel are not quite to be viewed as opposing symbols.[16] Although the title may seem to suggest a binary opposition, the opposites do significantly meet, if only ultimately. Further, it may be noted that the conjunction 'and' in the title actually indicates a relationship between the 'city' and the 'river' rather than oppositon.

Another factor bears importance in the interpretation of the novel. The post-colonial depends very much on a specific cultural and political frame in time and space. It is generally marked by a historicist specificity, as distinct from or against universality and 'dabblings' in the universal. *The City and the River* is a tale which an ageless Great Yogeshwara reads out to his disciple the Nameless-One from a book of yellowed pages. The narrative frame work and pattern resembles that of the traditional *puranas* in which an old wise teacher, a guru or sage, tells his keen disciple a fairly long story of significance to prepare him for a quest and a mission. Thus, both the narrator Yogeshwara and the listener Nameless-One are mythical figures. In the absence of any specific name to the 'city' and the 'river', they become all cities and all rivers of all times. Further, the novel blends disparate elements, ancient and modern, like hermits, yagnas, sacrifices, boatmen with bows and arrows, sel-loading rifles, tanks, helicopters, ultra-modern lasers, etc. There are even pyramids to remind us of the despotic pharaohs of Egypt. Whatever resonances of the Emergency period in India we hear in the novel are very vague and there is no one-to-one correspondence between the characters in the novel and historical personalities or incidents in the novel and historical events as we find in a typical post-colonial text like *The Great Indian Novel* by Shashi Tharoor. So, the struggle between the boatmen and the Grand Master fictionalised in the novel is more in the nature of the myth of the eternal

recurrence of good vs evil. As evidence for the mythical subtext of the novel, we may cite the prophecy which refers to God being the real king of the city, Little Star who is a star as well as a body visible only to some, an ageless parrot which constantly reminds people of the choice that they have to make, a cyclical time framework which suggests birth-death-rebirth of the city, a melody which is a melody played by boatmen as well as the melody of the spheres heard at cosmic level. The mythical subtext is used not so much as a "radical posture of defiance"[17] as to reinforce the suggestion that the import of the novel transcends the limits of specific time and place.

Hence, a post-colonialist reading of *The City and the River* may result in a partial interpretation of the novel and prove inadequate to its larger dimensions.

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FROM THE MARGIN TOWARDS THE CENTRE: A READING OF UMA PARAMESWARAN'S CREATIVE WRITING

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In recent times, Canada has been witnessing a coming together of people belonging to many different countries and cultures that has resulted in the flowering of a multicultural ethnic mosaic. Among the new immigrants the South Asian group has emerged as the major ethno–cultural group in Canada. The South Asian literature deals with the problems faced by the immigrants in Canada like alienation, loneliness, homelessness, existential rootlessness, nostalgia, questioning, protest and assertion along with search for identity. People of ethnic minorities always find themselves in the margin. Their struggle to adjust to their marginal status frequently makes them nostalgic about their past and their country of origin. Uma Parameswaran, a prominent South Asian Canadian writer voices the anguish, aspirations and anxiety of the South Asian Canadians in her writing.

Diasporic writing addresses issues related to amalgamation or disintegration of cultures. An expatriate writer fixed in two cultures, the one of origin and the other of settlement, carves a new identity synthesizing the old and the new, thus blurring the discriminating margins of the two social milieus — this phenomenon is referred to by critics as *melting pot* syndrome — , or he reluctantly bids farewell to his native soil. Internalising nostalgia and suffering a forced amnesia he constructs an identity accepting the oddities of the soil wherein he has sought refuge. Here margins obstruct; confluence of the binaries becomes a remote possibility as the past intrudes and the present dominates. The picture is that of a *Salad Bowl* where components exist with distinct identities without any scope for merger. Uma Parameswaran herself has said that connecting two 'home lands' has been the main theme of her critical creative writings.

Diasporic writing requires the writer's projection of his own culture, relating it at the same time more positively to the host cul-

ture. As he moves from one culture to another, the writer may need to relocate himself afresh in relation to the centre. The visualization of his experience and the concretisation of the immediate in radically different idiom is indeed a process towards the relocation of the immigrant's identity. The new world presented is not a fantasy that cancels the reality of the past, but on the contrary is a readjustment, adaptation, participation and fulfilment.

A study of Uma Parameswaran's work reflects the ongoing involvement of an immigrant writer with reality. Her first short story "The Door I Shut Behind Me "(1967) reflects the sense of wonder and fear of the immigrant at the new world around him, and nostalgia for the world left behind. The story is about a young graduate Chander, who secures a green card and goes to Canada, and his first impressions of being in a new country. While his mother gives him a copy of the *Ramayana* and a translation of *Bhagavad-Gita* as parting gifts, Chander himself buys a copy of Chandra Sekhar's *Radiative Transfer*, though it is not his field of study, nor is it one that one could read during a journey. He simply is driven by an urge to hold that book to "see it was to think of its India – born author, and to think of him was to open a world of ambition and inspiration" (TOW p.94). He was quite surprised to see that the Indian families in Canada not only create 'little India' around them but also prefer to live in the memories of India of their childhood rather than the India of today. He comes to know that "When we leave our country we shut many doors behind ourselves though we are not aware of it at the time" (TOW p.105). At the same time, being optimistic, he feels that "there are many doors ahead of us" (TOW p.105).

Uma's second and most important work *Trishanku* (1988) was a sequence of poems covering twenty years and spoken by various voices, where one finds an encounter of different cultures. In a review of the sequence, Tom Wayman pays tribute to its "startling and powerful collage of the experience of uprooting and resettlement, of the intermingling of personal and social histories and of many other human dimensions involved in transplanting an ancient culture to a new land" (TOW p.9). Within this context, the range of topics, which Uma Parameswaran treats, is far-reaching: childbirth

and child rearing, marriage and family, friendship, community, education and poetry. The most striking feature of *Trishanku* is the vivid sense of life created by the memories, dreams and present reality of each speaker. Here are a few voices that depict fear, wonder, uncertainty, dilemmas, sense of loss, anger, isolation, despair, intense nostalgia, and at the same time an overriding impulse to survive in the new environment. The collective memory touches every person who is physically, culturally and emotionally displaced. The characters – Chander, Usha, Chandrika, Dilip, Savitri, Sharad, and Jayant – recur through out her work. They are caught in-between the worlds like the King *Trishanku*, trying to create a third space.

Uma Parameswaran provides a new perspective based on gender to the whole discourse of diasporic writing. Commenting on her T*rishanku*, she says, while Chandrika is willing to bond with the land to which her husband Chander has brought her and can love both homelands, Chander cannot commit himself to either. Perhaps, women with centuries of cultural indoctrination and expectations are able to adapt more quickly, and accept and love two homes without conflict or ambivalence.

Vithal, who represents the promising younger generation, says assertively:

> *We shall build our temple*
> Here where the Assiniboine
> Flows into the Red.
> And I shall bring Ganga,
> As Bhagiratha did of old,
> To our land
> our Assiniboine
> And the flute player
> *Dark as* kaya *blossom*
> *Shall dance on the waters of La Salle.*(TOW P.79)

The flute player, Lord Krishna, did come to the Canadian soil when Uma Parameswaran staged her dance drama *Meera* written in 1971.

The title play *Sons Must Die* is set against the backdrop of Kashmir and the Indo-Pak war of 1947-48. It focuses on the psyche and sensibility of the three mothers, each belonging to different parts of the sub-continent and unfamiliar with the geographical and politi-

cal realities of Kashmir. Their maternal sensibility transcends political precincts and sees only what Wilfred Owen calls the 'Pity of War.' This play reflects Uma's diasporic consciousness.

Uma Parameswaran, an expatriate writer in Canada, carries a distinct memory of her past and transmutes her nostalgia in her artistic creations in a unique way. She tries to relocate the history, philosophy and vision of her homeland in the midst of an alien host culture, and reveals her diasporic consciousness. In her plays *Meera* and *Sita's Promise* she goes back to her roots and transplants the old familiar Indian environment on the Canadian soil by re-appropriating the Indian legends and myths. Her work *Meera*, a dance drama, evolves around India's artistic resources and sets out to celebrate Indian art and traditions and at the same time to educate the outsider about our culture. It has a very simple story line that takes us through Meera's life with all its familiar episodes. It gives us the pleasure of the familiar, while telling the outsiders the basic details about Krishna's life and our dance and music traditions.

Sita's Promise links epic India with modern Canada through myth and dance, and makes them a vehicle of new vision. Rama, Sita and Lakshmana — the main characters in the Hindu epic — during their forest exile find a wounded arctic tern that has lost its way in its northern migration. They resolve to take it back to its home; they travel northwards where Jatayu, the sacred eagle, carries them to the tern's home by the shores of the primeval ocean that we now call Lake Agassiz. The return of the arctic tern back to its home is the urge of all immigrants; their longing to return home is brought out at various stages in the play. The native children dance for Sita and ask her to stay with them. Sita says she must go, but promises them that she will come again: "I, through my people, shall surely come again and we shall build our temple and sing our songs with all the children of all the different lands who make this their home." (SOP p.62).

Sita's Promise and *Meera* indicate the nostalgic passion of an expatriate writer to represent the characters and message from the greatest resources of her native culture with the help of her talent and learning and to represent them to an alien audience, earning

from them, if possible, the same love and regard that she carried within her for the precious givens that lay beyond the door she shut behind her.

The play *Dear Deedi, My Sister* composed in the 1980s is in the mode of letter correspondence between two sisters, one in Canada and the other in India. Apart from these two, we come across a variety of men and women, all immigrants from various parts of the world, settled in Canada. Life in the new land places them in a unique, uncomfortable condition. Like the poems in *Trishanku,* these poems too address the issues of racism, adjustment, adaptation and the hopes and despairs of the immigrants. Mark the following lines:

> We are new Canadians
> Come from many races
> Black, white, olive, brown,
> All alike, for all the many places
> Hightech, midtech, notech
> *Are one.* (SOP p.72)

In spite of the pain of discrimination and alienation, Uma Parameswaran ends these poems with an affirmative vision.

This acceptance by the host culture amidst the dilemmas and self-imposed ghettoisation is clearly seen in Uma Parameswaran's play, *Rootless But Green Are the Boulevard Trees*. This play centres on an East Indian family living in the suburb of Winnipeg whose members are divided by three generations, and the three phases offer a glimpse into one aspect of East Indian experience and the process of acculturation in Canada. The parents who represent the older generation have their roots in India, though they have come to Canada for greater opportunities. Their children, who represent the second generation, assimilate the influence of the two cultures. As they have spent the first half of their life in India and the second half in Canada, their tradition and values are a blend of these two cultures. The youngest siblings, who are born in Canada, represent the third generation. These children have never been to India and appear to have assimilated the Canadian culture completely. All this process of cultural acculturation are revealed in the play through settings, language and dialogue, which gives excellent glimpses into the clash of values as represented by the members of the three generations.

The diiemmas exist more in the parent generation than in the younger one. Here is Sharad saying:

> It upsets me profoundly to find myself in a crowd. All those alien faces staring at or through you. It makes me wonder. Makes me ask myself, what am I doing here?... Each so self-contained, so complete, looking at me as though I shouldn't be there. (SOP p.82)

But the youngsters assert themselves and demand their inheritance. Jayant, one of the young men, knows that home is where the feet are:

> ... our people, our old country, Dad, there's no 'our people' and no 'old country' for anyone in the world any more, least of all for us. This is our land and here we shall stay. (SOP p.83)

When the father distressingly points out the absence of roots, the son assures him that they can grow roots in their adopted land.

In an article Uma Parameswaran states that romanticizing one's native land has a place so long as it does not paralyse one's capacity to develop new bonds within one's adopted homeland. The new bonds are already being forged between Jyoti and Andre and Vithal and Donna. Sharad and Savitri feel that "Andre is a decent boy. He behaves just like one of us. So respectful. He looks like us too, with his black hair and eyes" (SOP p.81). Jyoti, Jayant, Vithal, Swapna and such youngsters are the 'flags' planted by Uma Parameswaran in the Canadian soil who are going to create a new culture – a third space which transforms and enriches Canadian culture. They themselves have travelled a long way from "unthinking Scorn, unfeeling barbs, closed fists and closed hearts" to being accepted, appreciated and acculturated. Thus Uma Parameswaran through this play highlights not only the immigrant experience of the new Canadians but also shows how these characters achieve cultural synthesis in the new land.

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P.V. NARASIMHARAO'S *THE INSIDER* : A PLEA FOR INTEGRITY, COMPETENCE AND GOOD NATURE

Brahma Dutta Sharma

P.V. Narasimharao's novel *The Insider* is a plea for integrity, righteousness, competence, and good nature as Anand, the protagonist of the novel, is marked for these qualities and even though he is not absolutely free from faults (his extra-marital love-affair with Aruna is one of his glaring weaknesses, and for this weakness he has to face such insulting comments as the following one: "'... Indira Ghandhi will never come to plead for this bloody sinner. He is a characterless wretch and a blot on the government and the party.'"[1]), yet he, who not only rises from a terrorist to a legislator and finally reaches the chair of the Prime Minister, has integrity, righteousness, competence, and good nature in his character.

