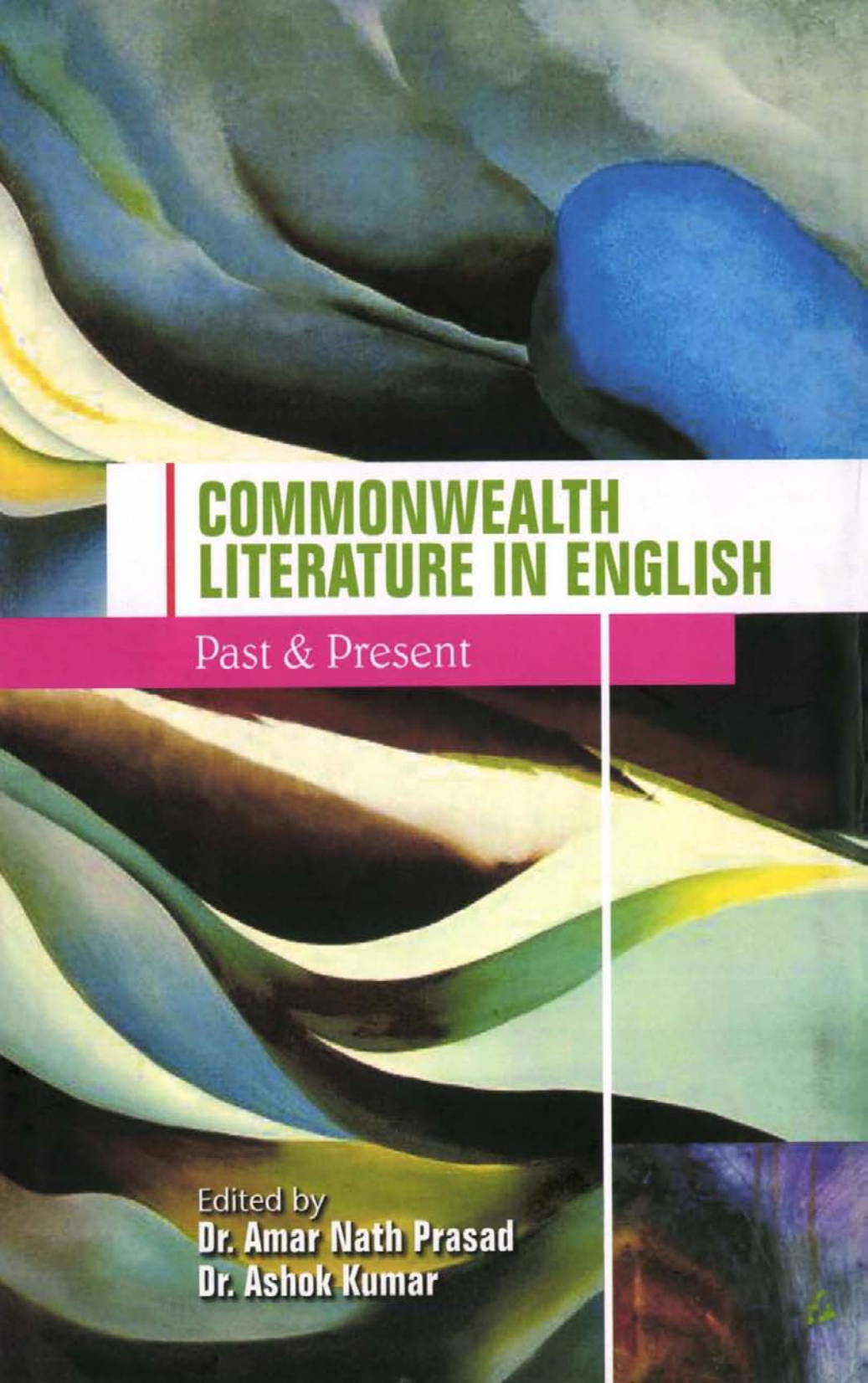


COMMONWEALTH LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Past & Present

Edited by
Dr. Amar Nath Prasad
Dr. Ashok Kumar

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(PAST AND PRESENT)

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CONTENTS

- Preface

1. Commonwealth Literature : Philosophy and Poetry (With Special Reference to *The Remains of the Day)* — Dr. Anita Ghosh 1
2. R.N. Tagore's Treatment of Love : The Highest Manifestation of Human Consciousness — Bithika Sarkar 28
3. Re-Interpretation of Myth in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* — Dr. Ratri Roy 39
4. Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's *The Householder* : A Critical Exploration — Dr. Nagendra Kumar Singh 54
5. Influence on Manohar Malgonkar — Dr. Sudhirkumar J. Singh 70
6. The Seeking Self in the Novels of Anita Desai — Dr. Anita Singh 83
7. The Art of Characterization in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande — Dr. Sheikh Salahuddin 103
8. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* : A Study in Theme and Technique — Dr. Amar Nath Prasad 123
9. Amitav Ghosh's *In An Antique Land* : A Post-Modernist's Rendezvous with History — Dr. Uday Shankar Ojha 140

10. The Refugee and Naxal Nexus in Asif Currimbhoy's 'Bengal Trilogy' : A Socio-Critical Explication
— Dr. J. Samuel Kirubahar and Ms. R. Meena 150

11. Culture Clash, Confusion and Final Assimilation : A Study of Immigrant Experience in *A Change of Skies* by Yasmine Gunaratne, *An American Brat* by Bapsi Sidhwa, and *Jasmine* by Bharati Mukherjee
— Dr. (Mrs.) B.R. Agrawal 164

12. India as Revealed in V.S. Naipaul's *India : A Wounded Civilization* and Peggy Payne's *Sister India*
— Dr. Mrs. K. Sandhya 182

13. Tehmina Durrani's *Blasphemy* : A Study of Socio-Religio Decadence
— Dr. P.K. Chaudhary 191

14. Tehmina Durrani's *Blasphemy* from a Multiple Perspective

PREFACE

The present book **Commonwealth Literature in English : Past and Present** is a modest attempt to explore and elucidate critically some of the well-known writers of the commonwealth literature. The authors whose works have been critically analyzed in this book are Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, R.P. Jhabvala, Manohar Malgonkar, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh, Asif Currimbhoy, Yasmine Gunaratne, Bharati Mukherjee, V.S. Naipaul, Peggy Payne, Bapsi Sidhwa, Tehmina Durani, Margaret Laurence, Carl Jung, Nadine Gordimer, Chinua Achebe, Patrick White, Taslima Nasrin and some short story writers of Sri Lanka.

The leading paper by Dr. Anita Ghosh critically explores the philosophy and poetry of commonwealth literature with special reference to three important novels **The Remains of the Day, A Pale View of Hills** and **An Artist of the Floating World.** The next paper by Dr. Bithika Dasgupta Sarkar is concerned with the works of Rabindranath Tagore. It analyses Tagore's concept of love which is the highest manifestation of human consciousness. She is of the opinion that with his usual insight into the origin and process of his poetic creation, Tagore knows that the despondency of his outlook was the outcome of a sensitized imagination, as it was with the entire genre of romantic poetry.

Sri Aurobindo holds an eminent place in Indian Writings in English. His magnum opus **Savitri** has been widely appreciated as a great work of literature. Dr. Ratri Roy in her paper "Reinterpretation of Myth in Sri Aurobindo's **Savitri**" explores critically the author's treatment of myth in **Savitri**. Dr. Nagendra Kumar Singh in his scholarly paper on Ruth Prawer Jhabvala examines objectively and

analytically the novel **The Householder** and observes that in this novel the novelist portrays the life of a lower middle class individual in urban setting and this she does with fine insight. Her portrayal has a verisimilitude that is commendable.

Manohar Malgonkar is one of the leading novelists in Indian fiction in English. His novels show his highly productive use of artistic talent. His interest of history is indeed working of serious consideration, for it is fully blended with the poetic elements of imagination and some other dramatic and aesthetic touches. This is what Dr. Sudhir Kumar J. Singh expresses in his paper "Influence on Manohar Malgonkar". Dr. Anita Singh devotes her scholarly paper on the spiritual and existential realism of the novels of Anita Desai. She makes a very skilful comparison between the existentialism of Arun Joshi and Anita Desai and concludes that Anita Desai is very sincere and practical with her art and craft.

Shashi Deshpande is considered a great writer, with an excellent command over English language and narrative skill. Her portrayal of the plights and persecution of the women and her psychological analysis of the women characters have become a centre of attention among the literary people and critics. Her art of characterization is even more interesting. Dr. Sheikh Salahuddin in his paper "The Art of Characterization" dwells upon this theme and sums up the paper by observing that Shashi Deshpande's novels stand distinguished in portraying Indian women in the social life of India at a given time with befitting mythical exploration.

Dr. Amar Nath Prasad has critically explored the various aspects of the book **The God of Small Things** by Arundhati Roy. Roy's debut novel **The God of Small Things** is the most remarkable work in Indo–Auglian fiction. It has a very fine correspondence between the feeling and the form, the matter and the manner. Her 'extraordinary linguistic inventiveness', her satirical portrayal of the contemporary society, her psychological dealings of the isolated and deviated characters, her new and original style containing several new things have been widely appreciated the world over.

Dr. Uday Shankar Ojha in his paper on Amitav Ghosh's **In an Antique Land** holds the view that it is in this post-modernist context

of destablizing and transforming fixed ideas of history, that Amitav Ghosh does to have a determined quest for artistic coherence in a fragmented world of some ordinary and unheroic characters belonging to different religious beliefs and varrying cultural colonies languishing in alienated moods. Dr. J. Samuel Kirubahar and Ms. R. Meena in their critical paper on Asif Currimbhoy critically evaluate **The Refugee, Sonar Bangala** and **The Inquilab.** The hold the view that the dramatist's conception of refugee is linked to survival and the achievements and dreams that emerge from the connected experience of generation and expression of freedom and beauty, and of power and community. They think that Currimbhoy's works are "organically spare rather than elaborate, active rather than passive, a process of stripping off layers, honing down to the core."

Dr. (Mrs.) B.R. Agarwal explores in her paper the immigrant experience in Yasmine Gunaratne's **A Change of Skies,** Bapsi Sidhwa's **An American Brat** and Bharati Mukherjee's **Jasmine.** She is of the opinion that in all these novels there is one similar truth that immigration transforms the personality of an individual by enabling him to come out of the cacoons of his traditions of a dead past. Dr. (Mrs.) K. Sandhya makes a very fine critical comparative study of V.S. Naipaul's **India : A Wounded Civilization** and Peggy Payne's **Sister India.** Her main thrust in this paper is to show how these aforesaid two writers belonging to two different races, cultures and countries project their views about India after spending a fairly adequate period of time in this country. She concludes her paper saying that both these writers are common in their views that India is a poor and religiously threatened country. Dr. K. Sandhya has contributed her other paper on Tehmina Durrani's Blasphemy which exposes the realities of the women of Pakistan and the other dalits and the deserted of that country. Dr. P.K. Chaudhary treats the same novel very analytically and elaborately and holds the view that the portrayal of female protagonist undergoing a gruesome psychic turmoil imparts an outstanding dimension to the novel for its deft employment of 'stream of consciousness' technique. Dr. S.K. Paul in his thought provoking and exhaustive essay examines critically the novels of

Margaret Laurence to whom he thinks that she may be called a Jungian, in the sense that some of Jung's most penetrating intuitions are exemplified and illuminated in the four Manawaka Novels. Dr. Pradnya V. Ghorpade has critically examined the concept and vision of negritude in Nadine Gordimer's novels. R.K. Mishra, on the other hand, has dealt with the ideological clash between primitivism and modernism in the novels of Chinua Achebe. Dr. Shalini R. Sinha has tried her best to examine critically Taslima Nasrin's *French-Lover* which she calls a flawed journey towards self-discovery.

Dr. Ashok Kumar, deals with the nobel laureate Patrick White. He is of the opinion that the novels of Patrick White are justaposition of the influences and day by day sacraments and thus they generate a united soul state which is tributory to a place, symbolic or real. The last paper by Dr. Kandiah Shriganeshan of Sri Lanka is concerned with the Tamil mind and identity as portrayed in the short-stories of Sri Lankan Tamil writers.

The present book, we hope, will certainly cater to the long-left needs of the students, teachers and research scholars of commonwealth literature. The healthy critical comments and literary suggestions from different corners will be cordially appreciated.

The book saw the light of the day after the co-operation and constant efforts of a number of people to whom we want to record our sense of deep gratitude and obligations. First of all, we are very much indebted to all our learned contributors who composed their critical and analytical articles for this book and sent them timely to us. Prof. Raghubeer Singh Saini, Prof. Pashupati Jha, Prof. M.R. Verma, Dr. Dharam Singh Saini, Shri V.N. Singh, Dr. A.K. Vishnu, Dr. P.K. Patra, Dr. Shibu Simon, Dr. M.B. Gaijan, Dr. S.K. Paul, Dr. Bithika Dasgupta Sarkar, Dr. Nagendra Kumar Singh, Dr. K. Sandhya, Dr. P.V. Ghorpade, Radhakant Mishra, Dr. K. Shriganeshan and Dr. Anita Singh deserve our special thanks for encouraging and inspiring our spirit of editing a book like this.

Editors

One

COMMONWEALTH LITERATURE : PHILOSOPHY AND POETRY

(WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE REMAINS OF THE DAY)

Dr. Anita Ghosh

Although Commonwealth literature (from the Commonwealth of Nations, hence written in English) and postcolonial literature (translated into English) are taught in many English departments, they remain problematic for at least two reasons. First, taxonomically the designations never escape their flawed origins. Thus Jayana Clerk and Ruth Siegel, editors of a recent anthology (1995), virtually apologize for their title, Modern Literatures of the Non-Western World, saying that they "faced the dilemma of using a negative term that derives from a Western perception" (xvii). Similarly, the rationale for grouping works and the related supposition for survey courses is a sense of an underlying cultural history (e.g., American literature), which also informs other courses of genres that derive from that history. Lacking any comparable unity, postcolonial literature is presented as a hodgepodge assembly and is often associated with minority studies. By definition, minority views are supplemental. Frequently, minority views arise in reaction to majority views. Since they do not voice majority experience, they must remain secondary and somewhat exotic.

Yet the views presented by Commonwealth writers are not minority views, though one would hardly know this from the

scolding of critics such as Graham Parry who takes the most prominent Indian novelist, R. K. Narayan, to task for "the odd psychology of some of his characters whose emotional responses are often bizarre to a Western reader" (79). Anglo-American readers cannot understand the actions of Narayan's characters until they know something of the Hindu social psychology that defines normal behavior in Indian society. This, then, is the second problem: to understand something of a profoundly alien society requires a deeper shift in outlook than can be accomplished by an examination of an isolated text or even a collection of works.

Commonwealth writers are native to the regions and cultures they write about: the Caribbean, India, China and parts of Africa. In some measure an Anglo-American audience must appreciate the exotic element of such writing: how different the fictional characters and their situations are from what is ordinary and important in our experience. When this is ignored, critics often bluster, scorning the unfamiliar, or preach, asking for tolerance of the unfamiliar. Jayana Clerk and Ruth Siegel hope that their anthology "helps cultivate an awareness that honors different cultural perspectives," as though assuming that it was the professed intent of each author to pitch his or her culture to an audience of North American undergraduates (xviii). We do not expect great works from our own tradition to be so transparent and pandering. William Walsh illustrates the bluster approach, concluding that Narayan's Mr Sampath "doesn't quite succeed" because of "an insufficiency of composition.'" Exasperated because he can not explain the accomplished work, Walsh proclaims, "The novel's shape is oddly hump-backed, and repeated readings fail to convince me that I have missed some deeper and more structurally implicit unifying influence". What Walsh could not feel was the Hindu atmosphere, which provides motives for the characters in the novel and themes for readers.

Criticism has recently become sensitive to the presumptive tone of male narrative voices, to racially white voices and to colonial voices. Critical explanations proceeding from such sensitivities, however, remain dialectically two dimensional, assuming that truth can be discovered by stretching the text between two poles: male/female, white/black, majority/minority, America/the world.

Moving from one pole to the other is regarded as significant and such movement in a protagonist's understanding and his/her subsequent moral growth provides the model for many Western novels. Nonetheless, the change is measured by distance from the initial pole, which continues to broadcast paradigm assumptions that postcolonial writers do not hear, because they are tuned into the cultural programs which shaped their child-hoods. The non-Western cultures, in which postcolonial and Commonwealth writers typically spend their child-hoods, construe identity and motives that often lack Western counterparts. In some cases there is no second pole, either similar to or opposite from the first.

To read postcolonial literature with insight, Anglo-Americans must recognize that cultures are discrete and incommensurable. Indian Hindus are not bizarre British Christians. Readers must accept that there are not Kantian categories of logic or a deep grammar that will explain everything. In principle, the notion that critical tools should emerge from the culture they seek to explain sounds unproblematic. Objections arise on two counts. First, the legacy from Plato through Kant, paralleled by theology, claims a transcendental logic capable of giving the true picture. Postmodernism opposes this belief by stressing that any specific claim to the truth is necessarily grounded in a concrete language and historic culture. Second, as Bishop Berkeley might say, we only know what we know. Most readers of postcolonial and Commonwealth literature know only English and its associated culture. The implicit assumption is not exactly that Anglo-American culture is normative, but that readers partially escape or suspend it with difficulty, inevitably smuggling along implicit assumptions. The second point tends to reinforce the first point. Knowing only one view, it would be difficult to imagine exactly where it diverges from the truth.

Two points can now be made in regard to postcolonial literature. The first point is that there is not a neutral or obvious place to begin, a place where truth is bare and universal, which consequently becomes a standard. This should not forestall critical effort, but should work recurrently to qualify judgments as cultural instead of true. The second point is that criticism must have a foot in both the

culture of the reader and that of the writer. Because postcolonial novels offer exotic material, the critical enterprise is closer to anthropology, which studies alien cultures, than sociology, which studies one's own culture. A theoretical basis for anthropological criticism is provided by the prolific and readable work of the McGill philosophy professor, Charles Taylor. Midway between such theory and postcolonial literature, the studies of comparative religion and comparative philosophy provide useful critical terms. Pioneered by Huston Smith, William Cant well Smith and Joseph Campbell, the discipline of comparative religions opposes the presumption of Christian apologetics to be the true religion. Comparative philosophy is an even younger field. The works of Roger Ames and David Hall on comparing Confucian China to ancient Greece are exemplary. Although I did not discover it until after I had explicated the Confucian dimension in two of Timothy Mo's novels, Hall and Ames's Thinking Through Confucius is perhaps the best critical tool for understanding the Anglo-Chinese novelist's work. I believe that the critical method illustrated in this paper parallels the methods they use in regard to philosophical texts. Bernard Faure's *The Rhetoric of Immediacy* offers a postmodern reading of Zen Buddhism. The collection, *Japan in Traditional and Postmodern Perspectives* (1995), offers additional critical tools for readers of Asian postcolonial literature.

African-American culture has no doubt aided Western readers to appreciate the fiction of such African writers as Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (James Ngugi) and Nadine Gordimer. The Caribbean worlds of V. S. Naipaul and Sam Selvon are also vaguely familiar, crisscrossing with reggae music and cruise holidays. Australian and Canadian literature present cultural nuances of difference to American readers. India has produced many talented novelists who write in English, among them: Salmon Rushdie, R. K. Narayan, Nayantara Sahgal, and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. Clearly the most foreign atmosphere is found in works by East Asian (China, Japan) novelists. Two Japanese Nobel laureates (Yasunari Kawabata and Kenzaburo Oe) and the translation efforts of such publishers as Charles Tuttle in Tokyo have reached few Western readers. Among those who write in English, one name

stands out, Kazuo Ishiguro. Born in 1954 in Nagasaki, Japan, Ishiguro moved to England in 1960. Thanks in part to Anthony Hopkins's fame, the movie version of Ishiguro's novel, *The Remains of the Day*, is probably the best known single work by a Commonwealth writer. The work presents the ambivalent reflections of an English butler who recalls highlights from his service to a prominent aristocrat who was involved in formulating national policy towards Nazi Germany.

The movie was successful enough to provide a familiar world for a Pepsi Cola television ad in which an ancient butler shuffles through a cavernous English mansion to deliver a tantalizing can of the product sans a straw. Winning the Booker Prize in 1989, *The Remains of the Day* was preceded by two earlier novels, both set in Japan. *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) illustrates the ennui caused by defeat in WW2 and the subsequent American occupation. The novel ends with a character recognizing that "It's not a bad thing at all, the old Japanese way," which the war has irrecoverably destroyed (181). *An Artis of the Floating World* (1986) offers the postwar diary of a prominent painter who produced war propaganda for the government before and during WW2. The "floating world" refers to "the night-time world of pleasure, entertainment and drink," which Ishiguro uses to symbolize basic tenants of Buddhism.

I will argue that these three works need to be read as related in order to see that *The Remains of the Day* expresses a Buddhist criticism of Confucian ethics. This is a common theme in Japanese culture, which is largely formed by the tensional unity of Buddhism, Confucianism and Shinto, in some what the way that Western culture is formed by the tensional unity of Greek and Christian elements. The movie ignores this dimension and instead renders stock Western formulas of lost love and moral outrage. Some how the emotionally dead life of Mr. Stevens, the butler whose 1956 diary tells the story, promises to explain the blase British unconcern with anti-Semitism expressed in Neville Chamberlain's appeasement to Hitler. Although these elements, contained in a glossy picture of decrepit aristocracy, are obvious, explaining how aristocratic haughtiness, and the last glimmer from the dying light of the Raj, kindles Nazism is not so easy. For example, sentiment, if

not morality, dictates that Stevens should be chagrined to have neglected his father on his deathbed to arrange for a physician to treat the blistered feet of a French diplomat. Surprisingly Stevens boasts, "Why should I deny it? For all its sad associations, whenever I recall that evening today, I find I do so with a large sense of triumph" (110). Even more to the point, we expect Stevens to echo Miss Kenton's judgment — "What a terrible mistake I've made with my life" — about both his failed romance with her and his support of Lord Darlington's Nazi sympathies. Instead Stevens talks about trying "to make the best of what remains of my day" This may be no more than denial and evasion in Anthony Hopkins's performance, but there is more at work in the novel.

Mr. Stevens believes that he can sum up his life in the confession, "I gave my best to Lord Darlington" (242). He hopes that his life makes a "small contribution to the creation of a better world" (116). The Japanese term for this is bushido: "it required the samurai specifically to serve his lord with the utmost loyalty and in general to put devotion to moral principle (righteousness) ahead of personal gain. The achievement of this high ideal involved a life of austerity, temperance, constant self-discipline . . . qualities long honored in the Japanese feudal tradition . . . [and which were] given a systematic form . . . in terms of Confucian ethical philosophy" (de Bary 1: 386). According to Ruth Benedict, whose 1946 book, The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture, remains a classic starting point for the analysis of Japanese culture, "such strength [of character] is the most admired virtue in Japan" (192). The purpose of Confucian ethics is to produce a person who exhibits grace and authority under any social circumstance. Confucian ethics are not eschatological. There is no Last Judgment nor transcendental authority to separate sheep from goats. As Hall and Ames explain: "The model [chun tzu: exemplary person] qualifies as model not on the basis of what he can do, but by virtue of the quality of his actions: how he does things" (Confucius 191).

In contrast to Confucian ethics, Zen Buddhism hopes to liberate a person from all (Confucian) social situations, which are inherently worrisome. In Zen Buddhism, writes T. P. Kasulis, one is enlightened "when one lets go of pre-conceived notions of the self (122). Such

pre-conceptions are not Platonically innate but are derive from memorable performances of behavior evoked by specific social contexts or special occasions, which define tradition (li). In contrast, "The Zen ideal is to act spontaneously in the situation without first objectifying it in order to define one's role" (Kasulis 132). Against this Japanese Confucian/Buddhist tension. *The Remains of the Day* can be seen as a Buddhist critique of Confucianism. Mr. Stevens's life is stunted by the Confucian bushido code that he relies on to render identity and self-worth. The remedy is to develop a Zen Buddhist outlook.

The contrast between Eastern and Western attitudes in regard to social roles provides a door into Kazuo Ishiguro's world. In the Western view, Stevens is pathetic because his obsession with duty has arrested the development of adult autonomy. Westerners believe that something like Erik Erik-son's "Eight Stages of Man" specifies objective and universal stages of human, in contrast to cultural, development. Measured by this standard, Stevens fails to grow-up; he follows a social role instead of becoming his own person. Exasperated when Stevens fails to drop the role of butler and does not romantically respond to her, Miss Kenton asks, "Why, Mr. Stevens, why, why, why do you always have to pretend?" (154). Stevens's ambitions remain oedipal: to please a father figure. Especially in the movie version, Stevens remains pathetically defensive until he tragically admits, "All those years I served him, I trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really — one has to ask oneself — what dignity is there in that?" (243). Stevens poses this as a rhetorical question because every Westerner knows the answer: that one's deepest obligation is to develop a unique individuality. Christianity demands this. In Sources of the Self Charles Taylor illustrates that Romanticism/Modernism simply provided different arguments to insist on the same duty.

Nothing like this analysis can be made from a Confucian outlook. In Japan filial loyalty (hsiao) — which is ultimately offered to the person of the Emperor (symbolized in this case by Lord Darlington) — provides the vocabulary for self-worth. Without this loyalty, which derives from a sense of gratitude and obligation

(gimu: the infinite debt owed to parents for giving life and to the emperor for giving culture; giri: the debt owed to teachers, employers and other benefactors), one is no better than a monkey or a sociopath. Benedict explains that "the hero we [Westerners] sympathize with because he is in love or cherishes some personal ambition," the Japanese "condemn as weak because he has allowed these feelings" to erode his moral worth: "Westerners are likely to feel it is a sign of strength to rebel against conventions .... But the strong, according to Japanese verdict, are those who disregard personal happiness and fulfill their obligations. Strength of character, they think, is shown in conforming not in rebelling". Since the time of the pre-Socratics, Western metaphysics has assumed the existence of some single underlying and presocial reality. Asian thought concedes that such a reality exists but has no confidence that reason can mirror it. Its sensitivity to the notion that reality is ultimately indiscernible and ineffable is revealed in self-consciousness about metaphor or the ways in which reality can be traced, in Derrida's sense of the term. For the Japanese, one would be a fool to die for the Truth like Socrates or Jesus. Believing that specific meaning and identity are conferred by social context, Asian concern focuses on adept shifts of identity in response to differing social situations. Hence Joseph Tobin reports that "the most crucial lesson to be learned in the Japanese preschool is not omote, not the ability to behave properly in formal situations, but instead kejime — the knowledge needed to shift fluidly back and forth between omote and ura [literally "rear door," thus informal behavior]" (24). Because Japanese are adept at making such shifts of identity, they generally do not feel compelled to make one choice among Shinto, Confucian and Buddhist outlooks. They unselfconsciously adopt the appropriate identity when social circumstances call for a choice. Using psychological terminology, Takie Sugiyama Lebra identifies four possible Japanese selves: presentational (Confucian), inner (Shinto), empathetic (Mahayana) and boundless (Buddhist).

These shifts between various identities are generally under social and personal control. In contrast, paradigm shifts are occasioned by historical forces, such as the shift from the feudal values of the isolated Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1867) to the

values of the Meiji Restoration of 1868, which committed Japan to modernization. Edwin Reischauer has compared this shift to an earthquake: "The Tokugawa system had been shaken to its foundations by the events since 1853 [caused by an American naval presence and threats of colonization], and the whole antiquated structure began to disintegrate. All policies had become subject to debate by samurai from all over Japan" (80). He explains that "the samurai in a brief nine year period were deprived of all their special privileges, and Japan was started on a great change which was to transform its society in a mere generation or two from one in which status was primarily determined by heredity to one in which it depended largely on the education and achievements of the individual" (82-83). Benedict offers a more graphic picture: "The Tokugawas . . . regulated the details of each caste's daily behavior. Every family head had to post on his doorway his class position and the required facts about his hereditary status. The clothes he could wear, the foods he could buy, and the kind of house he could legally live in were regulated according to this inherited rank" (61). In the thirty years that Reischauer mentions, all of this was erased and new scripts were written. Even the emperor had his photo taken in Prussian military regalia.

After less than a century's involvement with the Western outlook, the Japanese world exploded in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Like many Japanese novels written after the war — one example is the brooding novel by Jiro Osaragi, *The Journey* (1960) — Ishiguro's first two novels are set in the mushroom shadow of the atomic Bomb, which so dramatically ended the outlook provided by state-mandated Shinto. One day it was Emperor Hirohito's portrait in every public building, the next it was Douglas MacArthur's picture in the newspaper. Overnight definitions of honor, dignity and status were redefined. In *A Pale View of Hills*, a retired teacher laments, "I devoted my life to the teaching of the young. And then I watched the Americans tear it all down" (66). The same teacher lectures his son, already converted to the new outlook, "Discipline, loyalty, such things held Japan together once. That may sound fanciful, but it's true. People were bound by a sense of duty. Towards one's family, towards superiors, towards the country" (65). Later the sensei

(teacher) is lectured by one of his former students who bluntly tells him, "In your day, children in Japan were taught terrible things. They were taught lies of the most damaging kind. Worst of all, they were taught not to see, not to question. And that's why the country was plunged into the most evil disaster in her entire history." How can the teacher respond? Can he meekly admit that his entire world view was wrong, that his life was "spent in a misguided direction" (147)? And what value system should he adopt to assess his putative failings? The contemporary Zeitgeist of his student, with its "self-evident" democratic values, simply did not exist in the old teacher's world. And who can say how long the current outlook will be fashionable? The teacher is too old to abandon his pre-war outlook; the younger man is too earnest to recognize how arbitrary his own outlook is. Yet millions of people in the 20th century have been caught trying to straddle the conflicting values of two worlds. Ishiguro offers us an example in the second plot of *A Pale View of Hills*, which tells a fragmentary tale of a ghost-like woman and her neglected daughter. The little girl does not attend school and is literally lost at various times in the novel. Her mother is equally lost, chasing an American serviceman in the hope of redemptive immigration to the America that destroyed Japan. Her equivocation and uncertainty are well illustrated by her inability to care for her daughter, who symbolizes the next generation. At one time she says, "I'm a mother, and my daughter's interests come first" (86). At another time she sarcastically asks, "Do you think I imagine for one moment that I'm a good mother to her?" (171).

In addition to the possibilities of exclusively living in the old world or the new world, or equivocating between them, there is a fourth possibility suggested by Zen Buddhism, which recognizes that social roles work like dramatic roles to dictate action and identity, and that the concepts of analytic language simply write more scripts rather than naming pre-existing entities. Kasulis explains that "We go through life thinking that our words and ideas mirror what we experience, but repeatedly we discover that the distinctions taken to be true are merely mental constructs" (55). Values are a matter of style, a way of seeing things. There is no ultimately true world of essential substances; in positing eternal

ideas Plato was simply imagining, functioning as another artist. Human nature does not operate by following a set of formulas. The most we can know is how to act and who we are within concrete social boundaries. Who and what we are beyond these is an enigma, a subject for Zen koans, which state paradoxes that are used as a meditative focus for Zen training. "Show me your original face," a Master might demand of a disciple, thereby directing him to reflect on pre-social (non-Confucian) identity. How can this primal state by identified without recourse to an arbitrary social context? Here one must remark that language itself is such a context.

For most of *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens feels that his tragic and wasted life resulted from mistaken loyalty, so that if he had backed a different horse or had played different cards, he would have been a winner instead of a loser. Stevens ponders this, "Naturally, when one looks back to such instances today, they may indeed take the appearance of being crucial, precious moments in one's life; but of course, at the time, this was not the impression one had." Indeed, the very problem is that "There was surely nothing to indicate at the time that such evidently small incidents would render whole dreams forever irredeemable" (179). Zen advises us to cease looking for such definitive and seminal moments because they are not there. These putative moments of choice are characteristic properties of analysis rather than objectively existent or discrete entities waiting to be discovered. The recognition that consciousness is a process like painting, rather than a mirror, can instantly dissolve trust in the analytic process. Suddenly the gestalt shifts from seeing the contents of consciousness to noticing the process itself. One can then develop an esthetic taste for this voyeuristic, detached perspective, which keeps one from too quickly professing another explanation, which promises to explain what was mistaken in the former view. *The Remains of the Day* and *An Artist of the Floating World* are both rendered as diaries in which each diarist searches for (moral) points of judgment in his experience, which he thinks mistakenly committed him to a historically failed vision. The problem is that the diary, or any retrospective analysis, is an interpretation committed to some set of implicit values that the analysis will make explicit. Analysis is a performance which

requires "causes" in order to produce "effects." For this reason, as Kasulis explains, "Zen Buddhism criticizes our ordinary, unenlightened existence by refusing to accept a retrospective reconstruction of reality" as uniquely or even especially true or definitive (60). Any expectation of discovering the "truth" or developing a transcendent identity in such terms is futile. People like Stevens, who cannot escape the deconstruction of beliefs they relied on to make sense of their experience— a world view they thought was objective and universal — have an opportunity for liberation, for not recommitting themselves to an alternative interpretation. In fact the Zen monastic experience is designed to force monks to just such a crisis.

It is Ichiro Ono, the artist in the novel, *An Artist of the Floating World*, who, by virtue of a heightened sensitivity to Japanese esthetics — which were largely formulated by Zen Buddhism — is most aware of the possibility of floating rather than diving in hopes of getting to the bottom of things. As Ishiguro depicts him, Ono rose to prominence in the 1930s as a painter. Ono is enticed to direct his art towards the production of didactic propaganda by earnest men who tell him that as a leader of "the new generation of Japanese artists, you have a great responsibility towards the culture of this nation" (151). They counsel Ono not to "hide away somewhere, perfecting pictures of courtesans" (173), but to paint inspiring pictures of "stern-faced soldiers....pointing the way forward" to greatness (169). Under the American occupation of 1945, Ono admits that he had been "a man of some influence, who used that influence towards a disastrous end" (192). What else could he say? Still, there is a disconcerting tone in Ono's contrition, which makes it sound insincere. He seems to disown too quickly his earlier commitment to the war effort and to equivocate in denouncing it, saying, "Indeed, I would be the first to admit that those same sentiments [expressed in didactic war art] are perhaps worthy of condemnation" (169). Ono's motive is not to defend a choice. He considers any choice to be a consequence of a process. The (moral) problem is unconditional faith in the process: "All I can say is that at the time I acted in good faith. I believed in all sincerity I was achieving good for my fellow countrymen. But as you see, I am not

now afraid to admit I was mistaken" (124). People who earlier demanded that Ono support fascist values, now expect the same ardor in condemning those values. As an artist (Buddhist), Ono perceives that the performance is the same.

Art frustrates the wish to get to the bottom of things, to gain a clear and definitive picture of the way things really are. As a young artist, Ono was not ready to sacrifice his vanity, his confidence that as a man of discipline and technical mastery, he would get to the bottom of things. Even when he is middle-aged, basking in the glow of adulation from his students, he considers art a vehicle, something he can use to achieve aims which precede and remain unaffected by the vehicle. When he thinks that he has mastered enough of the instrument, Ono informs his teacher, "I have learnt much in contemplating the world of pleasure, and recognizing its fragile beauty." But he then demonstrates how little he has learned: "I now feel it is time for me to progress" because "artists must learn to value something more tangible than those pleasurable things that disappear with the morning light" (180). The Zen roshi or teacher could tell him that perceiving and thinking are processes like painting a picture. We perceive how light and languages connect things, paint things. We fleetingly possess the picture but never the objects.

For the essence of the Buddhist outlook is the recognition that everything, including the values to which we are so earnestly dedicated, is a temporary perceptual amalgam fused by language and emotion. The ground for the existence of things is temporal and as insubstantial as light. Yet, like Ono and Stevens, we become "attached to our characterizations, thinking of them as absolutes, rather than as names convenient for a given purpose" (Kasulis 25). This includes our very identities, which are no more than cultural performances. Identity is a play of light and color, not something static; not a number nor an atom nor a soul. This Buddhist line of thinking gets to the bottom of things in its own way, and in Ishiguro's novel Ono's teacher, Mori-san, tries to communicate something of this view to his pupil, Ono, telling him that "the finest, most fragile beauty an artist can hope to capture drifts within those pleasure houses after dark. And on nights like these, Ono, some of that beauty

drifts into our own quarters here." The master then refers to some of own his early paintings, saying, "they don't even hint at these transitory, illusory qualities" (150). If Ono were as discerning as the artist he aspires to be — and ironically claims to be — he would recognize this as Japanese politeness, as face-saving admonishment which avoids explicit formulation and consequent direct confrontation. Mori is suggesting that despite whatever technical mastery he achieved in his youth, he could not see with the profundity produced by a lifetime of (Buddhist) dedication and practice. The point, he suggests, is for Ono not to think that he has finished the job of development; that he can see to the bottom of things and that consequently he no longer needs to strive for enlightenment. For enlightenment is also a process which needs to be repeatedly performed.

In Christianity, pride is a sin because God is everything and we are merely his creatures. In Buddhism, pride is embarrassing because it so flagrantly ignores elementary principles. In the Buddhist view, one cannot possess anything, including the self that craves possessions; everything dissolves and changes. In a Zen-like tradition of relating how his master enlightened him, Mori-san talks about "a man of no standing" (someone with no conferred authority). Ono complains, saying, "I am puzzled that we artists should be devoting so much of our time enjoying the company of those like Gisaburo-san" (148). Mori explains, "The best things, he always used to say, are put together of a night and vanish with the morning" (150). The principle of change (anicca) is an axiom of Buddhism. You cannot hold on to nor control experience by retrospective interpretation, which always renders a substitute (sign) for the experience to produce propaganda. Interpretation discovers only what is latent in its own structure. It cannot get to the bottom of experience because interpretation always deals with the substitutes it paints. The artist controls only the illusion of light.

Like a Zen monk, Mori has spent much of his life trying to capture the oblique light of the floating world, which does not spotlight a specific moment or subject, like truth or dignity or even beauty, but rather encompasses all such particulars in a suffusive glow — just as the light of life similarly contains all specific moments,

none of which transcends the process. Explaining the eminent Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitaro's idea of satori (enlightenment), Robert Carter writes: "The deep self, which forever eludes our conceptual grasp, is yet somehow known, nevertheless, as that at the background of our experience. It is never known but is ever present as a background 'lining'" (53). Kasulis defines Zen enlightenment as "the direct recognition of what one most fundamentally is: the purity, unity, and responsiveness of pre-reflective experience" (93). The Trappist monk and student of Buddhism, Thomas Merton, explains that "the chief characteristic of Zen is that it rejects all these systematic elaboration's in order to get back, as far as possible, to the pure unarticulated and unexplained ground of direct experience. The intent of Buddhism is to achieve an esthetic appreciation rather than to employ analysis in a search for an illusory redemptive moment, a moment of truth, moral choice and justification. In Ishiguro's novel, Mori plays the part of a Zen Master, telling Ono, his disciple:

I was very young when I prepared those prints. I suspect the reason I couldn't celebrate the floating world was that I couldn't bring myself to believe in its worth. Young men are often guilt-ridden about pleasure, and I suppose I was no different. I suppose I thought that to pass away one's time in such places, to spend one's skills celebrating things so intangible and transient, I suppose I thought it all rather wasteful, all rather decadent. It's hard to appreciate the beauty of a world when one doubts its very validity. Surprisingly this intangible and transient world of perception is the only world we ever experience.