When the narrator reports: "Anand, who had decided to retire from active politics and had declined to contest and Lok Sabha election, was called upon to shoulder the Prime Minister's task, suddenly, unexpectedly, in an extraordinary turn of political events" (767), he is reporting a sort of a divine intervention in human affairs in order to reward Anand, as there is no explicit reason why he should be called upon to shoulder the Prime Minister's task when he has decided to retire from active politics and not to contest the Lok Sabha elections. Since Anand is given the post of Prime Minister unexpectedly, the incident is to be regarded as the divine intervention in his favour, and one has to study his conduct and behaviour in order to find out as to what factors are responsible for this incident to occur.

Political integrity is the first remarkable trait of the personality of Anand. In his capacity as a member of the Congress Party, he not only accepts the political programme of his party but also tries to implement it faithfully. His sincerity is evidenced by his taking the resolutions of his Party seriously and regarding people's welfare as a criterion of the acceptability of his actions, as the narrator reports: "Where [Anand] himself was concerned, the party's adoption of a

far-reaching ideology in its entirety was something which humbled him and made him think deeply about each decision he made. When a file came to him for disposal, he felt something within him stir and ask, 'Is your decision going to be in confrormity with the spirit of socialism?'" (403).

After he has become a member of the Congress Party Anand is a man of socialist leanings as he likes the state to neutralize social imbalances. The fact finds projection in his statement: "'My approach is not election-oriented at all. I want social transformation for its own sake, which is what I believe the party stands for, votes or no votes. And in the ultimate analysis, the party programme is not inimical to its electoral prospects. What will indeed affect our electoral prospects, if that should ever happen, is our vacillation and gaping chasm between precept and practice ...'" (315). Like a socialist, he believes in eliminating private property altogether. No doubt he ignores the issue whether people, who love property so much that even a "shack ignites... passions" in them, will allow anybody, not to speak of a government that depends for its return to power on their votes, to abolish private property altogether and will accept that they can get happiness only when they allow their private properties to be snatched away from them.

Again, it is like a socialist that he believes in the government's not letting disparities widen and suggests ways and means to achieve that end as he argues: "'The correct order should be: distribute the means of production first; enable all to produce more; avoid increase of disparities'" (231). He does not pay attention to the fact that since there are disparities in respect of talents, competence, assiduity and integrity, disparities in possessions too are bound to remain. So does he ignore the fact that perpetually squeezing the competent to help the incompetent is unjust (It is a well-known fact that when a government tries to remove disparities, it has to squeeze and suppress the competent, as it is they who have been able to earn and multiply) and this step of the government is likely to make it unpopular.

Likewise, it is his socialistic leaning that makes him support the step of nationalizing the banks as this step of the government

is likely to enable them to advance loans to the poor and enable the poor to come out of the clutches of the greedy moneylenders, who exploit the poor and go on charging interest at surprisingly high rates. And this is the reason why he supports Mrs. Indira Gandhi when she contests the election for the leadership of her party in Parliament.

Like a socialist Anand sympathises with the landless and believes that the tribals have unjustly been deprived of their land holdings by landlords. The fact comes to light when we find that he accepts as correct the police report blaming the landlords and bureaucrats for the tribals' having become landless. And like a socialist he has a genuine will to give the landless peasants land. The fact comes to light from the following brooding of his: "Take the rural poor, for instance. The government had promised them land for more than a decade. He, Anand, was in the game right now. How much land had he given them so far? Not much, he admitted to himself. The landholders had violated the land ceiling law in a vast number of cases. He now could do nothing about it" (615). This is in conformity with the views of Jawaharlal Nehru, who had asserted that the problem of poverty in India could be solved only by taking land from the landlords and giving it to the landless peasants.

Anand is different from his fellow politicians, as most of his colleagues do not care much for scruples. For instance, the narrator reprots that Mahendranath, who is the Chief Minister of the state of Afrozabad, silences his scruples on the issue of political survival: "'... whatever Mahendranath's initial scruples, the urge for political survival promptly silenced them. ... his followers did things in a manner that did not need his agreement. It was an exercise in subtlety and misrepresentation. They assured him that nothing they proposed to do was wrong in any way. And he was convinced, because he wanted to be'" (159). In order to celebrate Mahendranath's birthday they use the government machinery and force people to contribute money to meet its expenses. A man of scruples will not silence his scruples but will try to see to it that no dishonesty is committed to benefit him and that not only he but even his dependents are not given any undue advantage as getting an advantage is indirectly getting a bribe.

Both Chaudhury and Mahendranath, who precede Anand as Chief Ministers, practise hypocrisy as either of them tries to impress upon people that he is a socialist and talks of uplifting the poor and the downtrodden, but actually wants socialism to be as far away from the state as the north pole is from the south. The narrator also reports that several other leaders in the Congress Party practise the art of pretending to be socialists without positing their slightest belief in socialism. He draws the readers' attention to the fact that these leaders who write about socialism preach socialism and receive acclaim for their socialist speeches and writings are not genuine socialists at all as they have enriched themselves through "highly exploitative businesses" and are not persons of integrity as they have received wealth from "unsavoury resources" (134). The narrator further exposes Chief Minister Chaudhury as he shows that Chaudhury has no faith in socialism, even though he pretends to be a genuine socialist. The fact comes to light when we turn to the following three reports of the narrator, the first of which runs as follows: "[Chaudhury] had quoted with hearty approbation someone's gibe that socialism is a system that makes all people equally poor. 'I wonder how many heads and feet you would have to cut off if the principle of equality of height were to apply to the ladies and gentlemen standing right here, on the dancing floor,' he had said"(133); and the second of which reads as follows: "At the meeting of the Subjects Committee of his party, he moved an amendment to the official resolution. The resolution, he roared, did not go far enough. He wanted socialism 'here and now', instead of the circumlocutory (according to him) socialistic pattern of society that was being mooted"(133). Chaudhury pretends to be advocating for socialism because this pretension, he thinks, can endear him to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and can keep him in power.

It is the issue of land reforms that exposes the Chief Minister in the novel in which Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister, has made up his mind to implement the land ceiling laws. The report that the Chief Ministers do not "raise the banner of dissent" but come out of the meeting "seething with mute rage and frustration" (291) dertermined not to implement the ceiling laws makes the fact clear.

The narrator exposes these Chief Ministers as they are the persons trying to break the citadel of the socialist programme of the Congrss Party from within as they agree with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in the meetings of the Party but refuse to implement the land reforms programme to which each of them is a party and protect the landlords by not implementing the land-ceiling laws.

However, the narrator repeatedly suggests that Anand is a man of integrity. It is also suggested through several characters in the novel. Not only his friends but also his foes express their opinion to this effect. For instace, Aruna remarks: "'Here is a rare specimen of humanity. No guile, no evil, yet he manages to survive in politics — in fact thrives — and that's the most amazing part of it!'" (155). Anand is not power hungry, as the narrator reports: "... Anand worked without any visible ambition" (170); and the welfare of the people is the first thing in his mind as on being asked to join the cabinet the first question that he asks is: "What is in it for the people?" (171). In this regard Anand stands in sharp contrast with Shekhar who is "articulate, and possesse(s) youth, dynamism, intelligence, and tenacity of purpose" (169) no doubt, as the narrator reports, but "believe(s) in ends. He [is] certain that all talk about pure means [is] so much nonsense" (169), meaning thereby that he does not hesitate in resorting to dishonesty in order to attain his ends, while Anand, as has been pointed out, stands for absolute honesty.

Another dimension of his integrity is his impatiality. The fact that he is impartial comes to light when we find that he rejects the request of Bhim Shankar, a powerful landlord of his constituency to order work to begin on an irrigation tank "against the norms" (234) even though this makes him an offender in the eyes of the landlord. If he had not been an impartial man he would have tried to win the favour of this powerful landlord because the latter can help him in winning the election as this man belongs to his constituency.

That Anand is also a competent man is evidenced by the following remark of the narrator: "...competence couldn't be ignored either, to the extent it gave the government some 'weight' in the eyes of the people. 'A few', Chaudhury said to a journalist who was a confidante, 'just a few like that brainy young fellow who is keeping

that pretty legislator Aruna happy ...'" (.200) as here the narrator says that Chaudhury gave a cabinet ministership to Anand because he knew that the latter was a competent legislator. Anand's brilliance comes to light from the fact that he possesses a penetrating foresight. For instance, it is his foresight that enables him to foresee that the widening disparity will create tensions in the society. That Anand has a penetrating insight into the political affairs of the country and that he is a good judge of character comes to light when he is able to perceive that the number of M.P.s supporting Indira Gandhi is larger than that of the M.P.s supporting Morarji Desai, and says so to Chief Minister Chaudhury. And his prediction comes true when the narrator reports: "Indira Gandhi was elected leader of the Party in Parliament and became Prime Minister" (479). The same inference the reader also has to come to when one finds him trying to go beneath the surface to find facts and not remain content with what is apparent. For instance, when Shankar Das comes from Delhi and Chief Minister Chaudhury asks Anand to discuss with the former national scene, Anand is not satisfied with the piece of information that he has come to Afrozabad only "to explore a lead" (550) and asks Chaudhury: "Given the eminence of the person, his intimate connections at the higher level, the current political activity in Delhi which no responsible Delhi-based journalist would normally miss by visiting a state.... 'Don't you think there is something more to this visit?'" (551). That Anand has a penetrating understanding of things, rather than merely a superficial one, comes to light when we study his opinion about the programmes of his political party: "'I don't think any of our party programmes would lead to the wilderness, as such.... On the other hand, the accussation is that many of our promises to the people were just for garnering votes. Critics said they were a hoax'" (303) and such other utterances of his. Even Shekhar, his enemy in several senses, admits that Anand is a brilliant man and that he leaves no loopholes in what he does (344).

Anand is politically mature enough to understand that in the political field it is the policy, rather than some family, that has to be paid attention to and that a politician of integrity remains loyal to a policy rather than to a family. The narrator draws attention to this

fact when he says: "All of Anand's admiration [for Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's exemplary traits], however, could not reconcile him to the new slogan of 'loyalty'. Loyalty to the party, even to one individual of Nehru's stature, was understandable. But when the slogan extended to the family ... Anand remembered the king's regime. He recalled his early revulsion towards the concept of loyalty to the king, even in the context of hereditary rule. Now in the new context of democracy, the slogan saddened him" (357). The interests of the country and those of a political party can be protected only if the leader is brilliant and politically competent. That is why a political party can come to and retain power in a democracy only if its leader is politically more competent than that of any other. In such a situation every politician will like his party to be led by the most competent man in the party and will like to remain loyal to him, rather than to any member of a particular family.

It is Anand's political maturity that enables him to persuade even a landlord like Balram to accept the need of land reforms in the context of the fact that there occur a large number of murders every year only because land reforms have not been made. It is not easy to persuade the affected, as the pain caused by a financial loss remains uncompensated howsoever strong arguments one may advance. It is only a very brilliant man who can cause a loss to a person and also make him accept the loss voluntarily. Anand's brilliance, again, comes to light when we turn to the fact that he takes decisions on merit, rather than on such grounds as 'a long-standing government practice,' and 'a practice that has stood the test of time.' This fact becomes clear when we find him to be in temporary charge of the department of prisons and find him resolving to take a decision on the basis of merit and reject the petition of a landlord murderer to treat him as a 'B' class prisoner.

Assiduity is another commendable trait of Anand's character. No wonder he resolves: "'My way would be to redouble my efforts to make an undeniable difference to the people. I'll work, work, work — work to distraction or death, so that public support will be overwhelming and trivialities will pale into insignificance. This is what is called drawing a longer line'" (286) and sticking to the practice of

serving the people whole-heartedly irrespective of victory or defeat in the election as even after he has been defeated in the first general election he lets people return to "their petty requests and recommendations, pestering him as they had done before the poll, as if nothing at all had happened" (110). The fact that he goes on helping ungrudgingly without any distinction signifies that he believes in achieving success through work. His assiduity finds expression in many other forms too. For instance, he tries to win the election through a massive contact programme as the narrator reports. Another dimension of his assiduity is working for his political party by involving himself in all its programmes. Another proof of his assiduity is the narrator's report: "Determined to be of service to the people who had voted him to the legislature [Anand] would spend weeks on end in his constituency, travelling extensively to the distant villages in the area" (139).

That Anand is good natured is evidenced by the fact that he is not revengeful and does nothing against those who do him wrongs. This is apparent from his reaction on finding that Shekhar does much to make the election meeting, which Mrs. Gandhi is scheduled to address in favour of Anand, go flop; but far from doing anything by way of revenge , he does "... nothing" (504). The fact that he is not a revengeful man is obvious when he says to Aruna: "'I have no desire to fight them on *their* terms, especially because my fight is not with individuals but with what I see is wrong, know is wrong. This is why I'm not interested in wasting my energy to destroy X or Y. So I don't care what they say'" (286). His resolving not to harm his enemies amply demonstrates that he is a good natured man above petty things like taking revenge.