On the last page of the novel, Ono, now an old man, reflects, "when I remember those brightly-lit bars and all those people gathered beneath the lamps, laughing a little more boisterously perhaps than those young men yesterday, but with much the same good-heartedness, I feel a certain nostalgia for the past," but he then goes on to conclude: "one can only wish these young people well" today (206). Neither Mori nor Ono offer specific advice from theology that would force life to conform to some principle; nor do they offer advice about seizing an opportune or all important moment of decision, that once lost results in tragedy. Their advice, which

seems so empty to earnest young people, is to encourage them to be esthetically sensitive to the quality of light that illuminates life; to appreciate life itself. In 1949 Ono's son-in-law parrots the same rhetoric Ono heard in the thirties, which was the same rhetoric Ono's grandfather might have heard in the early days of the Meiji restoration: "We needed new leaders with a new approach appropriate to the world of today" (185). The truth is that the light of the lamps and laughter of the people beneath them and the political ardor of Ono's son-in-law are no different now than they ever were; nor will they ever be fundamentally different in the future. There is nothing to find or repudiate in the past; neither is there anything to prove or create in the future. Life is not — except in Christian/Islamic interpretation — moving towards some eschatological moment. A koan has it that "When an ordinary man attains knowledge he is a sage; when a sage attains understanding he is an ordinary man" (Isshu 121).

Mr. Stevens is interested in extraordinary men. As a kind of Victorian samurai, his life is dedicated to the great or at least the powerful. A life of devotion requires a worthy object, a fixed point. Thus Stevens confesses that in his youth "we tended to concern ourselves much more with the moral status of an employer." Sounding like the youthful Ono, Stevens acknowledges that "we were ambitious ...to serve gentlemen who were, so to speak, furthering the progress of humanity." Stevens speaks not only for himself and the servant class, but for everyone in the empire when he says, "professional prestige lay most significantly in the moral worth of one's employer" (114). Extraordinary people were the measure of empire. No less than the fascist regimes of the 20th century, European aristocracies of early centuries were dedicated to providing an environment for superior people. Thus Lord Darlington's Nazi sympathies are no quirk, and Stevens could have comfortably worn a Nazi uniform.

Stevens is proud to be near the hub of the wheel of empire, where "debates are conducted, and crucial decisions arrived at, in the privacy and calm of the great houses of this country" (115). Initially Stevens is exclusively concerned with samurai values.

Someone else chooses the game; the butler is content to be a skilled player: "my vocation will not be fulfilled until I have done all I can to see his lordship through the great tasks he has set himself (173). In 1923 Stevens witnesses a confrontation between his employer and with an American Senator, Mr. Lewis, who calls Lord Darlington a fool: "He [Darlington] is an amateur and international affairs today are no longer for gentlemen amateurs. The sooner you here in Europe realize that the better" (102). When Darlington rises with icy civility to correct Lewis — "What you describe as 'amateurism', sir, is what I think most of us here still prefer to call 'honour'" — Stevens heartily approves. Yet Lewis proves to be correct: good intentions are not enough to create a just world. Reginald Cardinal, tragically killed in WW2, represents British hopes for the post-empire period. In touch with modern politics, he is less crass than the American senator and might be characterized as a young John Majors. His observation on Darlington is discomfiting: "Over the last few years, his lordship has probably been the single most useful pawn Herr Hitler has had in this country for his propaganda tricks. All the better because he's sincere and honourable and doesn't recognize the true nature of what he's doing" (224). Stevens has himself, if only silently, objected to Darlington's sycophant behavior towards Hitler's foreign minister, Ribbentrop.

Stevens's loyalty to a single view exhibits a hair-line crack when he is involved in what he would like to dismiss as lower-class political wrangling in a village where he is stranded for a night. A garrulous barroom character expresses the opinion that "Dignity isn't just something gentlemen have. Dignity is something every man and woman in this country can strive for and get" (185-86). Stevens tries to deny this, since it strikes at the foundation of aristocratic, fascist and Confucian claims to possess exclusive authority to set the rules for social games. For example, if each individual could freely decide how to be religious, what authority would the pope retain? Stevens asks, "how can ordinary people truly be expected to have 'strong opinions' on all manner of things?" (194). He has, however, discovered that Darlington and his cronies are as uninformed as the villagers or any other "amateurs" and

that their "strong opinions" are nothing more than the gullible fantasies of childhood redefined in Nazi propaganda. Calling someone like Darlington "lord" or the housemaids "Jews" does not denote some inherent property; it simply assigns a position in a social game. Not to have realized this, especially since he was himself such a skilled player ~ this is Stevens's mistake from a Buddhist perspective.

Although it might appear that the end of the novel leaves Stevens a wreck, regretfully cynical of his misplaced trust, this is not the case. Stevens talks about hoping "to make the best of what remains of my day," in a tone that is not glum (244). Once again Ono provides instructive insight when earlier in the novel he says, "it is one of the enjoyments of retirement that you are able to drift through the day at your own pace, easy in the knowledge that you have put hard work and achievement behind you" (41). In retirement one is a person of no standing and hence no anxiety. Having no assigned part to play, one has no fear of giving a bad performance. In retiring from the world, as do Buddhist monks, there is an invitation to see life as art, as a performance rather than as a Zoroastrian battle. A Westerner might argue that even Zen Buddhist monks play some social role and that Stevens remains employed. Yet consider what Mr. Faraday wants from Stevens. Mr. Faraday, a rich American who employs Stevens after Darlington's demise, wants a purely dramatic performance. Faraday is amused by Stevens, until one day when Stevens fails to offer the performance that is expected of him for one of Mr. Faraday's American guests by denying that he was Lord Darlington's butler (123). At least in part, Stevens's motive is obvious: he did not want to exhibit his part in the pretension and gullibility of drafting policies of appeasement to Hitler. The guest lets Mr. Faraday know that she thinks the house and butler are imitations. Faraday is not amused when he inquires, "I mean to say, Stevens, this is a genuine grand old English house, isn't it? That's what I paid for. And you're a genuine old-fashioned English butler, not just some waiter pretending to be one. You're the real thing, aren't you?" (124). Faraday bought the house because it was a theatrical museum. Stevens is employed as the star actor in this small theme park. What angers Faraday is the quality of performance.

Because Stevens's performance failed to entertain the audience, Faraday is disappointed in the way a producer would be disappointed in a stage play flop. The sole concern is esthetic. Death camps and atomic bombs do not threaten.

At the end of *The Remains of the Day*, two features offer opportunities to reconsider the entire novel and to see it as something more than a tour de force of style. First we might note that the final image is almost the same as that in An Artist of the Floating World. In the earlier novel the final image is of "all those people gathered beneath the lamps, laughing" (206). In *The Remains of the Day* we find Stevens waiting for pier lights to come on, and when they do he studies "more closely these throngs of people laughing and chatting," discovering that "evidently, they had all paused a moment for the lights coming on." This is a moment of zazen, of disengagement from unreflective life preoccupied with details, of noticing the light instead of the objects it illuminates. Consider next how Stevens continues: "As I watch them now, they are laughing together merrily. It is curious how people can build such warmth among themselves so swiftly. It is possible these particular persons are simply united by the anticipation of the evening ahead. But, then, 1 rather fancy it has more to do with this skill of bantering. Listening to them now, I can hear them exchanging one bantering remark after another" (245). The topic of "bantering" provides the second opportunity to reconsider the novel. At the beginning of the novel, the banter of Mr. Faraday seemed a nuisance to Stevens and seemed perhaps to provide a source of humor to readers. In either case it did not seem especially significant. How astonishing, then, to discover the centrality of bantering in Zen Buddhism and accordingly to recognize that it functions in the novel as a kind of Zen practice which liberates Stevens from his samurai role.

There are two schools of Zen Buddhism: Soto and Rinzai. Both rely on zazen (seated meditation) to produce enlightenment. Rinzai Masters additionally assign koan study to their disciples. Meditation temporarily suspends all social roles except that of zazen, which Zen Buddhism claims is not really a social role but the natural human condition, our "original face." Koans present the student with culturally insoluble problems in order to erode

confidence in the assumption that Confucianism has delineated the rules for every game that can be played and in order to question the assumption that analysis can get to the bottom of things. Many Westerners are familiar with the koan which asks, "what is the sound of one hand clapping?" Yet what may be misleading in this popular example is that koans are not mildly entertaining enigmas. Koan study constitutes a formal and intense dialogue (another Confucian game) between a student and his roshi (Zen Master). When the Master demands, "Not thinking of good, not thinking of evil, just this moment, what is your original face before your mother and father were born?" he wants an answer, Alan Watts quotes a Zen master's description of koan work: the enigma causes a '"feeling of uneasiness and impatience'. After a while this feeling becomes intensified, and the Koan seems so overwhelming and impenetrable that the disciple is likened to a mosquito trying to bite a lump of iron" (73-74). The famous Chinese scholar, Wing-tsit Chan, adds that "Literally koan means an official document on the desk, connoting a sense of important decisions and the final determination of truth and falsehood" (18). The inability to provide the right answer - like the inability of Stevens to find the key moment on which his life pivots, imagining that he could have turned it in the right direction by giving the correct response — creates great anxiety for a Japanese schooled in Confucian etiquette. To the same effect, Kasulis recounts the story of an exasperated Buddhist monk who tried to turn the tables by asking his master, "What [sort of thing] is this person of no status?" The roshi came down from his dais like a Thunderstorm, Seizing the student, "Rinzai exclaimed, 'Speak! Speak!"' When the monk hesitated, not knowing how he was expected to respond in this situation, "Rinzai released him, saying" of the student, here is "the true person of no status., what a dried up shit-slick he is." He then left the monks to ponder the double entendre hinged between Buddhist and Confucian expectations about how the monk should have acted (Kasulis 51-52. Kasulis explains that "while the secular person must have a presupposed status in order to act, the Zen Buddhist is, in Rinzai words., a person of no status " He has no social situation or stage on which to act, no script to follow, and yet there is an insistent demand to perform. Yes, hut:

which part? The answer is no part, show me your original face: "the Zen ideal is to act spontaneously in the situation without first objectifying it in order to define one's role" (Kasulis 132); that is, the "massage" of Zen is simply to live instead of first studying how to live as specified by Confucian texts.

In a less intense way, the bantering in *The Remains of the Day* produces an effect similar to koan study in zazen. Bantering will accept neither habitual nor convention response In laughing at the proffered response, it forces one to consider how one has acted — from a point of view without rules. On this point Faure says that "There may be a type of sudden awakening that, like humor, totally subverts all... categories (and as such is not itself a category)" (46). In this context, we might note that very early in the novel Stevens confesses that "bantering on my new employer's part has characterized much of our relationship over these months" (14). Like a Zen monk challenged to respond to a koan assigned to him by his master, Stevens tells us he "would smile in the correct manner whenever I detected the bantering tone in his voice. Nevertheless, I could never be sure exactly what was required of me on these occasions" (15). Zen monks also compiled lists of koans — one might almost call them jokes — and their "answers" in a work called the Mumonkan. Stevens sounds very much like a Zen monk when he puzzles, "how would one know for sure that at any given moment a response of the bantering sort is truly what is expected?" What one needs to appreciate here is Steven's Japanese heritage, wherein a roshi requires as much respect as an English lord. Thus Stevens worries, "One need hardly dwell on the catastrophic possibility of uttering a bantering remark only to discover it wholly inappropriate" (16). He experiments with timid and studied witticisms, but admits, "I cannot escape the feeling that Mr. Faraday is not satisfied with my responses to his various banterings" (17).

The problem in regard to enlightenment is that the Zen Buddhist monk typically relates to his roshi in a manner specified by Confucian ethics, the system that seems coterminous with Japanese culture. In Japanese culture, the whole point of Confucian ethics is security: to provide safety from embarrassment by meticulously following etiquette. Benedict explains that the Japanese tend to

"stake everything on ruling their lives like pedants and are deeply fearful of any spontaneous encounter with life" (291). Zen Buddhism provides alterity. It is a crazy "system" — Faure calls it "ritual antiritualism" (284) — (indicated to destroying, or at least suspending, the mediating system of Confucian ethics, which Zen Buddhism claims alienates one from direct experience. Consequently the roshi often employs crazy-wisdom to violate Confucian expectations. The roshi may slap the student or denigrate conventional Buddhist piety or do something strange. For example, the Mumonkan tells this shocking story. Some monks are quarreling about a cat when Nansen, their roshi, intrudes,, saying, "if you can say a word of Zen, I will spare the cat." Not knowing what they are expected to say, the monkas are silent mid the roshi kills the cat, violating ethical principles about nonviolence and compassion. Imagine the shook among non-Buddhists as well as Buddhist, if the Dalai Lama was filmed today chopping a pet cat in two. The monks must for that their master had gone crazy, What would they expect when Nansen reports the incident to Joshu, an even greater Zen master? They would expect Joshu to upbraid Nansen, perhaps to expel him the monastery and proclaim that he is no Buddhist, Instead Joshu "took off his sandal, put it on his head, and walked off"! Nansen then remarked, "If you had been there, I could have saved the cat!" (Shibayama 109-15; Blyth 120-25). In a formal interview ihe roshi asks his disciple, "what is the meaning of Joshu's putting his shoe on his head?" (Blyth 124). The Buddhist monk is likely to he as perplexed as Mr. Stevens is by Mr. Faraday's bantering.

The problem with rules and scripts is that they cannot take the measure of life. Even if the code is perfectly, rather than shabbily, enacted, it produces mandarins instead of Buddhas. The perfect Nazi is still a thug. Stevens's father provides an additional illustration. In his seventies, at the end of a life of distinguished service, Stevens's father has always been a paragon of bushido, of samurai discipline and loyalty. Stevens is shocked when Miss Kenton, at the time a newcomer to the estate, sees in the old man nothing more than an under-butler. Stevens remarks, "I am surprised your powers of observation have not already made it clear to you

that he is in reality more than that. A great deal more" (53). Consider Mr. Stevens senior as his son finds him early one morning near the end of his life. Is he a man to be emulated? Stevens offers us the portrait of an old monk living in a "prison cell" garret at the top of the house, as though at the summit of a mountain. Although it is still dark, the old mandarin "was sitting, shaved and in full uniform" waiting for the dawn. Clearly the model of monastic discipline, he admonishes his son, '"I've been up for the past three hours, he said, looking me up and down rather coldly." The old man also glanced "disapprovingly at the lamp I had brought to guide me up the rickety staircase," Stevens reports that "the oil lamp beside his bed had been extinguished" (64). We have already become aware of the significance of this symbol from the suffusive lamp-fight in *An Artist of the Floating World* and the lights of the pier al the end of *The Remains of the Day*. There is also Gautama Buddha's dying injunction that every Buddhist knows: "be ye lamps unto yourselves." Gautama clarified at least part of his metaphor by ironically admonishing his followers, "Look not for refuge [or light] to any one besides yourselves" (Buddhist Suttas 38), Clearly the tight has gone out on top of this mountain.

After the death of his father and the death and disgrace of Lord Darlington, Stevens is left with the frail reed of bantering as a discipline. He has no choice in this. Stevens admits that he was part of a "package" deal (242). He went with the house when the American bought it and Mr. Faraday chooses to confront Stevens with banter. Consequently, Stevens feels forced to devote "some time and effort over recent months to improving my skill hi this very area" (130), As though he was talking of koan study in zazen, Stevens says, "I have devised a simple exercise which I try to perform at least once a day; whenever *an* odd moment presents itself, I attempt to formulate three witticisms based on my immediate surroundings at that moment" (131). We smile as the oxymoron of a such a resolute study of humor, but there is something serious to note in Ishiguro's use of Zen bantering. Fur if one is to avoid the end of Stevens's father, the sterility of mere discipline—or worse, avoid following Darlington to Auschwitz — one can perhaps only do so by laughing: laughing at the roles others are playing, not because they are badly

performing their parts, but for the opposite reason, precisely because in playing their parts so determinedly they strike us as false, as performances which are forced, followed by rote. Above all, such performances are grim and joyless. One believes, not that these people are conscious lakes or interested in manipulating others, but that they are deluded and ignorant of there own identity apart from the scripts they desperately follow. Instead of living they are acting. Then one sees this about one's self. And suddenly the role of samuraj or butler or even monk is transformed from a matter of humorless and grim discipline into a performance, a dance. The axis shifts from counting the minute details of duty to appreciating an esthetic performance. Life is not confined in a number of Confucian games. As many Japanese descriptions of enlightenment have it, the bottom of the bucket suddenly falls out and all the water of good karma or dutiful Confucian action is lost.

In this way and that I tried to save the old pail
Since the bamboo strip was weakening and about to break
Until at last the bottom fell out.
No more water in the pail!
No more moon in the water! (Reps 31)

One does not need to see the "moon in the water" or one's life rationalized in a diary, if one is in contact with the living moment. Can you see the moon? Do you have a life? The roshi laughs at the anxiety that turns life into a diary of moral calculation.

Certainly Stevens is no Buddha at the end of the novel. Yet neither is he like Miss Kenton, now Mrs. Benn, who writes, "I have no idea how I shall usefully fill the remainder of my life," which "stretches out as an emptiness before me" (49). It is true that Stevens is still evasive in regard to realizing how profoundly his code betrayed him: how he could have easily worn a Nazi uniform under slightly different conditions, and consequently how it is reliance on absolute moral systems, which defend the ego, that is the problem in a Buddhist view. Consider that if he had been on the "right" side, Mr. Stevens would not have been a success. He merely would have been a mandarin as smug as his father and Lord Darlington, Reginald Cardinal prompts Stevens to recognize something like

this when he asks if Stevens is curious about Darlington's involvement with Ribbentrop: "Tell me, Stevens, don't you care at all? Aren't you curious?" (222), He presses, "You just let all this go on before you and your never think to look at it for what it is" (223). Stevens continues to play his samurai part, ironically imagining that his "father might have been proud of the stance he takes to bar Reginald from barging into Lord Darlington's meeting at the very moment when "his. lordship's good name was destroyed forever" (235). Equally painful Stevens also stands watch, with "an ever growing conviction mounting" that "Miss Ken ton was at that moment crying," because his script of butler/samurai says nothing about how to act in the circumstance of proffered love. Years later he confesses that "at that moment, my heart was breaking" (239).

Regrettable as these incidences are, Stevens cannot redeem them. At best, he can see that such moments of crisis and loss were there in the scripts he was following. The way to avoid such waste and tragedy is not through redoubled dedication and discipline, but paradoxically, less. The roshi might ask if, at the time, Stevens truly felt compelled to act as he did in those two crises? If so, then why does he feel guilt-ridden, imagining later that he could have acted otherwise than the script dictated? At this point a Westerner poignantly feels the antagonism between the unique self, dedicated to principle through individual decisions, and a social role, which seems so much more superficial. This is of the case in Japan. Benedict reports that "Unforeseen situations which cannot be handled by rote are frightening" to Japanese precisely because moral principles, as such are not available in their experience (293). Benedict turns this around some what, explaining "that they have been brought up to trust in a security which depends on others recognition of the nuances of their observance of a code. When foreigners [or a Zen master] are oblivious of all these proprieties, the Japanese are at a loss. They cast about to find similar meticulous proprieties according to which Westerners live and when they do not find them, some speak . . . of how frightened they are" (225).

Zen would regard the regret that Mr. Stevens feels as a sophisticated way of clinging to the ego. It is a way to inflate the ego into a transcendental state, making it somewhat like the ego of the

Christian or Muslim at the Last Judgment when the individual considers all the moments of moral decision, which, being chosen, constituted what the person became. The paradox of imagining alternative lives arises because there is a notion of the self as existing prior to, and in some way remaining unaffected by, the experiences which define the self. The problem comes from an unacknowledged shift or dualism between the self as the product of experience and the self as a transcendental agent that chooses which experiences to have. Buddhism considers this second self to be an illusory product of theology or retrospection. As Stevens discovers, one does not know until *one* has experienced. There is only one temporal track.

In closing his diary, Stevens feels mat "Perhaps it is indeed time I began to look at this whole matter of bantering more enthusiastically. After all, when one thinks about it it is not such a foolish thing to indulge in — particularly if it is the case that in bantering lies the key to human warmth." In teasing and bantering we disallow a conventional response, a reply merely in character. It is something very close to the roshi who continually "come on, show me your original face, not your butler's face or some other mask show me your face." Stevens admits, "I have of course already devoted much time to developing my bantering skills, but it is possible I have never previously approached the become someone different than the Confusion mandarin that he will become archly sensitive to multiple and detailed disciplines. But we can say that there is a better chance of liberation under the bantering tutelage of Mr. Faraday than under the grim discipline of his father or Lord Darlington. Perhaps Mr. Stevens is further on the way in this regard than we think. In his last sentence, Stevens says that he hopes to "be in a position to pleasantly surprise" his roshi, Mr. Faraday. Perhaps he has already surprised us. Is his diary as flat and ironically unselfconscious and morally didactic as we think, or is it in some degree a witticism, Which puts the reader in an analogous position to Mr. Stevens vis-a-vis Mr. Faraday?

Heinrich Dumoulin illustrates that as an ideology, in contrast to ritual, Zen Buddhism is largely defined by a tradition of crazy-wisdom, paradox and bizarre teaching methods (96-102). For example, Hui-neng, who "is regarded, next to Bodhidharma, as the

second and actual founder" of the Zen sect of Buddhism is depicted as an illiterate (Possible regarded) rice- pounder doing menial kitchen work before being elevated to leadership of the entire sect (Dumoulin 88). Finally, we need to remember that Kazuo Ishiguro is the master who has given us the koan of Mr. Stevens to study. The reward is insight into the Japanese and Buddhism that supersedes abstract scholarly studies and illuminates a great novel that otherwise may remain closed to most readers. If this explication is convincing in revealing the theme of *The Remains of the Day*, it illustrates an appropriate critical technique for the analysis of many Common wealth and postcolonial novels: using comparative religion and philosophy to provide key terms and concepts to comprehend non-Western identity, motives and values.

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Two

R.N. TAGORE'S TREATMENT OF LOVE : THE HIGHEST MANIFESTATION OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

BITHIKA SARKAR

"There is a vast forest named the Heart,
Limitless all sides —
Here I lost my way."

("Morning Songs")

And in that vast forest, there arises the sole question:

"That for me alone your love has been waiting
Through worlds and ages and wandering.
Is that true? .....
That you read on my soft forehead infinite Truth,
My ever-loving friend,
Is that true ? ("Love's Question")

Tagore feels that this love is the highest manifestation of human consciousness. It is the way in which God reveals Himself in human life and experience. Indeed, there can be no poetry without love, for love is the eternal bondage between man and man, man and nature,

man and his Creator, but before discussing Tagore's treatment of love, it will be relevant here for us to recount briefly the factors which conditioned this particular method of treatment and the unique distinction of Tagore's love poems.

The first thing that strikes the modern reader of Bengali love poetry, whether it be a Vidyasundar, a Vaishnava Padavali, or even a Mangal Can, is the implicit acceptance of the physical aspect of love in contrast to the romantic infatuation, which was almost abstract. The poet admired, often with the help of exuberant imagery, the physical attraction of the beloved—

"Janama abadhi hama rupa neharalu
nayana na tirapita bheia
Lakha lakha yuga hiye hiya rakhalu taboh
hiya judana na gela."

"It seems to me that I have gazed at your beauty from the beginning of my existence, that I have kept you in my arms for countless ages, yet it has not been enough for me".....Judged from the standpoint of reason these are exaggerations, but from their of the heart, freed from limits of facts they are time."[1]

If the poet did not dwell directly on the pleasures of the body, it was to the extent demanded by normal reticence observed on the subject, but nowhere it is relegated to a secondary position. The Vidyasundar poems, however, often threw pointed hints at the hidden delights of the physical union of the lovers. The recurrent themes of this poetry were the social stigma of illicit love (kalank), the teasing and testing of emotions (man and abhiman), the pangs of separation and neglect(viraha), the tryst (abhisara) and finally the union of two bodies as well as of the two souls, two separate identities fused into one.

The romantic malady of emotional ennui and the psychological entanglements of modern love did not exist for them. Emotions were uncomplicated and loyalties unwavering. The pathos of these emotions lay in their constant frustration resulting out of social impediments. Hinduism enjoined child marriage, which permitted natural love, only out the pole of respectability. Love in this context

led either to adultery. Needless to mention that free romantic love was detached from real life. And it is this detachment which made the visionary romantic love more appealing to Tagore.

Tagore was, in fact, tired of an old conventional trait and in search of a new horizon, in his article, "Why Bengali is not a Poet?", he writes:

"Due to the sun's rays and the open air, love cannot be pure. It begins to stink. Our love never enters through the gate, it comes and goes through the .small window passage, which has made it hunchbacked. It cannot look straight in the face. It startles at the sound of its own footstep."[2]

Not only the old concept repudiated but also the entire treatment of the subject. Thus categorically rejecting the old concept, Tagore takes us into a world where not only was the loudness of passion avoided, but also the harshness of the real. Here love between human beings is a manifestation of divine love. And the play of lovers is a counterpart to the play (khela) of the universe. This khela is the interplay between God and His creation, "between the infinite, eternal Being and the finite, moral Becoming, between perfection and the Desire to become with Perfection", There is the eternal play of love in the relation between these Being and Becoming. And each of the lovers feels that

> "I seem to have loved you in numberless
> forms, in numberless times, in life after
> life, in age after age, for ever"[3]

Up to the writing of Chitra, very few poems have dealt with an actual problem of love. "The Love of Rahu" has intensity, swiftness and imagination. It is the eternal hunger which is never satisfied but ever pursues. As Edward Thompson writes:

"Rahu is love that is passionate, gripped with famine, a wolf that hunts down, a shadow that clings to the substance, a dark unseen self that is heard breathing when the frightened object of its love wakens at night.... It is like the presence of temperament, darkening thought and action. Rabindranath never did a finer study of passion's pitiless cruelty.[4]

For the first time, we have two poems in Manasi- "Love Expressed" and "Love Hidden" which describe with exceptional poignancy the shame of a deserted woman and the despair of an ugly one. The ugly woman does blame her fate but rues her own inability to express the beautiful in her:

"Mundane love seeks to ravish the eye
Hence it assumes the beauteous form;
I did not blossom them
Hence my deadliest pain."[5]

But Manasi has something more to offer - some perfect love-lyrics. For instance, we can refer to the beautiful love-poem , "Atlanta Prem "or "Unending Love" :

".....We have played alongside millions
of lovers.
Share in the same shy sweetness of
meeting.
The same distressful tears of farewell
Old love, but in shapes that renew and
renew forever.
Today it is heaped at your feet, it has found
its end in you.
The love of all men's days both past and
forever
Universal joy, universal sorrow, universal
life.
The memories of all loves merging with
this one love of ours
And the song of every poet past and
forever."

The denial of the old tradition is reiterated in "Evening Songs", perhaps the first poems of Tagore's maturity. It is like our Indian music, plaintive and simple, on one strain. The poet is in love with something more than a material person. Moonlight, the poet's real

Muse inspires him and floods his dream with beauty. He demands that love should fill the heart with youth.

> "Put a moonlit smile on the face of the earth".

We find a similar transition from Restoration Poetry to Romanticism. Suck -ling is one of the first to voice this new attitude: "I think of what deliciously unsatisfied desire for a woman, in the mood in which one likes to stay unsatisfied, and merely guess at satisfaction."[6]

Tagore's "Unbearable Love" describes Suck-ling's mood in which "one likes to stay unsatisfied". The Romanticist, even when he was an epicure like Byron, yearned for a 'beau ideal'. Shelley, considered a sensualist, was very little concerned with bodily delights in his poetry. However, Tagore openly declared his entry into the same airy mansion when he said:

"We always want some flesh and blood to fondle. Our heart, like the skin of a rhinoceros, does not delight in a subtle and soft touch. We therefore, admire Byron, and the bodiless moonlike imagination of Shelley is liked by few Bengalis".[7]

Tagore' s "Morning Songs" is the first throwing forth of his inner self out -wards. In his own words : "I celebrated the sudden opening of a gate".

The poems were born out of a sheer joy in the world and of union with it. They show the rising of his healthier intellectual self about the mists—the miasma, almost of self-obsession, the vague miseries of adolescence.

Sharps and Flats is a serenade from the streets in front of the dwelling of man, a plea to be allowed an entry and a place within that house of mystery.

> "this world is sweet, — I do not want to die.
> I wish to dwell in the ever-living life of man."

For Shelley, the object of love was 'the glory of the lamp-less universe', the moon beyond the clouds', 'the star above the storm', 'the harmony of nature and art', and finally the very essence of existence. Rabindranath says the same, only the images differ. One can compare Shelley's :

"In your heart the glow of dawn; and
An image of some bright Eternity
A shadow of some golden dream, a splendour
Leaving the third sphere pilotless."

with these lines of Tagore where the Image is finally installed in the "inner sanctuary of peace":

"Stand in that inner sanctuary of peace
The ever lit, and the ever shadowy
In the storm-less, sunless, silent heaven.
The eternal abode of life.
Stand there with a holy smile
With a holy light on your face
Like the life-giving Annapurna."[8]

Later, like Shelley, Tagore also realised that a gulf would always remain between his ideal and actual love and that the error consisted in seeking in a mortal image. Hence in this collection we get a series of sonnets which defiantly eulogize the human body, the final phase of emotional attraction. There is a frankness in Sharps and Flats which has embarrassed some of his admirers.

For instance, we can refer to the sonnets on his mistress' kiss, her arms, her feet, her body, her smile, the wind blown by her skirt, the sky of her heart, two on her magnificent breasts and one on her nakedness.

In India, a confluence of stream is a place of pilgrimage, holy. However, Tagore shows how "Leaving their homes, two have made a pilgrimage to the confluence of lips". Even the poet himself admits that there is sensuality. As a result, in the later poems of this series,

there is the trouble to escape from the same sensuality. And the poet concludes "they all have unity, all belong to the drama of life".

In The Golden Boat, the poet's vision acquired another dimension. The "Beauty of the Mind" (Manasundari) incorporates in a single image all that the poet has ever sought. All the indulgence of his ardent soul is poured out in his imaginary consummation with his beloved— Manas Sundari.

> Put these arms, slender as lotus stems
> Around my neck, in a close embrace.
> Let their touch thrill my flesh to the hair roots
> With inmost passion, a deadly enchantment Fills the body.
> The breasts are a tremble with life"
> The vessel of senses is about to crack."[9]

No other poems of Tagore equal the description of the consummation given here, nor even the uninhibited sonnets of **Sharps and Flats.**

Buddhadeva Basu, an eminent scholar of Comparative Literature, in his essay on Rabindra's love poetry, unhesitatingly calls Tagore an escapist, because Tagore always evaded a direct statement of personal emotions. In different words Nihar Ranjan Roy points to the same argument when he says that Tagore was not a poet of love as Keats was.

Prashanta Mahalanabish comments that Tagore

> "...lacks fire, he is never in it. He is always carried away by the imagery and suggestions of beauty. Emotion and passion lay behind, so that he is always in a reminiscent mood, full of musings. In fact, his singular detachment — the characteristic going beyond the sense enjoyment is evident everywhere."[10]

In fact, Tagore's emotions, although always robust, were free from morbidity to an extent unusual for a poet of such sensitiveness. His poetry does contain much of the hallucinatory elements which distinguished Romantic poetry in some European countries, and came to England with the second generation of Romantics. To Tagore, such idealizations as Shelley's came more naturally. We see, therefore, even in the mortification's of passions, an .attempt to find an ontological explanation.

The development of a new poetic form by Tagore raises abstract concepts to the highest pitch of lyricism as in the poem, "Urvasi" also bears the assertion of this truth. "Urvasi" portrays a woman who is celestial beauty, incarnate, forbids any loudness of feeling, bans any description of individual beauty as isolatory and unmistakably reminds us of the Shelleyan hymns to some form of Intellectual Beauty. At the feet of this Beauty, the poet flings the star- twisted garland, when he suddenly appears before her:

> "Thou art not "Mother", art not
> 'Daughter', art not bride,
> Thou beautiful comely one,
> O Dweller in Paradise, Urvasi!
> When evening descends on the pastures,
> drawing about her tired body, her
> golden cloth,
> Thou lightest the lamp within no home.
> With hesitant wavering steps,
> With throbbing breast and downcast look,
> Thou dost not go to any beloved's bed.
> In the hushed midnight
> Thou art unveiled like the rising dawn,
> Unshrinking One!
> Like some stem-less flower, blooming in
> thyself when didst, thou blossom,
> Urvasi?"[11]

It is interesting to note that Urvasi is not merely the heavenly dancer of Indian myth. She is the cosmic spirit of life, in the mazes

of an eternal dance. She is Beauty dissociated from all human relationships and also that world enchanting love which(though not in Dante's sense) moves the sun and other stars'. She is Lucretius's "bominum divanque voluptas, Alma Venus" (Delight of men and. gods, Venus the beloved), is Swinburne's "perilous goddess", born of the sea- foam.

Similarly, in "The Swing", the traditional disport of lovers in Indian art and poetry, Tagore achieves an unsophisticated intensity of emotion with an imaginary beloved.

Whatever may be the poetic depth of such love, it cannot fulfil one's natural emotional needs. Tagore himself said:

> "It cannot be said that she brings no pleasure, but she is the farthest from felicity. When soever she blesses with her favours, she gives intense delight, but at times with her hard embrace, she will press the heart's blood out of you."[12]

This description of the "Beauty of the Mind" comes very close to Keats' "Dame Sans Merci" who has cast her spell over the entire Romantic movement in Europe. All over the world, Romantic poetry suffered from an innate frustration. A strain of sadness can be heard in 'Eternal May', as much as in Shelley's "Rejection" or Keats' "Ode to Melancholy". But it did not align with either Indian tradition-allopathic attitudes or the reformatory national outlook which was hopeful. Rabindranath in his early writings had referred to this discontent as the dominant mood of the modern poetry of the West and characterised it as the frustration of desires that did not know their own objectives. He expressed the same opinion in his maturity in a letter quoted in Rabindra Jeevani where we have the following explanation :

> "If we look more carefully, the part of love in Manasi is a poetisation - merely an exquisitely beautiful game— its true and real theme is that man does not know what he desires."[13]

With his usual insight into the origin and process of his poetic creation Tagore knows that the despondency of his outlook was the outcome of a sensitized imagination, as it was with the entire genre of romantic poet Tagore says : "The poison of despair is concealed in imagination and of that poison, I have taken a full draught."[14]

The very Imagery of Keats' "Invocation to Sorrow :"

> "Come then sorrow, sweetest sorrow
> Like my own babe, I nurse thee on my breast."[15]

is repeated in Tagore's :

> "Come sorrow, come
> I have thy seat ready, come
> Tear out each vein of my heart,
> And put your lips on them;
> Draw my heart's blood drop by drop
> I will nurse you with a mother's love."[16]

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Three

RE-INTERPRETATION OF MYTH IN SRI AUROBINDO'S *SAVITRI*

Dr. Ratri Roy

Much has been written about Sri Aurobindo's poetry, but one particular aspect of it has not been fully explored. Perhaps the philosophical and stylistic part of his poetry has caught the attention of the readers and critics to such an engrossing extent that they have been preoccupied with these two facets of his art and not cast even a sidelong glance at the others. This essay is an attempt at discussing his treatment of myth in *Savitri.*

He is of course, the first writer in India to have given reinterpretations of classical myths. Of late, Indo-Anglian literature has achieved an importance in academic circles which it did not have a few decades ago. It is a pity that the majority of the critics are preoccupied with modern Indo-Anglian writing. They do not want to go further back into the past than, say, Ezekiel. Even Raja Rao is rather outmoded for many readers. It cannot be denied, however that this literature is barely two centuries old, and Sri Aurobindo stands like a huge oak spreading its branches over these two centuries. In the history of this newly developed literature, he is the first poet who has given reinterpretation of myths. In English literature this honour belongs to Shelley. Prior to him, there were many poets who had written poems based on myths (Marlowe, Shakespeare etc.), yet these remain straightforward narrative poems, not re-interpretations of myths like *Prometheus Unbound.* Sri Aurobindo has not only reinterpreted many myths, in *Savitri* he joins classical myth with present life and travels towards the future.

It is only in recent years, i.e. from Frazer onwards, that serious studies of myths have been undertaken. This will become clear when it is remembered that two centuries ago knowledge of myths was so common among the educated that Lempriere's *Classical Dictionary* does not even have an introduction.[1] Equally revealing is the fact that Graves's compilation, a mid-century publication, carries an introduction which runs to fifteen pages.[2] Even R.L. Green's collection of myths for children has an introduction of five pages.[3] These are but two examples of the gradually growing consciousness of the importance of myths. Of course, the success and excellence of Eliot's poetic contributions are significant in this respect.

Myths have inspired a lot of speculations among scholars. Malinowsky and Frazen have given anthropological analysis and Levi-Strauss linguistic ones. It is not necessary here to go into details—a few hints will illustrate the complexity of the topic. Robert Graves, for example, differentiates myths from no less than twelve kinds of stories. It will be interesting to cast a cursory glance at his tabulation. "True myths" are not:

1. Philosophical allegories as in Hesiod's cosmogony.
2. A etiological explanations of myths no longer understood.
3. Satires or parodies.
4. Sentimental fables, e.g. the story of Narcissus.
5. Embroidered history
6. Minstrel romances, e.g. the story of Cephalus.
7. Political propaganda, e.g. Theseus's Federalization of Attica.
8. Moral legends.
9. Humorous anecdotes as in the bedroom farce of Heracles, Omphale and Pan.
10. The abical melodrama.
11. Heroic sage, e.g. the Iliad.
12. Realistic fiction, e.g. Odysseus's visit to the Phaeacians.[4]

Graves has given examples of each of these items, but many of them are so obscure that I have deliberately omitted them in order to

avoid confusion. A few of his examples, reasonably well-known, have been retained. These twelve kinds, it should be remembered, are not true myths. What, then, is the true myth? Graves tells us:

> True myths may be defined as the reduction to narrative shorthand of ritualistic mime performed on public festivals and in many cases recorded pictorially on temple walls, vases... and the like.[5]

Needless to say, very few scholars will agree with this definition. The scope of the present essay is not wide enough to discuss the definitions given by different scholars, but, as Graves's definition is half a century old, a more recent one may be given:

> "In general, myth is a narrative that describes and portrays in symbolic language the origin of the basic elements and assumptions of a culture."[6]

Just as Graves's definition and exceptions narrow down the compass of myths stringently, so song's definition is so comprehensive that very little can be excluded. Let us now look at another definition coming, temporally, between Graves and Long. Here is Don Cupitt :

> "Myth is typically a traditional sacred story of anonymous authorship and archetypal or universal significance which is recounted in a certain community and is often linked with a ritual, it tells of the deeds of superhuman beings such as gods, demi-gods, heroes, spirits or ghosts, it is set outside historical time or in supernatural worlds or may deal with comings and goings between the supernatural world and the world of human history, the superhuman beings

> are imagined in anthropomorphic ways, often the story is not naturalistic but has the discordant logic of dreams; the work of the myth is to explain, to reconcile, to guide actions or to legitimate them "[7]

Now this is a pretty comprehensive definition, the only drawback being its length. It takes into account all the different aspects of myths and even clarifies its functions. A few more explanatory remarks remain to be made.

Myths have been variously classified by modern scholars. As we have seen, Graves gives no less than twelve kinds of tales that are not true myths. These, however, are accepted as myths by readers who are less particular than Graves. In all, Graves gives us thirteen kinds of myths. It is interesting to note that after enlightening the uninitiated about the nature of true myths in the *Introduction*, Graves proceeds in the book to recount all the Greek myths, including those which according to him are not true ones. So the eager reader never comes to know what true myths are.