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DR. JOHNSON THE MAN AND HIS LITERARY REPUTATION

Alka Rastogi

The present paper is a modest attempt to establish the thesis that some of the basic qualities and traits of Dr. Johnson the man were largely responsible for his reputation as a literary dictator of his age. That is to say, there was a very close, inalienable correlation between Dr. Johnson the man and Dr. Johnson the most distinguished and awed man of letters of his century. What I propose to bring out is that he enjoyed unprecendented fame and commanded respect and fear as a literary luminary in his life-time, not simply because he was one of the most learned among his contemporaries, or that he was the first English Lexicographer, or that he passed strong unique judgments on the various English writers, fetching for him the appellation 'the hanging judge,' or that he was a great talker. These remarkable achievements of Dr. Johnson must have undeniably contrributed to his greatness, to some extent, but what made him the most outstanding literary figure of the Eighteenth century was mainly the man that he was. He did not possess Pope's astonishing wit and brilliancy, nor did he have Gray's fine imaginative quality and disctinction, nor did he show Addison's thematic and stylistic excellence. Also, he did not write much poetry of any great importance, and his critical judgments were sometimes very prejudiced and faulty as we all know. His poems, *Rambler* and *Idler, Rasselas,* critical writings and the massive work of single-handed hard work for years — the *Dictionary of the English Language* — could not have earned for him the immense fame and authority that he had in his later years. It is said that he was endowed with a very bulky and unpleasant personality, and was very rough, frightening and insulting to most of the persons, thus making people fear him. Also, he was an expert in creating upon others' mind the impression of his physical and intellectual superiority in no time. His biography tells us that when only a school-going boy, the fellow students looked upon him so much as a superior person to themselves that three of them, including his life-long friend, Hector, "used to come in the

morning as his humble attendant and carry him to school. One in the middle stooped while he sat upon his back, and one on each side supported him, and thus he was borne triumphant."[1] But these aspects of his personality — his rough and insulting habits and manners, his skill in exhibiting and establishing his superiority over others, — and his literary output, mentioned above, were things that could have impressed only a few, and would not have influenced the larger world and would not have crowned him with the literary dictatorship. In short, what I believe and stress is that it was Dr. Johnson the man, gifted with some very unique qualities of head and heart, who actually created Dr. Johnson the literary dictator of his age, eclipsing in his life-time such celebrated authors as Pope, Gray, Goldsmith, Fielding and others.

Let us now briefly enumerate the basic qualities in Dr. Johnson the man that undoubtedly imparted him the singular fame and authority he enjoyed particularly in his later life. In England perhaps it is not the brilliance or distinction of mind that win the respect of people; the English think of themselves as plain persons, more honest and direct in words and deeds than the rest of the world. Dr. Johnson, as well as the king of his times, George III, possessed these qualities of man abundantly, and thus wielded great power in their own spheres of life. George III and the public of the Eighteenth century were enamoured of Dr. Johnson — a plain man with extraordinary courage of convictions. In Johnson's staunch sincerity and invincible commonsense they saw the ideal of the country. He could achieve a position of unique authority among his fellow countrymen mainly because of the gifts of veracity, honesty and good sense. The writers in the Eighteenth century were thought to be fantastical, living in dreams, sharing none of the plain man's interests, interested in trifles and indifferent to the vast world of life. The people and the king of that age found Dr. Johnson just the opposite of this and hence instinctively accepted him as the leader of the men of letters. Plainness, with a certain quiet and strightforwardness which Englishmen consider to be the peculiar birthright of the people of their nation, was the focal point in the mind of Johnson. The secret of his greatness lies, to use his own phrase, in the "bottom of sense,"

which characterized all that he wrote and said. Whether right or wrong, there is always something fundamentally human about him which appeals to all and specially to the plain man. In fact, no man, as Johnson Bailey affirms, "not even swift, ever put the plain man's view with such exactness, felicity and force as Johnson does in his writings."[2]

Dr. Johson always stood firmly on the solid ground of fact. Human life, as it is actually lived, was the subject of his study and conversation from the beginning to the end. He always put theories to strict positive tests which the common man comprehends and trusts at once, though it is true that the ordinary people have not the quickness of mind to apply or practise them. When people preached a theory to him, he would contradict them simply by applying it to practice. Let me refer to an incident from his life to illustrate it. One of his friends was Mrs. Macaulay, who was a republican, and believed in the doctrines of the equality of all men. When Johnson was at her house one day, he said to her: "Madam, I have now become a convert to your way of thinking. I am convinced that all mankind are upon an equal footing; and to give you an unquestionable proof, Madam, that I am in earnest, here is a very sensible, civil, well-behaved fellow-citizen, your footman: I desire that he may be allowed to sit down and dine with us." After that, as Dr. Johnson records, "She never liked me since."[3] The promptness of Johnson in applying arithmetical tests to careless statements must have been one of the definite causes of the fear, respect and confidence he created in those who knew him directly or indirectly. Let me cite another instance to prove the point. A gentleman once told him that in France, as soon as a man of fashion marries, he takes an opera girl into keeping, and he declared this to be the common practice. "Pray sir," said Johnson, "how many opera girls may there be?" He answered, "About four score." "Well then, sir," replied Johnson, "You see there can he no more than four score men of fashion who can do this."[4]

Wonderful goodsense, firm grip on the realities of life, love of truth and seriousness unmistakably marked his writings, conversations and actions, and these traits in him seized the imagination of the reading public of his age. These qualities lent him homeliness

of appeal and won for him the reputation of manliness and honesty that he enjoyed throughout his life. The unfailing grasp of the realities of life was the most important ingredient of Johnson's greatness. Ordinary people felt it from the first, and looked to Johnson more than anybody else. He filled the entire reading public of England of his age with confidence in him. His contemporaries discovered in him a man singularly rich in the wisdom of everyday life, learned but not the slave of learning, sincerely religious but with a religion that would never ignore the realities of human life, and a scholar, a philosopher and a Christian, who was, above everything else, a man out and out.

It was conduct, not faith, ethics, not religion, the duty of man in this life, not his supernatural destiny in another, that mainly possessed the minds of the serious people in the unecclesiastical age of the eighteenth century. And Dr. Johnson, who was a Christian, a churchman saturated with ecclesiastical prejudices, was just the man to fascinate and dominate the people with such interests as these. No questions occupied his mind so much as moral questions. All his life he was primarily concerned with how he ought to live, and how to live better. He considered the problem of the conduct of life to be of supreme importance to a rational man and regarded it as essentially a moral problem. His treatment of it is usually based on reason, not on mere authority or orthodoxy, or even on Christianity in the least. For example, *Rasselas*, his popular ethical novel, which has been translated into most of the European languages, does not contain a single allusion to Christianity. And even elsewhere when he discusses definitely Christian problems, he usually does so in the light of unfettered reason and commonsense. He was never hesitant in judging it by the touchstone of reason. Obviously, the essential element in the confidence Johnson acquired was not his seriousness, but his supreme sanity and infallible commonsense.

Dr. Johnson's concern for human life was another factor responsible for his fame and authority as a man of letters. Scholar as he was, and very conscious of the dignity of scholarship, he never forgot that scholarship faded into insignificance when put beside the basic issues of life. No wonder at the height of his scholarship he

remarked in the preface to the *Dictionary*: "...this recommendation of steadiness and uniformity (in spelling) does not proceed from an opinion that particular combinations of letters have much influence on human happiness."[5] A sentence such as this could infuse into plain people a feeling of extraordinary confidence in the author. True, from first to last he was essentially a human being, with a feeling for human life as a whole and in all its aspects. He once stated: "A mere antiquarian is a rugged being,"[6] and he was never himself a mere grammarian or a mere scholar, but a man with a profound interest in all the activities and pleasures of life. His high opinion about the dignity of literature focused on its large and human side, and not on the catalogue of curious information. Everywhere in his writings plain people are addressed with his frank attitude. "I could have written longer notes," he writes in the "Preface" to his *Shakespeare*, "for the art of writing notes is not of difficult attainment."[7] Again, he remarks, "It is impossible for an expositor not to write too little for some, and too much for others."[8] A man who writes like this is sure of his readers at once. He is instantaneously taken to be too proud, too sincere, and too great a man to stoop to the dishonest level where vanity tries to steal admiration. In his writings as well as in his talk, he was not afraid of being seen what he actually was. Just as when asked how he would explain the word 'Pastern' as meaning the knee of a horse, he answered at once, " Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance," likewise in his writings he made no deliberate endeavour to be considered wiser or more learned than what he really was. And the modesty which he showed for himself he showed for his author also. Obviously, the common opinion that he depreciated Shakespeare is, in deed, erroneous. There were certain things in Shakespeare which were beyond his grasp, but that does not mean that Shakespeare has not been judiciously assessed by Johnson in his Preface. Dr. Johnson has nothing of the subtle cleverness of the common critic who attempts to magnify his own importance by indulging in extravagant and insincere praise of the author on whom he writes. This is the reason why he speaks of the poet with the same simplicity as he speaks of the editor: "Yet it must be at last confessed that, as we owe everything to him, he

owes something to us; that, if much of his praise is paid by perception and judgment, much is likewhere given by custom and veneration."[9] Needless to say, he always evinced abundant honesty and courage in his writings, talks and actions.

Dr. Johnson was a wonderful embodiment of courage, honesty, simplicity and directness. These traits were apparent not only in his thoughts but also in his expression. It is not fair to say that he always wore a heavy armour of magniloquence; the fact is that he could be as free from pedantry of phrase as he always was from pedantry of thought. He is not only a supreme master of commonsense, but is also a master of the language of commonsense. He has the gift of saying things which no one can misunderstand and no one can forget. His commonsense is what its name implies, no private possession thrust upon the minds of others, but their own thoughts expressed for them in their own language. That was one of the secrets of the immense fame, authority and confidence he attained. The critics of Pope's *Homer* are met by the unanswerable retort: "To a thousand cavils one answer is sufficient. The purpose of a writer is to be read."[10] Even to Pope who was scornful of the great, Doctor Johnson shows the same sound commonsense: "His scorn of the great is too often repeated to be real: no man thinks much of that which he depises."[11] Again speaking of Pope's victims, he observes that if they had kept quiet, the *Dunciad* would have been little read: "For whom did it concern to know that one or another scribbler was a dunce?"[12] These instances and many more from his writings reveal his rare gift of putting together into a sentence the common stock of wisdom or observation, and applying it directly and unanswerably to the subject of discussion. Doctor Johnson the creator of these expressions was neither victim of cloudy speculations nor self-deceived and the deceiver of others, but a man who kept himself always close to the realities of things. And when to this was added the special charm of *The Lives of the English Poets,* the old man speaking in the first person plainly, displaying the fullness of his knowledge of books, men and the general life, then his fame and authority resulted in fathomless affection and respect of the people of his age. The great man of

letters was seen and heard as a friend speaking face to face with those who understood him rightly. His wisdom, learning, piety, shrewdness, vigour, wit, and the ivincible commonsense, made him a kind of national glory, the very incarnation of the mind and character of the English people. Doctor Johnson the literary dictator of the later middle years, commanding authority and awe, ultimately became as dear as the prince, to his literate contemporaries, overflowing them with love and respect for, and confidence in, him.

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THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE AS A POETIC NOVEL

Suta Kumari

One of the foremost poet-novelists in English literature, Hardy is in the line of Emile Bronte, Meredith, Virginia Woolf and D.H. Lawrence, and it was but natural for him as his creative genius was essentially poetic which is evident from the fact that he began his literary career as a poet and during the last three decades of his life he almost produced nothing but poetry, inclusive of *The Dynast* — an epic drama. No wonder *The Return of the Native,* one of his haunting creations, is out and out poetic. One of the basic themes of the novel is the struggle of the individual against convention. Set against the vast brooding heathlands of England, it also exposes the weaknesses of human love, its warmth, self-sacrifice and unreasoned passions.

The very opening chapter is intensely poetic. The discription of twilight at Egdon Heath is highly evocative. The landscape assumes prophetic dimensions and a sort of mysticism shrouds it. It is awesome and unfathomable by human standards. To quote the novelist's words: "The face of the heath by its mere complexion added half an hour to evening; it could in like manner retard the dawn, sadden noon, anticipate the frowning of storms scarcely generated, and intensify the opacity of a moonless midnight to a cause of shaking and dread."[1] It is interesting to note that in the best tradition of Romantic poetry, nature has here been endowed with supernatural traits. Through personification the novelist has succeeded in creating the desired atmosphere. Even storm has been personified and the image we form is of a demon outraged and furious. The time that has been picked is 'midnight' and a 'moonless' one, which is in itself sufficient to cause dread in the hearts of the readers. There is alliteration of the 'd' sound in 'retard the dawn, sadden noon', and of 's' in 'storms scarcely' and of 'm' in 'moonless midnight.'

The heath is further given the metaphor of 'Titanic' and adjectives of 'majestic' and 'sublime'. In contrast, it is also given the

epithet of 'Haggard Egdon' probably to intensify the varying moods of the heath. It appealed to a kind of "subtler and scarcer instinct" than "to the sort of beauty called charming and fair."[2] But like its counterpart man, the heath too has its moments of gaiety. During the winter months of storms and mists "Egdon was aroused to reciprocity; for the storm was its lover and the wind its friend."[3] The novelist draws an erotic personification of the heath as the beloved and the storm as her lover in the depth of emotions. Thus the heath is multi-dimensional like man having "a lonely face, suggesting tragical possibilities."[4] At once the meaning is suggested to us and we start looking for tragic events to take place against the background of the tragic heath.