Frazer's sociological interpretation of myths in his twelve-volume *The Golden Brough* is so well-known as to have become passe and I will therefore mention two more recent views. Laurence Coupe gives what he calls five paradigms. The fertility myths come first and he takes the stories of Osiris and Isis as examples. Creation myths come next and the Babylonian myths of Tiamat and Marduk are cited as examples. Third on the list come two different kinds of myths, the first of which are those about Exodus. As expected, he takes the Old Testament account of the Exodus from Egypt as his example. He differentiates these from Deliverance myths and gives the example of the Passover myth in the Old Testament. Next on the list come myths concerned with heroes and he takes the well-known story of Purseus as example of this kind of myth. Last on his list are what he calls literary myths and gives the example of *The Tempest*.[8]

Clearly enough, these different paradigms are not mutually exclusive. To take his own examples, the myth of Exodus is also the myth of Deliverance. Again, the heroic tale of Perseus is also a tale of deliverance for he saved Andromeda as well as Syria from a

marine monster. Incidentally. Sri Aurobindo calls him a deliverer in his play of this name. Numerous myths still remain unaccounted, for what about the story of Oedipus, or the numerous love-stories? It will be most unscholarly to push them all within the convenient category of literary myths.

Another classification is that offered by C.H. Long.[9] He gives four categories, the first of which includes Cosmogonic myths. All creative myths will naturally come under this head. The second comprises the stories of Cult heroes. The basic stories of the epics will come in here. His third category contains two kinds of myths concerned with birth and rebirth. The first of these sub-groups is the millennial myth in which the coming of the ideal society is presented and the second is the Messiah myth. The fourth group is that of Foundation myths.

Here again there is room for the same confusion that arises with Coupe's classification. How does Long keep Cult. Heroes apart from Messiah myth? Was Rama just a cult Hero? Was he not a saviour as well? As a matter of fact, a hero attains the status of a cult hero or a Messiah precisely because he delivers a people or a country from some kind of oppression. His use of the term Cosmogonic, however, provides room for the Scandinavian myths. This gloomy mythology ends in total destruction or Gotterdamerung and therefore does not fit in comfortably within any of Caupe's paradigms. Again Cadmus is a cult hero, and so are Theseus and Aeneas. However, each founded a kingdom and a dynasty, and can therefore be included within Foundation myths.

As a matter of fact, myths are such very complex phenomena that they defy definitions and classifications. Such scholarly salt can catch only the tail-feathers of this phoenix. There are tales of primitive fear and horror as well as more sophisticated, elegant ones. Cronos swallowed his children alive, yet the same mythologies body us to Apollo singing to his golden lyre. Trying to explain this complexity, R.L. Green sums up:

> "They are a strange mixture of the cruel and horrific with the beautiful and the mysterious."[10]

Turning to Sri Aurobindo at last, it is proposed to show, first of all, how *Savitri* gives a new interpretation of an age-old myth, and what is more, it is not merely a re-interpretation that Sri Aurobindo gives, but that he has created a new myth. As a matter of fact, the creation of a new myth is usually taken to be proof of a very high order of creative genius and there are few artists who can be honoured with the appellation of a myth-maker. As far as Sri Aurobindo is concerned, one must remember that he is no ordinary poet, but a seer, a mystic, of the highest order and a capacity to create a new myth is only one of his many powers. This essay, however, does not propose to enter the hallowed ground of mysticism. Instead, we will concentrate on the most obvious feature *of Savitri*—its mythical method.

I do not propose to outrage the reader by recounting the myth of Savitri as told in the *Mahabharata*. It is necessary, however, to present certain facts about this epic which may not be very well-known. First of all, as far as sheer bulk is concerned, it is the longest poem written in English, containing as it does 24,000 lines. It has three parts, each divided into several Books, the total number of Books being twelve. These Books, again, are sub-divided into cantos. Sri Aurobindo has given names to each Book and fitting/canto.

Now, *Savitri* is an epic—the first and only epic (so far) in Indo-Anglian literature. As such it fulfills all the conditions of an epic. A discussion of this aspect will be irrelevant. Instead, I will limit myself to quoting Sri Aurobindo's own definition:

> "The epic, a great poetic story of man, or world, or the gods, need not necessarily be a vigorous presentation of external action."[11]

It might be said that this definition was formulated with *Savitri* in mind. Well, Aristotle had given the definition of tragedy (as well as its other features) only after observing the performance of Porcelain tragedies. The same can be said about his concept of the epic, formulated long after Homer. The scholarly reader may now draw his own conclusions.

Savitri is not a book to attract the ordinary reader. For the sake of convenience, I will give a brief resume with a slant towards the element of myth in it.

Book I of Part I contains five cantos, the first of which describes the dawn of the day Satyavan is to die, Savitri, on waking, braces herself for the coming ordeal:

> Immobile is herself, she gathered force.
> This was the day when Satyavan must die.[12]

The next canto describes Savitri's character, her inmost thoughts. It presents the human as well as the divine aspects of Savitri. After this we do not see her again till she is born, in the second canto of Book IV fully 330 pages later.

Meanwhile, the rest of Book I and the whole of Book and part of Book III are devoted to the spiritual quest of king Aswapati. We have mystical poetry of a very high order here, for the spiritual experiences of Aswapati are the real experiences undergone by the poet himself. Poetry of this order is not to be found in English literature. There might be a few lyrics here and there, by Richard Rolle, Smart and Thompson, but though these poets wrote poetry of a high order, they did not achieve the spiritual experience described here. Dame Juliana, St. John of Cross, St. Teresa or Pascal came nearer to these experiences than the poets we usually label as mystical.

In the 4th canto of Book III Aswapati meets the Divine Mother and asks for a boon: let the Divine Mother come down to earth in mortal body. The boon is granted:

> A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour
> A branch of heaven transplant to human soil
> Nature shall overlap her mortal step
> Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will.[13]

Part II begins with Savitri's birth. Her humanity and divinity, both are brought into focus. Then in the next canto she is sent on a quest for a husband worthy of her.

The quest itself, Savitri's journey through a beautiful landscape is described in enchanting poetry. Sri Aurobindo shows how he can tune his lyre to humbler strains and describe:

> Wind-stirred grass-lands winking in the sun
> Or mid green musing of woods and rough-browed hills,
> In the grove's murmurous bee-air humming wild
> Or past the long-lapsing voice of silver floods.[14]

The next canto described the meeting of the two and they decide to marry. As in the *Mahabharata* Narada pays a visit and reveals the truth about Satyavan, but Savitri holds firm.

The title of the next canto explains its theme: "The joy of union; The ordeal of the foreknowledge of Death and the heart's grief and pain." Now Savitri starts her spiritual discipline to prepare for the ordeal to come. Here follow 7 cantos, detailing her "tapasya". Then in Book VIII, consisting of just one canto, Satyavan dies. Here Part II ends.

Part III recounts the story of Savitri's struggles with Death and her triumph. K.R.S. Iyengar's description is the best:

> "We are treated to a Gita, we are overwhelmed by a Vishwarupa, we are made to follow the vicissitudes of a Kurukshetra, we catch glimpses of Death's Other Kingdom, the hedonist's Bower of Bliss, the paradisal splendorous of Vaikuntha, the ineffable void of Nirvana."[15]

Savitri is offered the eternal bliss of Nirvana, which she refuses:

> In vain thou temptst with solitary bliss
> Two spirits saved out of a suffering world
> I sacrifice not earth to happier world.[16]

Instead, she asks for a very different boon—the deliverance of the entire race of humanity, and this is granted to her:

> Illumine common acts with the Spirit's ray
> And meet the deity in common things,
> Nature shall live to manifest secret God,
> The spirit shall take up the human plane.[17]
> This earthly life become the life divine.

In the Epilogue (Book XII) she returns to earth and the epic draws to a joyful close. The last 3 lines run:

> She brooded through her stillness to a thought
> Deep-guarded by her mystic folds of light,
> And in her bosom nursed a greater down.[18]

This brief resume is like a vague and distorted shadow of the actual work. Sri Aurobindo's wonderful poetry is represented here only by a few inadequate quotations selected more for their content then for their felicity of expression. This extremely important aspect of *Savitri,* its poetic style, I regret to say, will have to be totally sidetracked in this article.

The first requirement of an epic is that it should contain a coherent narrative element and the same holds true for myths. The importance of a well-defined story can hardly be over-estimated when the subject under discussion is the re-interpretation of myths, for the interpretation of a story is possible only if a story exists. In the case of *Savitri* we find a time-hallowed story, integrally related with religion as well as everyday life. Now let us see how this story has been given a new interpretation by our seer-poet.

The sub-title itself highlights the fact that the poet has not taken the story at its face-value, he has given it symbolic dimensions. He calls *Savitri* "A Legend and a Symbol." In the *Author's Note* preceding the epic he explains the symbolic value of each character:

> "Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself, but descended into the grip of death and ignorance; Savitri is the Divine word, daughter of the Sun, goddess of the supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save; Aswapati the Lord of the Horse, her human father, is the Lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the mortal to the immortal plane."[19]

The characters in the myth, thus, are re-interpreted and endowed with symbolic dimensions. More, the dimensions can be called spiritual and not merely symbolic. We have abstract spiritual qualities embodied in these characters. Should the epic, therefore, be called allegorical? What does the author say?

> This is not a mere allegory, the characters are not personified qualities, but incarnations or emanations of living and conscious Forces with which we can enter into concrete touch and they take human bodies in order to help man.[20]

When such subtle distinctions are under discussion, it is better to be guided by the poet himself, who uses the word "symbol" with reference to his epic. In any case, the genre of *Savitri* is not our topic. Let us, therefore, turn once more to the mythical method.

We have seen that the characters, all taken from mythology, have been given symbolic dimensions. This is definitely a reinterpretation of the original mythical characters. What is remarkable is that the poet gives us an interpretation which is new,

yet fully in keeping with the classical nomenclature. For example, Savitri's very name itself proclaims that she is the daughter of the Sun, Satyavan's name signifies that he is possessed of Truth. The poet has not only retained the original significance of each of these names, but has also added his own values to it. The most remarkable of these newly interpreted classical names is that of Aswapati. Ordinarily, this name means exactly what Sri Aurobindo says at first, Lord of the Horse, but then he gives his own interpretation: "the Lord of Tapasya; the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavour."[21]

Beginning then, at the most superficial level, it becomes apparent to the serious reader that the very names of the characters have been given spiritual dimensions. Yet this interpretation is such as is immediately understood and accepted by the common reader. There is no esoteric quality or obscurity involved here.

At this stage it will be relevant to consider Mircea Eliade's opinion. After defining and explaining the nature of myths, he goes on to observe that, over the centuries, myths may become trivialized and debased, so that the gravity and the strength of the original impact may become diluted. Yet, indeed, this is exactly what has happened to most ancient myths. In India, our classical myths are a part of the religion we follow, but it cannot be denied that considerable dilution and degeneration has taken place over the past millenia. Eliade also observes even such debased and trivialized myths can be revitalized so that one can rediscover and re-experience their original nature. This is what our poet has done, not only with the characters but with the story itself. He has not given merely a new interpretation, but has proceeded much further beyond it. He has revitalized an age-old myth that has nearly, though not fully, become diluted and trivialized. Familiarity with the myth has, in this case, instead of breeding contempt, enhaloed it with the light that never was on sea or land.

This brings us to the narrative element. The original story has, in our poet's hands, undergone a sea-change into something which is new, but not strange. As is well-known, Sri Aurobindo's philosophy (labeled as Kashmiri Shaivism by the cognoscenti) has blended together numerous philosophical and religious doctrines

like the traditional ones of *niskama karma*, theory of rebirth and yoga. He has welded these doctrines to western theories like Neoplatonism and Darwinism. This is not the place to ascend into the rarefied stratosphere of philosophy, but a few brief statements about his teachings are necessary:

(1) Sri Aurobindo tells us that about the material plane in which we exist, there are several other planes of gradually higher spiritual existence. This besides being traditional, has affinities with Neo-platoniom and Theosophy.

(2) Like Darwin, he argues that life has developed as a result of evolution, but his idea is different from Darwin's. For example, he holds that evolution has not ended with man, it is still going on and the next stage of evolution will take place on the spiritual level, not on the material one.

(3) His concept of man's development encompasses and goes far beyond humanism. The two concepts given above lead to the crucial idea which has been graphically presented by the seer-poet:

Existence
Consciousness-Force
Bliss
Super-mind
...
Mind
Psyche (soul)
Life
Matter.

Evolution has an upward movement in that it rises upwards from Matter through Life and so on, but it also has a downward movement in that the spiritual force (the lowest being the Super-mind), are continually trying to come down to unite with and uplift man. Here we have the concept of evolution, Divine Incarnation and the extremely important one of Transformation. This is one of the key-words in Aurbindonian philosophy. Human life will be transformed into the Life Divine.

(4) This simultaneous upward-downward movement will be facilitated by the practice of sadhana, which will develop man physically, morally and spiritually. We do not have the idea of a lopsided development by mortifying the flesh to the glorification of the soul.

All these and other important ideas are to be found in his *Life Divine.* I have deliberately refrained from quoting in order to keep the article short. *Savitri* is the poetical version of *The Life Divine.*

He has been faithful to the original story in every detail. But details do not matter, they help only to add magnitude to the epic and to endow it with sublimity, and to clarify the main these is. What does matter is the manner in which they are given spiritual and symbolic dimensions. The story of Savitri is told by the sage Markandeya to the Pandavas towards the end of the Vana-Parva. King Aswapati's long Sadhana (I will use this word with due apologies to the reader, for, actually speaking, there is no English equivalent of it) and its culmination has been given by the poet himself, for, in the original story, the King is a devotee of Shiva. In *Savitri* he meets the Divine Mother and begs her to come down to earth in mortal body.

Again, the quest on which Savitri is sent is not to be found in the original story, though many later re-tellings have added this interesting and lovely detail. Savitri's determination to marry Satyavan, her dialogue with Narada are all authentic details. Savitri's long Sadhana has again, been expanded from the original story, in which it is given as taking place for one day (the new moon day of *Jyestha*). This has been expanded to one month in actual practice by many communities later on, where Savitri-vrata is observed as a fock ritual for married women. In our epic the spiritual austerities extend to one year at the end of which Satyavan dies and Savitri's struggle with Death commences. The struggle is on the spiritual level and has been described in detail. Death or Yama accepts defeat only when Savitri reveals herself to him in all her Olympian, or heavenly, glory. In the original story there is no actual struggle, for Savitri follows Yama who, impressed by her moral and religious insight, grants her several boons. Here, however, this part

of the struggle has been altered to exemplify Sri Aurobindo's teachings. Ascending through several levels, Savitri meets the supreme Deity and rejects *Nirvana* in favour of coming back to earth to serve humanity on its arduous journey towards the life divine.

The original story, thus, serves as a spring board to send the epic soaring upwards to spiritual heights. The main events and the outline remain unchanged .Yet, within this framework, we have the embodiment of a highly complex and entirely practical religious doctrine. It must be remembered, moreover, that not only is the doctrine a practical one but all the experiences described in the poem are descriptions of actual experiences undergone by the poet. One might admire the creative imagination of other poets, but here the imagination plays no part. Whatever is described is as true as the worldly experience described by non-mystical poets like, for example the experience Wordsworth describes in *Tintern Abbey* or other such poems. All these are intensely personal mystical experiences, yet they are so steeped in our traditional religious doctrines that understanding them in a purely theoretical manner is not very difficult.

What we have here is not merely re-interpretation of an age-old myth, but much more. The myth of Savitri has been lifted out of the morass of passive acceptance into which it had sunk. Sri Aurobindo has expainded a story into an epic and given us back our heritage, in a glorified form. Very few other interpreters have done as much as Gide, for example, in his *Prometheus Miobound* shows us Prometheus walking the streets of modern Paris and having many unenviable experiences. Such a work can be called clever in a superficial and disparaging manner. Even if the other aspects of *Savitri* are not considered, it can be taken as the first re-interpretation, one can say 'recreation', of an ancient myth.

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Four

RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA'S *THE HOUSEHOLDER*: A CRITICAL EXPLORATION

Dr. Nagendra Kumar Singh

The *Householder* (1960) is one of Mrs. Jhabvalas major novels. Here she portrays the life of a lower middle class individual in urban setting. And this she does with fine insight and her portrayal has a verisimilitude that is commendable. One is surprised to find that in the course of only a few year's stay in India, that foreign lady had observed the lower middle class life and its social setting so minutely that she presents a very accurate picture of this level of social existence. It is a far cry from the levels at which Lalaji in *The Nature of Passion* and Har Dayal in *Esmond in India* live. Here we have Prem, a college lecturer (or, rather, teacher) in a private Delhi College run by Mr. Khanna who is also the Principal of the college. Such private mushroom colleges and schools are a common feature of the educational scene in India where chaos reigns supreme. Such institutions are floated by unscrupulous people with the sole intention of making money. In a society in which unemployment causes the fate of the millions of young men and women, founders of such institutions exploit young educated men by employing them on low wages. They themselves, however, live in much ease and comfort.

Prem is the householder in the novel. Yasmine Goonaratne tells us about the Hindu concept of the householder. She writes:

> "The dominant Hindu view of life, which took shape during the ten centuries that are generally believed to have elapsed between the composition of the Upnishads and the formulation of the codes of Manu and Kautilya (roughly 5000 B.C. to A.D. 500) classifies the life of the 'householder' as the second of four *Ashramas* or stages in Aryan life: preceded by the period of studentship, it is followed by one of retirement and calm reflection, and at last by renunciation of all worldly interests".[1]

By allowing the title of her novel to take root in India's ancient past but keeping it fixed all the time in the present day social setting, Jhabvala gives us a long perspective and thus her novel cannot be dubbed a family comedy, thereby it can not be viewed in a wider perspective. It is a family comedy, even a social comedy. But it is much more. It is a serious criticism of life. The ancient Indian savants believed that if a man's life successfully passed through four stages, it finally attained *nirvana.* At each stage man had certain duties to perform, obligations to fulfil, and responsibilities to discharge. Each stage was vital for man as well as society.

Without passing through the crucibles of the four stages a man would not or could not acquire a true, objective knowledge of his social reality as well as his philosophical-metaphysical reality. Man is a blend of both these realities. These are the two coordinates of his being.

Since Jhabvala is a comic novelist, she is not directly concerned with the philosophical-metaphysical dimension of man's being. Her main concerns are individuals and society. In the present novel, Jhabvala is concerned with the individual and social existence of a lower middle class young man named Prem. He has, after passing his B.A. in second class from Ankhpur College (a typical mofussil Indian College) where his father was principal, joined as a lecturer (or teacher) in Hindi in Mr. Khanna's private College in Delhi. Mr. Khanna is an educational charlatan and racketeer (our academic world abounds in such racketeers and charlatans) and exploits

educated people for whom getting satisfactory employment's is a Herculean task. About this private College, the author gives us revealing facts in these lines:

> "The Khanna private College was not cheap. Mr. Khanna specialized to in boys from well-off families who were not clever enough to get admission into the better colleges. He kept them for a year or so, during which time he ostensibly trained them to get pass the admission tests. That most of them did so was perhaps due less to their own hard work than to Mr. Khanna's contacts, which were very good. Meanwhile the boys had a pleasant time (both in the College and outside)".[2]

Mr. Khanna is an insensitive brute and his wife is a harridan. While Prem describes the miserable existence of Sohan Lal, the professor of Mathematics in Mr. Khanna's Private College, this brute goes on eating his 'English' breakfast. This breakfast scene is described in a very revealing manner. When Prem enters Mr. Khanna's sitting room with a view to requesting him to raise a bit his salary of Rs. 175/- p.m. so that he might be prepared, financially, to welcome his conceived first child into this world when it is born, he finds Mr. Khanna breakfasting. Mr. Khanna says to him, '"You see me enjoying my breakfast'", and adds, '"It is very important to start the day with a good breakfast'" (p. 11). Everything in Mr. Khanna's room "was new and opulent and comfortable - plump cushions and flowered curtains and a big shining radio set" (television sets had not yet come into vogue). Mr. Khanna explains to Prem, who is "overwhelmed with shyness", the virtues of an early morning sumptuous breakfast "'You see', explained Mr. Khanna, the gastric juices must be allowed to flow from early morning, otherwise they will become clogged and nasty indigestion's follow'". And then the author says, "Quite unreasonably, Prem thought of Sohan Lal eating his first humble meal perched on a little bench in staff room" (p. 12). And much later

in the novel, we find in sharp contrast to the glittering opulence of the interior of Mr. Khanna's apartment, the gloomy poverty of the dirty Mehrauli street with its crumbling houses in which Sohan Lal lives:

> "It was a narrow winding street with open booths on both sides - booths selling embroidered slippers, booths selling cheap cotton cloth, booths selling vegetables or fruits or sweetmeats or chunks of meat hung up on hooks. Over the shops were wooden verandas and arched windows set in thin crumbling walls", (p. 131)

In one such house with crumbling walls Sohan Lal, 'professor' of Mathematics in Mr. Khanna's Private College, lives. The authors tells us: "Prem and Indu walked into a dark doorway by the side of a booth selling coloured drinks in bottles. The stairs too were very dark. Upstairs Sohan Lal met them ..." (p. 131).

It is by exploiting the labour of people like Sohan Lal that Mr. Khanna and his wife eat 'English' breakfast and meals in their opulent and comfortable rooms. This is the pattern in all spheres throughout India - in trade and commerce, in politics, education and culture, in art and literature, and so on. As a result, the entire system has been vitiated, in fact, the very human psyche in India has been perverted. It is in such a system that Jhabvala places her protagonist, young Prem, a householder who, as a householder, according to our Shastras and according to the Hindu view of life, has to fulfil certain obligations. She writes that Prem "wanted to belong somewhere" and not only that, but he also wanted "his whole position as a householder, as husband ... to stabilize, register as it were ..." (p. 101). For the first time in her novels, Jhabvala has here given us a character, a self that probes the conditions of his existence, of course with a very limited knowledge of things and men, not to speak of the diabolical system being perpetrated by our rulers who are in league with robbers. But his limitations make Prem entirely human and, for once, Jhabvala, a hursh judge, not

only sympathises, but also empathises with this character. Prem is perhaps the best character in Jhabvala because he gets all the sympathy of his creator. The novel is a quest on the part of this weak, imperfectly equipped character—weak and imperfect in respect of knowledge and courage, but possessing commendable integrity and rectitude - for belongingness, for stability in a system in which these things are myths. Prem is shown in personal and social relationships with others in the novel - with Raj, with Sohan Lal, with Mr. Chaddha, with Mr. and Mrs. Khanna, with Hans, with the Swami with the Seigals, and the last, but not the least, with his wife Indu. Each relationship leaves its own impression on his soul. In the following several pages these various impressions with all their parameters will be evaluated. But before taking up-the relationships, we quote the following paragraph in which the author tells us that, "weak and alone". Prem is pitted against formidable forces. Jhabvala writes:

> "But he was weak and alone. He is on one side with Indu behind him and the coming baby, and on the other side were the Khanna's and the Seigals and Mr. Chaddha and his students and doctor's bills and income tax forms and all the other horrors the word had in store for him. He felt that lie was required to pit his strength against all these, and yet he knew from the beginning that it was hopeless because he did not have much strength. He knew that the only way he could survive was by submitting to and propitiating the others side", (p. 125)

Prem is an imperfectly educated teacher drawing a poor salary of Rs. 175/- in the Khanna Private College in Delhi. He pays a house rent of Rs. 45/- which, as Prem himself tells us, is more than 25% of his salary. His landlord is Mr. Seigals who, along with his family, lives a happy- go - lucky sort of life. Prem is a second class B.A. from Ankhpur College, a mufussil College which produce

graduates who can fill in clerk' posts in government offices, as Raj has done, or who can become inefficient teachers like Prem. Prem is an object of great sympathy of the author, in fact, he is the hero of the novel. Jhabvala sympathises, with Prem because of his social class - it is a class in India, which is not rapacious, which is not vulgar, which is not hypocritical, which is not selfish, which is not mean, which is not the exploiting class, which is not brutish, as the rich people represented by Suri, Lalaji and Har Dayal and their associates in the earlier novels are. Prem and Raj, typical mofussil College graduates, are employed in the private and public sectors respectively. They come of lower middle class families. The lower middle classes and the lower classes are the victims, they are at the receiving end in a crassly materialistic society. The perpetrators of such a society in affluent countries are not so odious as they are in a country like India- a country where the gulf between the rich and the poor is very vast, where thousands of poor children go blind, and thousands die every year due to malnutrition, where there are millions of beggars, not to speak of millions of unemployed or semi-employeds there are also rich people in this country whose life style compares favourably with very rich in imperialist countries.' They have not deserved this life style through their constructive and creative contribution to the growth of Indian society, nor have they earned it with hardlabour, they have simply grabbed it by looting public wealth under official auspices.

Prem lives in such a society in Delhi in an oppressed condition. He also suffers from intense loneliness, although he is cheerful and sociable by nature. Once when Prem has had a quarrel with Indu, he has this feeling of miserable loneliness:

> "He began to feel like crying himself; already a tear was trembling on his cheek. He brushed it aside with his hand and the feel of it made him want to cry more. He felt so alone and lonely, shut up in this small ugly flat with Indu who cried by herself in the sitting room while he had to lie and cry by himself in the bed room", (p. 24)

And when on one Monday evening Raj does not turn up at the regal cinema to have with Prem their weekly meeting, Prem walks desultorily in the crowded streets. The author says: "There were the usual evening crowds, and they made him feel more lonely than ever", (p. 29) And then, on this occasion, Prem, tired of looking at people, goes to a small lawn, sits on the grass and looks at the sky which, since it was sunset time, was a very delicate pink with streaks of flaring orange across it. How beautiful, Prem thought, how beautiful is nature. He felt he ought to elaborate that sentiment to himself, and get something really noble and significant out of it. He would have gone even "further in searching out philosophy and deep" meaning ", had he not been interrupted by Hans Loewe who takes him for a perfect specimen of a typical Indian of his concept who renounces the flesh and thinks only of the spirit. But all that Prem wants is his stability as a householder. He is a believer in the Shashtra's concept of a householder and expounds the concept to his landlord, Mr. Seigal, who, however, is blissfully ignorant of any such concept. Here is Prem's monologue on this topic with bits of certain desultory utterances of Mr. Seigal and his son thrown in that make the whole situation very comic:

> "'In our ancient writings it is written', Prem continued, 'that there are four stages to a man's life. When he is young, he is a student, learning from his father and his teachers -"'.
>
> " 'Has the tea brought?' Mr. Seigal inquired of Romesh".
>
> "'After that comes the life of the householder', Prem said. 'In this stage a man must raise a family and see to their needs...' He thought of Indu and the coming baby and felt instantly depressed".

But Prem continues. He says :

> "'The third stage is when a man retires from his duties as a householder and spends his time in contemplation'".

> " 'They have made vegetables *samusas* with our tea'. Romesh told his father".
>
> "'Thus it may be clearly seen'. Prem concluded miserably, skipping the fourth stage, of which he was not quite sure, 'that each stage of life has its own duties and obligation'. Oppressed by a sense of failure, he took his leave rather quickly".(pp: 40-41)

This sense of failure oppresses Prem throughout the novel because, as the author tells us, "He felt himself to be terribly inadequate as a husband, a teacher, as an adult altogether", (p. 53) Utter loneliness, a sense of oppressive failure, a terrible feeling of inadequacy as an adult - these things become the existential conditions of human existence at the levels of sensations and feelings in a particular political - economic - cultural setting. The result often is a loss of that self- awareness of one's organic make which at times does revel in that 'sensual music' which a man and wife must first feel themselves with in order to gradually develop into each others spiritual self- identity. Prem feels self alienation - alienation of common routine awareness of himself from, for example the sweet awareness of the 'sensual music' of non-woman organic fusion and so he once tells himself, in fact, wants to tell his friend Sohan Lal, that he hardly knows his young, sexually attractive wife, Indu:

> "It is not that alone', said Prem. Me thought of words in which he could explain how difficult it would be for him to bring Indu. I hardly know her, he wanted to say; how can I bring 'someone I hardly know to such an important tea-party? Yet it seemed a strange thing to say about one's own wife especially after he had already confessed to Sohan Lal that Indu was pregnant". (p. 26)

Here one is reminded of a beautiful poem titled 'Talking in Bed' by Philip Larkin. The whole poem is quoted below to make the point:

> Talking in bed ought to be easiest,
> Lying together there back goes back so far,
> An emblem of two people being honest.
> Yet more and more time passes silently
> Outside, the wind's incomplete unrest
> Builds and disperses clouds about the sky,
> And dark towns heap up on the horizon.
> None of this cares for us. Nothing shows why
> At this unique distance from isolation
> It becomes still more difficult to find
> Words at once true and kind,
> Or not untrue and not unkind.

Philip Larkin's poem involves us in deep philosophical cogitations. The lovers lying together in bed go back to far that they, at the moment of consummation of their loves, are at a unique distance from isolation. Had they either been hurled into the wind's incomplete unrest outside which builds and disperses clouds about the sky, or into the dark atmosphere of a town asleep in the dead of night then he or she would have been faced with real isolation. Instead, in the bed two souls fuse and blend into one, each becomes the other and so both stand at a unique distance from isolation. But the tragedy is that this fusion, this blending does not lead to exchange of words, true and kind, between the lovers.

Prem's case is different from that of the lovers in Philips Larkin's poem, yet he also faces isolation, not in the wind's unrest, building and dispersing clouds about the sky, or in the dark and dead atmosphere of the sleeping town, but in a milieu in which the Khannas, the Seigals and their ilk rule the roost. In this milieu Prem has rock-bottom existential experiences. He feels the harshness of the world in which he lives and often a wave of bitterness sweeps over him.

> "He realized that no one was interested in his difficulties, that the problem of supporting himself and Indu and any family they might have was his alone. The harshness of the world filled him with bitterness and despondency. It seemed to him that adult, settled, worldly people - people like Mr. Khanna and Mr. Seigal - should be glad and even eagar to help a young man just starting out in life and with a family to support. But no body cared, 'wherever you look in the world', he told Sohan Lal, 'people think only of themselves and they don't love their neighbours at all'", (p. 126).

Two of the persons who touch his life on the raw are Mr. Khanna, his employer and Mr. Seigal, his landlord. He expects right from the beginning that they will help him. Mr. Khanna will raise the salary and Mr. Seigal will reduce the exorbitant house - rent, so that he may fulfill his duties and obligations as a householder - his duty by Indu and by the coming baby. But in his last interview with Mr. Khanna he receives a severe dressing - down, even a warning that he may be dismissed from service. The author says:

> "The fear of losing his job was a new one for Prem... His mind leapt to the consequences of dismissal: the difficulty - or even impossibility - of finding another job, the destitution of himself, Indu and their baby" (p. 123)

He knows that he must hold on to his job anyhow, but feels "the weight of this burden very heavily. And his last interview with Mr. Seigal at which he ineffectively tries to impress upon him his desperate financial condition in the hope that he will reduce the rent is marked by Mr. Seigal's insensitivity to his suffering.

Nobody understands Prem. In fact, Mr. Chandha is hostile to him from the very beginning. Even his efforts at communication

with different individuals - his students, Mr. Khanna, Mr. Seigal, even with Indu in the beginning - fail. Those who have any degree of sympathy for him are Sohan Lal, Hans Loowe and the Swami. But their sympathy are quite inadequate and ineffectual. For example, when Prem said, "Everywhere there is selfishness and cruelty, so that it is very difficult for a young man to make his way" (p. 126). Sohan Lal only "nodded and sighed". Hans Lowe, a young German, is a drop-out from an affluent society and has come to India because, as he tells us, one night while he was asleep in Frankfurt, seven thousand miles away from India, he had a dream. He saw a Sadhu sitting under a palm tree and calling to him" "'come Hans'". And so he has come to India for his spiritual regeneration. He thinks that India is the chosen country. He regards Prem as very spiritual. He tells kitty: '"I think he is very advanced ... He looks so spiritual'" (p. 44). He just cannot understand the gnawing pain that Prem feels at the core of his being in a society in which cruelty, selfishness, insensitivity injustice are all pervasive. It is a society in which it seemed to Prem that "he belonged nowhere, was nothing. Was nobody" (p. 92). However, his farewell meeting with Hans is quite touching. Hans is capable of deep feeling which touches Prem. And when he sees Hans' eyes "swimming with tears" at the parting, he feels "slightly guilty because he himself was not deeply enough stirred to bring up tears" (p. 136).

Prem's relationship with the Swami in the novel is interesting. He goes to the Swami' s residence thrice. Each time during his stay at the Swami's residence, he feels that all the anxieties, the gnawing pain that his precarious financial situation and insecure social position give him, his despondency at the tensions that his relationship with his wife Indu is often subject to have been purged away like dross from his soul and the soul breathes in fresh air of freedom and seems to have drunk a draught of cool, fresh water. Jhabvala describes the spiritual state of Prem on his return to his residence after his first meeting with the Swami:

> "Later he could not remember how he got home. He felt lightheaded, and kept laughing to himself. Probably people who met him thought he was drunk. In a way

> that was how he felt. But it was not so much as if he had drunk spirits than as if he had drunk pure well-water, and it was the unaccustomed purity of it that he had gone to his head", (p. 57)

During his second visit to the Swami when Prem finds the Swami and his disciples singing and dancing on an idyllic terrace, Prem also feels a "great longing, almost like pain in his heart". The author says:

> "He wanted to join in the dancing, but his limbs felt heavy and fettered. He thought that if he could shake off these fetters, then the longing in his heart too would resolve and he would be free to sing and dance and be happy with the others", (p. 96)

The fetters in Prem's case, as we know, are the dross, as described above, corroding his soul. "The harshness of the world", Jhabvala tell us, "filled him with bitterness and despondency". During his third visit to the Swami he sees a disciple ecstatically singing a devotional song. The Swami listened with, "his eyes half shut in ecstasy". Vishwanathan, a close disciple, also sat lost in sort of trance. Seated among the Swami and the disciples in a trance, Prem "felt that his own life too had, like a river, found its own bed and was running with theirs in one current towards God" (p. 128). But the Swami's path is not a householder's way of life. The householder has social and familial duties to perform and obligations to fulfill. He has to have a happy household.

Prem, the householder in the novel, cannot perform his duties and fulfill his obligations and he has a household in which he often has strained relations with his wife. He is a sensitive man and till the other day when he was unmarried he was not fettered with the duties and responsibilities of a low-middle class householder. He often looks back lingeringly to his recent past when he was happy, being the only son of his father who, as Principal of Ankhpur College, was an important man in his own house as well as in his

social class in the village of Ankhpur. Prem's position is that of an underpaid, inefficient teacher in an insecure position (Mr. Khanna, his employer, can dismiss him, as he threatens him, any time he likes) in a private college whose owner is an educational racketeer. Prem is made aware of his stark existential situation thus in a moment of cogitation:

> "But Prem-what was he? He was no longer a student living in his father's house: he had lost interest in his mother and in her cooking and in talk of Ankhpur. But what was he instead? Where did he belong? It seemed to him now that he belonged nowhere, was nothing, was nobody". (p.92)

Such a nihilistic view of his life Prem does not normally hold. He wants to forge relationships with all characters in the novel. With each of the two of these persons, Hans and the Swami, he finds that his social life and their personal lives stood at two different levels of existence. Social life as such neither the Swami nor Hans lives. Naturally, Prem's maximum efforts are made to establish satisfactory relationships with Mr. Khanna, his employer, and Mr. Seigal, his landlord; and intimate personal relationships with his erstwhile college friend, Raj, and with his physically attractive and basically good-natured wife, Indu. It is in this web-like relationships, with these persons that Prem can fulfill his life as a householder. Prem has a firm faith in the position of the householder forming a very important period in a man's life. Prem wants nothing more than what is householder's share in the national wealth so that he may justify his and his wife's existence as householder that our shastras conceived of. But Prem's position is such that he cannot fulfill his main obligations to his wife who is with child. Indu, as pregnant women, has an uncontrollable desire for sweetmeats. Prem cannot buy her even sweetmeats because he has no money to spare. And one day in the scorching heat of a Delhi summer day Prem, while going back to his college after lunch at home, feels a great longing for a bottle of cold drink at a cold drink booth, but he chides himself for harbouring such a longing, as if it were an unbecoming

desire. Prem cannot buy his wife even small presents and only at a moment of separation from her when he feels a sudden surge of emotion for her, he buys a satin blouse piece for her. The feelings of Prem are so gnawed at by his obsession with his low, meager wages that he cannot fully enjoy the sensuousness of love-relationship with his sensuous wife. It is only towards the end of the novel that they luxuriate in their sensual relationship. Sensuousness emanates from such sensual satiety. This sensuousness could have fused the two souls into one so that each could identify itself with the other. One such occasion of satiety is described by Jhabvala in these words:

> "In the night they (Prem and Indu) went to sleep out on the roof. They felt both alone and supreme. The sky, vaulting huge and black above them, nailed with silver points of stars and a slice of moon, seemed closer than the earth ... He tried to persuade her to take off all her clothes and show herself naked to him. She blushed, giggled, clutched the sari defensively to her breast while he tried to pull it off. They struggled together and then they loved one another. Never had they known such an excess of sweetness", (p. 118)

But the next morning Prem has a bitter quarrel with his colleague, Mr. Chaddha, at the Khanna Private College as a result of which Mr. Chaddah complains to Mr. Khanna against Prem's inefficiency as a teacher due to which his (Mr. Chaddah's) class is often disturbed. Mr. Khanna gives Prem a severe dressing-down and threatens .him with dismissal without any further warning if he does not improve as a teacher. Thus Prem's entire destiny as a householder hangs by a slender thread. If Mr. Khanna dismisses him, the thread will be cut and his fate will be shattered, the very thought of which sends a shiver of chill down Prem's spine.

The Householder in Jhabvala's one of the two best novels, the other being *Heat and Dust*. In this novel also, as in her other novels, Jhabvala depicts a rapacious social system in which the rich and the privileged exploit, and thrive at the cost of the poor and the

underprivileged. Prem is hedged in his existence as householder by two such exploiters, Mr. Khanna and Mr. Seigal, who provide him with food and shelter, respectively. Prem does not demand much from them. Only a little rise in his mere pittance of a salary of Rs. 175/- per month and a little lowering of the house rent, which Prem himself tells us, works out to more than 25% of his gross monthly income. But the Khannas and the Seigals of the rapacious society will not allow him to live the dignified life of a householder. He, therefore, lives a harassed kind of existence. His self or being at times feels hemmed in, even threatened. And Mr. Khanna's threat of dismissal sends shivers of chill down his spine. Prem is not cynical or pessimistic. He is vibrating with life as he proves it in his love making with Indu. He wants to establish links with other selves who touch his life at many points. This is a legitimate of the self but given the conditions of life obtaining in the system in which Prem lives, the efforts aimed at establishing links are not likely to succeed much. With his erstwhile intimate college friend, Raj, he can not re-establish the links that a man should have with his friend. Raj is never very happy to meet Prem, even when Prem meets the cost of their snacks and tea together in restaurants around a particular city cinema house. And when the two talk, they do it on different wave-lengths so that their meetings are funny. Prem, towards the end of the novel, invites Raj and his family to lunch at his rather expensive residence. Prem and Indu have a sense of fulfillment as householders, but the two couples - Prem and Indu, Raj and his ugly wife - cannot come on to an intimate level of personal relationship. Prem turns to the Swami and yearns for a regular state of blise which Swami's company gives only momentarily. But this does not happen and he realizes that the two modes of existence, that of the Swami and his own, are incompatible with each other. Mans' efforts at making out Prem a person who has achieved perfect spiritual balance and what he calls "God consciousness" are indeed ridiculous. Even so, Prem does get a feel of Hans' true liking for him at their parting. And with Indu he experiences some of his truest experiences. But he is pitted against forces of the society in which he lives that can crush him. The Khannas and the Seigals of the Post Independence India rule the economic roost. In such a society

the Khannas and Seigals are also sensitive brutes. And their life-styles fill human consciousness with abhorrence. Mr. Khanna eats sumptuous breakfasts and meals in sharp and immediate contrast to Sohan Lal's scanty and poor man's lunches which includes his breakfast also. And the Seigal's lavish and easy, and outwardly relaxed life presents a sharp and immediate contrast to the bare, almost unfurnished flat, and very simple, verging on a poor man's life, although by no means an unhappy life, of Prem and Indu.

In this novel the self is constituted of the relationships that Prem has with Raj, Hans, the Swami and Indu, and the society in nutshell is constituted of the Khannas and Seigals. *The society prevails over the self* - Mr. Khanna's severe dressing-down of Prem symbolises the dominance. But the self is by no means calloused as it is in the case of Hari in *To Whom She Will*, Nimmi and Viddi in *The Nature of Passion*, and Shakuntala in *Esmond in India*. This is because Prem is a householder. His situation at times appears to be desperate. But he is not defeated. In fact, the novels end on a note of triumph and fulfillment, although there will be no material change in Prem's existential situation.

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Five

INFLUENCE ON MANOHAR MALGONKAR

Dr. Sudhirkumr J. Singh

Manohal Malgonkar is one of those few Indo-English writers of fiction whose names, for certain specific and well defined reasons, evoke both curiosity and admiration. Inspite of his rather related emergence as a writer of fiction, Malgonkar has been able to occupy a safe and reasonably prominent position in the history of Indo English literature. His first novel, **Distant Drum** appeared in 1960 and it has, since then, been followed by such of his other novels as **Combat of Shadows** (1962), **The Princes** (1963), **A Bend in the Ganges** (1964), **The Devil's Wind** (1972). **Open Season** (1978) and **Bandicoot Run** (1982). Besides these, he has also brought out three volumes of short stories, namely, **A Toast in Warm Wine** (1974), **Bombay Beware** (1975) and **Rumble Tumble** (1977), Malgonkar has been a serious student of Indian History, and it is both natural and appropriate that he should have written, as he has actually done, such illuminating and informative books of history as **Kanholi Angrey, Maratha Admiral** (1959), **Puars of Dewas Senior** (1963) and **The Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur** (1971). Besides these novels, short stories, one period play entitled **Line of Mars** and books of history, Malgonkar has, over the years, also written a large number of essays which have, from time to time, been published in different periodicals. Even a casual survey of Manohar Malgonkars books and essays give us impression that he has a tremendous stamina

and flair for writing. We may hope that, as time moves on, he will go on making his own significant contributions to the corpus of Indo-English literature in general and of Indo-English novel in particular.

Malgonkar's entry into the field of writing may be looked upon as a kind of pleasant accident. For quite some times he kept himself engaged as a hunter, but subsequently he withdrew himself from big-game hunting because of its inherent brutality and fierceness. In fact, as a matter of sheer reaction to and repentance for what he had done as a hunter, he choose to become a wild - life conversationalist. This close contact with the jungles of India and their wild life has proved to be an experience of invaluable help to him, for it is on the basis of this very experience, that he gives us ultimate, lively and authentic description of Indian jungles in his novel and short stories. During the second world war Malgonkar joined the Indian army and had to move from place to place along with the battalion; he served in the infantry, in the counter intelligence wing of the army, and also on the General staff with merit and distinction. Though he remained with the army only for a brief spell of time, he could realise the pleasures and pains, the exultation and desperation's of military life from the inside and it is natural that he makes use of these exciting experiences with a great skill and charm in his fictional writings. Later, he switched over to business and started looking after his own Manganese mines located near his hometown, Jagalbet, in Karnataka. Manohar Malgonkar has also been interested in political activities and this interest has given him a sharp awareness of the contemporary Indian political scene and situation. He took to literary writing, among other factors, also because of the fact that he received a typewriter from his wife on one of his birthdays. It is not at all difficult to see that Malgonkar has been a variegated career and that he has imbibed different and differing experiences from a wide variety of sources, contacts, encounters and spheres of activity. Richly endowed with the power of visualization, gifted with a highly developed sensibility, equipped with a remarkable flair for style and inspired by a genuine gest for life. It was in the fitness of things that he opted for the career of creative writer.

A good deal has been written on the various aspects of Malgonkar's mind and art. His novels and the collections of his

short stories have indeed been inviting successes, so that the critics and the scholars interested in Indo English fiction have turned more and more towards him. However, before we take up for consideration the wide variety of view that have been expressed, from time to time, on Malgonkar's mind and art : It is but proper that we examine some of the important influences, that have their own bearing on the art of Malgonkar's fictional writing and his attitudes towards concerned problems.

It is indeed hazardous and at times something in the nature of a specialized kind of gamble to trace the influence of one writer or several writers on the mind and art of a particular author. In the case of Manohar Malgonkar too a similar kind of pursuit seems to be both difficult and delicate. And yet, a close and careful reading of his novels does unmistakably suggest that in certain ways and in varying proportions, he has, no doubt, been influenced by a large number of writers. It is relevant to note at this point that Malgonkar has perhaps little to do with such eminent modem novelists as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner and Saul Bellow. This may be explained in view of the fact that while in one sense or the other these novelists are experimentalist, as a writer of fiction Manohar Malgonkar is more or less, a traditionalist. Expectedly enough, as we gather, Malgonkar is influenced by such writers of fiction as Meadows Taylor, Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, EM. Forster, Somerset Maugham, Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, John Masters, Ernest Hemingway, John Updike and Truman Capote.

Meadows Taylor (1801-76) came to India while he was just a boy, but he stayed on this country for a considerable period of time. At first he served as an assistant to a Bombay merchant, subsequently, he emerged as colonel Phillip Meadows Taylor and finally he worked as a very popular administrator in the service of the three successive Nizams of Hyderabad. But whatever as an administrator, a soldiers, or an assistant, he was different from the other Britishers of his time, then living in India, in the sense that while he tried to identify himself with the sentiments and aspirations of the native people, the other Britishers kept themselves away from Indians. In the true spirit of a liberal and a linguistic Taylor started learning the native languages, and eventually succeeded in gaining

proficiency in Hindustani, Persian and Marathi. What, however, really interest us in his case is his personal encounter with and knowledge of the problems existing in India in the nineteenth century. In his famous work **Confession of a Thug,** he shows his grim awareness of one such problem. At the same time in such of his novels as **Tipoo Sultan, The Noble Queen, Ralph Damell** and **Tara,** he gives us his own views on the different epochs of Indian history. As a matter of fact, these novels may also be looked upon as historical romances. "With his firm grasp of Indian Tongues and his vast experience with Indian people',[2] remarks Hemingway", Taylor could write.... confidently and competently about Indian characters and situations" And very rightly does professor Amur observes :

> "It was Taylor who demonstrated effectively and for the first time how Indian experiences could be handled in a foreign medium and the fact that he was an English man did not make much difference. Taylor seems to have been an important influence on Malgonkar"[3]

Attempts are made to show that as a novelist Malgonkar has been indebted to Rudyard Kipling. It is indeed one of the striking literary paradoxes that while on the one hand Kipling was an ardent believer in imperialism and was rather persistent in his declaration that the east and the west would never meet, on the other he wrote a good deal about India, lending a special colour or flavour to his descriptions of Indian scenes and situations. There is obviously much in common between kipling and Malgonkar, for both have their pronounced points of interest in the army, the outdoor life and the jungles. What, however, is of special importance to us in this connection is Kipling's exploitation of and play the English language in relation to his treatment of Indian characters and situation. It is pertinent to mention here that Kipling had been born in India and he spent some fruitful years as a journalist at Lahore and Allahabad, and as such he was in a position to cultivate a taste for the linguistic habits and mannerism of the Indians. A careful

study of Malgonkar's novels readily reveals the fact that he was inspired, at least to a certain extent, by Kipling's linguistic transmutations of Indian speech. Expectedly enough, Kiplings, attitude towards Indian characters is fundamentally different from Malgonkar's attitudes towards them, but, this difference notwithstanding, Malgonkar reminds us almost necessarily of Kipling, for in them there is that width of canvas which is clear indication of their manifold interests and varied experiences. It is not at all difficult to see that Kiplings and Malgonkar are rather close to each other in respect of the vivid descriptions of Indian scenes and competent handling of English speech in relation to Indian characters. At any rate, Malgonkar does seem to have imbibed a definite kind of inspiration from Kipling, though, as we find, he has used it for an altogether different end.

It is not without valid reasons that Manohar Malgonkar is supposed to have been influenced by Joseph Conrad's fictional writings. By birth Conrad was a pole, by profession he was a sailor in the British Merchants Marine service, and it was by choice he become a naturalized citizen of England. Conrad tells us at several places in his letters and diaries that he could not have written so effectively in any language other than English, for, according to him, it is not always the writer who chooses his medium of expression, at times, it is the medium that selects its own writer or writers. In his novels Conrad makes ample use of his experiences as a sailor. Walter Allen observes:

> "..... Conrad's romantic extra literary career as a sailor in exotic waters may easily blind us to the essential nature of Conrad's genius as a novelist. He is not great simply because he pulled off a remarkable feat', and though he is a novelist of the sea and of exotic places, he is much more. His life at sea provided him with a store of experiences that he drew upon for the material of his fiction, but the true value of the sea and of the exotic place

> was that they offered him what might almost be called the laboratory conditions in which he could make his investigations into the nature of man and the springs of action"[4]

As we go through Malgonkar's novels we come to realise that like Conrad, what he tries to do through his novels and short stories is to render his raw experiences in an articulate form. His first hand knowledge of the army and wild life, his encounter with the problems of tea estates, his direct touch with the pains and pleasures of the princely order, his sorrow over the eruption of communal orgy, his involvement with the doctrines of terrorism and nonviolence, his fascination for the pageantry of Indian History, his closeness to the tussle between the values of the east and the west, and his embarrassment at the oddity of political interference in administration - all these provide him with adequate material for his short stories and novels. With all their exotic flavour there is something of epic dimension about Conard's novels, and though Malgonkar may not be able to handle English language in the manner Conrad does. His novels too have something that may be described as the sweep or range of an epic. We may pin point the Conradian element in Malgonkar's novels by stating that atmosphere is almost a character in his books. Conrad's novels have the expanse of the sea itself, and within the limits of the Indian scene Malgonkar's novels have a kind of vastness that has its own appeal. It is idle, though, to speculate if Malgonkar's novels are as symbolical as Conrad's. Conrad's symbols have a kind of profundity, of penetration, of massiveness that is simply amazing and at times the manner in which he combines the exotic with the symbolical does really strike us as fantastic. Malgonkar's novels do not give us productive crop of symbols; they invite our attention chiefly by virtue of their narrative element, atmospheric evocation and linguistic flexibility, and yet, as Professor Amur points out," at least one of his novels *Combat of Shadows*, has a characteristically Conradian theme."[5] Malgonkar's *Combat of Shadows*, as the writer himself says in the epigraph to the book, oscillates between the contradictory poles of desire and aversion, and as such attains an

unusual kind of emotional pitch. And though it would be something in the nature of an exaggeration to say that Manohar Malgonkar may be looked upon as the Indian Conrad, with all their limitations his novels are perhaps as engaging, as poignant and as poetic as those of Conrad.

In the course of an interview that James Y. Dayananda had with Manohar Malgonkar on his novel **The Princes,** during the later visit to America in 1972, the novelist says something specific about E.M. Forster, a writer who is almost always remembered in the context of both Anglo-Indian and Indo-English writing. His famous novel **A Passage to India** tries to project the image of our country both as a mystery and a muddle, and Malgonkar is perfectly right when he says that "No other author has been such a deep, understanding of the character of the educated Indian as E.M. Forester has".[6] It is certainly a great encouragement to Malgonkar that Forester expressed his linking for **The Princes** and selected a **Bend in the Gangage** as one of the three best works of fiction published in 1964. Moreover, it is a rare historical coincidence that both of them, in different ways, were interested in the state of Dewas senior. In the course of his interview Malgonkar says'.

> 'The Prince that E.M. Forster knew died soon after Forster's visit. And his son, who became Maharaja after him is a great friend of mine and I am friendly with him today. So I couldn't take liberty with the characters and lie about my friend's father. But I am familiar with the state.... I may have drawn something from my experience, which is also E. M. Forster's experience."[7]

In his book *The Hill of Devil,* among other things Forster says a good deal about the state of Dewas senior and its Maharaja, and Malgonkar too has written a book entitled **The Pears of Dewas Senior.** There is, thus, a substantial area of exploration common to both Forster and Malgonkar. It is precisely against this background that we may undertake an assessment of the nature and extent of Forster's influence on Malgonkar.

It would be proper at this point to try to bring out some points of affinity between Somerset Maugham and Manohar Malgonkar. As Malgonkar came to the field of fiction from the world of the army, hunting and the jungles, more or less in a similar manner Maugham too started writing novels and short stories after his stay in the world of medicine. It is indeed creditable on their part that they draw upon the wide variety of their experiences and make use of them in their fictional writings. Perhaps the strongest link between these two novelists is their concern for the story element in their novels. Inspite of all his wit and satiric jibes, Maugham remains a powerful story - teller, and so is Malgonkar not withstanding his pre occupation with the various problems that seem to be ravaging India. What is, however, still more striking about these two writers lies contained in the fact that both of them maintain a reasonable degree of detachment or objectivity while practicing their art. Within the limit range Maugham endeavours to examine certain fundamental values of life, though he scrupulously avoids pronouncing any judgement on them, and almost like him Malgonkar too does not commit himself to any particular system or philosophy. It may be conveniently conjectured that, with his immense linking for the author of **Liza of Lambeth** and **Cakes and Ale**, Malgonkar must have been influenced, at least to a certain extent, by Somerset Maugham.

In his article published in **The Time Litrary Supplement** Malgonkar makes a specific mention of two modern English novelists, Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene.

He says :

> "Who can treat ..... religion, death (or more correctly the disposal of dead bodies), war and cannibalism with such heavy - handed cynicism and yet with enough feeling to leave the leader emotionally wrung out at the end of a book except Mr. Waugh. And who, among modern writers, can create atmosphere with such spell-binding deftness as Mr. Greene"[8]

There is no mistaking the fact that Malgonkar is all admiration for Evelyn Waugh for certain distinct reasons. He is not so much interested in Waugh as a social critic or satirist, or even as a supposed cynic, as in pre-occupation with the problems of religion and death in the contemporary world. In his novel such as **Decline and Fall, Vile Bodies, Black Mischief, A Handful of Dust,** and **Brideshed Revisited** Waugh writes a good deal about violence, adventures, miserable deaths, catastrophic wars, sophistication and savagery and he invests his treatment of these issues with kind of feeling that has its own peculiar effect on the readers. Expectedly enough, Malgonkar is all praise for Waugh for his tremendous ability to combine cynicism with pathos, sophistication with savagery and sensuality with horror in his fiction writings. Equally so, it is nothing unnatural that Malgonkar is inspired also by Graham Greene as a novelist. Greene is one of those contemporary writers who opted for Roman Catholicism in the present era of leftist learnings and liberal views. He is generally looked upon as Catholic writer, and yet his traditionalism entails a large store of variations in thought or attitude. Greene, it is true, writes usually about remote and far - flung places, but all the time we find him seized with the problems of evil and good, sin and salvation, guilt and redemption. Malgonkar does not have any religious pre-occupation of this kind. He admires Graham Greene for the simple and precise reason that the latter is able to create a telling kind of atmosphere in his novels. It is useful to remember here that atmosphere plays an important role in Malgonkar's novels too, and that in the novels of both there is plenty of sensation, thrill, suspense and excitement. Greene is Malgonkar's favorite author, for in him he finds the example of a novelist who proceeds remarkably well with the stories, gives us a variety of characters and suggests a complex pattern of possibilities with the help of atmosphere. In sum, if Evelyn Waugh fascinates Malgonkar by virtue of his linguistic artistry and his preoccupation with the contemporary death - wish, Graham Greene appeals to him because of his absorbing stories, the rich meaningfulness of intricate suggestions in his novels, and the spell of atmosphere in them.

Malgonkar comments that there is "a nice blend of Kipling and Forster, of the old bravado and the new breast beating in the novels

of Masters".[9] This statement is both appropriate and inappropriate at one and the same time for certain palpable reasons. Masters has indeed some affinity with Kipling, for, like Kipling, he too was born in India and served in the Indian army for well over a decade. Like Kipling, once again, Masters was an imperialist, and he did not conceal his feeling of sadness at the loss of India from the fold of the British empire. And yet, he is different from Kipling in the sense that his association with India was mere intimate than Kipling's, with the results that he did not want the Britishers to look upon the people of India as odious, untouchable, black species of humanity. Masters has perhaps no point of connection with Forster except for the fact that both wrote about India in their novels. Masters does not have Forster's humane and liberal outlook and much through Hemenway may content that Masters "Knows India much better than Forster does",[10] he almost contradicts himself when he states that Masters "Romanticizes and popularizes the country without considering the more subtle and symbolic ways so unfold the inner India".[11] The essential difference between Masters and Forster consists in the fact that while former is just a story - teller, the latter is also an explorer of ideas. There are, however, certain characteristic qualities in Masters which take us to Manohar Malgonkar. Masters had a hatred for dirty politics and willy politicians, in his novels such as **Night runners of Bengal** and **Bhawani Junction,** he deals with the communal, religious and racial problems of India, and, what is more, in them he expresses his attachment to and admiration for the military life and its ideals of duty and discipline. Masters is indeed a fine story teller; his novels are, more or less, something in the nature of romance - adventures, and in them he glamorizes the exotic aspects of India, though he tries to shatter the popular western belief that India is just a land of snakes, snake charmers, saints and princes. Although a Britishers to the backbone, he makes widest possible use of his knowledge of Hindi and Gurkhali in his novels and introduces native idioms in them. Furthermore, Masters reminds us of Malgonkar also because of his powers of observation, the scenic descriptions in his novels, and his close understanding and appreciation of the sounds and smells and colours of India. In this connection professor Amur says something very revealing about

Malgonkar. He states: "Malgonkar is quite frank about John Masters influence on him and told me in a conversation I had with him that in fiction he filled the place which John Masters held fifteen years ago[12] Malgonkar may think and claim that he is the Indian John Masters, for the two are indeed close to each other on certain points, and yet, as professor K.R. Srinivas Iyengar says, 'Malgonkar is not an indigenous John Masters".[13] As a writer of fiction Malgonkar is much more impressive than John Masters, and his understanding of the Indian people and situation is far wider and deeper than that of Masters. John Masters has indeed influenced Malgonkar to a certain extent, but it would be preposterous to say that he worked and thought and wrote all the time under the influence of this Anglo - Indian novelist.

It is sometimes claimed that Malgonkar has a certain kind of fascination for two contemporary American novelists, John Updike and Truman Capote. It is true that Updike's **Rabbit Run** and **The Contour Other voices, Other Rooms** have won wide acclaim, but then there is not much about these American novelists that might cast its spell over Malgonkar. Updike is a competent craftsman, and Captoe too demonstrates a lot of technical skill, but they are too close to Malgonkar in point of time so as to being able to influence him.

However, it is really interesting to note that Malgonkar is rather close to Ernest Hemingway in several respects. In his fictional writings Hemingway deals, in a large measure, with war, sex and adventure and provides us with considerable dose of suspense and excitement. Hemingway is a powerful storyteller, and the scenes he describes and the situations he presents in his novels have their own infectious quality.

But what really impresses us as the most important point common to both Hemingway and Malgonar is their penchant for code characters. In his essay entitled 'Manohar Malgonkar and the Satpura Code' D.R. Sharma points out that, like Hemingway's characters, Malgonkar's Characters too go by a certain code of values. 'It is inevitable', says he, "that any reference to a code hero should remind us of the code heroes of Hemingway"[14] and he goes

on to say that 'Satpura code is Malgonkar's offer of an Indian square meal to an under nourished reader who has been nibbling at the chesestraws of Western virtuosity".[15] Kiran Garud in **Distant Drum,** Abhayraj in **The Princes,** Debidayal in **A Bend in the Ganges,** Nana Saheb in **The Devil's Wind** and Jaikumar in **Open Season** are all code heroes. Even Henry Winton in **Combat of Shadows** may be looked upon as a code hero, though only in a negative sense, for he suffers humiliation and has finally to die only because he violates established code out of sheer jealously and malice. It is not without reason that sudden dart keeps on reminding him of the code and persistently tells him that their business in India is not to grow morals but tea. Like Hemingway's heroes, Malgonkar's heroes too may prefer to get destroyed, but they refuse to accept defect. Defiance and endurance are the main planks of their moral code. It would then not be unnatural to conclude that, knowingly or unknowingly, consciously or unconsciously. Malgonkar has been influenced by Ernest Hemingway.

It hardly requires emphasizing that Manohar Malgonkar occupies an important place in the history of Indo-English fiction. Though rather a late entrant into the field of Indian writing in English, he has made a highly productive use of his artistic talent and has been able to draw upon the large fund of experiences he could gather in the course of his journey through life. Maloonkar wrote the first four of his novels rather in a quick succession but subsequently the place of his writing novels slowed down, though by now he is an acknowledged writer of a large number of articles and short stories, besides three books on Indian history. Malgonkar's interest in history is indeed worthy of serious consideration, for it imparts an important dimension to his art fiction - writing.

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Six

THE SEEKING SELF IN THE NOVELS OF ANITA DESAI

Dr. Anita Singh

Anita Desai's unquestionable existential concern has distinguished her from other novelists of the younger generation. She is the only novelist who shows some sort of similarity to Arun Joshi. But even Arun Joshi has yet to acquire the depth of Anita Desai. Committed to novel writing, she is very sincere and practical with her craft. In this chapter, an attempt will be made to highlight the quest for the self in her novels and her obsessive existentialist concern. The emphasis is on her search for real identity, the sense of loneliness she feels and how she expresses it through imagery, symbolism, structure and narrative techniques.

For Anita Desai, freedom implies liberty in toto, such as the nexus of ideas that make up the background of her conception of human life. There is, perhaps, nothing really new in these ideas, but Anita Desai continues to work in her novels with a significant difference. In her novels there is the recognition that liberty is at one with creativity and that only pure freedom can make the world happy. Yet no theory of human nature is new. Anita Desai stresses on responsibility for an action that appears even trivial. Our highest purposes fail miserably without positive action and then comes to our mind some chance, purposelessness or cross-purpose. The madness of Anita Desai's heroines echoes the same. Their voices terminate in madness, and again, in action that appears half-accidental and half-willed.

In larger part of her novels she has philosophic formulation, but not the age-old philosophic problems. She merely, but adequately, describes some phenomena of human life, such as, the problem of taste, the question of nature and origin of values. Her preferences can be listed by different colours of vision that seem very important for telling us either what this or that man or what men or women in general are. She projects the situation and create such individuals without any recourse to the ideas of beauty. Rather they have their integral relation to what the individual essentially is or becoming. In this connection we have her characters based on existential psycho-analysis. The most magnificent part of her novels is the dialogues or the monologues.

In *Voices in the City* Desai gives us three major characters that are tortured by their own meaninglessness and hollow existence. Consciously or subconsciously they go deep into their own psyche and expose their inner-selves. Her Nirode is, in fact, a rootless character without any definite goal in life as he changes his goals one after another. He is obsessed by failure in achieving success in life that creates a void, a sense, of emptiness. This he admits to his friend David:

> ..... I want to fail - quickly. Then I want to see if I have the spirit to start moving again, towards my next failure. I want to move from failure to failure, step by step to rock-bottom. I want to explore that depth. When you climb a ladder all you find at the top is space, all you can do is leap off, fall to the bottom. I want to get there without that meaningless climbing I want to descend quickly.[1]

Nirod quotes Camus while admitting the above facts of life:

'In default of inexhaustible happiness, eternal suffering, at least, would give us a destiny. But we do not have even that consolation and our worst agonies come to an end one day.'[2] Again he says: 'Happiness, suffering I want to be done with them, see beyond them to the very end.'[3]

Nirode experiments with failures like a true existential hero, seeking meaning in life, though he gets nothing except that he comes to the realisation in the end. This quest of Nirode shows his emptiness and bankruptcy Anita Desai paints this aspect of his personality in the following manner:

> He was weaned by his own unsureness in which he swept back and forth like a long weed undulating under water, a weed that could live only in aqueous gloom, would never rise and sprout into clear daylight. He was proud to the point of being a fanatic, he was intense enough to be capable of whole-hearted dedication, yet he drifted, a shadowy cipher, and his life consisted of one rejection following another. He loathed the world that could offer him no crusade, no pilgrimage, and he loathed himself for not having the true, unwavering spirit either within him. There was only this endless waiting, hollowed out by an intrinsic knowledge that there was nothing to wait for.[4]

He finds no difference in love, hate, resistance or compromise. Though he is some what different at the last stage in his spiritual findings he suffers a new jolt at Monisha's death and the new set of life he begins:

> There was so much he wanted to tell them to reassure them that no outrage had been committed, that Monisha had died from an excess of caring and consciously, and that they too must accept, with a life intensity, the vigilance of heart and conscience allowing no deed of indifference or incomprehension to drift by, but to seize each moment, each person,

> each fragment of the world and reverence it with that acute care that had driven Monisha to her splendid death.[5]

His philosophical discussions, historical denunciations and withdrawals are not very convincing. Most of his psychological conflicts and spiritual crises are simply reported and not realized. Therefore, it is simply his outbursts of irritation or denunciation.

Amla, his unmarried sister, poetically describes his detachment from the world and his indifference that makes him a rootless creature in a big city like Calcutta. She sums up his position in this way:

> .... In his state of purely detached acceptance of a world not worth realizing, nothing could matter enough to trouble him. In fact, it was easier for him to live here where he could rest, in such anonymity, upon the heave, swell and drift of great black wave, apart of the crusted flotsam on its crest, allowing it to carry him, in perfect indifference and without any certitude of destiny, moving only because the tide made it move, continuing only because it continued. One day it would sink quickly silently into the sand.[6]

It seems that Nirode is under the influence of Camus, Kafka and Baudlaire as he remains a rootless, a wanderer and a misfit. He does not compromise with the world, nor does he become a revolutionary in a true sense, rather he loves to be a reactionary. To some extent he resembles Camus Meursautt of his novel, The Outsider. However, Nirode remains a psychic rebel with his feelings of utmost intensity and absurdity.

In *Voices in the City* there is not only Nirode who has before him a vast human island but in it Monisha is also a character who has a miserable psychic life. She has a vacuum both inside and outside. Anita Desai adopts the technique of the diary which adds pathos

to the empty married life of Monisha. Her rapport with her husband Jiban is marked only by loneliness and in communication. She frantically tries to search for a real meaning in life but she is utterly frustrated. Nothing sustains in her life. Nothingness in her takes us to judge her character having no surface-value. Desai writes:

> To pretend to have forgotten, to pretend to believe in these trivialities, these pettiness of our mean existence, is that right? To sort the husk from the rice, to wash and iron and to talk and sleep, when this is not what one believes in at all? What force of will does it require to shed as I believe my brother has, at least to an extent shed, the unnecessary, the diverting and live the clean.... Death and mean existence and that surely is not difficult.[7]

Monisha prefers non-existence to a meaningless existence. She defines love as 'an awakening condition of the conscience' but fears and avoids it because love implies a sense of duty. Therefore, she remains an exile in her two families-mothers as well as husband's. Her hypertension does not help her relate herself meaningfully to the external reality. She fails to combine the ideas of personal freedom, domestic duties and social responsibilities. As ill-luck would have it, she is also denied by nature the chance to bear children. Thus, she seeks identity in the deepest darkness of the space. The reported arrival of Amla does not make any difference to her feelings. Traceless, meaningless and uninvolved - such is a condition of non-existence. She likes darkness between the spaces and the stars:

> I'll have only the darkness. Only the dark spaces between the stars, for they are the only things on earth that can comfort me, rub a balm into my wounds, into my throbbing head and bring me this coolness, this stillness, this interval of peace..... ... I think that what separates me

> from this family is the fact that not one of them ever slips out under the stars at night. They have indoor minds, starless and darkness. Mine is all dark now. The blessing it is.[8]

It is her tragedy that the 'few moments of night silence' turns into 'one unlit west'. She thinks of the street singer's emotions that 'Spread through her eyes like dark lakes', as she fears they would dissolve and disintegrate her into a meaningless shadow. Here we have presence of traceless, meaningless and uninvolved conditions She discovers that her inner flame is somewhat different, as she thought of:

> Heat seared her eyeballs, a great fog enveloped her, not the white one of dreams but black, acrid, thick-with her arms she wrestled with it. She fought it, it was not what she wanted ..[9]

In fact Monisha's mental agony mounts from page to page in the novel. She is more and more tormented. She accepted that the absence of the element of love has made both brother and sister all alone. To this aspect of Monisha, Dr. Madhusudan Prasad rightly observes:

> In her existentialist search, Monisha ultimately discovers that it is the 'absence' of 'the element of love that has made both brother and sister such object rebels, such craven tragedians'. The insufferable cacophony of over-crowded, apathetic Calcutta, Monisha's claustrophobia and oppressive lack of privacy, her incapacity to bear a child, her total incommunication with her nonchalant husband, the absence of love in her life and the resultant fomenting loneliness within and the suspicion of her in-laws who look on her

> as a thief - all this terribly tortures her mentally and she shrieks in agony. "There is no escape from it" and makes her feel the futility of her hollow existence and ultimately drives her to suicide.[10]

Monisha, like Nirode, wants to be free, but unlike him she finds it difficult to free herself. Her longing for privacy and longitude remains unfulfilled; rather her life follows a subdued pattern of monotonous activity-without any meaning. Her husband's posting to Calcutta and her childlessness further detract her from privacy. She withdraws from the material concerns of family, and retreats behind the barred windows. From these windows she advises Amla to always go in the opposite direction. It is an advice to rebel. Amla notices her stillness and death- like submission, and thinks of her as a lifeless statue. But Monisha's stillness is not steadiness or detachment; it is not feeling or suffering; it is a death-like stillness. Ultimately, Monisha's death, gives Nirode the knowledge of a reality that he had never known before. In the hours between Monisha's cremation and her mother's arrival his mind alters into a terrified apprehension:

> ... not only of this dramatic and to the long estrangement between him and his mother, but of the feeling that never again would be known that alleviation of the torment of conscience, that drugged, dull sleep in which he had rocked obviously for so many years, successful in his deceit, scornful of his success, stagnant and dehydrated of all ambition, communion, relationship, joy and responsibilities, Monisha's death had brought them all, flooding into him with the onrush of a great stormy wave, and he had opened his heart to it with gratitude. But now already he was beginning to feel the torture that accompanied such grace, and he knew he

> would never again be able to avoid it, turned his back on it.[11]

Amla is also an existential character. Her attitude towards life, youthful excitement and wonder is entirely different from Nirode and Monisha. She tries to opt out of the absurd and lead a happy life attending cocktail parties, dinners and dances. She takes joy in conversation with me. Anita Desai describes the dimensional character of Amla in the following lines:

> Despite all the stimulation of new experiences, new occupations, new acquaintances, and the mild sweet winter air, this sense of hollowness and futility persisted. Daily it perused her to the office, led quietly under the black mouthpiece of her telephone, shook-ever so slightly the tip of her pencil as she traced the severe lines of a well draped sari, then engulfed her in the evenings when she attended parties at which she still knew no one well, and at night when she tried to compose her unsteady thoughts for sleep.[12]

Amla is very different from Monisha and Nirode. She finds their silence and withdrawal mystifying, but she finds" a sense of hollowness and futility. Her dream of love and involvement with Dharma is broken when she comes to know that he is a married man and has disowned his daughter. She bids farewell to his love which had begun to overpower her. Thus, she moves from revolt to conformity, to sense the atmosphere of desolution. Temperamentally, like Nirode and Monisha, she comes through love to surrender.

Arun's marriage to a British nurse in England, Monisha's suicide and Nirode's relentless efforts to obliterate self-identity make Amla apathetic and alienated from her mother. Through these three characters, Anita Desai succeeds in her portrayal of not only the individual human relationship against the backdrop of a cosmopolitan consciousness of a big city in India, but also the

growth of individual consciousness from a cynical sense of loss of identity to the mystical realization of the meaning of existence. We agree with Anita Desai when she says, "Neither Nirode nor Amla actually escape from their dilemmas, do they? I see art as an exploration, an Enquiry, not an escape.[13]

In an interview with Atma Ram, replying to a question regarding *Bye-Bye, Blackbird* Anita Desai observes:

"... of all my novels it is most rooted in experience and the least literary in derivation".[14]

In this novel we have her deep existentialist concern exploring adjustment, belonging and ultimate decision in the lives of three major characters Dev, Adit and Sarah. Desai captures this conflict in fictional terms through Dev, "one of those eternal immigrants who can never accept their new homes and continue to walk the streets like strangers in enemy- territory, frozen, listless, but dutifully trying to be busy, unobtrusive and, however, superficially to belong.[15] At each step Dev's reconciliation suggests a psychic situation that involves cross-cultural contacts and the impact they have on individual responsibility.

Dev has come to study at the London School of Economics. His contact begins right from the house of Adit who has settled in London with an English wife, Sarah. The cultural differences there expand, and Dev moves out lcoking for a job. He undergoes various experiences and cultural shocks. His tensions are not due to the fact that he finds himself in an unfamiliar situation, but he was familiar to what was around him:

> ... yet it was known, familiar, easy to touch, enjoy and accept because he was so well-prepared to enter it so well prepared by fifteen years of reading the books that had been his meat and drink, the English books that had formed at least one half of his conscious existence.[16]

He recognizes the people, their faces. It is rather the gap between the expected and the immediately known that disturbs him. He is

self-conscious of his identity which he does not find there. This crisis of identity is not only for him, but it seems to have a larger dimension. Its dimension expands to Dev, Adit and Sarah.

The self-awareness of the educated Indian immigrant and their wavering between acceptance and rejection makes many of them to be either stranger or to be hostile. In *Bye-Bye-Blackbird* Dev's dilemmas are also seen emanating from his emotional and instinctive responses to the Londone' scene. He wanders on its streets in search of his new identity. London thus reflects various psychic stages that he goes through before he discovers his affinity with the countryside. In this vast human island he finds himself alienated and suffers spiritual agony through his hellish experiences in the London tube. Like Sindi Oberoi of Arun Joshi's novel *The Foreigner* Dev seems to be rootless. Getting education in London, Dev feels himself an outsider, a foreigner and an immigrant. In the following lines we find his real position:

> He descends, deeper and deeper, into the white-tiled bowels of clapham tube station. Down into the stark caverns, artificially lit, by way of long, ringing staircases where draughts sweep ilily up and down and yet live the underground airless, suffocating. The menacing slighter of escalators strikes panic into a speechless Dev as he swept down with an awful sensation of being taken where he does not want to go. Down, down and further down-like Alice falling, falling down the rabbit hole, like a Kafka stranger wandering through the dark labyrinth of a prison. On the platform, with black lights glaring at the cold, white tiles all around, he stands fearfully with his fellow travellers and darts horrified glances at the strange looks of these people, who had seemed natural enough in the sunlight of

> High street, have acquired in these subterranean depths. Here in the underground, their faces have become withdrawn, preoccupied, and are tinged with an unearthly, martian green, their movements are grown furtive and their voices-on the few occasion when they do speak out - chill him with their hollow, clanging harshness. In a panic he throws himself into the tube that has come sleeping in alike a long worm, and is carried off by it, hurtling through black tunnels in which the air is chocked with soot and cinders and the very air is black as in a tomb.[17]

Desai's protagonists are placed in comparatively free positions. They are aliens or orphans either factually or emotionally. They come from incomplete families where either one or both the parents are dead or absent. The protagonists either disown themselves or are disowned by their families. Maya, in *Cry, the Peacock*, has only memory of her mother through the photo on her father's desk. The Ray children in *Voices in the City*, at least four of them, are alienated in different degrees from their mother. Sita's mother in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* had run away from home leaving her children to the care of their father. A similar withdrawal from her parents is there on the part of Sarah in *Bye-Bye-Blackbird*. She has, at one stroke, placed herself outside the family and cultural situation by marrying an Indian. In *Clear Light of the Day* the children resent the long absences of their parents and they are aware only of their exits and entrances.

Nature is not merely a matter of heredity; rather it is a matter of inclination and tendency. It is a combination of instinct, feelings and thought, unconscious or sub-conscious. It moves towards wholeness to reach a position of being self-critical. The division of self has its own function. It leads to self-knowledge and self-understanding. A similar sense of unreality haunts Sarah in *Bye-*

Bye-Blackbird. She worries and wonders about her identity and the two sides of her character. The two roles do not seem to match or meet. She feels like an imposter if she plays the role of English Secretary when she is the Indian wife:

> They were roles and when she is not playing them she was nobody, her face was only a mask, her body only a costume...
>
> She wondered ... if she would ever be allowed to step-off the Stage, leave the theatre and enter the real world.[18]

Sarah's situation is more complex than Adit's. Anita Desai would have found in her character enough scope for the tragic dimension of her other heroines. However, Sarah is practical and balanced and, therefore, she faces the reality boldly. But, at times, she feels divided to decide which her real self is. When Adit prepares to leave for India she also decides to accompany him, knowing well that she is bidding farewell to her English self:

> It was her English self that was receding, fading and dying, she knew, it was her English self to which she must say good-bye...[19]

Dev is caught between acceptance and rejection, between nationalism and cosmopolitanism. He is tortured emotionally and intellectually. In London he dreams of an Indian empire where the roles between the two cultures - Indian and English - can be reversed:

> Let us turn the tables now. Let the Indian traders come to England-the Sikhs and the Sindhis.... Then let them spread over the country the Sikh with their turban and swords and Sindhis with their gold bars and bangles ... Then let our army come across, our Gorakha and our Rajputs with the camel corps and elephants of

> Rajasthan ... Let all British women take to the graceful sari and all British men to the noble dhoti.[20]

In his contradictory responses to England, Dev often displays characteristic psychic traits of an Ex-colonial. Uncertain of himself, he sometimes gives in to the intoxication of fury and violence. He is uncertain of being able to convince others. He is provocative and sensitive. He complicates and confuses his human relationship. Anita Desai records his spiritual anguish with understanding and sympathy. Desai peeps into that area of experience where racial and cultural encounters, irritation and bitterness are unavoidable. We see the sensitivity of a woman like Sarah who is aware of those forces that have changed her destiny as a female. Her emotions and feelings are much deeper than Dev's angry and anguished reactions. He is angry because he is denied and rejected. But with all her acceptance Sarah remains an outsider in her own chosen world.

While Adit and Dev have the choice to opt for their natural condition, their true circumstances, Sarah has no choice. She has to surrender to the decision of her husband. Adit, in seeking his own self, is totally unaware of the loss of self that his decision hurts Sarah. England, in this very novel, suggests vast human island for Dev, Adit and Sarah. The tension in the lives of the characters- the exile and the visitor remains not very rigid. The blackbird here stands both for the temptation and the gloom that it creates. Adit is free of his temptation, Dev is free of his gloom, and, therefore, they bid the blackbird a good-bye.

Maya in *Cry, the Peacock,* seems to be self seeking for a change in her life. She connects her present with the past and tries to go into a sheltered life. Her continuous efforts for something fail to establish complete communication with reality in life. Maya wants to revert back to her childhood-memories to escape just from the present. The self-seeking Maya longs for a change in life. Maya seeks meaning in a dark universe. She cherishes a continuous longing for some thing which she never gets. The cry of the peacock and, at the same time, her own cries frustrate her within Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Seeks her childhood-manorial as a refuse camp

safe from her family life. By going there, she longs to connect the changes, distortions and revelations between the present and the past in her middle age. For a change, she shelters in the Island.