The next chapter introduces us to Diggory Venn the reddleman: "His eye, which glared so strangely through his stain, was in itself attractive — keen as that of a bird of prey, and blue as autumn mist."[5] He is thus the very picture of caution and serenity. At the same time it bestows upon him a mysterious quality. Autumnal mist permeates the whole atmosphere making visibility poor. The 'autumn mist' of the reddleman's eyes either makes his vision clouded or makes it impossible for the perceiver to see him clearly. Either way it hides the reddleman's reality behind a curtain and we long for the mist to lift as it eventually must, to be able to draw a clear picture of the man. Venn is soon joined by an old man and together they traverse on the moor: "There were no sounds but that of the booming wind upon the stretch of tawny herbage around them, the crackling wheels, the tread of the men, and the footsteps of the two shaggy ponies which drew the van."[6] The passage is almost onomatoepoeic — 'booming wind' and 'the crackling wheels' convey the sounds most emphatically. There is also a sort of irregular rhyme-scheme, if we divide the passage into poetic line-forms — 'them', 'men' and finally 'van'. The total impact is of calm tranquility, frequently shattered by the disturbance of crisp, dry leaves by the wind or by the two men's feet. Even the walk of the men is 'tread' — which amply succeeds in maintaining the atmosphere of gentle calm. Once again, the ponies do not canter or gallop — they take their 'footsteps' in an easy, almost by the use of the word 'shaggy'.

All in all, the novelist succeeds in creating the desired effect of autumnal calm which is reminiscent of Keatsian Autumn. Hardy is able to achieve the extraordinary vivid visualisation in two ways. The first device pertains to his love of detail whereby broad features are set before us and the picture emerges completely. The second device is poetically imaginative. He makes extensive use of arresting similes. For example, he writes that a long,empty and white road bisects the vast dark surface of the heath "like the parting line on a head of black hair." It is strange simile which makes the description of the whole scene poeticaly vivid.

The third chapter is unmistakably reminiscent of the Romantic nature poetry of Shelley and the epic poetry of Milton. Hardy conveys to us the impressions of the black inhospitable Egdon Heath in its vast stretches. The solemity of the moorlands is conveyed right at the beginning of the book and it begins to sink into our consciousness, even though human voice is allowed to interrupt this silence. In spite of the presence of a few ephemeral human beings who for a few moments shatter its monotony, the silence is felt all through the book. The description of bonfires projects Hardy's combining of the real and the poetic:

> Some were distant, and stood in a dense atmosphere, so that bundles of pale strawlike beams radiated around them in the shape of a fan. Some were large and near, glowing scarlet-red from the shade, like wounds in a black hide. Some were Maenades, with winy faces and blown hair. These tinctured the silent bosom of the clouds above them and lit up their ephemeral caves, which seemed henceforth to become scalding caldrons.[7]

The passage reminds us of Coleridge and Shelley. Hardy is poetic not only in his description of the bonfires but also in the effect which is carried on to the reader. The imagery brings forth the bonfires as frightening and awesome as the demon or Maenades. Contrasting colours like 'pale strawlike' and 'scarlet red' intensify the impact. The fires on a dark night are like wounds on a black hide. The horrfying and odd simile is in keeping with Hardy's love of strangeness. The same effect is created when the silent bosom of the clouds is tinctured by the radiation of the bonfires and they start resembling 'scalding caldrons'. Caldrons are generally associated with witches brewing their ominous potions. In fact, the bonfires on its surface

signify the heightened passions working in the hearts of the major characters.

In the chapter entitled "A Figure Against the Sky" the landscape is poetically depicted. It combines a rare breadth and intimacy. Wordsworth is concerned mainly with broad outlines and general features. Clare and Cowper concentrate mainly on the details. But Hardy combines both the methods. It is this chapter which best illustrates his method. It describes Eustacia's lonely vigil on the heath on the night of the 5th November. It illustrates his eye for the details of the scene, which is possible only for a man who has lived almost such surroundings from his earliest youths. Hardy alone could realise that the wind made a different noise when it was blowing through hollow or heather or over bare stones. He was also able to distinguish each sound separately. Besides, the scene is closely interwoven with the fabric of human emotion. It is in relation to Eustacia that the scene is projected before us. It is she who listens to the wind. Her tenseness as she waits for Wildeve seems to be thrown into relief against the background of the heath. Hardy appears as a musicologist and the rhythm and harmony of the symphony, that is the wind, is borne home to us in all its profunditly. The atmosphere of cosmic silence is only barely broken by the wind. The Universal Spirit pervades the whole atmosphere, and it is impossible to distinguish each separate organ being played upon. It is an orchestra and its beauty lies in the cummulative effect which it leaves behind. It is evident that there is not only a perfect communion between human beings and nature but also peculiar relationship between the two: "The bluffs, and the bushes, and the heather-bells had broken silence; at last, so did the woman; and her articulation was but as another phrase of the same discourse as theirs. Thrown out on the winds it became twined in with them, and with them it flew away."[8] The passage has the compelling emotional and imaginative intensity of a poem. The poet in Hardy makes use of the most intractable material. The result is a new kind of poetry — it is a vision of awe-inspiring forces.

Eustacia is angry at Wildeve because of his desire to marry Thomasin. She accuses him but he is unmoved. The pause is "filled

by the intonation of a pollard thorn a little way to windward, the breezes filtering through its unyielding twigs as through a strainer. It was as if the night sang dirges with clenched teeth."[9] The strained conversation between Eustacia and Wildeve, and the tension which surrounds them is deepened and heightened through nature imagery. The flow of the breeze is not smooth, as the flow of the conversation between the two characters is not smooth. The twigs are unyielding just as Wildeve is unyielding. Eustacia's anger is evident and is made more apparent through the night singing dirges with 'clenched teeth.' Later on, in the same chapter Eustacia explains aloud her hatred for the heath: "' 'Tis my cross, my shame, and will be my death!'"[10] The line is prophetic and seen against the background of the lines quoted prior to these, i.e. "the night sang dirges with clenched teeth," it heightens the human drama and emphasises the active role being played by the heath. To Wildeve and Eustacia, the whole heath is abhorrent and the wind is mournful. The complex characters of Eustacia and WIldeve find the simple sounds of nature 'compound'. It seems as if the complexity of their characters is responsible for making them hear the simple sounds of autumnal heath as 'compound utterances.' At the same time Hardy sets out to paint a beautiful picture of nature where each stalk and furze not only has shape and colour but also sound. Nature is made vibrant and living by synthesising the visual and auditory faculties.

The next chapter begins with a ballad-like rendering. "The next morning ... the reddleman came from the brambled nook.... " The little hills appear like an archipelago in the fog-formed Aegean. All the aspects of nature, be it bird or plant, seemed to be in direct communication with regions unknown to man. Even Eustacia's beauty is described in terms of animal imagery: "In her winter dress, as now, she was like the tiger-beetle, which, when observed in dull situations, seems to be of the quietest neutral colour, but under a full illumination blazes with dazzling splendour."[11] Thus she responds to external stimulie possessing no consistency of her own. She could appear dull if the situation so demands and contrarily could blaze like a fire if the situation is like that.

Further down in the same chapter, Hardy again has recourse

to comparisons with Nature. Budmouth is described as a wonderful place, "a great salt sheening sea bending into the land like a bow...."[12] Alliteration is a poetic device and Hardy is adept in it. The lully nature of the place is suggested at through comparison with the rainbow. Just like the rainbow curves and plunges into the land, so does Budmouth. In the second instance is the description of Wildeve's house as perceived by Eusacia from the top of the hill down towards the valley:

> The mist had now so far collapsed that the tips of the trees and bushes around his house could just be discerned, as if boring upwards through a vast white cobweb which cloaked them from the day. There was no doubt that her mind was inclined thitherward; indefintely, fancifully — twining and untwining about him as the single object within her horizon on which dreams might crystallize.[13]

The mist is compared to a cobweb which acted as a cloak and covered the house from the light of the day. The cobweb is symbolic of the feeling of trapping and ensnaring Wildeve by Eustacia. The collapsing of the mist and the emergence of the tips of trees and bushes suggest that Eustacia's trap is about to be lifted, even though she is least aware of it. Just as a creeper twines around the parent tree, so do Eustacia,s thoughts twine around Wildeve and she seems to think that he is her centre of existence.

Hardy is at his poetic best in his repeated lovely descriptions of nature. Mrs Yeobright and Thomasin are collecting apples and berries in preparation for Clym's arrival:

> The open hills were airy and clear, and the remote atmosphere appeared, as it often appears on a fine winter day, in distinct planes of illumination independently toned, the rays which lit the nearer tracts of landscape streaming visibly across those further off; a stratum of ensaffroned light was imposed on a stratum of deep blue, and behind these lay still remoter scenes wrapped in frigid grey.[14]

It is in this display of colour and their interplay that Hardy is out and out poetic. In fact, it is Romantic poetry of the Shelleyian kind. We see two distinct platforms of nature — the one nearner at hand and the other remote and far off. The one seems to play upon the other. It seems as if the nearer landscape is the presentness of human existence which is full-blooded with saffron light and is hence vibrant with passions. That which is far off is the future, and the present

shapes and colours that future. The gloominess of the future is conveyed by the reference to colours like frigid grey. On the contrary, deep blue is also mentioned which symbolises serenity and peace . The future, which is far and remote, is uncertain; it may be serene or it may be gloomy. But one thing is certain — it is the present that shapes it.

In the chapter entitled "How a Little Sound Produced a Great Dream" Eustacia overhears the conversation between Clym, Mrs. Yeobright and Thomasin, and is fascinated by the voice of Clymn uttering 'Goodnight'. And at night she dreams a wonderful dream:

> She was dancing to wondrous music, and her partner was the man in silver armour... the visor of his helmet being closed. The mazes of the dance were ecstatic. Soft whispering came into her ear from under the radiant helmet, and she felt like a woman in Paradise. Suddenly these two wheeled out from the mass of dancers, dived into one of the pools of the heath, and came out somewhere beneath into an iridescent hollow, arched with rainbows. 'It must be here,' said the voice by her side, and, blushingly looking up she saw him removing his casque to kiss her. At that moment there was a cracking noise, and his figure fell into fragments like a pack of cards.[15]

The dream sequence takes us centuries back into the world of medieval chivalry and we see a beautiful damsel with her knight in striking armour. The whole atmosphere is one of romance and poetry — rhythmic, wondrous and otherworldly. Yet the whole passage is prophetic and describes the type of relationship that is to develop between Eustacia and Clym. It is a world of fantasy which Eustacia seeks and the relationship is going to be as far removed from reality as the dream is. Like the two dancers of the dream who seek seclusion, Clym and Enstacia also lead an isolated existence later on. She is under a misapprehension that marriage to him would introduce her to the high fashion world of Paris, without knowing that he has no intension of going back to Paris. The hero of the dream is shown to be wearing a casque and his identity is hidden. Similarly, the true nature of Clym is never understood by Eustacia and she seems to be living in a world of illusions. The shattering of her illusions, and the subsequent breakdown of her relationship with Clymn is prophesied in the last line of the paragraph quoted above: "...his figure fell into fragments like a pack of cards."

Then, Clym makes passionate love to Eustacia on the heath during a lunar eclipse in the chapter entitled "An Hour of Bliss and Many Hours of Sadness," and Hardy emphasises the strangeness added to the scene by the lurid, joyless light. In the very next chapter Clymn has a confrontation with his mother over the question of his relationship with Eustacia. He walkes out and goes to the same spot where he had hopefully arranged for a meeting between Eustacia and Mrs. Yeobright. His dejected mood is poetically expressed in these lines:

> He was in a nest of vivid green. ...it was a grove of machine-made foliage, a world of green triangles with saw-edges, and not a single flower. The air was warm with a vaporous warmth, and the stillness was unbroken.... The scene seemed to belong to the ancient world of the carboniferous period, when the forms of plants were few, and of the fern kind; when there was neither bud nor blossom, nothing but a monotonous extent of leafage, amid which no bird sang.[16]

It is the poetry of thought and feeling. So lonely is Clymn at the moment that nature appears machine-made to him. His mother's genuine concern for his welfare goes unheaded by him and he seems to think that their relationship is mechanical. His melancholia is reflected in the objects of nature. There are no flowers, the atmosphere is still and no birds sing. Handy's historical sense comes to light and he talks of the Carboniferous period where only giant plants grew and amphibian life evolved but there was no human race and hence no human relationships.

Meanwhile, Eustacia comes and they walk about on the heath, with "the sun sloping down on their right, and throwing their thin spectral shadows, tall as poplar trees, far out across the furze and fern."[17] Again, we notice the strangeness that is so closely associated with romantic poetic imagination. He creates a Gothic atmosphere with the help of far-fetched similes. The shadows of Clym and Eustacia are thin and spectre-like, resembling the tall poplar trees — thereby creating a sense of grotesqueness. Hardy's visual imagination and wonderful sense of colour come to play once again when he paints the sunset scene at the time of the parting between Eustacia and Clym with the confident strokes of a master painter:

> The sun, resting on the horizon line, streamed across the ground from

> between copper-coloured and lilac clouds, stretched out in flats beneath a sky of pale soft green. All dark objects on the earth that lay towards the sun were overspread by a purple haze, against which groups of wailing gnats shone out, rising upwards and dancing about like sparks of fire[18]

Throughout the passage, the colours that have been used are bright colours which depict the passion in the hearts of the two lovers. Even the shining gnats dance about like sparks of fire. It is in this intensity of emotion that Clym swears to make Eustacia his wife without delay. When she goes off and the rustle of her silk dress fades away, he is once again left amid the same lonely and hostile atmosphere which had pervaded his soul prior to her arrival. It is in this moment of intense soul searching and self-realisation that Clym is honest enough to admit that Eustacia is no goddess just as he is no prophet.