Though the island holds no magic now for her, the illusion tramples upon her. She attempts for a futile search for some purpose in life. She visualizes the world of her dreams and intensifies her desire to recapture an experience, an excitement and innocence. Her instant decision as to where she would go that summer is her journey in quest for her lost innocence.

In *Fire on the Mountain*, Anita Desai gives us a positive message, very valuable in the context of our contemporary society. She gives us a chance to try to strike a balance between reality and illusion, and to make our lives more meaningful. Here she highlights the truth that a life of undiluted reality or undiluted illusion spells tragedy. Nanda Kaul and Ila Das are such characters whose existentialist problems are unsolved. Nanda Kaul feeds herself on illusion. But when she receives the tragic news of the rape and murder of Ila Das her illusion changes into reality. On the contrary, Ila Das faces real life. Nanda Kaul, an old woman, has had too much of the world with her and, so, longs for a quiet, retired life. Her busy past now looks like 'a box of sweets, positively sickening. She desperately desires to avoid familiar obligations around her. She wants to free herself from all stifling and irritating involvement's. So she withdraws determinedly into carignano, her hillside home, Kasauli, where she hopes to live a paired, reduced and radiantly single life. She cries out in agony:

> Have I not done enough and had
> enough? I want no more. I want nothing.
> Can I not be left with nothing?[21]

Nanda Kaul's cry is nothing but a cry in wilderness, a prayer shot into the vacant air which goes unheard and unanswered. Physically, she has been able to withdraw herself from her harsh life of duties and responsibilities, irritations and annoyances, dubious joy and certain sadness. She can neither escape her past, nor help the present, nor predict her future. She is apparently all alone. Her past keeps babbling in her memory and these memories

create uncontrollable feelings in her consciousness. Her present is also not free from disturbances. There is Raka, her great grand child, and Ila Das, her old friend and classmate. The arrival of Raka does not make any differences to Nanda Kaul. She looks upon her as an unwelcome guest, an intruder. Raka also feels no less miserable, like a caged bird, a wild animal tamed and domesticated They live apart, while still living under the same roof Theirs is a strange living-together - each resenting and avoiding the presence of the other. If the old lady loves to live alone, the young Raka desires it no less but with a certain difference. Yet her arrival at Carigano has created for Nanda Kaul a situation which she can not escape. Anita Desai describes their aloneness in the following lines:

> If Nanda Kaul was a recluse out of vengeance for a long life of duty and obligation, her great grand daughter was a recluse by nature.[22]

Thus, it seems that it is an awkward pair, neither of them belonging to the other. Then we have Ila Das, a Piano teacher-turned-social-worker who also breaks in Nanda Kaul's solitude. Her voice is enough to disturb Nanda Kaul's life. In fact, Ila Das is a noble soul struggling against the odds of life. She is aware of the facts of life that misery and suffering are inevitable in life. So she always keeps smiling. Ila Das simply tries to stop the disastrous marriage of the daughter of Preet Singh. For her good intentions she is assaulted and raped under the cover of darkness. The telephonic news of her death results in the death of Nanda Kaul. This tragedy leaves Raka utterly alone.

For Nanda Kaul the past, the present and the future are all in ashes. She has tried to create a fantasy world from the past, a world of happy families, love, wealth and good humour. At one stroke the news of Ila Das's death rips the curtain aside and reveals the hidden reality:

> It was all a lie, all. She had lied to Raka", lied about everything. Nor had her husband loved and cherished her and kept her like a queen, he had only done enough

> to keep her quiet, while he carried on a life-long affair with Miss David, the mathematics mistress, whom he had not married because she was a Christian, but whom he had loved all his life, loved. And her children, her children were all alien to her nature. She neither understood nor loved them. She did not live here alone by choice, but because that was what she was forced to do, reduced to doing. All those graces and glories with which she had tried to captivate Raka were only a fabrication. They helped her sleep at night; they were on tranquilizers, pills. She had lied to Raka. And Ila had lied too. Ila, too, had lied, had tried.[23]

This fabrication of fantasy is of no use. The hidden reality is enough to force Raka to escape and seek her thrill by setting fire to mountain-side. Ila dies leaving her fantasy, while Nanda Kaul sees. Like Monisha, Nanda Kaul also finds how senseless the compromise between external and inner experiences is. Everyone is struck once again by the want on waste of human potential.

Nanda Kaul's attempt to detect the scheme of events in human existence seems to be an exercise in futility. She tries to be unattached with the world, but the world sticks to her tenaciously. She is sick of her part, and so she removes herself to a new heaven. But the past, including the memory of her husband's infidelity, keeps assaulting her. She resents Raka but she can not disown her. She wants to will away carignano to her but does not do so. She detects Ila Das's voice but she can not dismiss her. When she takes pity on her, she feels she should invite her to stay with her but fails to do so. When Ila Das dies an unnatural death, Nanda Kaul succumbs to the shock of this news and Raka remains the sole survivor. The mountain fire, which has been so often alluded to in the novel, is symbolic of eternally impending danger that may engulf anyone anytime. We are not even sure if it will leave Raka untouched. Human existence is never safe, and never at the mercy of chance, and it can not escape

the truth that is death. Therefore, in brief, it is absurd, futile and meaningless.

The picture of life that Anita Desai presents in this novel is, no doubt, dismal, but it is the truth of life Human life has so many facets, and there are different angles from which it can be viewed and reviewed. But the novelist has been successful in her presentation and has chosen her own angle of view. She has been able to diagram the absurdity of human existence, utter futility and meaninglessness.

Self-realisation is not the main thrust of fantasy in *Fire on the Mountain*; rather it is used in an entirely different way. It is not used as an escape route, it also does not border on hallucination. Two kinds of fantasy-worlds exist side-by-side-one which is consciously and deliberately woven by Nanda Kaul to interest her great grand daughter Raka, and the other shared by Raka and Ram Lal, is based on Ram Lal's belief in the supernatural. There is also a third world of fantasy of Raka's imagination. It reflects her alienation from the disjointed world of her parents. There is no conscious awareness of the division or polarity between truth and falsehood, where Ram Lal is concerned. His belief in the supernatural is neither an escape nor an emotional prop. It is an integral part of his world and of his background. Raka accepts it because it has a certain authenticity and, with her wide-eyed wonder, she wants to know more about the churails and their intrusion into the human sphere. Ram Lal and Raka meet as equals, not as an adult and a child. They share the wonder that the existence of such beings is likely to arouse. When she chances to visit the club one evening, she is confronted by a total reversal of her expectations, and instead of ladies 'dressed as queens and men as princes' all that she finds is a group of mad men and rioters' chasing each other and appearing like monsters to her:

> Somewhere behind them, behind it all, was her father, home from a party, stumbling and crashing through the curtains of night, his mouth opening to let out a flood of rotten stretch, beating her

> mother with hammers and fists of abuse,
> harsh, filthy abuse and made Raka cower
> under the bedclothes and wet the mattress
> in fright...[24]

It is this fear which leads her to set the forest on fire. It is her liberation from her childhood-fears and violent realisation of the future. For Nanda Kaul, it serves as a mirror of the hollow-self she has created. This also serves as a revaluation of her earlier values. She rejects her former roles completely at this stage of her life but this does not set her free. She finds herself going against the habit of a life-time. She is in her confrontation with reality and, thus, is pushed into an emptiness which signals an end.

In *Fire on the Mountain* the protagonist Nanda Kaul is no longer a young woman trying to find a place for herself in an adult setting or relate to a new family- structure. She is rather a woman of mature years who has experienced different situations and relationship and who has succeeded in fulfilling their claims. In worldly terms she has been a giver all her life holding back only the hour of stillness every afternoon. But with the children grown and settled, and her husband dead, she had moved to Carigano away from the activity of life. This withdrawal, however, is unnatural and therefore, inimical to the act of life.

Like *Fire on the Mountain* the protagonist in *Voices in the City* is devoid of love. We know that the absence of love reduces every creative act into a self-destructive act. Nirode finds solace in the creative friendship of David. Dharma recovers from his solitude through the love of Amla. It is Monisha alone who seeks them in human relationship and is finally destroyed. *Voices in the City* is, thus, a powerful tragedy of human existence. In *Bye-Bye Blackbird* Anita Desai leads us into this world through her characters that are all entangled in self-made images. The characters move against a background that draws them, but leaves them dissatisfied. Dev in this novel is caught between acceptance and rejection, and displays ex-colonial psyche. He wavers between his choices. Sarah also remains an outsider in her own chosen world. The two manor male heroes Dev and Adit are mutually contradictory in response and

reaction. We can not forget the female protagonist Sarah who accepts the decision of her husband in seeking her husband's self.

The Quest for the self in the *Voices in the City* is clearly demarcated in two parts. The different attitudes of Jit, Dharma, David, Nirode, Monisha and Amla are highly individualized. But any demarcation would falsify the facts. The various sets of instinct, feeling, emotion and passion, however, in-between the two—reality and unreality—strike us. The human island into the novels of Mrs. Desai had numerous symbolic connotations. They echo conflicting demands of protection and independence. Most protagonists show a marked tendency towards neurotic behaviour. In some of them there is abnormality and eccentricity. Anita Desai is interested in peculiar characters rather than every-day-average ones. To them, there is no sense of contentment at all, but when they realise that they have to live, they compromise. The picture of man-woman relationship is never satisfying. The novelist seems to have no capacity to make the pictures, opposite to the woman's point of view. Therefore, the description of human relationship is inadequate. Basically, everyone is solitary. The conclusion that the human island created by Mrs. Desai in her novels acquires tremendous significance and becomes symbolic of those urges that lead and motivate us to seek a separate and unique identity of our own.

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Seven

THE ART OF CHARACTERIZATION IN THE NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE

Dr. Sheikh Salahuddin

Shashi Deshpande has emerged as an outstanding novelist on the literary scene. She is one of them who has taken up the woman cause most ardently and earnestly. She represents India and contemporary Indian literature, especially in the English-speaking world, with great distinction. Acclaimed by the reading public, decorated by the Sahitya Akademi Award and other literary organizations, she is considered as a forceful writer, with an excellent command over English language and narrative skill. Along with Shashi Deshpande, there are women writers who in the recent years have projected a picture of Modern Indian women in their writings. In this connection, it is significant to note that" there are three categories of women as projected in Indian fiction. First, we have rural women — poor, hard working and sincere — as portrayed by Kamala Markandaya. The most representative of these is Rukmani in *Nectar in a Sieve*. In the second category, we meet educated middle-class women who are married and working as well — like Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and Jaya in *That Long Silence*. And finally we meet women of the upper strata society from the urban milieu. These are women who are socialites, have easy morals and do not mind extra-marital relations— like Paro in

Narnita, Gokhle's novel *Paro* and the female protagonists of Nayantara Sahgal and Shobha De:"[1]

In contemporary Indian literature in English Shashi Deshpande occupies a prominent position as a novelist. Her introspection and psychological probe make her second to none in revealing the subconscious psyche of her character. As compared to many other Indian women novelists of 20th century, she is much more vociferous in voicing her fears and concerns regarding the future of women in uncongenial surroundings. Her female protagonists are sensitive, self-conscious, brilliant and creative. Both Jaya (in *That Long Silence*) and Sarita (in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*) evince the novelist's concern for all these women who are being misunderstood and passing through a great turmoil and suffering. Her protagonists are desirous to revolt against the stereo type role assigned to them by the society. Initially victims of self-denial, they are at conflict with their inner selves because they deny their real feelings. As psychologists tell us: "the denial does not mean that the feelings cease to exist, they will still influence his behaviour in various ways even though they are not conscious. A conflict will, then, exist between the interjected and spurious conscious values and the genuine unconscious ones."[2]

Deshpande describes that her every novel starts with people. Character thus occupies a pivotal position in her fiction. In delineating characters a novelist like her has no choice. "There are some, may be several, choices in the technique", She says, "... but not in the characters". Deshpande has carefully avoided creating wooden characters to serve her need. " I don't think," She told Laximi Holstrom, "any character in my novels comes out of necessity, to serve some need of mine".[3] The novelist excels in the portrayal of women characters. She is, however, averse to idealizing or sentimentalizing them. "My characters are all human beings one sees in the world around", she pointed out to Stanley Carvalho, "No superman" (The Sunday Observer). To another interview also she told:

"My characters take their own ways.
I've heard people saying we should have

> strong woman characters. But my writing
> has to do with women as they are "[4]

Deshpande's women characters have strength of their own, and in spite of challenges and hostilities, remain uncrushed. Urmila in *The Binding Vine,* for example, declares: "I'm not going to break". It is about such human beings that Arthur Hugh Clough had said, "Amidst the bludgeoning of Fate/My head is bloody but unbow'd" as compared to Deshpande's women characters, her male characters are generally 'thin' and 'typed'. Admitting her inability to create a round character of the opposite sex, as Tolstoy's Anna, she says:

"I am not Tolstoy in the first place. Tolstoy had so many years of male writing behind him. The female Tolstoy is yet to come. As Virgnia Woolf said, Shakespeare's sister is yet to come,"[6]

What is said about Shakespeare and Marlowe in the field of drama may be said about Shashi Deshpande with a slight variation. It is said that Shakespeare has created only women, no man and Marlowe has created man, no woman. In the same way Shashi Deshpande has created only woman in her novels, no man. Her woman characters represent her attitude to life and had led many critics to conclude that all her novels are autobiographical in nature. It is true that most of her women characters present their ideas and attitude to life and it is also true that some of her characters hold contrary attitude to life.

Deshpande has, nevertheless, created authentic characters — flesh and blood characters with recognizable credentials. She has successfully delineated their problems and plights, yearning and aspirations, failures and foibles, dreams and disillusionment and how they come to find out the middle way between tradition and modernity.

Deshpande's novels, like those of Jane Austen, have a narrow range. They are more or less a fictionalization of personal experiences. Most of the novels present a typical middle-class housewife's life. Deshpande's main concern is the urge to find oneself, to create space for oneself to grow on one's own. One striking thing about her novels and short stories is the recurrence of certain

themes in them. But the predicament of woman — especially those who are educated and belong to the middle-class has been most strikingly dealt with. Many of her characters are persons who are frustrated either sexually or professionally. Her novels generally center on family relationships — particularly the relationship between husband and wife and the latter's dilemmas and conflict. Deshpande told an interviewer:

"Human relationship is what a writer is involved with person to person and person to society relationships — these are the two primary concerns of creative writers and, to me, the former is of immense importance. My preoccupation is with interpersonal relationships and human emotions."[7] Observing on human relationship, E.M. Forster has also said, "Human relationship is stronger than iron chains that bind and at the same time more delicate than glasses".[8]

It is these relationships which are responsible for human bonds. According to Deshpande," every one has to live within relationships and there is no other way. "It is needed" she reiterated to Vanamalo Vishnatha:

"It's necessary for woman to live within relationships. But if the rules are rigidly laid that as a wife or mother you do this and no further, then one becomes unhappy. This is what I have tried to convey in my writing. What I don't agree with is the idealization of motherhood — the false and sentimental notes that accompany it"

All the major novels of Deshpande present these relationships of wife and husband, sister and brother, mother and daughter and daughter and father. Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and Jaya in *That Long Silence,* for example, has been cast into such a character that she has to face all these relationships. Her characters show a rough revulsion to normal physical functions such as menstruation, pregnancy and procreation. Women, she feels, must not be reduced to the level of breeding machine:

"I have a very strong feeling that until very recently women in our society have been looked upon just as 'breeding animals'. They have no other role in life. I have a strong objection to treating any human being in that manner".

Even if Deshpande seems to belittle the significance of woman's physical functions, her writing redress the balance by high lighting the fact that a woman is not merely a conglomerate of such at functions. She has to be judged at par with her male counterpart on the basis of her potential.

Despite imaginative flashes and role played by memory in her novels, Deshpande is, at her heart, a realist. She presents a plausible story, authentic characters and not shadowy abstractions — "airy nothing" without "a local habitation and name". Realism, as Angels says, implies "besides truth of detail, the truthful representation of typical characters under typical circumstances.[9] Deshpande observes this kind of realism in her novels. Hers is the India of the eighties and nineties. "She believes in presenting life as it is and not as it should be". And like Jaya of *That Long Silence,* many Indian wives keep on "perennially groping about their fate, but unwilling to do anything that could result in their being tossed out of their comfortable ruts and into the big, bad world of reality, to fend for themselves.[10] Likewise the candid question raised by Mini in *Roots and Shadows* that:

> "Millions of girls have asked this question, millions in this country ... what choice do I have? Surely it is this, this fact that I can choose, that differentiates me from the animals. But years of blinding folding can obscure your vision so that you no more see the choices. Years of shackling can hamper your movement so that you can no more move out of your cage of no choice"[11]

For her portrayal of the predicament of middle-class educated Indian women, their inner conflict and quest for identity, issues pertaining to parent-child relationship, marriage and sex and their exploitation and disillusionment, Deshpande has been called a 'feminist'. The publications of *That Long Silence* by Virago Press made its own contribution to this belief. Deshpande's apparently contradictory remarks to interviewers lent further support to it. Asked

whether she would like to call herself a feminist, she replied to Geetha Gangadharan:

> "Yes, I would. I am a feminist in the sense that, I think, we need to have a world which we should recognize as place for all of us human beings. There is no superior and inferior, we are halves of one species. I fully agree with Simone de Beauvoir that "the fact that we are human, is much more important than our being man or women". I think that's my idea of feminism".[12]

Deshpande is against categorizations, "when you deal with just my work", she added, "then take me as an individual writer and deal accordingly. Don't call it women's writing or feminist writing. Today we have women writing about women, for women. These works are being published by women, criticized by women, read by women and studied in the Women's Studies Departments and so on. I hate this 'women's libs' separating women's writing. It is just self-defeating".[13]

Elsewhere also Deshpande made absolutely clear that she had nothing to do with feminism in the narrow sense. In her interview to Ashvini Sarpeshkar Tandan, for example, she declared," I don't like to be branded this or that because life is more complex than that. My enduring concern is for human relationships. I certainly don't think my novels are man vs. woman issue at all.[14]

Deshpande's novels contain so much that can be regarded as the staple material of feminist thought. Women's sexuality, the gender roles, self-discovery and so on. But she can be called a "feminist", if at all, only in a certain specific sense. To Deshpande's mind, no amount theorizing will solve women's problems — especially in the Indian context. Elucidating her viewpoint she further remarked:

"They often think it is about burning brass and walking out on your husband, children, etc. I always try to make the point now

about what feminism is not, and to say that we have to discover what it is in our own lives, our experiences. And I actually feel that a lot of women in India are feminists without realizing it".[15]

This is a highly sensible approach to woman world that Shashi Deshpande presents in her novels through her characters and ponder over to place them in proper place in man-dominated and tradition-bounded Indian society. She, unlike hard-core feminists, does not agree that being a wife or mother is something that is unnecessarily imposed on a woman. According to her, "It is needed". She craves for "a greater sense of balance". Self-confusedly, she feels trapped in the women's world. She says, "... may be I want to reach a stage where I can write about human beings and not about women or men. For I don't believe in having a propagandist or sexist purpose to my writing". If her writings present such a perspective, it is only a coincidence".[16]

The arresting and pressing point about Shashi Deshpande's novels is her delineation of the women's inner world. She herself admitted to Geetha Gangatharan in an interview:

> "We know a lot about the physical and organic world and the universe in general, but we still know very little about human relationship. It is the most mystifying thing as far as I am concerned. I will continue to wonder about it, puzzle over it and write about it. And still find it tremendously intriguing fascinating".[17]

Deshpande's protagonists are women struggling to find their own voice and are continuously in search to define them. But they " become fluid, with no shape, no form of... [their] own." The experiences of Indu, in *Roots and Shadows*, also are not different. "This is my real sorrow that I can never be complete in myself."[18] She bewails. She thought she had found in Jayant, her husband, "the other part of my whole self. But all her dreams are scattered and she came to realize that "this was an illusion" and she is 'disillusioned'. "But can perfect understanding ever exist?" She asks eagerly.

That Deshpande has been genuinely interested in issues pertaining to the lot of women in India is irrefutable. Some of her views vented through her characters may be referred to briefly.

Matrimony is one of the most significant issues in Indian Social scenario. It is often regarded in India as the "Summum bonum" of a woman's life. In many cases, however, it serves as a weapon in the hands of the patriarchy to coerce and silence. Manju, in *If I Die Today*, summarizes the common predicament succinctly:

> "A marriage. You start of expecting so many things. And bit by bit, like dead leaves, the expectations fall off. But two people who have shut themselves off in two separate glass jars who can see each other but cannot communicate. Is this a Marriage? This is undoubtedly not an inevitable situation. In India a wife finds it impossible to relate to the world without her husband, it is held that "A husband is a sheltering tree.[20]

Marriage is no longer a sacrament, it is a convenient arrangement always to the disadvantage. The character of *Roots and Shadows* observes:"... what was marriage after all, but two people brought together after a cold-blooded bargaining to meet, mate and reproduce so that the generation might continue".[21] "It is a trap", she adds, "that's what marriage is. A trap? Or a cage? .... a cage with two trapped animals glaring hatred at each other. ... And it's not a joke, but a tragedy".[22] To Urmila of *The Binding Vine,* the back of the bride's neck nervously awaiting for the butcher's knife to come down upon it".[23] In *That Long Silence* also a couple is compared to a pair of bullocks yoked together. "Tow bullocks yoked together ... It is more comfortable for them two move in the same direction. To go in different direction would be painful, and what animal would voluntarily choose pain?"[24]

In *The Dark Holds No Terrors* Saru also finds her marital condition unbearable and feels "the desperation of a trapped

animal."[25] Her grand mother deserted by the husband "had never ... complained" and had accepted her plight as her 'luck', believing 'that'. It was written on my forehead".[26] And Saru's mother did not have " a room of her own" and "Silence has become a habit" with her.[27] "Only the movies can elevate marriage". Maintains the latest novel *A Matter of Time*, "... to a pedestal, marking it the culminating event of a life time, of several lifetimes".[28] This is a bitter commentary on marriage and married life which have lost their original sanctity and compatibility and are reduced to the level facade or Sham. Even the paraphernalia associated with them has become meaningless. To cite a concrete case from *The Binding Vine*, Shakutai, who had often wished to have her 'mangalsutra' made of gold, finally realizes the futility of the endeavour," The man himself is so worthless, why should I bother to have this thing made in precious gold?[29]

The novelist is pained to notice ways of subordinating women by male members of the society. Economic deprivation and rape are main instrument employed to curb the spontaneous growth of a woman. We are reminded in *The Binding Vine* that 'if a girl's honour is lost, what is left? The girl does not have to do anything wrong, people will always point a finger at her".[30] The role of a wife in the present times is nothing less than walking on the razor's edge. Realizing this fact, Saru was obliged to give ironically the following imaginary advice to future wives in Nalu's College:

> "A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband ... That's the only rule to follow if you want a happy marriage. Don't ever try to reverse the doctor-nurse, executive-secretary, principal-teacher role ... Women's magazines tell you that a marriage should be an equal partnership. That's nonsense. Rubbish. No partnership can be equal. It will always be unequal, but take care that its unequal in favour of your husband. If the scales tilt in your favour, God help you, both of you".[31]

What makes matter worse for Indian woman is that there are no choices before them. Like marriage, their decisions are made in heaven — in their husband's mind. As *Roots and Shadows* puts it through the minor character Mini:

"Millions of girls have asked this question millions of times in this country ... What choice do I have?... But years of blindfolding can obscure your vision so you no more see the choices. Years of shackling can hamper your movement so you can no more move out for your cage of no-choices."[32]

This is a sad commentary on the incompatibility in and hypocrisy of married life, which the novelist has present realistically through her different characters in her different novels. The heroine of *If I Die Today* asserts" "There were characters created by Agatha Christie. These were real people. People I knew".[33]

It is creditable that despite her family background — in particular her father's intellectual pursuits — and her own philosophical orientation, Despande has taken up for discussion some crucial aspects of women's life such as sex, sexuality and her body. "Sex is only a temporary answer" declares Urmi in *The Binding Vine*[34], but is an answer nonetheless. Indira Nityanandam notices "The hope for Indian women lies in the happy fact that there are Miras and Kelpanas and Sakutais, we also have our Urmilas"[35], The "pseud-puritanism" and "Shame" thinks Jaya about sex in *That Long Silence.*[36] Indu, in *Roots and Shadows,* for example, resents her womanhood and as a woman she feels "hedged in my sex"[37]. In a male-dominated society a woman is expected to be passive and 'unresponsive' for it shocks people like Jayant to find passion in a woman. In this repressive atmosphere Indu finds herself just "an anachronism" — "A woman who loves her husband too much. To passionately. And is ashamed of it".

Although physical aspect of body has not been allowed to have a sway, creditably enough, the novelist is not obvious of its legitimate claims. Apparently, her women characters are rather fettered by the natural functions of body. Growing into woman is to Saru of *The Dark Holds No Terrors,* for example, "Something shameful" and "torture"[38]. Jaya, in *That Long Silence,* is painfully conscious of the

fact that around her husband's "needs" and "desires" she revolves. She remunerates: "We seem to be left with nothing but our bodies, and after we had dealt with them we faced blankness. The nothingness of what had seemed a busy and full life was frightening"[39] Later, however, she finds even a touch so smoothing and welcome, claiming that "physical touching for me a momentous thing. ... it was never a casual or light-hearted thing" for her and for her husband.[40] In *A Matter of Time* Sumi admits to have fallen in love with Gopal's physical being first"[41] And to Gopal, "The life of the body — why do the saints disdain it so? It is through our bodies that we find our first connections to this world".[42] It is clear that the novelist has expressed through her characters the practicability and utility of the body bondage. Michel Foucault focuses.

> "Sexuality must not thought of as a kind of natural given which powers holds in check ... it is the name that can be given to a historical construct: not as a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasure, the incitement to discourse ... are linked to one another".[43]

Now the time has come when woman's "body must be heard" and "woman must uncensor herself, recover her goods, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal. She must throw up her guilt..."[44] Anything like this yet to happen in Deshpande's fiction, which is a proof of her comprehensive understanding of grassroots reality and woman's plight in India. While remaining well within the bounds of Indian middle-class respectability, the novelist has raised some significant questions communicated by her character pertaining to the position of women in society and gender issues.

Deshpande's novels present at times a lonely and sombre world. Reviewing *The Intrusion and other Stories,* Muriel Wasi points out that this collection of hers reflects "unhappy realities of Indian life" and the woman's "depressive melancholic or claustrophobic"

world. "... it is time for Deshpande," She concludes, "to open some of her windows and let the morning light fill her dark rooms".[45] The realistic treatment of human predicament in Deshpande's fiction along with the contemporary angst in an existential manner might appear to be depressing, but the final impression of her works is far from being gloomy or depressing. Significantly, her women characters learn after looming large into the dilemmas of dreams and become disillusioned in due course to arrive at a compromise between modernity and tradition and find a sense of balance in life boldly and bravely. At the end of *The Dark Holds No Terrors,* for example, Saru goes back home with:

"... all those selves she has rejected so resolutely at first, and so passionately embraced later. The guilty sister, the undutiful daughter, the unloving wife. ... all persons spiked with guilt. Yes she was all of them, she could not deny now. She had to accept these selves to become whole again. But she was all of them, they were not all of her. She was all these and so much more".[46]

This behaviour on the part of Saru is meaningful and different from that of Nora of Ibsen's *A Doll's House.* Even Urmila, in *The Binding Vine,* thinks that human nature is "hardest to bridge, the hardest to accept, and to live with",[47] does not remain unaffected by the healing touch of love. She says at the end of the novel:

> "And yet I think of Vaana, heavily pregnant, sitting by me, holding my hand during the pains before Karitka was born. I remember Kishore's face when he first saw Anu. I think of Akka crying for Mira, of Inni's grief when papa told her about her illness, or papa's anguished face watching her, of the touch of grace there was in SakuTai's hand when she covered me gently at night while I slept, of the love with which she speaks of her sister".[48]

And to cite one more case, Jaya, taking stock of her 'achievements' in life, remarks:

> I'm not afraid any more. The panic has gone. I'm Mohan's wife, I have thought, and cut off the bits of me that had refused to be Mohan's wife. Now I know that kind of fragmentation is not possible... Two bullocks yoked together — that was how I saw the two of us the day we came here, Mohan and I. Now I reject that image. If I think of us in that way, I condemn my self to lifetime of disbelief in our selves. I have always thought there is only one life, no chance of a reprieve, no second chances. But in this life 'itself there are so many crossroads, so many choices ... If I had to plug that 'hole in the heart', I will have to erase the silence between us ... we don't change overnight. It is possible that we may no change even over long periods of time. But we can always hope. Without that life would be impossible. And if there is anything I know now it is this: life has always to be made possible.[49]

If Shashi Deshpande has portrayed normal and abnormal women, she has also depicted well-adjusted males as well. In fact, the husbands in the novels are quite mature, rational and insightful. They are not only compassionate towards them, they shallow their pride and take 'initiative in restoring balance and normalcy to them. Sarita (*The Dark Holds No Terrors*) and Indu (*Roots and Shadows*) found their husbands heroes when they decided to marry persons of other castes or of lower economic or social status. They were ecstatic in the early years of their marriage. The cracks appear with them. The heroines ascribe, not so authentic, reasons for the loss of warmth of their relationships. Let's try to see how the males stands in the eyes of their wives and why their cordiality atrophied Sarita sustains:

"I became in an instant a physical aroused woman, with an infinite capacity for loving and giving, with a passionate desire to be absorbed by the man I loved".[50]

Despite such intensity of admiration and love Sarita feels that she is being 'raped' by her husband and that it was not love making but onslaught. An interviewer reminded Manu, her husband, that "his wife earned not only the butter but also the bread as well".[51] His job as a college teacher or as a free lance writer is regarded something trivial. This marginalisation from the center to the periphery begin to attach more importance to her because of her profession than to him. Since he does not publicly create a scene by quarrelling neither with Boozie nor with Saru he is .....

His solicitous inquiry about bruses on her body may not be hypocritical. "God, Saru! Have you hurt yourself. ... his concern was genuine.[52] She regards him a divided person, a case of Schizophrenia:

"Was it possible for a man to dissemble so much? A violent strange of the night ... and now this. Am I crazy or is he? Can a man be so divided in himself."[53]

The fact she acknowledged much later is that he is not a divided person but a well adjusted person, it is Sarita who is "a two-in-one woman".[54] If Sarita could discover that Boozie was only showing off as a womanizer, why could not Manohar? Why should he be denied that much of intelligence. Her transitory infatuation with Pamakar is a defense mechanism for Sarita: "I had imagined it would give me an escape route ... that would lead me out of my loveless trap. ... Solution for a woman who found no happiness with one man and tries to find it in another."[55]

Let us turn now to Indu. What is wrong with Jayant? Indu asserts:' ... as if the lens has misted over, obscuring my vision, it was not Naren but Jayant who I wanted and in the same moment hated him wanting him so much. What a subtle explanation to defend one's infidelity! Starts hating her husband and turns to adultery with Naren whom she thinks "a detached man". Her so-called devotion to Jayant was not genuine. And it was a pretension to soothe a male ego: "... it shocked him to find passion in *a* woman. It puts him ofI have learnt my lesson now. And so I pretend I'm passive. I am unresponsive".[56]

Gopal, the husband of Sumi of *A Matter of Time* has been cast as the pivotal figure. Gopal is not depicted to be sadist like Manu of

The Dark Holds No Terrors, nor a fraud like Manohar of *That Long Silence.* Timid by nature, he is about forty-seven yeas old and thin — "so thin you can count his ribs.[57] He seems to be a non-aggressive male "with the spare clean lines of his body, his eyes that crinkled and he corners.[58] And he "could cross the barrier between the sexes with ease ... and do something most men found hard — his whole self to a female not just a part of himself."[59] When Sumi's sister Premi attempts to mend the rift that has set in the life of Gopal and Sumi, he discloses his loss of faith in life, quoting Yudhishtra, he tells her of the greatest wonder of the world :

> "We see people die and yet we go on as if we are going to live forever ... its the secret of life itself. We know its all there, the pain and suffering, old age, loneliness and death, but we think somehow, we believe that its not for us. The day we stop believing in this untruth., ... it will almost impossible to go on. ... It happens to me. I stop believing. The miracle failed for me and there was nothing left. You've got to be the Buddha for that emptiness to be filled compassion for the world. For me there was just emptiness".[60]

It is premature on the part of Gopal to leave off his family when his commitments to them are yet to be fulfilled. Moreover, he is still haunted by the desire for the body. He remembers that he touched Sumi's "bare flesh in the river and 'could feel its respond' to his touch. It is for "this losing yourself, in another human being that men give up their dreams of freedom." Coming face to face with sumi later, he feels "the space between them in the room is filled with desire, his desire, and knows that his body... is awake.[61] Even if it is "the last effort" and he makes a successful effort to 'subdue his body". The "fact remains that Gopal is neither physically nor mentally fit to renounce the world".[62]

One of the most significant features of Shashi Deshpande is her use of myth and folklore to penetrate the psyche of her character. Deshpande told Lakhshmi Holstrom in an interview that:

> "... We related a great deal of our personal lives, our daily lives, to the myths. We find parallels as matter of course. And we do this with all the myths, any myth that seems appropriate, whether they were originally about man or woman. I that sense it is part of a language, a grammar that one knows and understands, rather than a conscious literary device".[63]

In *That Long Silence,* Jaya remembers ' Yathecchasi tatha kuru', which was noted down in the diary of her father, and comments: "With this line, after all those millions of words of instructions, Krishna confers on Arjuna,' I have given you knowledge. Now you make the choice. The choice is yours, Do as you desire".[64] In *A Matter of Time.* Kalyani remembers Yamunabai, her mother's teacher and mentor, whose article of faith was: ' Nimitta matram bhava, Savyasachi; which the novelist explains as follows: "... be thou only the instrument, Arjuna. The end is not us, it's outside us, it's quite separate from us. We are only the instruments In *The Darks Holds No Terrors* the myth of Dhruva is used to emphasize the character of Saru in relation to her brother. 'Silence' is a very significant symbol through which her characters communicate a lot of unexplained feelings. Symbols and images in the art of characterization of Deshpande enhance the effect of the feelings of the characters. The words like 'silence', 'desires', dreams', 'illusion', 'death', and many others have become symbolic in her novels, through which Deshpande depicts a lot of feelings and experiences through her characters.

In her characterization Deshpande also uses stream of consciousness technique or flash back technique to present the inner drama of her characters. Hence her narration is introspective sliding across the past and present through effective 'quick cuts'. Occasionally, side tracks a bit of philosophizing on human life, grief, pain, pleasure, dreams and disillusionment, fact and fancy, eerie of aloneness etc. These techniques enrich the artistic skill of Deshpande. She never leaves anything unsaid to evoke his

suggestion. In some sense, thematically as well as ideologically, Deshpande's novels have a kind of continuity. From the point of view of inter-textually we find not only traces of one novel in the other but also obvious repetitions of ideas through her different characters. A.G. Khan holds: "As in the Bombay films the same story seems to be recounted with different names and permutations and combinations"[66] We have seen how the heroines share almost the same traits. They married outside the caste and persons of lower financial or social status and had to leave the parental house in protest of disgust. Jaya and Urmi have antagonism against their mothers and Indu lost her mother at the time of her birth. Sarita and Urmi have doting fathers who support them much to dismay of their respective mothers. Indu's father is a wanderer appearing in the scene unexpectedly. All are educated pursuing some career and slightly better placed than their respective husbands.

Shashi Deshpande does not believe in offering readymade solution. But the conviction that "we can always hope" and that "life has always to be made possible"[67], speaks of a genuinely a positive attitude of life. Deshpande's protagonists finally, after looming large into the dilemmas of desires and dreams, become disillusioned in due course. Now they try their best to confirm their roles to real life and the novels end with an optimistic note with the possibility of some positive actions in future. The novelist emerges as a bridge-builder between the old and the new, between tradition and modernity.

Shashi Deshpande's novels stand distinguished in portraying Indian women in the social life of India at a given time with befitting mythical exploration.

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Eight

ARUNDHATI ROY'S *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*: A STUDY IN THEME AND TECHNIQUE

Dr. Amar Nath Prasad

Arundhati Roy is an international literary figure in the field of fiction. Her debut novel, *The God of Small Things*, which bagged the coveted Booker Prize for literature, is now a matter of great discussion among the readers and critics of the world. It is being termed by many celebrated critics as the most remarkable work in Indo - Anglian fiction. It presents a fine correspondence between feeling and form, matter and manner. Though Indian fiction in English is replete with many great authors; e.g; Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Das, Anita Desai, etc; yet Roy's contribution to English fiction is a precious laurel in the crown of Indian fiction. Her 'extraordinary linguistic inventiveness'; her satirical portrayal of the contemporary society; her psychological depth of the isolated characters; her new and original style containing many new things as opposed to traditional renderings of things etc. have certainly 'exercised a great influence on the readers of literary flavour. If a reader goes through this book, his heart is overflowed with many beautiful words and phrases, images and symbols. Sometimes he is bound to be baffled by some ungrammatical construction, new coinages, unconventional rhythm, bizarre phrases etc. Almost every page of the book is so beautifully written that a literary man begins to leap with joy to see some new expressions, which give a jerk and jolt to the mind.

Before Arundhati Roy, there were three great writers of Indian origin who bagged the Booker prize. V.S. Naipaul got this prize in 1972 for ***In a Free State;*** Ruth Prawer Jhabvala got it in 1975 for ***Heat and Dust;*** Salman Rushdie bagged it in 1981 for ***Midnight Children.*** However all these Booker winners were not thoroughly related to India. But Arundhati Roy has to her credit of being the first who is entirely home grown Indian to have the Booker prize. Unlike most other popular Indian novelist, she was neither educated abroad, nor she lived abroad. Roy is born, brought up and educated in India. The style she has invented smells the Indian soil. Her victory as a first time novelist, and that too, a universal one is really surprising. The Booker committee gave an encomium to this princess of prose: "With extraordinary linguistic inventiveness, Roy funnels the history of South India through the eyes of seven-year - old twins."[1] Moreover, ***India Today*** in its cover story, concludes: "Roy triumphed because unlike the others, she had the guts and the overwhelming talent to invent a new idiom and vocabulary to tell the story of a seemingly remote people. Mammachi, Sophie Mol, Estha, Rahel, Ammu and Velutha will stay with us popping up once in a while to remind us of some eternal truth."[2]

After ***The God of Small Things,*** Arundhati Roy has written some powerful articles which have now got the shape of the book. They are 1. ***The End Imagination;*** and 2. ***The Greater Common Good. The End of Imagination*** shows the author's strong revolt against nuclearization in India and abroad. It is also a mild satire on the arrogance and dominance of politics and a castigating comment on the nuclear arms and ammunitions which are rapidly gaining ground all over the globe. The book obviously shows that she is not in favour of war and killing. She seems to be a great follower of Mahatma Gandhi who believed in the theory of truth and non-violence. She thinks that atomic war will prove to be the most immoral, savage and barbaric act of humanity. The book also shows her unswerving boldness as a free and frank writer. She is of the opinion that writers must be the voice of a nation. They should not hesitate to expose the corruption's and aberrations of the society in which they live.

Her next revolutionary article (now it is in the form of a book), **The Greater Common Good**, deals with the author's rational and progressive attitude to the dam projects of the government; her sympathetic talks with the sufferers of the Narmada Valley project; her harsh and rugged satire on the faulty decision and adverse attitude of the political parties and above all, her Wordsworthian nostalgia for the natural scenes and sights of nature. She believes that big dams in India are obsolete, uncool and undemocratic. They are a Government's way of accumulating authority. They are a guaranteed way of taking a farmer's wisdom away from him. They are brazen means of taking water, land and irrigation away from the poor and gifting it to the rich. They displace huge population leaving them homeless and destitute. In this book, Roy stands like a lawyer to plead the case of the rural fold that what they are losing must be restored to them justifiably. With a hammer in her hand, Roy wants to blow hard on the illtreatment of the state and the Government who turn a deaf ear to the requests of the forest dwellers and the sufferers of the big dam project. She seems to weep on the absolute neglect of the poor, the insulted and the deserted. She feels that there is a human dignity in them, which ought to be recognized. A nation ought to be thankful to them because they live on their produce and create no nuisance. They are happily engaged in rural vocation of cultivating the land.

Thus, these two evocative books published after **The God of Small Things** are the revolutionary portrayal of the poor and the deserted of the society. They show how the author is sympathetic with the neglected and the injured; how she pleads the cause of the poor against the rich; how she strongly believes in the theory of peace and harmony etc. Here, she seems to be very near to P.B. Shelley in Romantic Poetry and G.B. Shaw in the Modern Drama. Like P.B. Shelley she believes that the poet must be the unacknowledged legislator of mankind. Like George Bernard Shaw she harbours the opinion that the world can become paradise if some of the evils of society are uprooted.

One of the primary duties of an author is to depict the seamy and sordid picture of society. A novel is the real and vigorous reflection of the mind and feeling of the novelist. So, the works of the

author should reflect the spirit of the age and those hidden things which generally escape the eyes of the social scientists. W.H. Hudson remarks: "A nation's life has its moods of exultation and depression; its epochs a strong faith and strenuous idealism, now of doubt, struggle and disillusion, now of unbelief and flippant disregard for the sanctities of existence and while the manner of expression will vary greatly with the individuality of each writer, the dominant spirit of the hour, whatever that may be will directly or indirectly reveal itself in his word."[3] And this is what we see in Arundhati Roy's well-known book, **The God of Small Things.**

Arundhati Roy has shown her sympathetic and revolutionary attitude especially to the neglected women and untouchable workers in the novel, **The God of Small Things**. The book, apart from many other things, deals with "the universal theme of social consciousness e.g. a confrontation between the big man and the small man or to speak through the terms of Roy, a confrontation between the 'Laltain' and the 'Mombatti'. She also exposes the hypocrisy and ostentation of some of the people who felt no qualm of conscience in blowing hard on the suppressed and the injured of society. Police in our day-to-day life are generally supposed to be the protector of the rules and regulations laid down by our great constitution. But what we find in police administration is just the otherwise. Arundhati Roy, a close observer of men and manners, very aptly flings a mild but pinching irony on the various loopholes of the police. Through the picture of the Kottayam police, she truthfully delineates the corruption's prevalent in police administration in almost all over India. She shows how Velutha, the God of Loss, the God of Small Things, has to bear the brunt of the callous and cruel-police administration; how his party president, Mr. Pillai, didn't help him at the time when he was in police custody; how he becomes a suffocated and baffled insect caught in the web collectively created by police, Marxism and society; how he, like Bakha in **Untouchable**, has to pass through the harrowing and unmerited injustice and tyranny. The picture of Velutha's pathetic plight in the police custody, and his torture even worse than an animal arouses our sense of pity and catharsis. The picture presented by Roy is so artistically presented that the readers are moved to tears.

The other prominent theme Roy raises in this book, is the realistic delineation of the plight of the women in society. She strives to express in this novel her sympathy towards those women who are devoid of everything. Ammu is such a woman whose social situation is full of many ifs and buts, ups and downs. She strongly yearns for pleasure and happiness and a life far from the shackles or constrains. At first, she like a free bird, flies freely in the open skies. But, all of a sudden, her wings are cruelly cut down by the callous society and thus she is pulled down to the earth where she has to grovel in the lowly dust. By her own consent, she married a man who proved to be an alcohlic and so her sweet marriage is broken. Being "divorced, she returned to Ayemenem, the big house of her parents; but there too, she found her parents cool and indifferent towards her and her children. All the members of the family - Pappachi, Mammachi, Chacko, Baby Kochamma, Cochu Maria etc. treat Ammu badly. Through this character, Arundhati Roy hammers hard on the man's domination over woman. She seems to say that women are not a "mere toy or an object of pleasure or a means of gratifying the men's baser passions, but they are the noble and richest part of a man's life. She seems to express that man's life without a woman is as worthless as flower without fragrance or a vehicle without an engine. For the smooth development of any society both the wheels of the chariot must be well maintained.

Education in society must be given to both men and women without any dispute. Education develops all the faculties of man - physical, mental and spiritual. It enlightens and broadens a person's outlook. So, keeping in mind of the benefit of education, women should not be devoid of taking higher education. But what we find in this novel is somewhat different. Here Ammu didn't get higher education. It is only because her parents think that higher education corrupts a lady. On the other hand, her brother Chacko is sent to Oxford to study further, though he didn't do good there. What a great irony! Chacko is allowed to study further because of he is a male member. But Ammu, a female, is step-motherly treated. In fact, even today, though in spite of a fundamental improvement

in woman's stature by our constitution and various amendments, we see in India, except a fistful section of society, that the conservative and superstitious mind of a large number of people are against the higher education of girls. This grave problem can be clearly seen in a conservative family where 'purdah is strictly maintained and also in the rural folks where women are supposed to be meant for only mating and procreating, serving and nourishing. Meena Usmani in her article "Violence Against Women" rightly remarks:

> "The women have frequently been ruthlessly exploited in our society and the problem is growing-day by day. The case of eve teasing, sexual harassment, abduction, sati, rape and wife battering in public and at the work place etc. have been more regularly reported since the 1960s and early 1970s. The issue of violence against women has become the public problem as the women are discriminated at work, home and are denied their due in every field. The constitution of India promises freedom, equality, opportunity and-protection to women and give them several rights. In spite of that they enjoy an unequal status."[4]

It is a great irony that a daughter estranged from her husband in this novel is tortured and tyrannized in the parent's house. While an estranged son, Chacko not only receives warm welcome but also remains the rightful inheritor of the family's wealth and fortune. When he flirts with the labour class women of the factory, Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, in the name of "Man's Needs", encourage him. But we see that the same behaviour of Ammu, her illicit relation with Velutha, is termed as untraditional and sinful. She is being-locked in a room and is beaten black and blue. Through this portrayal, Roy lashes out at the hypocritical moral code of society, which makes a great difference between men and women.

One of the prominent themes of the novel, which merit our attention much, is the author's truthful portrayal of untouchability, a fatal infectious disease, which prevents the development of society. Right from the Vedic age up to this time, the untouchables in society have been bearing the brunt of social persecution without any rhyme or reason. The misinterpretation of our great scriptures led this problem to such an extent that hitherto, it has not been absolutely uprooted from the society. Arundhati Roy presents realistically the inhuman and unadmirable situations faced by the untouchable, the downtrodden in Kerala. But through this state, she seems to peep into the lives of almost all the untouchables of the country who are treated worse than beasts. In this novel, Velutha is an untouchable paravan who, unlike other untouchables, is gifted with technical skills. He symbolically stands for the God of Small Things. But he has to face many unbearable difficulties in his day-to-day life. His father, Vellya, converts himself into the Christian religion only to immune from the victimization of the upper caste. But his conversion never brings any fruitful result. Velutha, along with his father, always goes to Ayemenem House to deliver coconut plucked form the trees. But they are never allowed to enter the room. They are never permitted to touch a thing that a Touchable' touches. Moreover, Mammachi remembers his past days when the untouchables were expected to crawl backward with a broom, sweeping away their footprints. She also remembers how an untouchable had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed. In short, Arundhati Roy, like a devoted social reformer, wants to highlight the cause of the untouchables and their difficulties to adjust in a cold and indifferent society.

Arundhati Roy seems to bring to our notice the grave situations our country has been facing and draws our attention or our sympathy to their piteous plight. In this regard, she is very close to Mulk Raj Anand who at first, dared to describe realistically the terrible and heartrending blusterings and false accusations imposed on the untouchables. She also conforms to the opinions of M.K. Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar who, to their very core of heart, showed the sympathy to a large section of society devoid of humanity. In

fact, a great art doesn't mean simply the tingling of the heart to the highest percipience by aestheticism, but it must have a social significance, a realistic ring of the various drawbacks of society. A true art or so for that matter, a true novel must be a fine blend of both 'the popular trends - 'Art for the sake of art' and 'Art for the sake of life'. The works of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Dryden, Pope, Dickens, Eliot, Shaw etc. are universally recognized not only for their artistic or aesthetic reverberations but also for their beautiful portrayal of the contemporary demerits and flaws of the society. Arundhati Roy may also be placed in their order. Why? Because her works have artistic flavour as well as social consciousness. It has a fine correspondence between feeling and form. Her social description is not dull and monotonous; rather it is woven into the fabric of art. Some people say that her book, *The God of Small Things* is replete with vulgar scenes and pornographic delineation's. No doubt, there are some certain scenes of the book, eg; the masturbation scene in the Abhilash Talkies; the scene of Ammu's bathroom in which she puts the toothbrush on her breasts to see whether it stand or fall; the scene of the last chapters in which Roy has dared to describe the genitals of both man and woman and the process of copulation; the scene in which Rahel, in her college day, deliberately collides against other girls to see whether her breasts hurt or not; etc. Certainly this type of sexual portrayal somewhat looks absurd and unethical in the eyes of India where the people are ethically deep rooted. But the occidental culture doesn't think it vulgar. Both British and American modern literature are full of-such descriptions. D.H. Lawrence is a glaring example whose revolutionary works **Lady Chatterley's Lovers, Women in Love** etc. have fired the sexual sentiments of a large number of people. We should not forget that though Roy has deliberately described some vulgar scenes, but it is done only to suit the framework of the plot or the sentiments of the characters, such characters who are mostly neglected by society. The scene of Abhilash Talkies (the masturbation scene) plays an important role in building a nightmarish experience in the innocent mind of Estha. The abnormal activities of the characters have a deep root in their past abnormal life. Moreover, in art, vulgarity without literary demands may be termed vulgar. But if the vulgarity

is suffused with artistic or aesthetic renderings, it can't be called vulgar. The culture, religion and history *at* our country are the fine, examples where sex is worshipped as God. There are many vulgar carvings in the caves of Ajanta and Ellora and even in the Sun temple of Konark in Orissa. Though thematically they are extremely vulgar but artistically they are always visited and seen by people of India and abroad so, vulgarity lies in the eyes of the beholders. Prof. R.S. Sharma remarks: "Roy's treatment of sex and genitalia may not be pornography proper because some of it certainly corresponds to the facts of Indian society and can not be wished away by concealment".[5]

A detail study of the novel obviously shows some psychological elements playing vital role in the inner workings of some of the major characters of the novel. The characters like Ammu, Velutha, Kochamma, Rahel and Estha are seen suffering from some psychological disturbances. The chief character Ammu is seen suffering from the sense of depressed mental psychology. She didn't follow the age-old rules of social conduct in society and developed her sexual relation with an untouchable of her village. It is only because her past life was not fully satisfied. Moreover it is 'trauma psychology' that makes Rahel a boy of taciturnity, who always wants to lead a life far from the din and bustle of the crowded city. It is this Psychology that engraves a permanent imprint in the innocent mind of Rahel, who, latter on, develops an incestuous relation.

It is interesting to note, here that human organism has some certain needs which it wants to get them fulfilled at any cost. Most of the sexual disturbances, psychosomatic diseases, hypertensions and many other such ailments are the result of psychological imbalances. Freud himself accepts the role of terrifying experiences, which involve danger to life. So, everybody in society wants personal security at first. The organism at first wants to protect life from physical injury. This sense of social and personal security gains its momentum in the mind of the child as soon as he develops self and self-concept. Judged on this principle, almost all the characters of the book seem to be suffering from these demands of organism. It is this wish for security which prompts Ammu and her

twins to discard social norms and makes them to lead a life worse than animals. It is this experience, which makes Ammu the transgressor of social ethics and also prompts her to indulge in sexual life which ultimately leads to their death - one is killed by society and the other by callous administration. In short, the denial of the physical and psychological needs makes the characters of the book rebellious leading to the defiance of society's age-old norms and principles.

The incestuous relation, which develops between the twins, is fine example of suppressed sexuality and genetic predisposition. Both the characters are so much isolated by their parents and society; so much neglected by the collective conspiracy of police, family and even Marxism, that ultimately they find no resort to harbour their repressed sentiments. So, they become abnormal and consequently the feelings of loneliness, emptiness and imperfectness collectively create a situation in which the twins have nothing to do but indulge in incestuous relation. But Roy never favours this relation. She observes that what the twins shared that night "was not happiness, but hideous grief". (p-338). This statement of the author clearly exonerates her of being an immoral or pornographic writer.

Arundhati Roy, like a true artist delineates only those abnormalities and discrepancies which she counters in our day to day modern life in which there is a conspicuous breakdown of moral and spiritual values' in which people seldom abide by the trodden path of ethics and culture; in which the children are immensely tyrannized and brutally behaved; in which the dalit and the deserted don't command proper respect, in which an innocent child like Estha is forced to masturbate an old man, 'Orange-drink Lemon-drink' man in the cinema hall; in which divorcing a woman has become the order of the day. So it is quite wrong to call the book and the author immoral as some critics call her. In deed it is not - unethical or immoral, but simply the bitter reality or the truthful mirror of the present day scenario. In other words, through the psychological interpretations of the various layers of human mind, Roy seems to present a trenchant critique of the present day Indian society, where people are bound to suffer traumatic experiences leading to so many physical absurdities.

One of the important duties of a great writer is to describe almost all the details of social and historical settings, new changes in society so that the readers may be able to be acquainted with the pattern of living daily routine, rites, customs, rituals, and habits. *The God of Small Things* is suffused with all these things. It presents the realistic picture of dresses, men and manners of the contemporary Keralite society. Sophie Mol is dressed in her yellow crimplene bellbottoms with her hair in a ribbon. Beige' and pointed shoes are often mentioned by the novelist for Estha who used to wear them with his Elvis Puff. In Kerala 'mundu' is a common dress. So, the book is full of the word 'mundu'. Velutha and Comrade Pillai are seen wearing mundu. Arundhati Roy, a great observer of men and manner, also shows a truthful picture of the market, doctor's clinic, cinema hall, police station etc. She has used such words and phrases which sometimes become the 'objective correlative' of the situation she describes. The following one example of the book is enough to show the author's keen observation of the Indian Cinema hall: " The Man with the steel Eveready Torch said that the picture had started, so to hurry. They had to rush up the red steps with the old red carpet. Red staircase with red spit stains in the red corners ... The Torch Man opened the heavy princess circle door into the fan-whirring peanut - crunching darkness. The Torch Man shone his light on the pink tickets. Row J. numbers 17,18,19,20. They squeezed past irritated people who moved their legs this way and that to make space." (p- 97-98)

The things which attract the readers much after reading the novel is the style of Arundhati Roy, a new and original style which employs a circuitous narrative technique. Events emerge elliptically and sometimes impairs the tempo of reading. There are time shifts, fast-forwards and reversals, which enhance the narrative art of the author and make it the novel of post-modern period. A thorough study of the book shows that Roy's style is a unique style. She has achieved the maximum effect by most economical linguistic means. The readers find an under current of connotation, aestheticism-and pure artistic exuberances. In terms of solidity, condensation, crafting and linguistic inventiveness, Roy's place in Indo Anglian fiction is highly original and sometimes astonishing.

It is very easy to write cheap novels, which only appeal to our wild sentiments. But very soon these novels are lost into oblivion as soon as they see the light of the day. They seldom have any permanent bearing in our mind. But to write a novel of classical nature, a novel, which makes a correspondence between the present and the past with an -eye to future, is hard nut to crack. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* falls under this category. It is beautiful in both form and content, matter and manner. It has heralded a new conception in the realm of traditional thinking. In technique and style, it lulls us away from cheap writings to the world of metaphorical structure, architectural pattern or in the world of Eliot's 'Objective Correlative or 'Emotional Equivalent'. Roy has invented such a new and original style in this book that cannot help without giving jerks and jolts into the mind of the literary and general readers. Like the major images of Shakespearean tragedy, some of the main images of this book also shuttle back and forth and point to the story as a whole. Sometimes the author has dared to coin some new words like 'Laltain', 'mombatti' etc, which are essentially Indian in nature. In other words whatever newness we get in this novel, smells the fragrance of Indianess. She turns and twists language to conform to the feeling. Consequently we can enjoy broken sentences, illogical statements, unrestricted sprinkling of italics, bizarre phrases, ungrammatical construction, unconventional rhythm etc. Roy herself believes that there is a little difference between 'studying architecture and building buildings'.

The narrative technique of *The God of Small Things* is an amalgam of many things. The Point of view' of this novel is of different types. The author has very beautifully taken the help of all the important points of view, which we generally see in the modern novels. It has the Omniscient point of view; the limited point of view. But the chief point of view seems to be that of the seven-year-old twins, Rahel and Estha, whose point of view occupy large portion of the book. The authorial voice is also present here and there in the novel. In this respect, Roy is very near to Conrad's innovations in which the story doesn't run straight but in a *zigzag* way. Sometimes we also see in this unique novel epistolary method of narrating the story. Baby Kochamma's point of view in her early

student life is mostly related to her letters written by her to her father. In short, *The God of Small Things* is unique type of novel in which the author seems to be in a mood of boldly mingling all types of the forms of narrative techniques and thereby creating a new and astonishing style which baffles the reader and sometimes even impairs the receptive process of reading and enjoying the book.

The structural pattern or the architectonics of ***The God of Small Things*** has vehemently brought about revolution in the literary scenario. A thorough study of the book obviously-shows that the novel is rich in both matter and manner. However, it is the manner of the book that fascinates the reader much. The design, language, mode of material of the novel are so beautifully employed and tugged together that they cannot help without enamouring the reader, particularly those readers who are in the habit of tasting the flavour of only traditional and regular pattern of things. The style of the book reminds us of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, Henry James and T.S. Eliot and in Indo-Anglian fiction, it is very close to Salman Rushdie.

Arundhati Roy has brought architecture in her novel. The reason is that he has been the student of architecture. She has not written the novel 'from the beginning to the end', but rather followed the architectural methodology. The whole story of the book is concisely revealed in the first chapter. In one of her interviews Roy rightly observes: I would start somewhere and I'd colour in a bit and then I would deeply stretch back and then stretch forward. It was like designing an intricate balanced structure".[6]

In other words, Arundhati Roy, basically a student of architecture has yielded most of the important events and their chronological signposts in the beginning of the book. As an expert architecture draws the whole picture of the building in his brain, and latter on, plasters the wall and gives a finishing touch. Similarly, the novelist has also done the same thing. She has, at first, given a strong foundation, that is, the beginning. In the preceding chapters, the readers get a glance of the inner construction of the building and after the last chapter, the reader is allowed to have the whole vision of the mansion.

Thus the structure of the book is very complex. It is very difficult to understand fully the chronological order of the book in the first reading. It demands second reading to have a thorough acquaintance of the new technique Roy has employed in the novel. In spite of the various knots and complexities of the structure of the book, the aesthetic perception or the poetic exactitude cannot be totally ignored. Roy has also taken a great risk in involving the reader into a jigsaw puzzle. In deed, in the process of reading generally we see that the reader's receptive process is impaired- on account of spending all his energies to the intellectual task of unrevealing the intricacies of the plot. In order to have a perfect vision of the book, the reader has to push his mind back and forth in hectic movement.

The next stylistic feature of Arundhati Roy is her brilliant display of some powerful images. The book is a whirlpool of images and symbols, mythology and modernity, sex and sensation. It is rich with many other poetic devices such as personification, irony, oxymoron, pun, hyperbole etc. But the main concern of the novelist is her abundant use of similes and metaphors. Right from the beginning up to the last, the reader is charmed by the beautiful application of words and phrases, similes and metaphors. They taste, the flavour of poetry in each line. Most of the images of the book smell the sweetness and fragrance of Indianess. They are common and as comprehensible *as* most of the images of Shakespeare. Sometimes, some metaphors have got much significance in the development of the plot. The image of History House; Pappachi Moth'; 'Ayemenem House', 'Orange-drink Lemon-drink Man', 'Plymouth car;' Mombatti; 'Laltain' etc always come again and again like the refrain in poetry. Roy is gifted with an integrating power - the power of organizing the different complex and obscure material into a dramatic whole.

The word 'History House' is very suggestive. It is very near to Hardy's philosophy of Time, Chance and Fate. It represents a cruel spirit of Evil, which casts its malevolent influence on the lives of the main characters. It has a unique quality to Capture dreams and re-dreams them. 'Pappachi's moth' suggests the repressed sentiments of most of the characters of the book. It suggests how a man becomes

very sad if his past is lost or not properly satisfied. 'Ayemenem House' also plays the role of structural unifier and a great symbol. It symbolizes the house of hypocrisy, cruelty, injustice and jealousy. It is as symbolic as 'Wuthering Heights' or Thrushcrush Grange' in Emily Bronte's. Roy observes: " The old house on the hill wore its steep, gabled roof pulled over its ears like a low hat. The walls streaked with moss, had grown soft, and bulged a little with dampness that seeped up from the ground. The wild, overgrown garden was full of the whisper and scurry of small Jives."(P-2)

Thus, in the handling of English language, Roy revealed herself as an interesting wordsmith. Though Peter Kemp calls her style of writing, 'a liberal sprinkling of italics and Carman Callil, a Booker Judge, denounces the book as 'vulgar and execrable', yet it can't be denied that the author has effected a new style. She has to her credit so many words and phrase, which she has coined in this book, and thus she has undoubtedly enriched the English tongue. Pier Paolo rightly observes: "In fact, through the creation of a new language, she can meet both her ends. It is a language, which expresses old concepts in a new way, which is moulded according to every new need, which in anarchic fashion does not obey the rules of grammar or syntax any more. It is a new world, within which Arundhati Roy is finally able to re-generate all her sensations. Being so original and personal, the fictional discourse sometimes looks like a new journey inside the author's stream of consciousness. Language allows her to break the bonds of distance from the object of her writing without technically evidencing it."[7]

The characterization of Roy is even more fascinating. Through her realistic characterization, she is able to depict the social theme of the high and the low, the rough and the sublime. Through the 'stream of consciousness' technique, the author dives deep into the recesses of the mind of her characters and digs out those unnoticed shades of mind which generally escape the eyes of even great psychologist or social scientists. The author has very beautifully fused together both characterization and plot construction so as to present a homogenous result. We know that every novelist wants to create in his/her novel the personal, idiosyncratic vision or opinion,

which she gathers from day to day life. She wants to enact these personal visions through some characters or through incidents. In this novel, Arundhati Roy has shown most of her personal views of her past life through the vision of the twins. Her mother, Mary Roy, seems to represent Ammu who was divorced after marriage.

The God of Small Things has a number of characters. They are so beautifully moulded by the frame of characterization that they have become alive among the readers. Almost all the characters are realistically portrayed and so they closely resemble the reader's sentiments. They sometimes arouse our sense of pity and catharsis. We can demarcate a line between these various characters on the basis of the two powerful symbols - 'Laltain and Mombatti', employed by the author. Under the caption 'Laltain' we may put the characters like Mammachi, Pappachi, Baby Kochamma, Chacko, Inspector Matthew, Comrade Pillai, who are dominating over the 'Mombatties' or the downtrodden of the book. Similarly under the caption, 'Mombatti', there are characters like Rahel, Estha, Ammu, Margaret Kochamma, and Velutha who are seen unnecessarily tortured by the 'Laltain'.

To sum up, Arundhati Roy is an extra-ordinary novelist in the realm of English novel. Her maiden novel, *The God of Small Things*, has now attained the status of a great novel of the world. It is a fine amalgam of feeling and form, matter and manner. In theme, it is not a' turning loose of emotion' but a realistic, deliberate and conscious portrayal of the various social maladies inflicting the modern commercial civilization. In style, it is a new experiment in the field of literature. It has metaphoric structure, verbal exuberance, idiosyncratic use of language challenging even the age-old rules of grammar, unconventional rhythm, sprinkling of italics etc. But this newness does not confront the readers rather it charms them. It makes them stay for a while to think over the new construction of phrases and fine use of language. The grammatical distortion of words and sentences has been deliberately done in order to conform to the childhood sentiments and the abnormal situation of the mind of some neurotic characters. For this new conception of form, she may be placed next to the line of great innovators like D.H. Lawrence,

Henry James, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf and Salman Rushdie.

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Nine

AMITAV GHOSH'S *IN AN ANTIQUE LAND*: A POST-MODERNIST'S RENDEZVOUS WITH HISTORY

Dr. Uday Shankar Ojha

After diving deep into '*In An Antique Land*' of Amitav Ghosh, we encounter, the author, himself an avowed anthropologist of today, renegotiating his rendezvous with the far-off yesterdays in the mysterious but mesmerising land of Egypt. The cinamatographic description of 'the romance of the researcher' casts a hypnotizing spell over the reader as he follows 'the old quester-hero following the lure of a fragmented text into distant times and places'.[1] We witness the exciting adventure of the researcher traversing and transgressing the barriers of time and space. To him, 'yesterdays are never lost, just as tomorrows are always imbedded'.

It is in this post-modernist context of destabilizing and transforming fixed ideas of history, that Amitav Ghosh dares to have a determined quest for artistic coherence in a fragmented world of some ordinary and unheroic characters belonging to differing religious beliefs and varrying cultural colonies languishing in alienated moods. The narratology doesn't conform to a historical or chronological ordering of events. Like a roving ambassador, the novelist perceives in depth the events of the world and enables his characters to envision the multi-layered, complex patterns of time and space in which past, present and future coalesce into one.

The ensuing post-modernist analysis is not limited to Amitav Ghosh only rather a whole new group of writers of post-colonial era found no distinction between traditional oral cultural history and a scientific objective history. One such potential voice, Salman Rushdie draws our attention towards the shifting focus from the colonial national and political discourse of the 1930s to the marked interactions of historical and individual forces of 1960s and onwards. In *"The Midnight's Children"*, Rushdie asserts that "there are so many stones to tell ... an excess of intervened lives, events, miracles, places, rumours, so dense a commingling of the improbable and the mundane (5).

True to the kindred points of his predecessors and contemporary novelists like Manohar Malgonkar (*The Devil's Wind*), Nayantara Sahgal (*Rich Like Us*), Rohinton. Mistry (*Such a Long Journey*) and Shashi Tharoor (*Great Indian Novel*), Amitav Ghosh, a traveller cum researcher, too, believes in the subversion of history skillfully exhibited in his novels like *The Circle of Reason,' The Shadow Lines.' 'The Calcutta Chromosome'* and the proposed work *'In An Antique Land'*. The scholarly Indira Bhatt makes a thorough survey of Ghosh's multi-faceted experience in colonial and postcolonial perspectives. She observes, "The Naxalites movement, the Bangladeshi exodus, the riots in Dhaka and Calcutta, the 1984 riots in Delhi, historical facts about malarial research, the condition of slaves in Egypt, the immigrant ghettos etc. that fill his novels."[2]

In very crude terms, if "the post-modernist greets the absurd or meaningless confusion of contemporary existence with a certain numbed or flippant indifference favouring self-consciously 'depthless' works of fabulation, pastiche, bricolage or aleatory disconnection", then an attempt for a comparative study of Asian and African, Indian and Egyptian, Jewish and Islamic cultures - all interwoven into the narrative framework of a novel is undoubtedly welcomed by the same postmodernist who places this novel as a universally recognised historic form of literary art.

So far as the structure of the novel is concerned, *IAAL* is divided into six parts. The first part is the Prologue, the second is 'Lataifa' with twelve chapters, the third 'Nashawy' containing seventeen

chapters, the fourth part 'Mangalore' extends up to ten chapters, the fifth part 'Going Back' has seven chapters and the last one is the Epilogue. The panoramic view of the vast geographical regions and cultural varieties of Egypt, Aden, Mangalore, Tunisia and in modern times between India and the U.S.A. arrest the attention of the readers with their soothing and scintillating exuberance. The time span covers from the middle ages up to the 20th century (i.e. from 1132 AD to 1990) with the narrator's own emergence time and again over the broad bosomed breast of eight hundred years of history is similar to the view of a tiny boat surfacing on the wild and wayward waves of an endless sea.

Repudiating the canonical forms of history, *'In An Antique Land'* (IAAL) is the story of a Jewish merchant, Ben Yiju, originally from Tunisia who came to India around A.D. 1130 "as a trader, and had spent seventeen years there. A man of many accomplishments, a distinguished calligrapher, scholar and poet, Ben Yiju had returned to Egypt having amassed great wealth in India" (*IAAL*, 19). Ben Yiju married a Nair woman, acquired an Indian 'slave' Bomma, a native of Tulunad and settled in Mangalore with other expatriate Muslim Arab traders to overcome the feeling of rootlessness and alienation.

Under mysterious circumstances Ben Yiju went back to Egypt with his slave Bomma and the story is intertwined with the narrator's own story of his visit to Egypt in 1980 to trace the story of Bomma. During his research work at Oxford, Amitav discovered a letter apart from so many other letters written by a merchant Khalaf Ibn Ishaq of Aden to Ben Yiju. This letter bore the catalogue number MS.H.6 of the National and University Library in Jerusalem. Now this single letter led him "to open a trapdoor into a vast network of foxholes whose real life continues uninterrupted" (pi 16).

With a 'sense of entitlement', Ghosh continued his probing inquiry initiated by a Hebrew journal, Zion, Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders, translated and edited by Prof. S.D. Goitein of Princeton University. Along with the narrator, the reader, too, experiences the journey and gets interested and absorbed in the researcher's deep diving into antique texts or archives to discover

some remote past, to find some connection with the present. Amitav, ultimately, gets permission by Oxford to use the Geniza library which, despite its rich store house of past historical documentation proves to be inadequate leading him further from U.S.A. to the two villages of Egypt to find out the authentic facts about the lives of Ben Yiju and Bomma.

The narrator's search, which lasted for more than ten years, began in a small village called Lalaifa, two hours south of Alexandria. Abu Ali, the landlord of the novelist, Khamees the Rat, the beady eyed local wit, his adversary Imam; Zaghloul the weaver; the quiet Nabeel and an elderly man Shaikh Musa were those contrasted characters who remained friend, philosopher and guide throughout towards the narrator.

Packed with anecdotes and exuberant details, the whole narration is all about the alien culture, customs, religion, social life of the Egyptian and medieval Indian people. It lays bare the magical, intimate insights into Egypt from the Crusades to Operation Desert Storm. Ghosh introduces a character Ustaz Sabry who shares his views with the narrator on the consequences of war between Iran and Iraq:

> 'It's we who have been the real gainers in the war', he told me. The rich Arab countries were paying the Iraqis to break the back of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. For them it was a matter of survival, of keeping themselves in power. And in the meantime, while others were taking advantage of the war to make money, it were the Iraqis who were dying on the front.' (*IAAL* 321)

However, it is worth noticing in the progression of the tale that Ghosh doesn't miss the opportunity to narrate tales of his own land also whether it be the political events i.e. Calcutta and the formation of East Pakistan, the stories of riots or his scholarly commentary on the comparative study of religion e.g., Judaism,

Islam, Hinduism or Sufism. With utmost sincerity, the author presents a fusion of fiction and history with "an objective view of the details regarding the curiosity of Egyptians about Indian customs, burning of the dead, circumcision of sex organ etc."[5] One such example of the curiosity about the worship of cows and the burning of the dead comes palpable here:

> 'You have to put a stop to it', she called out after me as I hurried away down the lane. 'You should try to civilize your people. You should tell them to stop preying to cows, and burning their dead.' (*IAAL*. 126)

Here, Amitav records such statements probably to prove that canonical history is imperialist in nature. N. Pandit continues this argument that "it has created stereotypes about the orient and these are stacked in books as objective records of truth. What history has to offer is not a general and overall, but selective picture of the past. Amitav's attempt at 'scholarly' research on the lives of Ben Yiju and Bomma is also an attempt at questioning orientalist history".[6]

Amitav, while narrating about the reasons for marrying a girl, Ashu, a slave girl by Ben Yiju, parodies the notion of the recorded history as truth as he says: "If I hesitate to call it love it is only because the documents offer no certain proof (*IAAL* 230).

The words like 'proof and 'document' bear the imprint of objectivity of a historian who apart from being a fictionalist refers to historical anecdotes and truth of the times as revealed by the documents. It is on the basis of Madmum's letters written to Ben Yiju that Amitav "links her (Ashu, wife of Ben Yiju) to the matrilineal community of Nairs, who still form a substantial section of the population of the southern part of the Malabar coast"" (P.229). Thus it throws ample light on the long tradition of temple dancers and devadasis prevalent in India in those days.

The novelist's search for Bomma's history and its origin led him to more and more inquiries into a rich storehouse of knowledge about the Tulu culture of the area, its language, customs and

geographical sketch of Mangalore. The novelist pens down categorically his study of Tulu language as:

> "The language of Man galore is called Tulu, and it is one of the five siblings of the Dravidian family of languages; it is rich in folk traditions and oral literature, but it doesn't possess a. script of its own and is usually transcribed in Kannada- It is this language that has given the area around Mangalore its name, Tulunad: like so many other parts of the subcontinent, it forms a cultural area which is distinctive and singular, while being at the same time closely enmeshed with its neighbours in an intricate network of differences". (P.244)

However, these local histories and cultures of Mangalore and of India in general "come to lose virtually every trace of its extraordinary past" (*IAAL* 245) with the advent of the colonial power. Amitav refers to the ancient 'historical civilizations' of India and Egypt both which have been perceived in differing historical perspectives because of various dominating forces - colonial and colonized. May these be the popular traditions and folk beliefs of the Aryans and the Dravidians in ancient India or an unflinching faith in the traditional herbal and hybrid medicine and quaint festivals of Islamic culture in Egypt and Arabian countries; almost all have virtually succumbed to the dominating power of colonization and the modern day development of science and technology. The knowledgeable Imam Ibrahim (Zaghloul) turns out to be a pathetic creature despite his profundity and experience about herbal medicines. The picture is crystal clear:

> '(Zaghloul) is very knowledgeable about plants and herbs and things like that' ... 'Those leaves and powders don't work anymore', he (Zaghloul) said

> 'Nowadays everyone goes to the clinic and gets an injection, and that's the end of it' (IAAL P.142).

Apart from Ghosh's frequent rendezvous with the medieval characters and places, a few contemporary characters, too, take the scene very often esp. Nabeel and Ismail. The narrator meets them in Nashawy, Egypt. These true representatives of the younger generation of the third world developing countries are passionate about achieving success in life to set themselves free from the clutches of poverty and to have a white collar, well paying job. Nabeel's innermost feelings, that "he had always been treated as a poor relative by his more prosperous Badawy cousins, and he had responded by withdrawing into the defensive stillness of introspection"(*IAAL* 150), ultimately uprooted him and his friend Ismail also to the then promising land of Iraq. Nabeel gets a job as in assistant in a photographer's store and Ismail works as a construction labourer. Both realise their dreams of acquiring material comforts but the hunger for it increases tremendously keeping at pace equally with their growing sense of rootlessness and alienation from their homeland. Amitav, too, shares the same kind of alienation being away from his family and loved ones when he is in Egypt working on his research. During a telephonic conversation with Nabeel, working in Iraq, Amitav felt his intense suffering out of loneliness and hardships that he faced in Iraq:

> "I told him about his own family in Nashawy, and about my visit to their own new house. He was eager to hear about them, asking question after question, but in a voice that seemed to grow progressively more quiet" (*IAAL* 347).

As an anthropologist at his best, the human side of the narrator shows his deep concern for the unheroic static picture of immobile societies. How closely does the narrator feels the nerves of the younger generation migrated from Egypt for job to Iraq and then trapped in the cobweb of consumerism, facing the crisis of the war

between Iraq and Iran and the hosts (Iraqis) turning hostile to Egyptians:

> "The Iraqis are wild, they come back from the army for a few days at a time, and they go wild, fighting on the streets, drinking. Egyptians never go out on the streets there at night.....they (Iraqis) blame, us, you see, they say: "you have taken our jobs and our money and grown rich while were fighting and dying" (P. 352).

History that defines nations, cultures and people only in totality doesn't define the local or individual. Nabeel's dreams are fulfilled. His poverty is removed. His family members, like the entire middle class society of Egypt, are enjoying T.V. sets, food processors, calculator's etc. in their respective well furnished drawing rooms but they have to compensate for it while watching helplessly the sad and moving culmination of Nabeel's tragedy during the gulf war :

> "We were crowded around the T.V set, watching carefully, minutely, looking at every face we could see. There was nothing to be seen except crowds : Nabeel had vanished into the anonymity, of History" (P.353).

And it is the same history and historical interventions that couldn't hide miraculously enough Ben Yiju's and Bomma's story from the screwing eyes of an anthropologist:

> "It seemed uncanny that I had never known. All those years that in defiance of the enforces of History, a remnant of Bomma's world had survived not far from where I had been living" (*IAAL* 432).

Locating the dislocated and scattered characters of the past and the present, we come to know that Bomma's story ends in

Philadelphia (*IAAL* 348), Ben Yiju's story ends in the year of a Crusade; the author's own tale slows down on the eve of the Gulf War and the novel winds up with TV "footage of the epic exodus: thousands and thousands of men, some carrying their TV sets on their backs, some crying out for a drink of water, stretching all the way from the horizon to the Red Sea, standing on the beach as though waiting for the water to part." (P.353)

These war- afflicted images of humanity of the 20th century can never be the triumph of consumerism complemented violence. The ancient notion of being held by bonds of love is now a hackneyed metaphor as against the hatred, conflict and a sense of fear for the 'other' of ours days. History might have created and eliminated nations but it has created feelings of antagonism as well. Edward Said calls the same feeling of fear and hatred of the 'other' as the Occident's fear of the orient and therefore a desire to appropriate it."[7]

Summing up this unique experience of Amitav's adventurous rendezvous with history in *"In An Antique Land"* Milan Kundera rightly observes that this modern novel accomplishes "the supreme intellectual synthesis" Amitav's unearthing of the dead and the living, of time and space of involvement and distance is what makes him a distinguished anthropologist and a unique story teller who never gets bothered about even when historians accuse "anthropologists of nuancemanship, of wallowing in the details of the obscure and unimportant and when anthropologists accuse historians of schematicism, of being out of touch with the immediacies ..... of actual life."[8]

Indubitably, Amitav subscribes to a post modernist notion of history as a narrative and therefore the validity of all individual histories against canonical history which is treated as a metanarrative.[9]

Notes :

1. Shy am S. Agrawal, "Nouns and Conjunction in "In An Antique Land" in *"The Fiction of Amitav Ghosh"* ed. By Indira Bhatt and Indira Nityanandam, Creative Books, N. Delhi, P. 113.

2. I. Bhatt and I. Nityanandam. Ed. *"The Fiction of Amitav Ghosh"*, p.10
3. Chris Baldick, *"The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms"*, OUP, P. 175
4. Swapan Chakravarty, "Providing Historical Redress", *The Telegraph*, 6 Nov. 1992.
5. Reena Kothari, 'A Traveller's Tale : IAAL', I.Bhatt and I. Nityanandan Ed. *"The Fiction of Amitav Ghosh"*, P. 109.
6. Ibid, P. 137
7. Edward Said, "Orientalism", New York: Random House, 1979 (An idea developed in detail in Chap.2)
8. Clifford Greetz, "History and Anthropology", *New Literary History*, No. 2, 1990, P.321-22.
9. Jean - Francis Lyotard, "The Postmodern Condition", London, Rouledge, 1977, P. 154-55.