Closely associated with his power of visual description is his power of viusual invention, and this constitutes the essence of his poetic genius. It is not as if he just makes us see a scene; he invents a scene which stirs the imagination, and in itself becomes mysteriously arresting and exciting. One such scene is the gambling scene between Venn and Wildeve in the hot summer night on the heath. Venn finds Wildeve gambling with Thomasin's precious hoard of guineas on the flat stone under the light of the open lantern. He sets to win them back and gradually does so. "The light of the candle had by this time attracted heath-flies, moths, and other winged creatures of night, which floated round the lantern, flew into the flame, or beat about the faces of the two players."[19] Amid such weird surroundings Hardy makes the two players determined to play on till "a large death's head moth advanced from the obscure outer air, wheeled twice round the lantern, flew straight at the candle, and extinguished it by the force of the blow."[20] But the heath trembles with the faint green spark of glow worms. The players gather thirteen glow worms and arrange them over the stone so that the "thirteen tiny lamps threw a pale phosphoric shine,"[21] and thus they continue their reckless game by the eeric light till Wildeve has lost all.

Misfortune strikes Clymn Yeobright in the form of eye ailment and forced by adversity he takes to the job of furze-cutting. As

Clym works with his hook, "Tribes of emerald-green grasshoppers leaped over his feet, falling awkwardly on their backs, heads, or hips, like unskilful acrobats, as chance might rule; or engaged themselves in noisy flirtations under the fern-fronds with silent ones of homely hue."[22] These are beautiful poetic lines; one finds a certain rhythm in the lines and they can easily be broken into lines of blank verse. Besides, there is vivid visualisation which is intensified through the use of colourful imagery. The effect is further enhanced by a reference to snakes that "glided in their most brilliant blue and yellow guise" and to "Litters of young rabbits came out from their forms to sun themselves upon hillocks, the hot beams blazing through the delicate tissue of each thin-fleshed ear, and firing it to a blood-red transparency in which the veins could be seen."[23]

A chance encounter occurs between Wildeve and Eustacia. The two old lovers dance and talk about the misfortunes that have struck the latter in particular. Hardy once again employs a strange simile as he says: " ... their two faces would have appeared amid the expanse like two pearls on a table of ebony."[24] The free bird braving the heavens has often been associated with the sign of freedom — freedom of all sorts, even freedom from the earthly bonds that tie us. Mrs. Yeobright's longing to be as free as the soaring bird is symbolic, or rather suggestive of her desire to be free from the physical world and achieve that sublime pleasure which only heaven could provide. These lines strike the keynote of the shape of things to come and we start looking for tragic events to take place — first of which happens to be the tragic death of Mrs. Yeobright herself.

After his own illness and convalescence, Clym learns about the mysterious circumstances leading to his mother's death. He confronts Susan's little boy and learns to his dismay that his mother had been refused entry to his house prior to her death:

> The pupils of his eyes, fixed steadfastly on blankness, were vaguely lit with an icy shine; his mouth had passed into the phase more or less imaginatively rendered in studies of Oedipus. The strangest deeds were possible to his mood. But they were not possible to his situation. Instead of there being before him the pale face of Eustacia, and a masculine shape unknown, there was only the imperturbable countenance of the heath, which, having defied the cataclysmal onsets of centuries, reduced to insignificance by its

seamed and antique features the wildest turmoil of a single man.[25]

Thus the setting is made to stand for the universe. It is not a background but a vibrant actor in the play, a living force, having a will and a certain purpose of its own, at times particiapating in the action, while at other times only an ironic spectator. Hardy's visualising poetic power burns all the brighter as the plot progresses or moves to its crisis. Hardy wishes to indicate that although Clym has broken finally with Eustacia, he is passionately in love with her. It is towards the end of the chapter entitled "Eustacia Dresses Herself on a Black Morning" that the emotions intensify. Clym's offer to Eustacia to help her tie the strings of her bonnet and her silent acceptance make the scene poignant. The dialogue is stilted and inexpressive, but the emotion comes through, for it is incarnate in every movement and gesture of Clymn and Eustacia: the quivering of her hands, his involuntary movement forward, the way be turns aside his eyes lest the spectacle of her beauty should compel him to weaken, etc. Obviously, it is an instance of the poetry of intense emotions and situation.

As the climax builds up, the tragedy intensifies. The breach is final between Eustacia and Clym and the former's tragic end is forecast in the chapter, "The Night of the Sixth of November": "The gloom of the night was funereal; all nature seemed clothed in crape. The spiky points of the fir trees behind the house rose into the sky like the turrets and pinnacles of an abbey."[26] The rain had also set in and it seemed that at least for Eustacia the day of the final deluge had arrived "and the tearfulness of the outer scene was repeated upon her face."[27] Like Shelley, Hardy has a mythopoeic vision and gives a distinct personality and countenance to nature. Nature seems to be shedding tears at the sorry plight of Eustacia. It is nature which first realises the gravity of the situation and the same is later on echoed on the face of Eustacia in the form of her tears. She is stuck by the same ponderous self-analysis as Hamlet is:

> 'Can I go, Can I go?' she moaned. '.... How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me! ... I do not deserve my lot!'.... ' O, the cruelty of putting me into the ill-conceived world! I was capable of much; but I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control! O, how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all!' [28]

Eustracia is remorseful and penitent, yet unable to put the clock back. She blames destiny for the situation in which she finds herself. Her plight is highly tragic and her expression is essentially poetic since it is loaded with emotional intensity. Death strikes Eustacia and Wildeve. Even in death she looks bewitching: "Pallor did not include all the quality of her complexion, which seemed more than whiteness; it was almost light."[29] She seems dignified in death, and still remains the same passion-tormented romantic enchantress.

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[6]Ibid., pp.16-7.
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A FICTIONAL INCARNATION OF NORMAN MAILER'S WHITE NEGRO

Purnima Anil

Man is born free but everywhere he is in chains. It is against these inhibitions imposed on man by his heredity and development that Mailer's hipster psychopath wants to break free from. Today's world denies all pleasures to man and he has to face suppression, alienation, and the supremacy of institutions over individual freedom. The result is angst, ennui and alienation. The denial of pleasure and freedom leads to neurosis. Man has to make compromises everywhere. The hipster psychopath with has unfulfilled desires and subdued fears is going back to the life of instincts. Beginning with his question novels, *The Naked and the Dead* and *Barbary Shore,* Mailer was in search of a solution to these problems. Disillusioned with American life and the scarcity of opportunities for individual happiness he found a way out in his White Negro. He presented an existentialist who believed in a heightened awareness of the present moment and virutally lived in the enormous present. In him we get a fascination for a life that is lived by instincts and not by conventions, totems and taboos.

For a fictional realisation of this character, normally called the White Negro, we can go to a major novel of Mailer written in the 1980s, *Ancient Evenings*, set in ancient Egypt. The cynical naturalist-determinist of post-World War America gazed at ancient Egypt like a true blooded romantic, admiring unabashedly the gold and the glitter of a time 'when the world was young.' There were convincing reasons for Mailer's love affair with ancient Egypt. He was feeling suffocated in a contemporary milieu where the powerful impulses subjugated intuitive life through elaborate social institutions. Thus he decided escape to another aeon when men were heroes and gods stalked the unpolluted earth. This was the time when man was not weighed down by taboos and inhibitions, when life was a series of existential adventures, when sex was not sin, when society did not frown on those who followed their intuitions. Such a milieu was discovered in the golden age of Egypt, a pagan society living in communion with nature before the birth

of religions like Islam or Christianity.

The most fascinating aspect of *Ancient Evenings* is the personality of the hero Menenhetet. He is a true existentialist psychopath living from moment to moment passing from the shadow of death to the radiance of life. He fights like a champion, makes love like stud, worships his gods in true awe, and indulges in magico — sexual rituals with no fears, inhibitions or taboos. Mailer defined the hipster psychopath thus: "He does certain things that are very brave in their way; he gambles for one thing with his soul.... The hipster is gambling with death and he is gambling with the hereafter."[1]

A similar spirit of challenging adventure permeates the being of an existentialist:

> (An) existential experience ... is ... sufficiently unusual so that you don't know how it is going to turn out. You don't know whether you're going to be dead or alive at the end of it, wanted or rejected, cheered or derided. Now abviously there are few experiences which can by these rigorous terms be called existential (in this age). ... the twentieth century (is) destroying a romantic view of existence.[2]

Thus Mailer had to go back 3000 years in human history to discover a perfect existential psychopath unhampered by the baggage of ethics and inhibitions. This is the reaction of Menenhetet to the battle of Kadesh, when he faced a mighty army by the side of his Pharaoh:

> I felt through all of that long afternoon to follow when so many of us were *nearer to the dead than the living because I never felt so alive.* I can still see the spear that passes to the left of my shoulder, and the sword, that misses my head. (p.338, emphasis added)

Again, he philosophizes about death:

> While I had looked at death two hundred times already, and often with a shout of happiness.... Death in the moment you know you glory, can seem like an embrace by the arms of the sun. (p.400)

This is the reaction of a perfect existentialist who is acutely aware of death and has, paradoxically, no fear of it. There is a streak of evil in every psychopath who indulges in violence to acquire personal fulfilment. Mailer realises it when he notes:

> Now a man may be evil. ... and sitll have good character (s). Good in the sense of well tuned even an evil man can have principles — he can be true to his own evil, which is not always so easy, either.[3]

Manenhetet is low on any scale of ethical behaviour. He hardly

has any scruples about killing human beings; he drinks the blood of his enemies and eats human flesh; he has sexual union with his mothers and daughters; he practises magic and eats shit; he double-crosses his king and sleeps with the big and little queens; he join brigands and loots the tombs of the pharaohs; he sells his indulgences and benevolences; he frequents whorehouses and indulges in homosexuality, fellatio, cumilinctus and necrophilia. Can there be a truer specimen of villainy? Yet he fascinates us by sheer power, we admire him for his bravura performances as a general, priest, stud and sorcerer. He is a perfect psychopath, hell-bent on personal fulfilment whatever be the cost in moral, social, political, economic or religious terms. For all his evil he would get the nod of Osiris,the God of gods, says Menenhetet II:

> Purity and goodness were worthless to Osiris than strength. Menenhetet would not be used because he was a good man but because he was a strong one. (p.709)

Mailer's choice of an ancient Egyptian like Menehetet as the perfect existentialist hero is reinforced by the fact that Meni is also a sorceror; a practitioner of magic; a "Master of the Secrets" (p.633), as the title given by Rameses II describes him. Mailer believes that the first aeon in civilized human history was the age of magic, followed by the age of technology, which in its own turn was supplanted by the age of technology. Sometimes in future, he visualizes, man may go back to paganism and magic as these cults are based on man's communion with nature, which is the ultimate need for human survival. He said once:

> Failing to work, theology was replaced by technology, but technology in turn, if it fails to work ... there is nothing left but a return ... to the old notions of magic.[4]

Menenhetet was already an existentialist psychopath when initiated in the rites of magic by Honeyball, a little queen in the 'Garden of the Secluded' who had fallen in love with him. Honeyball uses him to counter the overwhelming impact of the Pharaoh's personality on his adoring general. Mark the initiating ritual:

> Now we stood with the circle of lapis-lazuli and she blessed my naked body in an order that was not precise....
>
> From the altar she took a knife with a fine white marble handle and a point so sharp.... Now she removed her gown of white and stood before me as naked

> as myself. With this knife she pricked me on the belly and belo my navel and mixed my blood with hers. ... from there she repeated each step of the blessing taking a drop of blood from my forehead and hers, from my big toe and hers, out of my right breast and hers, and a drop of blood from each of us just above the hairs of the groin.... Our blood was mixed in these seven abodes and we stood together by the altar, grave, naked and equally marked. (p.447)

In a grave ritual after this initiation, Honeyball invokes the Ka of Seti, the father of Rameses II. The Ka of Seti duly appears and thunders against the sins of his son. This clears the spell of Rameses II on Menehetet and he regains his potency as a stud. When Seti spoke "Mnnenhetet knew that the hands of the thousand and one Gods who surrounded Usermare were no longer joined ... and again Menenhetet made love in a fury to Ma — khrut (Honeyball) and turned her about so as to know her by each mouth" (p.461). Yet sorcery is but one aspect to magic. Its other face are the holy rites of worship that enable man to transcend the boundaries of place and time, and communicate with the Gods. Arthur Machen has put these ideas thus:

> Sorcery and sanctity ... are the only realities. Each is an ecstasy, a withdrawal from the common life.[5]

The sanctifying aspect of magic is elaborated through the magnetic personality of Rameses II who can assume God-like powers. Meni pays this tribute to his Pharoah:

> I realized once again how to be near Him was to gain all knowledge of how a God might act when He is in the form of a man. He looks so much like a man and yet reveals divinity by even the smallest of His moves. (pp.355-56)

If Honeyball taught Meni black magic, Nefertiri initiated him into natural or sanctifying magic. "Sitting beside Nefertiri," he remarks, "I learned of the other magic that rises from the song of birds or the undulating of flowers. It is certain she reduced the air with the sweetness of the voice" (p.493). Nefertiri also explained to him the mysteries of dung, the excrement that drops from all living bodies. On her bidding, he stole from the Pharaoh's commode a pellet of his excrement. The queen held the pellet in her hand, made a few incantations, and the result came amazingly fast.

In his second incarnation as the High Priest of Amon at Thebes, Menenhetet achieved complete command of black and

natural magic. He tells the Pharaoh, Rameses IX:

> I used to be able, when I was a young priest to direct my thoughts into the body of a just-beheaded goose in such a manner.... I could send it forward in a straight line for as much as twenty paces" (p.665).

In his last incarnation, Menenhetet honed his powers to perfection. He found a willing ally in the young grand daughter, Hathfertiti and practised sexual rites where he could communicate with the Gods. He would, says Hathfertiti to Rameses IX, "make love to me as if I were a dead woman beneath.... It was a ceremony.... You taught me to accompany you into your Caverns ... he was also in communion with the eight Gods of the Slime" (p.682).

These magical ritres are inextricably mingled with phallic and vaginal symbols as sex is raised to the status of a religion. Let us note a typical ceremony: "Now the High Priest of the temple of Amon came forward to stand ... Amon" (pp.587-88). Similarly, a bout of love-making between Rameses II and Nefertiri is described in ritualistic imagery. "The eye of Horus is between her legs.... The backbone of Osiris beats upon the eye of Horus. The Gods are joined" (p.595). The point to note is that the creative rejuvenative function of sex is brought into focus, in sharp contrast to the arid ... mechanical sex which is evident everywhere in today's permissive society, and which becomes the focal theme of Eliot's "The Wasteland."

The magical sexual rites as portrayed by Mailer bear an uncanny resemblance to the Hindu cullt of *Tantra*—the path to mastery over the forces of nature. The blood ceremony, the invocation of spirits, the sexual rituals, the holding of secret sessions in a necropolis or a crematorium are integral parts of Tantra Siddhi. Other common streaks are the Omnipresence of shit, the use of phallic symbols, and the prevelance of human and/or animal sacrifice. May be Mailer had heard of these *Tantrik* rituals from some source, and transported them wholesale to the pagans of ancient Egypt. Still these rituals are but one aspect of magical forces. Another very important dimension of magic, which is integral to the narrative design of *Ancient Evenings*, is telepathy or silent communion with human and natural phenomenon. Mailer writes about this aspect of magic:

> ...notions of magic ... orbit around the fundamental notion that we are capable of extraordinary psychic communication, not only with each other, but with elements of universe we haven't begun to conceive.[6]

Psychic communication is the core of Ancient Evenings. The point of view of narration is first person omniscient, and a number of narrative voices criss-cross the fabric of the novel. The first voice is that of Menenhetet II who is the narrator in the first and third books. The main narrative voice in the other five books is that of Menenhetet I, but he often leaves the stage for Meni II, who visualises rather than hears the autobiography of his great-grandfather. Other narrative voices that step in for brief patches are those of the Pharaohs Rameses II and Rameses IX, the queens Nefertiri, Rama-Nefru and Hathfertiti, and mimor characters like the Bone-Crusher and Kehm-Usha.

The Young Menenhetet has the unique faculty of entering the minds of other characters and observing their thoughts. "My mind," he says, "felt like a bowl of water and the least movements in Menenhetet's thought rippled through it" (p.137). Similarly, he can enter the mind of his mother, Hathfertiti, and observe the ideas rising in her mind. "My mind resting in less, so was my mouth living in her mouth ... through my mother's ears I could *hear the unspoken voice* of my great-grandfather as he had spoken once to her when mouth was engorged ... and Menenhetet came forth into her mouth" (pp.109-110, emphasis added). With equal facility he can enter the minds of all the other characters and read their thoughts. Mark this: "So did his colder sentiments also come into me but no longer by way of my mother, no, the heart of the Pharaoh spoke to me.... By way of my father I learnt of his feelings" (p.484) Menehetet explains that telepathy in ancient Egypt was a usual practice. He says:

> In our own Egypt we know what it is to live in the thoughts of another. We are famous for our power to lay the most effective curses and this is due, of course, to the comfort with which we can leave our own mind and rest in the text. (p.318)

Ancient Evenings is a remarkable experiment in narrative stance. Mailer started as a narrator through third person authorial voice in *The Naked and the Dead*. From *Barbary Shore* onwards he experimented with a series of different points of view ranging from peripheral to central to neutral. In *Ancient Evenings* he has

combined all these stances, as part of the book is from the peripheral point of view, another part from the central point of view, antoher part from the omniscient point of view and still another from the neutral point of view. This seemingly chaotic narrative stance is firmly held together by Mailer's stout belief in psychic communication. The reader is kept permanently on his toes as Mailer swiftly shifts his narrative focus, displays a Kaleidoscope of fleeting images observed by a physically alive narrative medium, and brings dead people to life through invocation or sheer psychic force. It is a hypnotic welding together of form and matter, a theme of personal fulfilment in a magical-pagan milieu, told in a chameleon-like narrative voice which literally booms out from the pyramids of the long-dead Pharaohs.

Mailer has been severely criticized for the presentation of sex in his novel. But he has used them as the only means of psychic fulfilment available to modern man. He is the voice of modern America, has visualised the evils of the affluent society and tried to find a way for a fuller life which is open to the modern man especially in the western context. His hero in *Ancient Evenings* also is an expression of the vision of individual freedom and existential choice.

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BOOK REVIEWS

SUJATA SANKRANTI, *THE WARP AND THE WEFT AND OTHER STORIES*

(Delhi: Shrishti Publications, 2001), pp.254, Rs.195.00

H.C. Gupta

The book is a collection of seventeen stories of various lengths — from 7 to 17 pages. The titles of the stories give an idea of the variety of sweet dishes and savories served in it. Each story is a singular fare, ending with a purgative release of an emotional experience, concocted with a judicious mingling of the protagonist's past and wedding of the East and the West. Sujata Sankranti has taken up cudgels against the oppressive native and exotic culture. The two powerful currents of moral earnestness and aesthetic appeal with an undercurrent of passion, compassion and commiseration imaginative tour de force leave the reader spell-bound. The collection very well proves the dictum: "Art is truth living with beauty." Aware of social conventions, popular prejudices and constraints, she introduces rampant social evils to decry them and to assert human virtues and values. I here take three stories to substantiate my views. The three stories are: "The Musk Deeer", "Mirage" and "The Warp and the Weft."

In "The Musk Deer", which reads like a detective tale, Durga Prasad, a renowned justice, entrusts Mukund, his younger son, to investigate into the cause of suicide committed by Somu, his (Mukund's) elder brother. Looking through the third-sketch-book of Somu, Mukund comes upon a picture: "Three golden deer in a lush green groove" — one male being followed by two females. Inferentially, Mukund interviews Kammo, the cook's daughter and government school teacher, who both had resorted even to foul means to get Somu as husband. Mukund was stunned when Anand his doctor cousin revealed a sceret: he had told Somu after his medical check-up that he couldn't father a child for any woman. "The Warp and the Weft" has three parts — each part presenting a dying cancer pa-

tient. Part I expresses the psychic concern of a woman for her outliving husband, her son, Gopu, Gopu's wife, and Shanku, a servant. Part II deals with the premature cancer-death of Alfonsa, "chirpy, giggly nine-year old". Part III presents the case aged widow childless Bhagvanti, whose adopted son, Kishore cares more for his blood-parents and whom Nandu, the son of her husband by Putli, visits to make her uncontrollably violent. She knew that her visitors were interested in her death. It ends with her abusive words: "Forgive those wolves. Never... Mare mere dushman', let my enemies die. I will give them the surprise of their life..." "Mirage" is a graphic narrative of a love-marriage — the Brahmin Rishi's with the Anglo-Indian Susan' — that leads to a chaotic life after few years, and of the naming, keeping, good and bad times of the dog 'mirage'.Durga Prasad who discerned Picasso, Leonardo da Vinci in his son Somu, says of his expertise: "What a way he had with words! My prosaic analyses of law suits and criminal cases with a few touches here and there, he transformed into inspiring stories". That's what exactly one finds Sujata Sankranti doing with stark everyday happenings in everyday stories. The writer is no purist in her use of language. Indianisms, Hindu words, nuances, and references to Indian Gods and Goddesses, superstitions, rites and rituals give a distinctive Indian flavour to the collection. Similes, metaphors, and images are new, original and captivating. The book has been painstakingly published and prepared. To make it free of all errors, I would like to see the following one rectified in the reprints to follow: 'sweat tricked' (p.60 last line) Obviously 'tricked' should be 'trickled'.

True, all the stories are not of the same level; and yet each is distinctive and memorable in its own way. The author has dealt with people and events she has been quite familiar with, and which surely is one of the strengths of the book. She leaves loose ends in the fashion of post-moernist literary artists. Her life vision is positive, altruistic and didactic. The tales, to use nurse's terminology, are full-time natural deliveries not caesarian-operational. They are reader-friendly. They exhale the soothing flavour of fresh showers of rain on virgin furrowed land. The obvious inference: a trendsetter if not of the New Millennium at least of New Age in Indian English short-story writing.

K.V. RAGHUPATHI, *VOICE OF THE VALLEY*

(India: Minerva Press, 2002), Rs.80.00

Patricia Prime

The cover design of K.V. Raghupathi's "novel-poem", *Voice of the Valley*, by Sabu Joseph depicts the persona sitting in a valley, contemplating life and nature and listening to the voice within himself.It is a book-length poem. It is an ambitious poem — over 85 pages, in blank verse, sandwiched between a prose prologue and an epilogue. The long poem has an intese vividness and sensuality. Technically complex it requires an unfussy context, and this poem, with only two "characters" and one setting, is admirable in this respect.

Voice of the Valley begins in the traditional cast of epic exposition. It also strikes the abstract key in which the poem will continue: "Night, moonless night. Startlit night. Tremendous night. An extraordinary night." What follows reveals a poet with a wide range of influences. For in *Voice of the Valley* Raghupathi takes the reader on a quest, not unlike that of Moses in the Bible. Here it is Wanderer, given the name Bindura, who has to learn the art of silence, of listening to his inner voice in order to find Truth. For Truth only come to those who have overcome the jumble of this life in order to better understand themselves. As the seed falls to the ground and becomes a tree, so in the same way, the thoughts and feelings inside mankind are the reality of life, and must be allowed to develop and flower.

The book has a curious structure where the wanderer questions the Voice and waits for his replies. There is a dream within a dream here, for the reader must imagine himself or herself as the Wanderer, at rest in the beautiful valley, questioning themselves about the meaning and value of life. Both inner and outer worlds are being built into the whole self as Bindura, contemplates nature. He says to the Voice, "Reveal to me more of your true nature." To which the Voice replies:

> In Autumn when the tree sheds its leaves
> It asks nothing and receives nothing
> In Spring it receives everything
> Without asking anything.
> It remains where it is.

This is true existence, O, the seeker of Truth.

The Wanderer explains why he thinks the way he thinks, and what sort of person he is, often with a casual directness. He exclaims to the Voice, "I know who you are,/ Yet, I am bewildered and baffled / By your profound revelation.' " This believe it or not, is a characteristic statement by the Wanderer translated into late 20th century blank verse. There are two ways of looking at it the content of the poem. The first is to take the view that the Voice is a philosopher expressing his thoughts. The second is to assume the view of the man, Bindura, who is a truly magnanimous man — one who does not refrain from offering a real opinion of himself:

Speak more with great compassion
And free me from the entanglement
Of all doubts and agony.

To the Voice, the Truth is the overcoming of oneself, and the setting of the most painstakingly truthful values by which to live. The core belief is plainly stated: atonement, seems to be the message. "At-one-ment." But this Voice is not that of Jesus, or of God, for he says,

Bindura, do not concern with who and what I am.
I am neither God nor No-God.

The Voice must, therefore, be contained within the core of the Wanderer himsef. This is what he has to discover in order to know the Truth about himsef.

Raghupathi's book-length poem reiterates the Indian notion of spiritual transcendence whilst showing that reality is in the particular, the individual experience. The lesson to be drawn from meditation, or the exercise of the mind in religious contemplation, is that after a life of unsatisfied fantasies and self-destructive passions, we must return to nature and our inner beings.

Although Raghupathi's poem is easy to read, its seeming transparency is deceptive. It is filled with echoes, quiet allusions and other enriching resoances that deepen, multiply, and change its significance. To conclude, *Voice of the Valley* does not possess the linguistic ingenuity of Heaney or Pinsky, or of any of Derek Walcott's long poems, but it does bring Indian poetry back into the epic/ lyric balance.