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Ten

THE REFUGEE AND NAXAL NEXUS IN ASIF CURRIMBHOY'S 'BENGAL TRILOGY' : A SOCIO-CRITICAL EXPLICATION

Dr. J. Samuel Kirubahar and
Ms. R. Meena

Asif Currimbhoy, one of the few modern Indian playwrights who has shown great interest in producing "actable" plays, began writing plays in his late twenties. He strongly felt that he should actively involve himself in criticising the society and seek a full revelation of the world around him. He entertained independent-thinking, chose controversial themes, embodied them in arresting dialogue and constructed and resolved plots in an unconventional way. Currimbhoy was profoundly influenced by the new currents of violence that erupted in the country during the sixties of the last century as a result of many schemes and land reform bills which were poorly enforced by the government. However, from whatever vantage point one investigates the work of Currimbhoy, it is clear that the special identifying mark of his writing is his concern for the lives of refugees.

As a prolific playwright, Currimbhoy takes unusual themes from contemporary Indian society and weaves them into plays of artistic excellence as is pointed out by Peter Nazareth "Asif Currimbhoy interweaves the public event with the private and in

doing so, he asks disturbing moral questions about humanity in the period of decolonization" (48). Though Currimbhoy does not neglect to deal with the external realities of poverty, exploitation, and discrimination, his plays focus on the intimate reaches of the inner lives of his characters; the landscape of his plays is the spiritual realm where the soul yearns for what it does not have. His submitted body of writing is characterised by a specific recurring motif - his insistence on probing the relationship between struggle and change. One may also characterise Currimbhoy's work as organically spare rather than elaborate, active rather than passive, a process of stripping off layers, honing down to the core. The focus on the struggle of refugees to claim their own lives and the contention that the struggle emanates from a deepening of self-knowledge and love are characteristics of Currimbhoy's work.

Currimbhoy's plays can be divided into three categories:

1. Bengal Trilogy - ***Inquilab*** (1970), ***The Refugee*** (1971), ***Sonar Bangla*** (1972).
2. The Romantic Plays - ***The Tourist Mecca*** (1959), ***The Doldrummers*** (1969), ***Darjeeling Tea*** (1971).
3. ***The Political plays - Goa*** (1964), ***An Experiment with Truth*** (1969), ***Om Mane Padme Hum!*** (1972).

The Bengal Trilogy has Calcutta as its background during the Naxalite revolt, that battered Bengal in 1960's with an influx of Bangladesh refugees into India and deals with the problem of man confronting the man made corruption of the country through partition and its tragic upheavals by making people flee from their natives and the refugees take shelter in an alien country with houses burned and property confiscated. In Bengal Trilogy, one can see a conscious effort by Currimbhoy to explore the imaginings, dreams and rituals of the subconscious of refugees which contains his accumulated reality - a historical and psychological thread.

The Refugee, Sonar Bangla and ***The Inquilab*** are not only plays just with repeated characters and events common to all the three but also the worthy products of a dramatist with a social purpose who was strongly influenced by the trauma of partition and naxalite

revolt as naxalites have become mules of the world, carrying the burder. heaped upon them by society and by family, the victims of racial oppression as they become suspended citizens - suspended in time and place by a century, an end that only acknowledged them as refugees.

Asif Currimbhoy's ***The Refugee*** deals with the refugee problems during the Bangladesh crisis when the struggle for Independence of East Bengal reflects the attitudes of the Bengalis in India towards the refugees, which in turn becomes a study of the transformation of a muslim refugee, Yassin, from a non-committal state to total involvement. The play has, as its setting, a household in a border town in West Bengal, Sen Gupta's house, who in the beginning seems to be sympathetic towards the cause of refugees in Pakistan but later becomes disgruntled because of the great influx of the refugees affecting the life of the people in the refugee nation.

When the play begins, Sen Gupta receives a refugee, Yassin, the son of his childhood friend, Rukaiya, and helps him and gives him accommodation as he is kind to Yassin because he wants to keep up the promise given to Rukaiya. Later, there is a change in the attitude of Sen Gupta when the influx upsets the economy of the town and further Gupta's daughter, Mita, begins to play a vital role in the rehabilitation of the refugees; while his son, Ashok, is set to join liberation army.

The refugee, Yassin, himself seems to undergo a transformation from his non-committal state to involvement as he has been influenced by Mita who insists on taking concerns related to other refugees and as a result Yassin decides to work for the liberation of the country and begins to believe that freedom of thought and action should be preserved at all costs for an individual. He undergoes a transformation from indifference to sympathy and decides to work for the welfare of the refugees with his firm decision to join the Mukti Bahini to liberate his country from the clutches of West Pakistan.

In ***The Refugee***, while Ramul has been attached to his fellow refugees, Yassin, who surely believes that so much attachment with others will lead one's life to misery, is extraordinarily detached

from the outer world which consists of refugees. He says miserably, "All pains come from attachment, all wrongs come from self-interest. That is why we should each lead our own life" (T.R: 25). Yassin is initiated by the words of Mita when she narrates the condition of the refugees in a refugee camp. As he is greatly assailed by the words of Mita, he goes to the refugee camp and sees a Muslim who is tortured by Ramul, and saves him. It in turn, makes Ramul suspect him as a Pakistani spy and make him contemplate on his identity. This contemplation gives him mental anguish and leads him again to the refugees camp. He goes to the outskirts of the camp where he sees a young woman with a spade in her hand digging the grave for her dead mother. Yassin helps her dig the grave, and feels that he has understood the way of life.

In describing Yassin as an emaciated young man, the dramatist makes his character suffer not only physically but also mentally as he fails to confront his stand in his mental trauma. His is a wounded self that seeks to return as has been suffered by identity crisis and a search for freedom of thought and action.

The refugee problems in ***The Refugee*** make Ashok join the combat of the Mukti Bahini as he is an emancipated young man who contemplates an action all the time as he is torn between his involvement and in the cause of the suffering humanity and between his academic detachment and moral withdrawal from a world of burning realities "through no choice" (T.R: 50) The refugee problems affect Yassin and Ramul too. It makes Mita feel sympathy with Bangladesh and help Yassin realise his duty to his country, Bangladesh, as she is profoundly affected by the condition of the refugees and felt sad for them. She condemns Yassin's negligence of duty during Cholera. Currimbhoy writes:

> Subconsciously everybody looks accusingly, apprehensively at Yassin, as though he who personifies the refugees, brought it in. Yassin flushes, feeling guilty and oppressed once again; without knowing why, without being able to escape his identity the indelible stamp of the unwanted refugee (T.R: 29)

Yassin isn't sure whether he is right or not. The puzzled and blunt answers of him to the inquiries of the others throw light on his confused state. When Sen Gupta's wife, who pleads him not to risk his life, asks him whether he is sure that he is doing the right thing, he replies with his eyes afar seeking the absolute once again, "I don't know". (T.R: 38) Yassin's conscience which is greatly stirred up by Mita makes him determine to do his own fighting that impels him to leave for Bangladesh. Sen Gupta calls him 'an old character' and Prof. Mosin refers to his 'closed nature' and warns him against his escapist attitude. Yassin is detached and unconcerned as Mita puts it, he closes his eyes and thinks that they disappear from his sight. Even as a student of Comilla University, he has seen the twin paths of contemplation and action. In the freedom struggle, he "became involved through no choice". (T.R: 15)

The kindness of Sen Gupta's family can not relieve Yassin from his shock. The inquiries of Sen Gupta's family about the tragedy make him remain unhappy with no interest in recalling the past memories. When Sen Gupta asks about the real happenings, he bluntly answers, "I don't know" and about his involvement in the freedom struggle he says, "What I do. ... or don't do is a matter of personal choice. It's the interference of people that brings about the tragedies". (T.R: 14) Mita condemns Yassin's negligence towards the refugees and she thinks that Yassin is harming them through his negligence. As a social worker, Mita, the daughter of Sen Gupta, works for the rehabilitation of the refugees and admonishes Yassin's blunt ideals and tries to make him plan his life as to her, life is full of involvement's and a life without involvement's is a life without action. While Mita and Ashok are much concerned with the rehabilitation of the refugees, their father, Sen Gupta, who is much irritated by the growth of the refugees, is frightened about his future because of the encroachment of the refugees.

While Yassin remains inactive, another refugee, Ramul, who immerses himself in the problem of refugees, takes the lead and occupies school buildings and properties of others, including the garage of Sen Gupta and behaves like a pervert mentioning the horror of the partition and condition of the refugee - he does not act but pretends that he is active.

Apart from portraying the problem of the refugees, Currimbhoy offers solution to the problem through Mita who understands the refugees sympathetically and is deeply concerned with their rehabilitation. She wants Yassin to realise that the refugees are as "human" and "real" as other people. She says, "The refugees exist the same way. They're alive, and oh, only to real, They bring tears to my eyes, their suffering touches my heart. I can't bear to leave them alone" (T.R: 25). The cry of Mita seems to be the cry of Currimbhoy himself. The playwright's point of view is that the Government should not be officious in handling the refugee problem which has to be looked at from the human and not from the administrative point of view. Currimbhoy also paints the confused state of the peasants who are in dilemma whether to join the naxalites or not, which is reflected through one of the peasants, who thinks that if he joins the naxalites and indulges in land-grab activities, he will himself become landlord or he would land up in jail. Land to the landless, collective farming community holdings, and a distribution of surplus land to be done immediately are the cry of the naxalites which induces the peasants in the rural areas. They lead the landless or land hungry peasants who suffered from fantastic oppression and exploitation by the landlords to the launching of tempestuous attack on the landlords, the plantation owners and reactionary Government. Such furious activities of the peasants are clearly depicted in the Inquilab through Shomik who is one of the peasants and who wants liberation through resolution. As a leader of the peasants, he starts land-grab movement and causes the crucial murder of the landlord, Jain.

Sonar Bangla like ***The Refugee*** deals with the conflict between the people of East Bengal and the Pakistani forces, the problem of refugees and the emergence of Bangladesh. Mr. Hussain, the leader of Bengal mission as well as a refugee. Prof. Aziz and a few students of Dacca University are very much worried about the political situation in East Pakistan and are unhappy because the West Pakistani troops are preparing a big 'military build-up'. Aziz wants to start the civil disobedience movement with a view to balance the West-Pakistan army with the Bengali paramilitary force. His talk

with Yahya, the president of Pakistan, and Mujib, the leader of Awami League party fails to have an amicable settlement.

The slaughter of the intellectuals and others in East Pakistan by the West Pakistani soldiers results in the exodus of refugees who leave their country without knowing their destination. Though they help each other and share their food, they become sick and suffer. And as a result, Mukti Bahini, the liberation force, is trying to liberate East Pakistan from the clutches of West Pakistan. Mr. Hussain, the member of Mukti Bahini, wants Ray, the officer of Pakistan consulate, to provoke the West Pakistanis to declare war on India. The liberation force, Mukti Bahini, is gaining momentum especially in the countryside whose activities cannot be controlled by the Pakistan. The officers of the Pakistan army are in dilemma. They can neither stay out nor overrun and if they retaliate across the border it would be like inviting war from India. As India decides to help East Pakistan, it strikes at the enemy and liberates some territories in Bangladesh. A.A.K. Niazi, Commander of the Pakistani Forces in Bangladesh, surrenders his army unconditionally after which India announces a unilateral cease - fire and as a result Mujib, who has been sentenced to a solitary confinement for nine long months at Mianwali, is released by Bhutto who replaced Yahya. On seeing the desolation, destruction and bloodshed, Mujib bursts out with cry and the play ends with Hussain hearing the sound of Tagore's song 'Golden Bengal'. The physical and psychic brutality that are part of the lives of several other refugees are almost always associated with poetry - an immense chows within a refugee camp.

The third of the Trilogy, ***Inquilab*** deals with the running away of Ahmed, the eldest son of Prof. Datta to the Mizo Hills and his return as a leader of the Naxalites and the meeting between Amar, a student and the younger son of Prof. Datta and the killing of the landlord, Jain, which makes Amar realise that the Naxal short-cut will not bring out any socialist revolution. In fact, in ***Inquilab***, Currimbhoy creates a multiplicity of permanently maimed and damaged souls within the family structure who feels no pressure for responsible living or assume exemption from the demands of responsibility. There may be occasions of optimism or hope but

more pervasive is despair - a despair of nothingness, which shoots the lives of the people who simply give up themselves in life. Currimbhoy assumes that by simply revealing negative actions and violent encounters, he may be able to repair the damage done by unreflective people, who are not able to recognize that their actions have more than personal consequences.

Datta is a man of conservative look and a painstaking teacher who is under the influence of Gandhian ideologies and as a result he feels disgust on knowing that institutions are becoming the strongholds of the Naxalite activities. He is a peaceful man who has faith in non-violent activities. When the Naxalites make Ahmed a student - Naxalite, he feels pain in his heart. Later, he is killed by a Naxalite and his killing proves to Ahmed that violence could not be the right solution for social reform.

The two plays, ***The Refugee*** and ***Sonar Bangla***, depict the thirst for survival that prevails among the refugees.

1. some of them want to get rid of their poor condition.
2. some other decide to fight for their own purpose of searching their family.
3. some other refugees, who are well settled in life, ignore the others whom they do not recognize even as human beings.

These two plays throw light upon the filthy condition in which the refugees are distained to live and stay under tarpaulin covers, tents, tin shacks, shelters of tin and mud, palm leaf and bamboo and even into the large drain-pipes and water pipes which cause the contagious and infectious diseases like Cholera.

While presenting the Naxalite movement in Eastern India, Currimbhoy portrays the conflict between the existing order and the new order and between conservatism and the forces of revolution. In fact, in his plays, the naxalite provokes the peasants by saying, as stated in ***Inquilab***:

You get what you deserve: disease, hunger, want and death. You give your children an even larger share: scurvy, slavery, deprivation and death. Every *Bigha of Zamin* you toil for, you'll make them toil harder. For whom? Whom, I ask? *(rustle of discontent*

amongst peasants, shouting) For the damned, bloody, greedy zamindar! Who never worked a day in his life! who sucks your blood like leeches, grovels in flood and luxury: what gives him the right to own, and you to suffer! (Inq: 30).

Inquilab deals ostensibly with Naxalite revolt, where agrarian communists opt for violence as is told by Currimbhoy that "the play is the nightmare and the redemption of today's Calcutta". (Bowers: 5). Currimbhoy portrays the influence of the naxalites over the society who struggle for free economy and the establishment of a welfare state. With the student - rebels, the naxalites organize the naxal raids on Colleges. In fact, the play picturises the rebellious activities of two naxals, Ahmed and Shomik, who totally commit themselves to revolution and whose concept of revolution is based on their love for peasants and their identification with their needs. Ahmed kindles the students into rebellious actions, though he is not depicted as directly involving in violence but remains a driving force behind students by making violent invasion into the College by throwing bombs and causing major destruction. Though he does not speak out his mind like Shomik, there is a burning desire "to kill and recreate" for which he sows the seeds of revolt among the people. In this play, Inquilab, Currimbhoy remarks "youth... . youth is like .... the overripe mango. . . . feed it too much and it falls!" (Inq: 21). Young people, the pillars of the nation, crumble under the load of difference. To Currimbhoy, Inquilab is not a revolution through violence but an exercise of free will as he says it through Amar, who realises that his father's approach of nonviolence is right. This is the original change which comes through the exercise of free will.

The play Inquilab admirably portrays the influence of the Naxalites on the peasants who are imbued by the Naxalites to take back the land forcibly occupied by the landlords with crops of the land illegally controlled by the landlords. They organize "peasant's Committees" and launch land-grab movement and also punish the local landlords whom they consider tyrants. In it, Currimbhoy takes the risk of misrepresenting the very people whom he seeks to change. Reparation or redemption may be undertaken by a single individual in whom Currimbhoy vests the responsibility for survival, because

it is the action of a single individual that has caused the breakdown of experience or identity in private lives and ultimately in the public or social life and the group.

The Refugee gives a bonafide picture of the refugees who are placed in tight corners from which they cannot escape as they seem to suffer both physically and mentally. The author draws a vivid picture of the mental trauma of the refugees which cannot be cured by anyone as the refugees do not know their identity. They begin to search for it and yearn for the freedom of thought and action. The refugees' condition of being alienated makes some of them behave like perverts as seen in Ramul, who is kindled by the anti-social elements.

The anti-socials justify their act of provoking the refugees by saying that they have nothing to lose and they are non-committal. Though Ramul does not join them, refugee like him may be now and then provoked by them and become anti-social. Besides giving a vivid picture of the refugees and their sufferings, Currimbhoy also makes an attempt in the play to present the problems which the refugee Government is exposed to due to exodus of refugees. As we see it in the play, many refugee camps begin to mushroom alongside the border where they put up tents and shelters of tin and mud, palm leaf and bamboo and some of the refugees just have drain-pipes to live in. Government and army help them and send them plane loads of rescue materials like food, medicine and tarpaulin. Since the number of refugees keep on mounting day by day, the Government finds it difficult to keep pace with it and it has to face the problems like unemployment, Naxal threats, inter-party warfare, poverty, violence and disregard for law and order increase due to the sufferings of the refugees who trudge the endless road with their pitiful belongings resulting in an unending stream of tragic tableau each telling its own story of horror and cruelty. As the feeling of fear, death and despair perforate their minds, the pathetic journey of the refugees towards a safer place for survival is depicted in the second scene of the Act II in the play, ***Sonar Bangla***.

Asif Currimbhoy succeeds in dramatizing the trauma of the tragedy, which wounded them both physically and mentally as is

exemplified in the III scene of the Act II where each refugee relates incredible stories to the other and thus consoles and tries to get out of the depression. Most of the refugees' wives and daughters have been seduced brutally by the Pakistanis in the presence of them. Some of the refugees happened to be widows whose husbands were tortured with bamboo splinters until death and were made to beg to the soldiers for mercy over and over again. Some of the refugees could not even explain the tragedies happened to their sons.

Currimbhoy presents the pathetic condition of the refugees who are smothered by the natural calamity too. A continuous monotonous downpour not only brings water to where they stay but also infectious diseases like Cholera. Some of them die out of diseases and others leave the place dehydrated. The least hope which they have in life too is shattered by the attack of Cholera. Though they have lost their loved ones, their homes, their belongings and their villages, there is a little belief in them that they will survive.

The opening act of ***Sonar Bangla*** deals with the slaughter that has taken place in East Pakistan on 25th March, 1971. After the talks between Mujib and Yahya have failed, Yahya appoints Tikka, the Martial Law Administrator and instructs him to cleanse East Pakistan as the West Pakistani soldiers have indulged in the slaughter of the intellectuals and others in East Pakistan. Many intellectuals from Dacca University including Prof. Azif Nakee Chowdry of the *Ittefaq* paper and Mr. Ahmed, civil administrator have been killed by them cruelly. The dusky evening makes them rest "under an old empty barn with a palm - covered roof and open sides" (S.B: 51), and when the refugees, who take shelter there, grow in numbers, the condition becomes "almost lying over the other, partly out of lack of space, mostly to clutch on to some one real and protecting. Fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, young, old, everyone, including domestic animals like goats and cows" (S.B: 51).

The second act of ***Sonar Bangla*** gives a very moving account of the refugees who do not know where they are going and who struggle on and on trying to help each other along, sharing a morsel of food with one another and travelling on bullock-carts and rickshaws. The refugees from the Kushtia village are the microcosm

of the refugees all over the country who have no hope in their future yet long for survival which makes them leave the wrecked village.

A vivid account of the activities of the Liberation Force is given in the III act of the play as the refugees like Arun think that Mukti Bahini is the best way to relieve the refugees from their pathetic condition. The last act deals with the final war and the liberation of East Bengal and the emergence of Bangladesh. Hussain, the head of Bangladesh mission, thinks that the problem of the refugees will be solved when Mukti Bahini intervenes and so he civilly places his opinion to Mr. Ray, "Feed us, but arm us at the same time, reach that delicate balance of aid that is both compassionate and affords self-help. One without the other is meaningless" (S.B: 56). Though the refugees are drowning in the sea of suffering, they are clutching the wood of hope and believe that it will save their lives. They vow with hope:

> "Hunger consumes us. ...
> .... monsoon brings flood....
> .... cyclones strike us. ...
> .... we've endured before....
> .... we'll survive again. ..." (S.B: 52)

In fact, the plays ***The Refugee*** and ***Sonar Bangla*** reflect the inner sore of the refugees which is the cause for both their physical and mental sufferings. Through these plays, Currimbhoy vividly expounds the problems of the refugees -the physical and mental travail; the filthy condition in which they are distained to live; the problems of each section of the refugees like children, youth and women; the effect of the refugee life on them and so on. Currimbhoy contrasts the constitutionalists, who are drawn from the academic world and opt for the Government with on freedom of thought and speech, with the naxalites, who aspire to a classless society and who abhor the educational system that does not provide food and employment for the poor. While ***The Refugee*** and ***Sonar Bangla*** delineate the problem of refugees, ***Inquilab*** explores in depth the naxalite revolt and gives an honest account of the violent events that overtook Calcutta in 1970. Currimbhoy deserves credit for being

able to make good plays out of contemporary events that boggle the moral imagination. It is Currimbhoy's own documentation and analysis of the historical struggle of the refugees that authenticates the terrible and chilling violence of these refugees' life. In fact, Currimbhoy has explored the tragedies in the lives of refugees - the tragedy of poverty, abuse from men who are themselves abused, with physical deterioration. While Currimbhoy's paradigm community is nearly always rural, it becomes a viable emblem by means of his creation of familial and social generation that underscores his concerns with familial identity, continuity and rupture and with social roles like order and change.

Thus the three plays, ***The Refugee, Sonar Bangla*** and ***Inquilab,*** concern themselves with Bengal and its problems at different points of time with the burning problems of the refugees of East Pakistan and emergence of the nation of Bangladesh after the Indo-Pak war in 1971 as the dramatist has a noble mission of correcting the views of the society related to partition and naxalite revolt. Currimbhoy believes that a writer must work toward a larger perspective which may be termed connections made or at least attempted, where none existed before. His conception of refugee is linked to survival. In all his plays, the achievements and dreams that emerge from the connected experience of generation are expressions of freedom and beauty, and of power and community. The primary dreams, usually voiced in terms of the creation of art, is that of freedom to be one's own self.

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Eleven

CULTURE CLASH, CONFUSION AND FINAL ASSIMILATION: A STUDY OF IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE IN *A CHANGE OF SKIES* BY YASMINE GUNARATNE, *AN AMERICAN BRAT* BY BAPSI SIDHWA, AND *JASMINE* BY BHARATI MUKHERJEE

Dr. (Mrs.) B.R. Agrawal

The countries like Australia, India, Canada, Sri Lanka which have been the colonies of the British Empire are now members of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Literature indicates the literature penned in English only in the Commonwealth Countries outside the Anglo-American tradition. A few of these 'Commonwealth" or 'Third World' writers have emigrated to the West and have been producing a large-bulk of literature in English which is a powerful organ to voice their expatriate sensibility and immigrant experience in the West. Themes of migration, homelessness, exile, loss of identity, rootlessness, culture clash and cultural assimilation are often discerned in their works with striking similarities. The latent social and cultural hostilities, feeling of alienation from their roots and thereafter a constant search for attaching and assimilating these roots in the western surroundings-

constitute the core themes in their works. The dilemma of these immigrant writers in a multi-cultural situation often gets combined with their personal anguish due to discrimination or a sense of rootlessness, if rejected by their host countries.

As coloured expatriates, Yasmine Gunaratne, Bapsi Sidhwa and Bharati Mukherjee are likely to have shared their full share of social discrimination and culture shock. Gunaratne, Sri Lankan-Australian poet and novelist, has been living in Australia for more than two decades and her personal experiences as an immigrant have been authentically communicated through her protagonist. Bapsi Sidhwa born in a Parsi family of Karachi in Pakistan, living in Houston, Texas always stood against the conservative Parsi culture and advocated a new liberated British value system. She had faced the dilemma occasioned by the cultural complexities of Post-Independence Pakistani cultures. But she belongs to the generation of Parsis who have assimilated British value system in the Parsi milieu. Bharati Mukherjee is an Indian English novelist and inspite of being married to a Canadian, her experiences in Canada were far from being pleasant, in fact, she took the risk of quitting her job and shifting to U.S. The fiction of these three novelists- belonging to three different lands and settled in Australia and America, projects their own immigrant experiences of culture clash, confusion and assimilation in a multi-racial society. The clash of culture and need for adaptation is an essential part of their expatriate experience. Though these novelists belong to different countries, different social backgrounds, and different cultures, yet we find in their works a specific immigrant approach by which they convey their perspectives on the theme of culture clash and assimilation. A comparative study of the immigrant experience in *A Change of Skies*, *An American Brat* and *Jasmine* highlights a certain similarity in their handling of this theme. The three novels explore the transitional dilemma of the protagonists whose acculturation bids are thwarted by the complexities of cultural plurality. The protagonists, in these novels, are constantly engaged in a frantic search for identity or roots in an alien land till they forego their old roots and get assimilated to the mainstream culture of the adopted land. The novels project in their own way, the struggle of the

expatriates divided between the groups of those who have foregone their past identity in search of a new one through a surrender to the demands of the alien culture, and those who had high diasporal dreams which are miserably shattered to their utter frustration.

I

The novel ***A Change of Skies*** by Yasmine Gunaratne is a faithful record of the conflict between the characters who have submitted to their immigrant status and accepted the alien culture as an essential truth of that existence; and those who fail to accept the humiliation and disabilities arising out of this conflict and confrontation. The novel throws three possibilities: to delink oneself from the past traditions and cling to the new ones like Bharat and Baba; to hold one's past anchor tightly like Mr. and Mrs. Koyaka; to be on the fence like Edwina who is always undecided and criticizes both Australia and Ceylon, "you've got to do a bit of acting when you live between two cultures. You've got to protect your image...."(1). The novel, in fact, presents the immigrant experience from three points of views: Edward's, Bharat's and Navaranjini's.

The novel is an attempt to synthesize the diversity of cultures into an assimilated and integrated way of living. The lines from Edward's Diary of 26th Jan 1987 at Kangra Badagini in Western Australia highlight the theme:

"He who crosses the ocean may change the skies above him, but not the colour of his soul." (167). Emigrants, a common sight in Australia, have to face a lot of problems due to an unfamiliar landscape, which changes not only their words (language), but also the colour of their soul (their thoughts), In every expatriate's experience, "there must surely have been a moment, a small space in time ... when the anchor was let down, the sails folded, the landing made." (151). The novelist suggests, "the experience of exile opens beyond the limits of education." (285). To Gunaratne, this experience can actually give us "an awareness that everything around us is caught up in a process of profound and inexorable change and that we are not only changing with it but we are being perpetually remade." (285) Edward has rightly written on the tombstone of his

friend, "subject to change are all component things." (285). The novel is a commentary on the dilemma of the novelist, herself, in an alien culture. The illustration on the cover page - with a Rajputana painting too, communicates the message of the novelist that the East and the West can co-exist and ***A Change of Skies*** brings forth new ideas and new modes of living inspite of one's eastern origin.

The novelist focuses on different aspects of immigration and adjustments by portraying the experiences of Asian immigrants in Australia. The novel begins with the description of the misconceptions that one has the host country as a land of kangaroos. The novel is apparently the account of the relocation or acculturation of a young Sri Lankan couple. Linguistics expert Bharat Dava Sinha and his wife Navaranjini had known Australia, so far, only in a map 'marked with a blank pink space shaped like the head of a scotch terrier with its ears pricked up and its square nose permanently pointed westward, towards Britain'. Bharat accepts a visiting professorship of Southern Cross University in New South Wales, intending to stay there as a temporary exile along with his wife and looks forward to his return at the end of five years. Bharat's sister Veera warns him, "you'll be miserable. There is nothing there but koalas and kangaroos. And the white Australian policy?" But the political and social unrest in the homeland leads him to decide to move out. As to most Sri Lankans, the U.S. could be the land of their dreams but never Australia. In Australia, Bharat is well aware of his problems as an immigrant and does not grumble unreasonably to certain constraints, which the host country imposes on him. He criticizes those immigrants, who nurture a misguided sense of self-importance, fail to forego their traditional roots and wish to be assimilated to the alien culture without surrendering to its demands: He says, ".... Every new comer to Australia should be warned ... especially Asians' ... misguided idea of self-importance... "(59). The novelist aims at exposing the "high brow attitude" of Asian immigrants when she remarks, "both (the two daughters of the Australian High Commissioner) were engaged in what seemed to me very un-Australian activities... both were enrolled, at Universities in India ... studying Bharat Natyam and Sanskrit." (31). Running parallel to the experience of Bharat and Navaranjini

are those of Bharat's grandfather Edward in 1882. In editing the diary maintained by Edward, throughout the journey to and stay in Australia, Bharat and his wife discover the common problems that constitute *on* immigrant experience.

The novel demonstrates that the tremendous difference between the two ways of life leads a person to a feeling of depression or culture shock when his own native culture comes into conflict with the new one. Mr. and Mrs. Koyaka make much fuss about their heritage and glorious past and would make themselves intolerable to people of the host country and ridiculous to their own compatriots as well. The question, the novelist flings at them is "why didn't they go back?" (179) Gunaratne too, like Bharati Mukherjee, warns her protagonists of the dangers of glorifying one's native culture by belittling or degrading the alien culture. Barry seems to echo her views: "... there is a whole new literary genre developing in South Asia now called 'Gulf-Sorrow' - poems songs, and stories about love and loss and separation..." (179-180). He is critical of the sentimentality of the people like Koyakas who continue to stay (even overstay) in the new country and yet are so eager and nostalgic to return to there motherland. Ever complaining these people distort the image of their motherland or of their brothern "pretty depressed about the image of we Asians have in Australia", says Bharat (96).

Some Australians take kindly attitude to the Asians and regard them "as exotics who are having difficulty sending roots into alien ground" (87) like the bluebells from England or the immigrant Mynah and Crow. The friendly Maureen warns Navaranjini, "I think it'll take exactly five years for the two of you to feel at home in Australia" (85). The locals expect the immigrants to change and hold strange apprehensions about them. The uneven height of their 4-poster bed is considered responsible for their healthy marital relationship. The Annual University Day turns out to be a money-spinner due to Navaranjini's book - exhibition and the prize attraction is naturally the Kamasutra. Bharat is seen as a human encyclopaedia containing information on everything Asian from "Abu Ben Adhem to Zen" (25). Mekaboru Kiyanahati Balapan Koyako, a Sri Lankan, approaches the immigrant problems with

ease and confidence. He is the leader of the Sri Lankan community in Australia, much like Prof. Devinder Vadhera in **Jasmine.** Like Vadheras, he and his family hold on to everything Sri Lankan. He decides to return to his homeland when the political climate suits him well and he is offered the coveted berth in the Sri Lankan Cabinet as Minister for Arts, Cultural Affairs and Tourism (319).

The novel focuses on another aspect of the immigrant experience by showing the effect of events at home on the family and social relations of these immigrants. The ethnic unrest in Sri Lanka embitters healthy marital relationship of 25 years between Bharat, a Sinhali, and Navaranjini, a Tamil. The national events disturb Bharat's perspective of synthesis "to see the world as a whole and not fragmented", to see Jean and himself "as part of that world not aliens in it". (286). The crisis brewing in Sri Lanka effects their immigrant status and the two begin approaching "not a marital but a national problem" (297). The Australian word (coined) 'Bari' offends immigrant psychology', as it seems to connote 'incapable' or 'impotent' in Sinhali language. The differences in food habits also aggravate their misconceptions and destroy their marital harmony.

The novel analyses transformation as an essential prerequisite to the process of assimilation. Like Jasmine and Feroza, Bharat and his wife too seek to be assimilated to Australian landscape by changing names. Australian culture encourages trimming or truncating all proper nouns and Bharat's full name Mangala Davasinha changes to Mangala Day and is finally replaced by Mundi. Bharat becomes Barry and Navaranjini is cut short to Jean: the immigration is naturally followed by a process of adjustment and transformation of the personalities of immigrants. Jasmine and Feroza too go through many transformations of the kind. Gunaratne uses symbolic devices to suggest this transformation; "Barry scraped his spectacles and went in for contact lens" (125). This scrapping of Asian perspective to swing into the contact lens syndrome symbolizes his initiation and assimilation into a new life style of the west.

Further, we are exposed to the difficulties these immigrants experience when they decide to go back home. Jean and Barry decide

"not to behave like expatriates," (259) during their visit home. But they are silhouetted against the usual response of the natives that "expiates make scenes, expiates complain about the food being 'off in expensive hotels, expiates make fool of themselves by losing their temper." (262). In a serious vein, *A Change Of Skies* describes the condition of creative artists of exiles for whom "exile can often result in a kind of death" (284). The novelist suggests that it takes time for an unfamiliar landscape to impinge on an immigrant psyche, possess his imagination, broaden his vision and change the colour not only of his words but of his soul. The process of acculturation which begins with culture clash and confusion, passes through adaptation of changes in external behaviour of the characters and culminates finally in the assimilation into the new milieu. A number of reasons including the mindless ethnic violence, bad traffic jam strengthens the resolve of Bharat and his wife to go back to Australia. Breaking away from one's ethnicity and absorbing the new culture is the only way for survival, suggests the novelist. Barry's daughter "is allowed to grow up in a new country, free of the burdens of the past" (321).

II

An American Brat by Bapsi Sidhwa is the story of a young woman who journeys three cultures: her own community's Parsi culture, her country Pakistan's Islamic culture and the Western culture of the United States of America. It is the story of sixteen-year old Feroza's dilemma of "Who I was and what I have become". Since Sidhwa comes from the minority community of Parsi in Pakistan, her novels portray the dilemma of the Parsi community to retain its identity by upholding traditional values as well as seek assimilation to a multi-racial modem and changing society of U.S. Her novel *An American Brat* presents an interesting study of the immigrant experiences of the Parsi expatriates in the liberated and new cosmos. In an interview to Nita, Hussain, Sidhwa says that, "the book deals with the subject of the 'culture shock', young people from the sub-continent have to contend with when they choose to study abroad. It also delineates the clashes the divergent cultures generated between the families 'back home' and their transformed and

transgressing progeny bravely groping their way in the New World."(2)

The novel opens with Zareen's anxiety that her daughter Feroza is unparsi like and that "she is becoming more and more backward every day". (3). As a child, she objected to her mother's coming to school in sleeveless blouse and saree and believes in the special code for women to follow. Her parents are worried that she might succumb to the Islamic conservatism and forget her Parsi tradition. Therefore they decide to send her away to America for a holiday and expose her to a liberal westernized way of life, which is quite close to their Parsi way of living. Thus, Feroza's journey from the third world of conservative Pakistan to the First World of free multi-culture America begins. The journey begins with a lot of confusion and embarrassment of Feroza and ends with her initiation into the new culture and liberated ways of life. The novelist has carried an emotional exploration into the impact of the Modem America on the immigrant psyche. The novelist observes her emotional reaction, her fears during her journey as, "she became conscious also of the gravitational pull of the country, she was leaving behind. Her sense of self, enlarged by the osmosis of identity with her community and with her group of school friends, stayed with her like permanence..." (47).

After her landing in America, Feroza is subjected to many kinds of humiliation, embarrassment and rather inhuman treatment by the customs official. She is exposed to a New World of moving staircase, the escalators etc. Her initiation, her naivete and amazement reflect the culture shock of immigrants. Her confusions at the wrong end opening of the Pakistani Passport, her fight for the cart for her outsized suitcase by inserting a dollar bill in a slot, and frustration on being side-lined by a flirtatiously smiling young man and the whole barrage of questions from the hostile customsofficer-reveal the bafflement and amazement of the third world immigrants in an advanced cosmos. Though initially embarrassed, but equally fascinated by the exposure, her mind is filled with images of slender young American and his candid admiring eyes, she encountered at the airport. She feels alienated and essentially fascinated by an altogether different culture. People here were "busy with their own

concerns, none of them around her bothered to glance her way or stare at her" as they would have in Pakistan. "She knew no one, and no one knew her. It was a heady feeling to be suddenly so free for the moment, at least, of die thousand constraints that governed her life." (73) The novelist suggests that these younger breeds of Parsi community undergo a sea change in their approach to life and come forward to break away from the cloying and cramping chains of the narrow-minded community. Sidhwa wants to communicate that the cultural transplants who resign themselves to the culture and ways of the adopted land, achieve a degree of acculturation and self realization which isolates them from the rigid and conservative Parsi heritage but transforms them and assimilates them into a more modern and liberal culture which welcomes all the immigrants. Feroza who has travelled miles in search of the freedom and emancipation, begins to assimilate the independence of mind and spirit and sturdy self-confidence offered by the New World which is alien to her "Third world' experience and sheltered up-bringing. She stays in America with her uncle Manek, a graduate student at MIT, who although only six years her senior, is a crafty veteran in the ways of America. Manek had weathered the trauma of culture shock, which the New World had buffeted him and emerged toughened. He wants Feroza, too, to imbibe and assimilate the progressive and stimulating culture of the U.S.A. Feroza succeeds in the process of transformation and integration and outgrows Jo and acquires friendship, knowledge and confidence. Like Jasmine, she, too, matures through culture clash and confusion and acquires an assimilated and integrated personality. She is exposed to the diversity of culture in a multi-cultural and multi-racial society while moving around the city with her Uncle Manek. Manek shows her the museums, libraries and shopping malls. She is mesmerized and bewitched by the touring of New York City's marvellous places on the one hand. And on the other, the horrible experience in the fire stairs, the dark video parlours flashing lewd advertising, cheap hotels, prostitutes, her confrontation with a sex maniac at the YMCA bathroom-jolt her psyche and she goes through culture clash and culture shock. Her irresponsible and uncalculating native attitude lands her into labyrinths of filth and dirt and debris:

"America assumed a ruthless hollow, cylindrical shape without beginning or end, without sunlight, an unfathomable concrete tube inhabited by her fear." 90.

Her encounter with the New World transforms her into a responsible, self-reliant and self-confident person. Sidhwa shows that the east is quite protective towards the youngsters whereas the America exposes them to a bigger shock and greater hazards so as to initiate them into its mainstream. If America is a land of dreams, it also has its darker side.

Feroza is left with the only choice to be assimilated to the new culture and ways of life. She decides to stay on and study in America. She acquires the American style of living and speaking. She discovers the joy of being a woman and dresses, talks and acts like an American girl. She is no longer a shy, conservative girl of Pakistan who would be shocked by her mother's dress. She finds that there is nothing wrong or immoral in wearing skirts though she tells that, "it is not decent to show your legs in Pakistan"(51). She also learns to drink wine and like boys; "Something within Feroza must have changed imperceptibly, because suddenly one spring evening Feroza discovered that the boys were talking to her, making a concerted effort to kid, cajole and encourage her out of her painful shell." (163) Moving out from a small strictly supervised college in Twin Falls, Idaho, she enters the University of Denver where she gradually matures into a confident and assertive young woman who befriends boys. It is like Jasmine of Bharati Mukherjee, who understands the joy of living and loving and discards the idea of dying. Both Mukherjee and Sidhwa make their female protagonists encounter the culture confusion so as to harmonize them with the New World of freedom of learning, freedom of choices to be made.