CHARU SHEEL SINGH, *TERRACOTTA FLAMES*

(New York: Wizard Publications Co., 2003), pp.60

O.P. Mathur

Terracottak Flames, Charu Sheel Singh's sixth collection of poems, comes as it does after *Creation Cocktail* (1997) — a postmodernist epic poem concerned with the existential situation of man from an Indian perspective. The collection also finds a mention in the *History of Indian English Literature 1980-2000*, jointly written by Prof. M.K. Naik and Shyamla A. Narayan. The collection under review has fifty-one poems, mellifluously rich in acoustic imagery which readies itself to vibrate at the phenomenal and the transcendental levels. The poems in the collection have a deep meditative pose where reflections sound like Buddha's Fire Sermons. Minerva Press finds the poems as satisfying to the highest aesthetic demands of beauty and sublimity; the acoustic sense cuts across localities of time in order to embrace the intra-lingual senserity that is available beneath the bodies of words. Charles Tomlinson noticed this quality in Prof. Singh's poetry with reference to his earlier collection: *Tapascharangam* (1987). The collection was translated into Hindi as *Sukadeva Ki Pida* by the poet's father.

In his Foreword to *Terracotta Flames*, Prof. Aristides Falcon Paradi of the University of California, finds similarities between *Creation Cocktail* and the collection under review. He also compares both with Homer's *Odyssey* and Peter Brooks' *Mahabharata*, and says that the works of Prof. Singh fall in line with the great tradition of epics in India. Prof. Aristides rightly says that the poet would like to burn rather than preserve linearity, history, impurity, as the first few lines of the first poem itself suggest:

> The old day brooms
> across night's empty
> corridors garbled in
> a crocodile's den.

The images have length, breadth, and depth; the whole breathing process sems to be in rupture as well as in rapture. The tensionality in the verbal rhythm hides its own cognitivity under the foliage of perceptive manifold. It is the being in general that the poems are

concerned with being temporally situated in relation to an atemporal potency that makes us feel and breathe. The being is "thrown" in the Heideggerean sense: What can the Potter/shape when the /medium bids adieu/te zonal complementarities that junk arsenals/that never ever/filtered." Terracotta songs are also songs of the incompleteness of man. The latter half of many poems changes into a big question mark; the sentiments acquire a religious sanctity that is nothing but a form of prayer, an invocatory deed that must aspire for the attainment of the ultimate yet should remain unfulfilled. The *virat* that God has created, His cosmicity, remains unexplained, unexplainable, though interpretations may grow to mythical proportions.

Dante and Balzac
do have their day
in half-toned milk
and endless glasses
of fruit-mix
that does not annual
meaning into
myriad meandering ways.

Charu Sheel's poetry is unmistakably and professedly philosophical and mystical. Being so, it falls in line with the poetry of Tagore, Aurobindo, Swant Vivekananda, Ram Tirtha, among others including the medieval Bhakti School poets. This, however, does not mean that Singh's poetry is theistic or atheistic or even polytheistic; at best it comes close to monotheism but its transaction (*vyapar)* remains between two universals — one at the micro, the other at the macro level. The poems in this collection are more image-conscious, image-centered and the syntax is so variably malleable that its tensions are assimilated into the lyrical manifold itself. Charu Sheel's poetry carries the sense of the contemporaneous most exquisitely by making the present the breeding ground of ideas and metaphors. One can say with assurance that Charu Sheel's poetry has developed into a philosophical genre with a distinct idiom and imagistic repertoire. This places him in a category of his own among the living Indian English poets.

S.R. JALOTE, *CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN AMERICAN THEATRE AND DALIT THEATRE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN THEMES AND TECHNIQUES*

(Varanasi: B.H.U. Press, 2001), pp.xvi + 160, Rs.240.00

Charu Sheel Singh

The book under review is a syncharonic study, not so much a study of black aesthetics, as of the socio-cultural problems the blacks in the West and the dalits in India are encountering. Prof. Jalote has been working in the field for a considerable time now and his contributions in the area are significant. The book is divided into five chapters where, except for the first and the last chapter, each of the remaining chapters make a comparative study of plays written by dalits and blacks. In the introduction, Jalote takes a synoptic view of issue by referring to relevant portions in *Manusmriti,* B.R. Ambedkar's writings and those of Gandhi and Nehru among others. The difference in the views of Gandhi and Ambedkar are well brought out though one wishes that the focus could have been more history centered without violating the contemporary of the present. Race-caste divide is given a divine sanction in both African-American and in Indian traditions. The study does not explore implications of colonial paradigms that lie latent in a binary framework of divisive thinking.

The study mentions certain theoretical principles in section two of the Conclusion. One wishes that the study had taken place prefixing these principles of black aesthetics whatever. It is understandable that the people who have been suppressed for centuries will turn to revolt in myriad art-forms-theatre being one. So, the black-dalit style shall have polyrhythmic, short, explosive lines, amalgamating irony, humour, sarcasm, even abuses as part of its literary *oeuvre.* Prof. Jalote does well to point this out but is not deductive enough to bring binaries to certain paradigmatic ends that would have facilitated a much more fruitful discussion. The study is somewhat frigid and does not seem to have the volatile urgency in comparison and argument that the dalit-black situation warrants. For

example, in Chapter Two, James Baldwin's *Blues for Mr. Charle* (1964) is discussed first, then its comparison is made with Dolus's play *Nav Nasalela Ganva* (1977) which means The Village Without a Face. The delay in time postpones the comparison of relevant passages, coldsheltering thus, the sense of immediate urgency that would have easily put the matters across. Chapter Three compares Imamu Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman and Beyond* with Prabhakar Dupane's play- *Sat Samundra Palikade* (Beyond the Seven Oceans). The issues are those of race and caste. The chapter makes a good study of character-types, institutional similarities and ideational equlibriums. There is an aire of general discussion throughout the book. Here is an example from the conclusion of Chapter Three: "Both India and U.S.A. are democractic countries, and both the countries have done much for the minority communities, probably as much as any country in the world" (p.72). This may sometimes be true that the literary merit of works written by dalit-black writers is suspect, but the critical approach, merese by a university Professor, cannot be expected to be wanting in taxonomical structure and literary acumen. This alone separates literature from stark journalism.

Chapter Four studies vengeance motif in Amiri Baraka's *The Slave* and Girish Karnad's *Tale-Danda.* The themes of marriage, however, superstructures colonies of the text. Both plays are studies in the negative dimensions of inter-racial and inter-caste marriage since they do not solve the problems of the community; instead, they intensify them. Chapter Five studies Richard Wesley's *The Talented Tenth* and Rahul Katyanana's *Singh Vijaya.* Both plays try to take a ladder beyond race-caste divide and attempt to usher hope through alternative means. This involves improvement in economic situation of the poor, educating them properly and so on.

The book is timely and decidedly a contribution to the meagre studies available in India on the subject. At the organisational level though, the inter-connectivity among chapters remains suspect; the title of the book behaves no better. It could easily have bee: *Contemporary African-American and Dalit Theatres*:...

BASIL CLARK, *TAKING WHAT COMES*

(Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1999), pp.391, Rs.300.00

I.K. Sharma

The book under review is a biography of Professor Amy Geraldine Stock (1902-1988), known in her close circle as Dinah, who spent a valuable period of her life outside Great Britain. A wandering scholar endowed with a strong physique she taught English literature in the universities of Panjab (Hoshiarpur), Rajasthan (Jaipur), West Bengal (Calcutta) in India and Dacca in East Pakistan / Bangala Desh. Her biography initially designed by Basil Clarke (who unfortunately died in midstream) was finally re-edited by Surjit Hans with the help of her colleagues, friends, and relaitves.

Professor Stock arrived in India on August 1, 1947 ... a very inauspicious hour for a foreigner to land when the entire sub-continent was seething with forces of dissensions. Ignoring all, she heroically headed straight to Dacca to take up her new assignment in the university. Lifelong she remained a cyclist by choice. In India wherever she worked her dwelling place had very little furnishings. Her 'romantic poverty' and 'rag-bag' personal appearance reveal the secret why she remained a lifelong friend of N.G. Ranga (a kisan leader) and Jomo Kenyatta (a freedom fighter). She lived cheaply and stayed in the cheapest hotel on her list when in a new city.

She was a teacher 'who can't resist teaching.' In this role she strove to fashion the young brains in a new way that she hoped would eventually alter the character of the society. Often she would urge her students to think independently and avoid the mechanical shortcuts to knowledge of English literature. Learning, she would say, is a quest, an individual enterprise. The question that repeatedly teased her mind was 'how to knock a hole in the fabric of Indian university exams" (p.154)? Equally instructive are her observations recorded in her journal on some of the Ph.D. Scholars performace. For instance,

> The candidate has done a phenomenally industrious thesis.... it was also phenomenally dull and undiscriminating, but it shouldn't be wasted. (p.218); "... a rather dismal Indian thesis on Orwell." (p.289)

Likewise her comments on *official meetings* in universities are dread-

fully open. These meetings, she writes, are "like a body all made of parasites... nobody has any central idea of the university: each... is there for his own prestige or to grab something (p.96)".

No less interesting are her impressions *on writers* whose works she had gone through. Spengler, in her view, is 'a crashing bore.' Camus and Sartre are "completely opposite types of mind preoccupied with the Absurd" (p.305). On Gandhi's Death she put down her feelings thus: "Curious, how the mind works. When I heard of his death, I had an immediate vision of the crumpled up kitten and the yellow brute disappearing out of the window. I think it will remain in my mind as an image of death by violence, and whenever I think of him" (p.97). Jinnah? The name was given to a cat in 1939 when she was teaching in Bingley Training College in Yorkshire "because he was an interloper" (p.85). About herself she declared without any mask. "I couldn't become a Christian" (p.304). In exasperation she penned: 'Is there in India a bigger fraud than myself" (p.180)?

In brief, Professor Stock was 'bored with Hoshiarpur' and 'enjoyed Jaipur despite pinkpricks.' All the same, it would be 'a wrench to leave India (p.165)'. Unwearied, the Professor moved freely from one place to another in and outside India, giving money freely to persons (servants and students) who needed it and responding sympatheitcally to the plight of weak examinees even a day before examination. A gifted poet, she sums up her own fate in a poem:

....And you will freely earn and freely spend,
But never save, and wander to the end
Over the continents of the world, and be
Honoured in many a diverse company.

To conclude, this book is a precious document that uncovers the life of a scholar who remained wedded to principles she was enamoured of in the early phase of her life. She represents an age when war of ideas (God, religion, supernaturalism, agnosticism Faith, Freedom, etc.) was going on in the western world. In addition, the book sheds light on the health of Indian system of education. A short documentary film should be made on the life of this remarkable lady of substance who, like Sister Nivedita and Annie Beasant, served Mother India in her own way.

O.P. BUDHOLIA, *CRITICAL ESSAYS ON INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE*

(Jaipur: Book Enclave, 2003), pp.241, Rs.550.00

Nand Kumar

Critical Essays on Indian English Literature by O.P. Budholia is a useful book, which includes almost all the forms of Indian English Literature. It consists of eighteen essays. Apart from the essays on Indian English Literature, this book also includes two papers on language: the first one, "Standard Variety of Indian English" deals with the intelligibility and acceptability of Indian English; and the other one, "Language and Literature" focuses on the close relationship between literature and language. The first paper in the book, "Kabir and Rabindranath Tagore as Poets: A Comparative Study," examines critically a few affinities and differences between Kabir and Tagore as poets.

This book comprises six papers on Indian English poetry dealing both the established and the new poets. "Symbolism in Sri Aurobindo's Savitri" opens up some new perceptions along with the symbolic representation of its chief character Savitri. It also focuses on the modern relevance of Sri Aurobindo's. The next paper, "The Poetic Art of A.K. Ramanujan," reveals the thematic contents of Ramanjuan's poetry, and also discusses the myths, symbols and images which have been used as linguistic tools by the poet. Budholia analyses, in detail, the concept of time-linearity and the role of memories in the poetry of A.K. Ramanujan.

The book includes a paper on Indian English prose, viz. "Jawaharlal Nehru as a Prose Writer" which traces the achievements of Nehru as a Prose Writer. The paper analyses the thematic, linguistic and mythical patterns in his prose works. Nehru has used many root words of Sanskrit in *The Discovery of India*, and Indian myths and images in *The Glimpses of World History*. Then, there are two papers on Girish Karnad as a dramatist. The first one concentrates on the historical facts of India and the historic behaviour of the Sultan. Also, it highlights the socio-psychological and politico-religious motifs of Sultan Mohammand Tughlaq. Another play

analysed in this essay is *Hayavadana*. The play has been interpreted for the pattern based on the device of folk-motifs, masks, miming, the chorus, etc. The emphasis in Tughlaq has been laid on the responsibilities of the Sultan only, while *Hayavadana* induces a complicated world of human relationships. The next paper "Myth as Symbol: An Interpretation of Girish Karnad's *The Fire and the Rain*" is a symbolic and psychological interpretation of the myth of the *Mahabharata*, and it revivifies the *Yavakreeta* myth in modern context. The structural plan of *The Fire and the Rain* runs into three parallel streams: Raibhya and Vishakha at the hermitage, the sacrificial place with Paravasu as the chief prest, and the story of Nittilai and Arvasu as actors in a theatrical performance.

Of the six essays on Indian English fiction, three are meant for revealing the fictional art of Anita Desai. The first one, "City as Protagonist: A View of Anita Desai's Novels," generates ambivalence in human relationships. The comparison between the city and the protagonist is apt. The next, "Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay:* A Quest for Identity," deals with racial premonition, human predicament, poverty and violence. The third one, "Anita Desai's *Journey to Ithaca:* An Analysis," sets forth the norms for the higher Journey of life. The incomplete Journey of Hugo in *Baugartner's Bombay* for his spiritual quest comes to its fulfillment in *Journey to Ithaca.* The next essay titled "Post-colonialism and Textuality: A Critique of Three Indian English Novels" deals with colonialism and its impact on postmodern writings.

"Symbolic Fabric and Prophetic Strains: An Assessment of Arun Joshi's *The City And the River*" is a remarkable, for it brings out the novelist's realistic and political vision and the impact of *The Bhagavad-Gita* and other Sanskrit texts on his mind and art. The last essay in the book, "Language and Human Psyche: An Analysis of *The God of Small Things,*" exhibits social and linguistic deviations. The critic opines that Arundhati is successful in using the "synchronic and sensory language" in the novel.

All the essays included in this book set forth the example of responsible criticism. Inevitably, the book will prove invaluable to both students and scholars of Indian English Literature.

SUNANDA MUKHERJEE,
MOMENT & OTHER POEMS

(Kolkata: Writers Workshop, 2003), pp.48, Rs.120.00

R.K. Singh

Moment & Other Poems is Sunanda Mukherjee's first collection of 34 poems, reflecting her personal disappointments and disillusion with love, marriage and life: "I realised that love meant/Torture, treachery and polygamy/That love means selfish sadism/ .... Now I know/The real meaning of love/And also, that/Women must handle it with care." (p.33). A wise feeling, indeed.

The 'countless injuries' and selfish sadism that she has suffered in love makes her "terror-stricken heart" (p.26) so vulnerable that she feels 'empty' as a woman. In her moments of self-pity and disgust she even challenges God, who, in His male form, could never understand the sufferings and tortures a woman is made to undergo. If God could ever have a female form, he would realise "that the heaviness of time/Is often heavier than life" (p.28).

Sunanda Mukherjee, a teacher of English literature in Varanasi, uses poetry to communicate her feelings to herself, searching her identity and discovering herself as a "forgotten, forlorn woman" (p.46), who is also disgusted with "bloodsucking parasites" and "cactus hands" of "the human faced wolves and snakes" (p.22). She hates the 'lovely faces' and 'innocent eyes' that make the talk of 'transcendental joy' or the principles of Truth, Justice, Love, etc. meaningless.

In her personal and nearly lyrical voice is pronounced deep discontentment, disillusion, uncertainty, and unhappiness with not only the near and dear ones but also with the 'faithless world,' humanity, and life itself. She sounds tired and exhausted, seeking refuge in her own dreamland, virtually haunted by death: "The darkness of midnight / Has spread its arms" (p.17) and if she searches the divine, it is only to kiss Death:

> Unveil and embrace me like fever,
> Drinking and engulfing every cell of mine
> Running through my veins.

Kiss me hard.
And then, take me away. (p.21)

Searching death is not living, but life is so disappointing to her that she seeks solace in Death, which appears enchanting, with the "third eye" (cf.p.18 and 43), yet the real emancipation lies "within" and "not in the false horizon" (p.47), as she realises.

The poet is promising, if she could cultivate her talent and recreate her inner world honestly. In poems like "Life" and "Only Scenes" she smacks of insincerity and artificiality, while in "Serpent", she is simply superb in constructing irony. Occasionally one overhears Tagore echoes as she ruminates about life and death: "Unknown hands/Are coming to catch me"; "It's a pity/That you can't see/The race of dark shadows covering the future sun,/coming towards you", "I want to forget everything/Even my own self/And dip into that bliss of forgetfulness", etc. But she also appears capable of celebrating the positive in her world, if she could poetically adjust her *attitude* and write real personal lyrics.

SURYA NATH PANDEY (ED.), *MILLENNIUM PERSPECTIVES ON A.K. RAMANUJAN*

(New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2001), pp.188, Rs.395.00

K.K. Sharma

Surya Nath Pandey's *Millennium Perspectives on A.K. Ramanujan* is a collection of fourteen essays on Ramanujan, a unique literary phenomenon of modern India. The volume opens with an "Introduction," which acquaints us with his cultural preoccupations required to comprehend his creative genius correctly. "Ramanujan's Credo" by D. Ramakrishna establishes that Ramanujan is strikingly different from expatriates like V.S. Naipaul and Salman Rushdie who are rootless and find India simply exotic. By virtue of his rootedness in Indian culture and involvement with American way of life, Ramanujan has effectively articulated both the Indian and the Western ideas with utmost ease. In "Correcting a Critical Fallacy: A Closer Reading of Ramanujan's Three Early Poems," the learned editor himself closely studies Ramanujan's three early poems — "Self-Portrait," "Conventions of Despair" and "Still Another View of Grace" —, in their proper contexts. The exhaustive analysis of these poems exhibits that there is a "serious inaccuracy in the existing Ramanujan scholarship" (34).

Niranjan Mohanty in "The Points of Return: Poetry of A.K. Ramanujan" examines the aesthetic configurations of the points of return in his remarkable poetry. His "points of return are history — personal, social or cultural and linguistic —, home or family, myth, and the self" (37). Referring to Vinay Dharwadker's observation on the poet's self and by drawing certain circular pictures exhibiting the position of the self, Mohanty establishes the fact that Ramanujan, though living in America, had never been away from India and Indian culture. Rajalakshmi Gopalan's "The Fusion of the Reflective and the Introspective in A.K. Ramanujan's Poetry" convincingly demonstrates how Ramanujan's greatness as a poet depends largely on his ability to blend poetically the experiences of the outer world with the responses of the inner one. Referring to several poems from *Relations*, Gopalan stresses that Ramanujan employs poetry as a means to synthesize

his felt experiences and introspective perceptions.

Rakesh N. Desai in his article entitled "The Negotiation of Art and Life in A.K. Ramanjuan's Poetry" points to the ways by which Ramanujan achieves the negotiation of art and life. Divided into two parts, the first part of the paper is devoted to the way his poems reflect the creative process, while the second part concentrates on the inalienable relationship between art and life. "A.K. Ramanujan's Treatment of Love" is Mohan Ramanan's serious effort to demonstrate that Ramanujan is a love poet besides being a polyglot scholar, an indefatigable translator, a true linguist, an instinctive folklorist, a bilingual writer and a perceptive critic. His treatment of love is marked by a strong native touch. By analysing "Love Poem for a Wife and Her Trees," Ramanan explore the multidimensional relationship of husband and wife.

Bijay Kumar Das defines post-colonialism and refers to the circumstances making Ramanujan both an expatriate and a post-colonial poet in his paper titled "A Post-Colonial Reading of A.K. Ramanujan's Poetry." According to Das, myth and history, language and landscape, self and the other are some of the basic elements of post-colonialism. On the basis of Ramanujan's dealing with the family theme in "History", "Looking for a Cousin on a Swing", and "Obituray", Putna myth in "Mythologies 1", and Lord Vishnu's killing Hiranyakshayap in "Mythologies 2", Das establishes that Ramanujan is a post-colonial poet with an astonishing understanding of Indian myths and folklore.

In his essay, "Locating A.K. Ramanujan: Memory, Self and Identity in His Poetry," E.V. Ramakrishnan traces the working of memory in poems like "Breaded Fish," "Still Another for Mother" and "Looking for a Cousin on a Swing." In these poems memory works like moments of epiphany when something very significant is suddenly realised. It becomes an organizing principle in the poet's second volume, *Relations.* In poems like "Traces", "Contraries" and "Foundlings in the Yukon," the self is identified as a process rather than a product. Ramakrishnan concludes the essay with the pointed observation: "One needs to break out one's prefabricated images to accept the world as it is" (101).

Jayaprakash A. Shinde's primary intention in "'Family,' as a Central Metaphor in A.K. Ramanujan's Poetry" is to study his poetry in order to explain how human behaviour relating to the family enables us to achieve a better understanding of the process working in society. Analysing his several poems, Shinde concludes that Ramanujan realistically dwells upon the relative advantages of the 'joint' family system over the 'nuclear' one. In "Roots that Roam: Relationships in Ramanujan's Poetry" Premila Paul focuses on his treatment of human relationships. Paul opines that his poetry deals with both individual and social memory, and his mainly enables him to maintain his rootedness and keep alive his relationship with India. Shirish V. Chindhade in "Some Interesting Structural Features of A.K. Ramanujan's Poetry" unravels the structural features of some of Ramanujan's poems to accentuate his technical virtuosity. His use of long sentences — ninety one lines in ten sentences, and twenty-three lines in two sentences only — and interest in the sonnet form have been spotlighted in this essay.

P.K. Kalyani's article titled "*The Black Hen :* A Trans-Continental Experience" examines the synthesis of cultures that A.K. Ramanujan has endeavoured to achieve in this posthumous collection of poems. Referring to various myths and legends, Kalyani shows how Ramanujan has popularized the Indian mythology in the West. In "Religious Poetry and Literary Criticism: A Note on A.K. Ramanujan's *Speaking of Siva*" Rama Nair points out how the parameters of literary criticism need to be redefined when mystical experience becomes a felt experience as in the case of devotional poetry. The last essay in the book, "Network of Relations: Cross-Fertilization in Ramanujan's Translations and Poetry" by Rita Kothari analyses Ramanujan's views on cultures, families, relationships and selfhood as revealed in his translations and original poems in English.

Bruce King's undated letter and Keki M. Daruwalla's letter dated November 17, 1999, appended to the book, substantiate some of the significant statements of the editor. An updated and annotated Bibliography immensely contributes to the authenticity and importance of the book. In a word, but for a few typographical errors, the volume is an instance of academic excellence.

A.N. DWIVEDI, *PROTEST POEMS*

(Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 2003), pp.69, Rs.200.00

O.P. Budholia

Protest Poems by A.N. Dwivedi has been divided into three parts: the first part consists of seven poems taken from Dwivedi's first collection, *Random Reflection* (1994); the second part comprises ten poems selected from his second collection titled *Fine Frenzy* (1998); and the third one contains twenty newly composed poems. The poems of the first section are woven into the texture of socio-cultural realism. "The Demon of Communal Riots" creates far-reaching effects on the reader. For the realistic portrayal of society, the poems like "The Slum-Dwellers," "The Village Tailor," "The Rickshawallh" and "The Beggar" are noteworthy. The humanitarian note is also clearly perceptible in these poems.

In the poems of the second part the realistic mode is replete with the satiric and ironic vein. The poems like "The Shoe Maker," "Beggars at the Sangam," "The Campus Life" and "Hungers at Large" fully bring out the social, moral and psychological purviews of the poet. The stitching that the shoe maker puts in its sole makes a stitch in the soul of the poet. He even evinces ironically the subtle behaviour of the roaming beggars at the *Sangam*. The long poem, "Hungers at Large," begins with the animal image of the tiger. The poet has revealed here five kinds of hungers: the hunger of a beggar, the hunger of a widow or a widower, the hunger of a priest, and the hunger of a politician. The intensity of hunger is so deep in each and case that the poet has personified it with the ferocity of a tiger. The art of beggary has also been divided into two parts: "Real beggar or a feigned one." As a social realist the traces minutely the psychological facts about these various hungers in different walks of life. A young woman beggar arrests immediately "the roving eyes/ of lecherous men, vulture like." The psychogenic traits of man are revealed and analysed, and even women are not spared by the searching eyes of the poet. As a subtle psychologist of human nature and human behaviour, he has traced minutely the deeper regions of human psyche when he reminds the reader of the hunger of a woman beggar: "This libidinous hunger is fiercer / than the hunger of the

beggar it is fiercer than that of a pair of hawks or eagles / suspected in the mid-air / in an ecstatic bout of sex act."

The twenty new poems of the third part exhibit the modernist perceptions of the poet about the social, political, moral and educational problems. The following poems like "Over Population," "Bug of Bribery," "Public life," "At the Cremation Ghat," "Mushrooming Schools," "Teacher & Coaching," "Fake Sadhus," and "Politician-Goonda Nexus" embody the social and realistic vision of the poet with a rare clarity and simplicity of expression. The Poet thinks seriously about the rapid growth of population in our country in "Over Population". "Public Life" works out ironically the hypocrisy and the double standard of human behaviour. The poems like "At the Cremation Ghat," "Fake Sadhu," "Fornication," and "Man-Women Relationship Today" become symbolic and suggestive of two major issues of our society: the loss of human values and the growing distance in human relationships. "At the Cremation Ghat" and "Fake Sadhus" bring out the corruption and the degradation of values even in the ritualistic ceremonies of our country. The pundits do not maintain discipline even while performing the rituals at the cremation Ghat of the *Sangam*. The crowd of the fake sadhus also teases the poet for the loss of moral values.

"Fornication" and "Man-Woman Relationship Today" are in the dialogue form. They also lament the loss of social and cultural values. The limit of the conduct for a young man ends in enjoying the "forbidden pleasures" without any tinge of conscience. Any advice against the sensual pleasures makes him react against the social norms. "Man-Woman Relationship Today" becomes suggestive of the freedom-loving tendencies of modern women. Man as husband acknowledges the inevitability of a woman's place in his life, but she proclaims her course of action that gives her an individual identity and the sense of personhood. She gets the warnings from her male partner, but she cares the least for them.

The poems in this collection are rich in beautiful myths and images. What is specially remarkable about them is the poet's artistic use of the indigenous myths, images and symbols in such a way as to bring to light their contemporary relevance.

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