Feroza, too adapts an American life style. She flirts with an Indian student Shashi at the University of Denver and later enters into a tempestuous love affair with a handsome young American Jew David Press. Feroza's mother Zareen travels all the way to Denver to dissuade Feroza from her decision to marry David, a Jew and frightens David away from Feroza by emphasizing on the difference between the Zoroastrian and Jewish cultures. Sidhwa

presents the fundamentalism of Parsi community as and unfair to women as unjust the Islamic fundamentalism is to their women, though she does assert that Parsi women enjoy more freedom than their Islamic counterparts. Both Feroza and Zareen travel at the physical level as also at intellectual level and enjoy their liberated cosmos in America. They find themselves treated as individuals in their own right and not merely as show pieces as wife, daughter or sister of someone. The novel ends with Feroza becoming in her mother's words "An American Brat." The self-assertive and mature Feroza, despite an estranged love affair and general feeling of depression, does not meekly return to Lahore for an arranged marriage, but prefers the struggle for freedom and self-fulfillment. She ultimately achieves a synthesis between the East and the West as do Barry, Jean and Jasmine. The author shows her a typical representative of Parsi milieu as *Jasmine* represents Indian native traditions and Bharat and Navaranjini symbolize and are attached with their Sri Lankan traditional values. But all of them possess an internal fondness and fascination for a western style. Feroza, therefore, absorbs the culture shock and alters her life style and ironically she outgrows her mentors, Uncle Manek and friend Jo both. She has adjusted and assimilated herself to an alien culture and "there would be no going back for her." (317)

III

Bharati Mukherjee, one of the major novelists of Indian Diaspora, has changed citizen-ships and lived in various cultural milieus with the disorienting rapidity of her own protagonist Jasmine. Her major concern as a writer has been the life of South Asian immigrants in U.S.A. and Canada and their problems of 'acculturation' and assimilation. In *Jasmine* (1989), she tries to unravel the complicated layers of cross-cultural confusion and assimilation through a series of adventures which the heroine undertakes during her Odyssey from Punjab to California via Florida, New York and Jova. Her journey through life leads Jasmine through many transformations - Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase and Jane which leave their inevitable scars on her delicate psyche. A simple, peasant girl from Hasanpur in rural Punjab, Jyoti is introduced as a bold,

intelligent and a non-conformist girl who questions the prophecies of the family astrologer about her "widowhood and exile" - which angers him so much that he chucks hard on her head. She trips and fails on the ground getting a star-shaped scar on her forehead. This incident along with another one of killing a mad dog rushing to attack her-figure prominently later on in Jasmine's memory of Hasanpur, indicating continued hold the Indian roots exercised on her after settling in U.S. Jyoti becomes Jasmine when she marries Prakash, a modem city man and she says, "Jasmine ... Jyoti. Jasmine. I shuttled between identities" (4). *An* identity change beginning thus continues for Jasmine when stunned by the sudden and brutal killing of her husband by terrorists, she decides to fulfill his dream and visits the U.S. to reach a University campus in Florida, lie down, on Prakash' new unworn suit and commit 'Sati'. Her decision is in compliance with the mindset she has acquired in the traditional society of Punjab being an eyewitness to the miserable conditions of the widows. Once Jasmine leaves for America on forged papers knowing not what future holds in store for her, she undergoes a metamorphosis. Her hazardous and adventurous trip abroad, like that of Feroza, reveals her innate affinity to the American concept of "Americanness as an outlook on life" and she becomes a personification of the author's ideal of fearless enterprise.

But her American experience begins on a jarring note-her brutal rape by the deformed Captain of the ship. Incensed by the outrage, she becomes a veritable Kali, knifes him to death, sets the building on fire and walks out distraught, dead tired, with no destination in mind. The author means that America, the land of dreams, had many disillusions in store for her. When she falls down nearly dead out of shock, starvation and fatigue, Mrs. Lillian Gorden enters into her life and offers her a home, as to several illegal immigrants. In New York, Jasmine is shocked by the sight of beggars, one of whom curses her as a "foreign bitch" when she refuses him alms. The taxi driver in New York is a migrant doctor from Kabul, who lives like dogs because they have taken everything from them. On the streets of New York, Jasmine sees more greed and more people like herself, "New York was an archipelago of ghettos seeming with aliens." (140). She is encouraged by the advice of Mrs. Gordon

who says, "Let the past make you wary, by all means. But do not let it deform you." (131). Her words help her recoup physically and mentally and she sets out to meet professor Vadhera, the gentleman who was instrumental in Prakash's securing admission to an engineering course. Dejected by the discovery that the Professor is eking out a living not by teaching but by trading in human hair, and frustrated by the diligently guarded 'ethnicity' in that household including the austerities of widowhood she is expected to observe, she decides to leave that house determined to live on her own. This move actually indicates her self-assertion and self-actualization - a process accelerated by her acculturation to the American way of thinking along with the American way of dressing. Her desire for independence shuts the door to the virtue of passive resignation extolled by her grandmother. In fact, Jasmine's protest, like that of B. Mukherjee, herself, is not against Indian culture per se but against its 'retentiveness', its 'particular way of partially comprehending me world' (5). Unlike Vadheras who have retired behind the ghetto walls and the ""fortress of Punjabiness" (148), Jasmine longs to explore the new land which intrigues her. She wants to distance herself from everything Indian, everything Jyoti like. Having learned to "walk and talk" American, she grabs every opportunity to become American and to prove to the world what "a girl from a swampy backwater could accomplish" (160). Through her Lutheran benefactress, she becomes "care giver" to Wylie and Taylor and their little girl Duff. Just as in the short story, 'Jasmine' in *Middle Man and Other Stories,* the Trinidadian immigrant falls in love, so here, too, does Jasmine with Taylor. Working at part-time jobs like answering phones, and tutoring graduate students at the University and absorbing the alien culture rather greedily, Jasmine gains a personality and becomes a confident individual.

The process of transformation and assimilation is quite fast. Pulling herself out of her native culture is painful but exhilarating at the same time as she feels, it is cowardly to "bunker oneself inside nostalgia" (185). The tugging between the opposing forces does not intimidate her, rather it excites her. Amidst the other immigrant domestics who hang suspended between the two worlds, Jasmine feels proud that she is getting rooted in the New World - an alien

land. Her immigrant status does in no way obstruct the emotional rapport between her and Taylor. She appreciates the Americans for their democracy, their "work culture", though she has reacted sharply as an immigrant to Wylie's decision to leave Taylor for economist Stuart as it was beyond her imagination to think of snapping her bonds with her husband. Despite the fact that her sense of Indian values cannot tolerate certain American practices as the sight of "naked bodies combing their hair in front of dresser mirror" (171), she is absorbed in the American world.

Another eventful chapter begins in Jasmine's immigrant education when she leaves Taylor and Duff fearing their safety because of the hovering presence of Sukha, the Khalsa Lion who killed Prakash in India. Then she meets another saving angel mother Ripple Meyer and secures a job in Iowa's bank and a place in the banker Bud Ripple Meyer's heart and home. Assuming a new identity to fit her role as Bud's wife (though she has not married him), Jasmine becomes "Jane". Bharati Mukherjee's use of friendly souls readily giving advice and assistance is, her disguise, her tribute to American generosity as she herself says, " My characters are survivors. They have been helped as I have, by good strong people of conviction"(6). In ***A Change of Skies,*** Gunaratne, too, focuses on the friendly Australians like the Bluebells, My naw & Crow. The separation between Bud and Karim depresses her but adds to her immigrant experience about America, that in "America nothing lasts - Nothing is forever, nothing is so terrible or wonderful that it won't disintegrate." (181). She has learned to adjust to a new set of values but she has definitely not shed all values altogether. Sought after by a University Professor who wanted to share out of body experiences with her, Jasmine couldn't help but marvelling at America's elasticity that can make a sixth class drop-out from an Indian village to be a fit companion to scholarly people. Jasmine's walking out of Bud's life is not a wanton act of frivolity. Her two remarks, "The moment I have dreamed a thousand times finally arrives" (237) and "I am not choosing between two men. I am caught between the promise of America and Old World dutifulness", (240) amply clarify that the decision of Jasmine is a resonant response to the courage she admired in Du, Bud's adopted son, in trying to take

charge of his life; and the cowardice of DarreL, Du's next door neighbour whose overtures of love she rejected, in trying to run away from life by the extreme step of suicide. Her desire for self-actualization - "I want to do the right thing. I don't want to be a terrible person"(239) has nothing to do with 'guilt' associated with 'sin'. Jasmine's every moment is a calculated step into her Americanization and with each development a vital change is marked in her personality. Jasmine's flight to Iowa and her renaming as Jane is indicative of a slow but steady immersion into the mainstream American culture.

To change from Jyoti to Jasmine, Jasmine to Jase and Jase to Jane is not an easy process. Each stage of her life ends in terror, violence and fear. She comments, "I have had a husband for each of the women I have been Prakash for Jasmine, Taylor for Jase, Bud for Jane, Half Face for Kali." (197). She survived hideous times that involved rapes and murders, terrifying challenges and immigrant crises. She is not sentimental about her Indian identity, nor does she suffer from nostalgic longing. Instead, she has shown an exemplary courage in withstanding the cultural confusion and culture shock and finally succeeds in forging new alliances in the friendly soil of the adopted homeland. The fusion between the East and the West pleases her and she rejoices that her journey to America has unfolded her "affirming" self, "her adventure, risk and transformation" (241). The word 'transformation' together with her words of farewell to the mental image of the astrologer which has been haunting her all these years, "watch me reposition the stars" suggest that Jasmine has indeed achieved self-actualization and assimilation with American milieu. T Padma tightly observes, "thus synchronous with her self-actualization Jasmine becomes truly Americanized, not just in peripheral social or cultural mores but in a primal 'intensity of spirit', and finds peace neither in India, nor America, but in the 'American Dream"'(7). While Jasmine is triumphant that her transformation has been genetic, Du, her adopted son remains a defiant immigrant who refuses to assimilate. Du can never be an assimilated American, as he would always be attached to an experience, which Jasmine successfully transforms by forging new alliances. In Jasmine, Bharti Mukherjee celebrates

both the dauntless and defiant spirit of a simple peasant girl who blossomed out of a bruised part into a formidable challenging personality and a complete individual. The status of an immigrant in the U.S. not only facilitates and accelerates her acculturation but also her assimilation into the adopted land. It is the only way to survive and this "Jasmine - like survivor" has obviously haunted Mukherjee, who herself survived her earlier immigrant experience in 'Canada' constantly fighting battle against racial prejudice" (8).

In the novel *Jasmine*, she hammers down the truth that an immigrant's life is in fact a series of reincarnations as he lives through a several lives in a single lifetime. By subjecting her heroine to multiple codes of society and geographical locales, she seems to suggest that if one has to assimilate oneself to the mainstream culture of the adopted land, one should forget one's past. But this assimilation of Jasmine is a long hazardous journey from the "Sati goddess" Jyoti (176) to the Kali, from Jasmine to "adventurous Jase" (186) and then to "Plain Jane" (26).

Thus the study of the above three novels written by three novelists belonging to three different countries of the Third World and settled in Australia and America faithfully record their expatriate experience of culture clash, culture confusion and confrontation in an alien land. The protagonists, counterpart of their own creator, approach the immigrant problem in a typical way i.e. by effecting a synthesis between the east and the west. All three novels hammer down the truth in our memory that interaction between two culture leads to a gradual transformation in the protagonists-Barry, Jean, Feroza and Jasmine. The novels project a common belief that the multi-cultural milieu of Australia and U.S. welcomes and assimilates all immigrants, irrespective of colour and race. To most Sri Lankans, the U.S. could be the land of their dreams but never Australia. Bharat and his wife, therefore, are constantly in touch of their motherland and thoughts of their home-land along with its political and social unrest are ever present in their lives. To Jasmine, U.S. is her 'Dream World and she sheds her Indian names and dresses and adopts herself to every circumstance of life over there. Chameleon like, she transforms herself. And gradually, she assimilates into the Western culture of America and

interacts freely with it so that "she not only takes but gives as well and by giving she endows a new perspective to the land she inhabits"(9). In a serious Vein, *A Change of Skies* describe that acculturation or adoption of changes in external behaviour begins early enough but 'assimilation' or 'adoption' or the ability to react instinctively and emotionally to a culture is a far slower process. Breaking away from one's ethnicity and absorbing the new culture is the only way for survival. Therefore Jean and Barry's daughter "is allowed to grow up in a new country, free of the burdens of the past." (32). With a broadened vision and newly acquired discipline and rhythm, Bharat, Jasmine and Feroza find the same old native place not worth returning and entirely uninteresting and disgusting. It is no wonder that Barry "longed to be back in Sydney" (263) because in Sri Lanka the old land marks have been lost and the new ones are not striking to recall." Feroza, in *An American Brat*, too, initially depressed, gradually recovers, strengthened in her resolve to stay in America. She prefers the struggle for freedom and self-actualization in America, instead of the settled life, family and every contentment at Lahore. She has decided to chart her own culture of heritage, journeying through the Pakistani Islamic culture and Western culture of America. She, too, feels that Pakistan, she had left behind is not a place worth returning, "Feroza was disconcerted to discover that she was misfit in a country in which she had fitted so well." (239)

All the three novels thus voice one similar truth that immigration transforms the personality of an individual by enabling him to come out of the cocoon of his traditions of a dead past. The transformation gradually leads to their assimilation and initiation into the alien culture and it becomes a movement "away from the aloofness of expatriation to the exuberance of immigration.".

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Twelve

INDIA AS REVEALED IN V.S. NAIPAUL'S *INDIA : A WOUNDED CIVILIZATION* AND PEGGY PAYNE'S *SISTER INDIA*

Dr. Mrs. K. Sandhya

My objective here is to "view how two writers belonging to entirely different nations, religions, cultures and environments project India in their writings after spending a fairly adequate period of time in India to study her. Though there are numerous other writers who have written about India, I have chosen V.S. Naipaul and Peggy Payne for my study for various reasons. Firstly both are foreigners though the Indians claim Naipaul to be their own because of his grandfather's Indian roots. Naipaul was born in Trinidad but has always been conscious of his Indian origin. Peggy Payne is an American who visited India on an Indo-American Fellowship to spend a winter in Varanasi. Her book *Sister India* has been published in 2001 and I thought the book will be of contemporary interest. Secondly one is a man who has depicted India from his perspective and Peggy Payne is a woman, who described India, mainly concentrating on Benares, from her womanly perspective. Thirdly because of the titles of the books. Naipaul's *India: A Wounded Civilization* sounds rather negative while Payne's *Sister India* connotes a more sympathetic and affectionate account of India. It is interesting to notice that V.S. Naipaul with his Indian roots calls

the Indian civilization wounded while a totally alien American writer treats India as her sister.

My purpose is to study India' as revealed in Naipaul's *India: A Wounded Civilization* and Payne's *Sister India.* To begin with Naipaul, he is certainly one of the most eminent writers in English in the west. He visited India quite a few times to obtain a first hand information of India which he has heard a lot about. The first visit to his ancestral homeland took place in 1961 and the experiences and observations encountered by him led to his writing *An Area of Darkness* subtitled as an *Experience of India* in 1964. Later his fourth visit to India in 1975 gave birth to his *India: A Wounded Civilization* in 1977. Both these books are travelogues based on his travel experiences, but they are considered, by some visitors, to be non-fiction novels. Naipaul's account of India that emerges out of his two books raised many an eyebrow of the Indians. His critical attitude towards India continued in his other books, also, like *The Overcrowded Barracoon* which is a collection of some of his essays, besides many references in his other works. Naipaul recorded his impressions of India which were by and large negative and bitter though he confessed, in one of his interviews published after his becoming the Nobel Laureate, that he is not prejudiced against India and he looks at it with an open mind.

It is essential, I feel, to see, briefly, Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness* as it runs parallel to his *India: A Wounded Civilization.* He analyses the social and political conditions of India besides making a close analysis of Gandhism and the place of Gandhian philosophy in Indian society. Probably his target is not the portrayal of Gandhism so much as its failure to fit into the rapidly changing Indian economic scenario based on industrialization. He said, "India undid him. He became a "mahatma". Thus, in *An Area of Darkness,* Naipaul portrays two Gandhis - the vociferous Gandhi, while in South Africa and the peaceful non-violent Gandhi who has been elevated to be "mahatma". Naipaul also pictures the trivial private issues taking front seat in the name of public commitment and the ever competing castes and clans without another, ignoring Gandhian philosophy. His tirade against India continues in his *The Overcrowded Barracoon.*

He expresses his views on India which nave stirred, up passions both for and against them. Nevertheless he gives a vision of India which appears rather dark and dismal.

Naipaul's second significant and powerful non-fiction novel is *India: A Wounded Civilization* based on his fourth visit to India in 1975 during the emergency. Though regarded to be more balanced than *An Area of Darkness, India: A Wounded Civilization* consolidated most of his views already projected in the former, like Brahminism, Hindu religion, Gandhian Philosophy and Hindu philosophy, to note a few examples. His book starts with 'An Old Equilibrium' which talks about the old Hindu iconography which stands lifeless in the modern world. He hints that "life has to be given to the new image" especially in the ancient defiled temples. He is very positive when he says "A thousand- year- old temple will live again: India, Hindu, India is eternal: conquests and defilement's are but infants in time"(page. 14 India: A *Wounded Civilization.* Penguin books, 1979, first published by Andre Deutch 1977). Naipaul mentions in detail about Vijayanagar kingdom, once the great Hindu kingdom, but in ruins when he visited. "What happened in, Vijayanagar- happened in varying degrees, in other parts of the country. In the north, ruin lies on ruin: Moslem ruin on Hindu ruin, Moslem on Moslem", (p.18). He says that India has not only been making itself archaic again but also intellectually smaller, always vulnerable. The turbulence in India, according to him, is not because of foreign invasion or conquest, but it has been generated from within. There has been a conflict between the archaism of national pride and the promise of the new and the crisis of India is not only political or economic. "The larger crisis", he reiterates, is of a wounded civilization that has at last become aware of its inadequacies and is without the intellectual means to move ahead". In one of his letters to his sister Kamala (September 21,1949) he writes, "While you are in India, you should keep your eyes open. This has two meanings: the subsidiary one is to watch your personal effects carefully; the Indians are a thieving lot. Remember what happened to the trousers of the West Indian cricket eleven. Keep your eyes open and let me know whether Beverly Nichols is right. He went to India in 1945, and saw a wretched country, full of pompous mediocrity, with no

future. He saw the filth;...Huxley said that it was half-diets that produced ascetics and people who spend all their time in meditation. Please don't get contaminated."*(Between Father and Son, Family Letters,* P.5) Such was his preconceived notion about India and he made many sarcastic remarks about India in quite a few of his letters.

Naipaul refers to R.K.Narayan's novels, especially his *My Days,* which provided him with an abstract idea of India before he had ever been to India. Narayan's oblique perception, he admits, matched "his own, and in the Indian life of his novels he found echoes of the life of " his own Indian community on the other side of the world"(p.21). Yet he was not prepared for the distress of India. He encountered the reality after visiting India. He observed that 'Bihar' (known as Vihara, a Buddhist monastery) was without "intellect or leaders, in the south a land of drought and famine and flood, in the north a green, well-watered land of jute and paddy and fishponds".

In the village he went to, only one family out of four had land, only one child out of four went to school; only one man out of four had work. Child's work, and children, being cheaper than men were preferred and children were considered to be a source of wealth as they were supportive to the maintenance of their families. Caste-system was rampant. "Every man knew his caste, his place; each group lived in its own immemorially defined area;, and the pariahs, the scavengers, lived at the end of the village". Then he saw Rajasthan full of dams and a great irrigation and reclamation scheme in a land, cut up and waste by ravines. He found those men of Rajasthan very handsome and self-possessed. Naipaul took time to understand that they were only peasants and limited. "The fields, water, crops, cattle: that was where concern began and ended". They were not ambitious and were bothered about food and survival. Naipaul noticed that the chivalry of Rajasthan has been reduced to nothing. The kingdoms, empires, palaces became empty, turned into legend or history. "Rituals marked the passage of each day; rituals marked every stage of a man's life." (P.32). Naipaul met a prince who was over anxious to preserve his prince-hood. He

seemed to be rather autocratic. Then Naipaul met a middle-class girl who married a foreigner and lived abroad. He felt that living abroad was glamorous and she appeared to be boasting about it. She stated to him that she came back to India to reassure herself. Naipaul comments sarcastically what kind of security she could find in India.

In his second part entitled "The Shattering World" Naipaul felt that with the declaration of emergency, there was a 'clean-up' and censorship of the press, (p.44) Terror was caused leading to confusion and political crisis. The old equilibrium disappeared. But "Out of this chaos, out of the crumbling of the old Hindu system, and the spirit of rejection India was learning new ways of seeing and feeling" (p.48)

In his third chapter called "The Skyscrapers and the Chawls" Naipaul delineates the hardships of rural population who migrate to Bombay with the prospects of better life-style. The already overcrowded Bombay cannot accommodate them with the result that around one lakh of people slept on the pavements of Bombay. The number of beggars seems to increase day by day. Naipaul notices that they have become a nuisance and disgrace, belittling the very idea of beggary, "precious to Hindus as religious theatre." There are countless mills, which need equally countless working hands and numerous chawls to accommodate them. Bombay has its wide roads neatly maintained while there are unmade roads too dotted with the huts and stalls of the poor. Naipaul makes a mention of Shiv Sena "being infinitely more positive than the Anand marg" which preached caste, Hindu spirituality and power through violence, mingled with ritual murder and mutilation and with homosexuality"

In the fourth chapter named "The House of Grain" Naipaul describes Poona in detail. He observes that electricity is not for the poor and electricity has not been brought across to light the villages (p.85). Villagers were divided on the basis of the possession 01 land. In some parts of central and northwestern India there are men "squeezed out or humiliated" turning into dacoits, outlaws and brigands. Naipaul goes on to the Naxalite movement originating in the far north of Bengal in Naxalbari. He traces its beginnings.

In part three "Not Ideas, but Obsessions" Naipaul talks about Gandhi, besides referring to many more people. He meets Dr. Sudhir Kakar, a psychotherapist at JNU in Delhi, who has told him that Indians have an, 'underdeveloped ego' which is created by the detailed social organization of Indian life. He differentiates Indians from the westerners even will- regard to their sexual life and the latter are articulate about it while the former have their own inhibitions regarding it.

In the next part "Synthesis and Mimicry" the Indian painting and architecture are touched upon. He finds architecture of India to be in a" disadvantaged position. He laments on the lack of freedom granted to Indian Press and says Indian newspapers have a limited vision'. (P.130)

In "Paradise Lost" he brought out facts about his stay in Delhi and the midterm elections called by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. He quotes an old man, in this context, who says 'There are no morals now. The Machiavellian Politics of Europe have begun to touch our own Politics and we will go down."

In the last part "Renaissance and Continuity" he states that "the racial sense is alien to Indians". He mocks at Gandhiji once again by saying, "Gandhi swept through India, 'but, he has left it without an ideology. He awakened the holy land, his mahatma-hood returned it to archaism; he made his worshippers vain" (p.159). It is appropriate, I feel, to mention here that even in his *Half a Life* he makes a reference to Gandhiji whom the editor said "he saw in 1931 when the mahatma came to England for the Round Table Conference. He said nothing else about the mahatma (whom Willie and his mother and his mother's uncle despised), nothing about the mahatma's clothes or appearance; he spoke only of seeing him', (p.94). Naipaul's obsessed estimate of Gandhi makes him feel that India is without an ideology and that was the failure of Gandhi and India together, according to him. He closes the book with "the stability of Gandhian India was an illusion; and India .will not be stable again for a long time. There is the possibility of a true new beginning, of the emergence in India of mind, after the long spiritual night", in *Half a Life* he continues to say; "Elsewhere in the country

they were talking of Gandhi and Nehru and the British. Here in the maharaja's state they were shut off from those politics. They were half-nationalists or quarter-nationalists or' less. Their big cause was the caste war", (p.28)

The above projected India is the picture of India as put forth by V.S. Naipaul and he has become a controversial person with many people disagreeing with his views. There are certain truthful observations and remarks which do reveal the true state of Indian people, their poverty, economic conditions, social milieu but it, is difficult to support some of his views.

Peggy Payne's account of India pivots around her stay in Varanasi; while Naipaul describes it from a broader canvas. *SISTER INDIA* is a story of westerners witnessing Benares - a very holy city in India. It is a story about an American lady who renames herself Madame Natraja signifying 'a one-woman blend of east and west.'

Natraja is the keeper of a small guest house in Benares. From the guest house 'Saraswati' she can see the Ganges. She gives, herself a Hindi name, just weeks after arrival there because she has felt that her name' Estelle, a north Carolina farm wife name did not fit her.

From where she sits she can easily see one of the phallic shrines to Shiva, the Linga. Her home is just yards from Dashashvamedh, the main bathing ghat. The 'galls' are too narrow to let a rickshaw enter. People pass in single file. Suddenly curfew is imposed in the city unpredictably because of the communal riots between Hindus and Moslems. The curfew continues indefinitely hampering the normal life of the regular residents as well as the pilgrims especially the foreigners who have to be tied down to their room, their movements being restricted terribly. These encounters surely have their retaliating attacks by the victims within a short time. Everyday is a day of tension as to when attacks will occur is uncertain. Payne stresses on this point throughout her book.

A detailed description is presented about the tea-stalls which are usually makeshift arrangements or poky places. She also depicts the burning ghat which buzzes with unceasing activity with the

cremation of dead bodies till the dusk. Rama nama is also chanted along with the slogan "Rama nama / satya hai" while carrying the dead body in their orange silk on a bamboo pallet. One of the American pilgrims, Jill is at once reminded of the crematorium in, Atlanta in her own country.

Payne also points out how astrology plays an important role for the Indians. The business-like astrologers lure away people to enlighten them on what is in store for them in future. There are quite a few people adept at massages and they pester the foreign tourists for a massage to be done by them for an exorbitant amount. Altogether life in Benares seems to be commercialized and Mahatma Gandhi, a native Indian's similar horrid experiences in the midst of a totally business like set up are recalled in one's mind. Another striking feature that is brought out by Payne is the skeleton like bodies of the rickshaw-pullers who have to toil to eke out their livelihood. Poverty is conspicuous in Benares in every nook and corner and it gets worsened with the untoward incidents that occur, depriving the poor of the little that they earn.

On the contrary the Maharaja of Benares is still held in esteem, living in a luxurious palace with a number of attendants. Even when he passes through the streets of Benares, it is a big occasion and there is a protocol. The traffic on the roads comes to a halt and the passers-by greet him with reverence.

This awe-filled adoration shown to the Maharajas comes fully alive in Naipaul's *Half a Life* where he describes how a clerk in Maharaja's palace commands respect. "Though the pay wasn't very good, nobody ever got dismissed, and people treated you with regard."(P-7)

The most important point made by the author is the pollution of the Ganges and the need to purify the waters by taking precautionary measures. Only the salient features with regard to Indian life in Benares have been'" touched upon to bring out the likeness and difference in "India" depicted by Naipaul and Payne. By and large both the authors project India as a poor and religiously threatened nation though Payne seems be more understanding and concerned about it.

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Thirteen

TEHMINA DURRANI'S *BLASPHEMY*: A STUDY OF SOCIO-RELIGIO DECADENCE

Dr. P.K. Chaudhary

Holding up the mirror to life is the chief objective of a novel. To call it *"a criticism of life"* is thoroughly apt. The prevailing social scenario is vividly highlighted, as "the one and only business of the novelist who takes his art seriously is to go direct to actual life and reproduce what he finds there with photographic fidelity."[1] The experience, whether pleasant or unpleasant is graphically depicted in the veil of fictitious names. A wit has rightly put "in fiction everything is true except names and dates."[2] In **Blasphemy,** an enthralling novel under present discussion, Tehmina Durrani, a Pakistani woman novelist writes at the very outset: "The novel is inspired by a true story. Names and certain events have been altered to protect the identity of woman whose story this is."[3] "The novel is dedicated "To Heer who suffered it all." Heer, reminiscent of the romantic feminine character in the world famous romance, Heer and Ranjha is the tortured soul around whose life the plot hinges. A male figure, Ranjha is the tortured memory she gets lost at times recurrently looms in the beginning, the middle and the end of the novel. Though it opens in the gloomy and lugubrious atmosphere just after the demise of Heer's husband, Pir Sain, she is shown squatting on a wooden stool in the bathroom and "a flood of memories" gushing from "the deep and lacerated wound" that is her mind (14).

In the mediaeval amorous tale Heer is treated as a maiden of enrapturing beauty. The heroine of **Blasphemy** is, in the words of Chandi, a friend of Heer, "more beautiful than the real Heer" (21). The man who is sitting behind is steering wheel with a magnetic gaze towards Heer and sends a note through her younger sister in which he extols her elegance "legendary like Heer's" and calls himself her 'Ranjha' (21). On this encomium she feels that "a thousand stars" have sparkled in her eyes and her heart was singing songs that she has never heard before (21). But such highflying notions cease like bubbles, as destiny has something inclement to decide for her future. Her mother, Ba, makes a different choice for the rest of her life; and the choice is a pir, known as Pir Sain, a holy man of high status and affluence in the society. This decision, makes her "flush her dreams down the toilet" and watch them "swirl around in the water being sucked into the gutter" (25). She is destined to be Pir Sam's third wife, the earlier two already dead. On the wedding day she feels "like entering heaven but leaving the world" (31): "The nose rings, the anklets and the dreams of bangles seemed fetters to me. I was somewhere else while someone was slipping high-heeled sandals on my feet"(33). After marriage, she is "bundled into a car"(35) and the car races into the future"(35). Thus Heer "steps out" from her parental house to "pi ke nagar"(35).

Henceforth begins the torturous encounters in Heer's life. On the wedding night "a mountain of flesh" descends on her with "an unusual haste for food"(39). She thinks that she has been "sacrificed to a god on earth "(39):' I looked across the dark and deathly room and noticed that the bed was like a wide grave. A high headboard rose like a tombstone. Delicate carvings read like my epitaph. The carpet, intricately woven, with animal emblems, looked like a slaughterhouse" (40). Every now and then she expresses the piercing "current of agony" darting through her body in the wake of intermittent onslaughts by the holy-looking "sinister persona" (44). Her concept of love meets sheer demolition: "I had thought lovers talked to each other and laughed and sang songs together like in the movies I had seen. Poets, passion, and love letters were all false. Liars, I cursed under my breath, they delude the younger" (42). On flimsy grounds she is tormented and humiliated. Cheel, an

eagle-like woman, always follows in her heels with nagging eyes. Kaali, a lowly woman, too, has suffered a lot in the holy man's shrine. Her story keeps Heer wide awake beside "the monster snoring in her bed" (57). She ruminates: "Was this hell? Was he entrusted by God to lift me from a dirty alley, raise me to supremacy and reduce me to an insect? Was he God? Unpredictable and unaccountable"(48). He is a revelation of "the passional secret places"[4] of Heer's life.

As a matter of fact, Heer has fallen into a veritable *Jahannum*, the burning Inferno (Carthage), Pir Sain, "the wretched" (61), is believed to have "direct link" with the Almighty and a power to "alter Allah's decree" also. The people "fell over each other to grab the bones he had chewed the meat off. So that they could grind them into a sacred medicinal powder.... They even salvaged his sputum when he spat" (62). Expensive gifts and briefcases full of money are bestowed upon him in honour. Heer comes to realise that her "golden anklets' have come from the labour of men that she had not seen and brocades "snatched from the rag-covered bodies of shoeless children" (65). She thinks: "Did Pir Sain have superannuated power or was it the faith bestowed upon him by ignorant people?" (65) Frankly she confesses:" My husband's person fell when his clothes were shed. The truth was camouflaged by a piece of cotton. Lying above me, naked as the day he was born, his evil was manifest. His cruelty is too harrowing when she opens her mouth, disclosing his clandestine involvement in whatever ill has befallen Kaali. Pir Sain sits on a chair, pulls her down between his legs and grips her temples with his knees and starts chopping her hair: "The razor ran across my scalp and brow, flung across the room, I saw him coil towards me like a torrid lava flat on my back. My stomach protruded. Inside it, my baby kicked" (71). Even her child fails to survive after birth. The most reliable of relationship turns into the most unreliable. Heer is, in fact, doomed to suffer 'emptiness' (75) in her life in the hands of the Devil Incarnate.

A girl is born to Heer. To this first daughter her mother wants to "give her wings like the birds and speed like the wind" (78). But a deep-seated abomination grows up in her mind against the stinking domestic scenario in the shrine. The next younger brother of Pir

Sain is a debauch, always surrounded by young girls and bottles of whisky. Pir's third brother has "a roaring sexual relationship" with his own daughter, Meesni. His fourth brother has a "long standing relationship with his wife's mother" (86). Being a religious leader Pir Sain does nothing to stop the incest flourish so blatantly under his nose. When Heer becomes pregnant during the sexually prohibited month of Holy Ramadan, Pir suggests abortion and the foetus is bled to death with quinine tablets. "I was shocked that he allowed himself a sin he allowed no one else" (83). Toti who chatters incessantly like a parrot calls the people of the Shrine as impostors, as they "exploit our ignorance, our poverty, our losses and our limitations to rule over us. The shrine is mercenary and political, it is not holy." (88).

A holy man is expected to be the fountainhead of love and compassion, but Pir Sain is the opposite out and out. Instead of loving his wife, he tortures her extremely even on trifles and drags her to the bed-room-turned-into-a-death-chamber (98) and makes her legs curl up while causing excruciating pain to her groins. The treatment that he metes out to Tara's Baluch fiance is horrible just for picking the pocket of a guest. Howling like "a wolf (99) he orders his people to insert cashed chilli into his rectum. The red insects that infest the cotton crop are spread over his wounds to sting like wasps. Toti, too, receives lacerating lashes of the whip. Pir goes on exercising these acts on the pretext of saving the faith from blasphemers, as he is "the Chosen One" (101). When Sakhi Bibi approaches the Shrine for her son's health and comes back without any outcome, Sakhi Baba, like a rational being says, "Graves cannot bestow life. Nor can men who fleece the poor and oppress the meek reach God"(107). A paper wrapped around river fish reaches the kitchen that bears the sermon that "those at the Shrine are impostors reveling in lies... The rulers of the Shrine run a business in Allah's name. God is where you are" (107-8), But the voice of protest against the Shrine ends "like a wild seed that fell on parched land, germinated, took root, sprouted, struggled up, and died." (108).

The Shrine is a place of worship, but it has degenerated into a slaughter-house of "innocence" (109). Heer's daughter, Guppi, is now twelve years old and is sleeping with others on charpois in the

courtyard. Heer sees Pir leading Guppi behind his bedroom door, hears her scream twice and senses her body curl "when the ropes of Guppies Charpois creaked" (110). When asked about the reason for her sudden screaming, she tells her mother: "He put his hand inside my shalwar. He also put it in my shirt and pressed me hard" (111). Heer plans to save her daughter from slaughtering in his death chamber. She sends Yathimri in Guppies place, and when she comes out, Yathimri's form bears the tattoos of his evil and between her trembling legs blood has trickled and dried. Heer asks the Almighty, "Who is this man, God? Is he exonerated because one of his ancestors was good?" (113). But satiating the "lion's appetite" (113) seems to be a tough one. When a middle-aged widow with her two angelic looking daughters come to have shelter, Pir orders his wife to lead them to "the pleasure of purgatory"; "I heard the sounds of the wolves and felt the heat of hell". (130).

Pir Sain takes life as "a raging storm". He is indeed a sex maniac. Yathimri, expert in fulfilling Pir's "satanic lust" (131), complains to Pir about Chote Sain's rape on her. The master is so much obsessed with her - "Midday to sunset, after dinner, and all night, he was over her or under her or with her" (137) - that the ferocious Pir gets Chote Sain "tied with ropes to the rebellious tree" (136) and slashes his bare back with khajji whip mercilessly. At last, the son dies of grievous wounds and Heer becomes emotionally hysterical. She considers her husband as her "daughter's molester" (143), and her "son's murderer"(143): "A parasite nibbling on the Holy Book, he is a "Lucifer", holding her by the throat and driving her to sin every night. To her, Pir is "the rapist of orphans and the fiend that feed on the weak. But over and above all this, he was known to be the closest to Allah, the one who could reach Him and save us"(143).

Pir Sain, the debauch, is in a tight grip of concupiscence. He brings home two cartons, one having a television and the other a video machine. The video film shows a man becoming stark naked by taking off his own clothes and a woman behaving very shamelessly just like ocean waves, seems rising, falling, . creeping, quivering, and then receding. But Pir, though described as "A LIVING SAINT. HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS, REFUSE FOR THE MEEK AND LOWLY" (158) in a newspaper, starts bringing

"Heroes" to the Shrine. "Heroes", the title of chapter Ten, is highly ironical, since these heroes are not valiant warriors facing their adversaries; instead, they are the 'heroes' displaying the masculine virility. Hero number one is hairy and damp, while his dusty heels scrape across Heer's skin 'like cracked clay over a fresh wound (161). This vulgar sexual obscenity is filmed by Pir Sain, looming over and around them. Another hero is the Jagirdar who "circles her waist like an octopus's' (164). She is introduced as a whore from the city" (164) and his fat fingers run like black rats over her body, stripped naked. Pir Sain addresses her as Piyari before two other strangers. A man looking like a bull grabs her tightly and enjoys her to his fill, while the tape recorder, like "a record on the gramophone" (256) in Eliot's **The Waste Land,**[5] is playing "a tantalizing song" (165). The religious leader makes a divine prophecy: "This is the stuff you will have in heaven, my friend" (166). The second man, looking very handsome, reminds her of Ranjha, as his face resembles Ranjha's. Fed up with such a life style of Pir Sain, Heer lifts her hands of prayer at Babaji's graveside, "A fire bums in me, Allah. Free us from the grip of Satan today. Lift from us the crimes he piles upon us in your name. Grant your blessings for the sake of a child's sacrifice" (174).

Pir's lust goes on unabated. One night, he brings in a pink and white boy who thrills Heer much by fornicating maneuvers. But the fauji's son is flogged to death. On the other side of the wall Pir lies on the top of her; and the victim's torment has fuelled Pir Sain's desire. When Rajaji, Pir's son, desires to marry Maharani, he is told that both are the master's offsprings. Such a marriage would be an incestuous relation, as Maharani's mother was drugged and blessed with a daughter by the dubious effort of Pir Sain. Rajaji flouts the suggestion and establishes nuptial tie with Maharani later on. A person in white robes who appears before Heer to advise for mixing some sedatives in Pir's drink is taken to have strangled the master with a muslin cloth, and it is none but Cheel, Pir's confidante'. After Pir's death she meets the Jagirdar in disguise and discloses her identity. Even Tara's disclosure reveals Pir's wretched life-style when he has crushed her violently with his weight and threatens her, "If I hear a word from you again, I will skin you alive. If I hear

you have spoken a word to a single soul, ever again, I will cut you with a knife into little pieces and cook you" (201). With Tara, Heer decides to sell copies of Pir Sain's video films so that they would spread the truth "as germs spread a virus" (201). The rumours disturb Rajaji who calls her "a serpent living in my father's sleeve" (203). Though loudspeakers of the Shrine announce the praises of Pir, Heer does not chant prayers for his soul to rest in peace and keeps herself shut in her bedroom and sedated into a deep slumber. Rajaji likes her die unknown and unmourned for her shameless acts: "If she dies, she is not even worthy of a burial place in our graveyard. Her epitaph will be a black mark on the Shrine. I want no reminder of her" (224). Then "in a van", she crosses "from life to death," "sliding into the depths of darkness" (226). Inside her grave Heer hears a woman pray, "O Allah, bless this soul for exposing the decadence of Shrine-worship. Bless her for bringing us closer to you." (229). She feels with her tear-filled eyes that someone has "understood" the groans of her life in rotten socio-religious set-up.

So, set in South Pakistan, ***Blasphemy,*** the debut novel of Tehmina Durrani, presents a searing study of evil, a mirror-like delineation of the distortion of Islam by predatory fundamentalists. Stylistically the book is very commendable for powerful prose with immense intensity "describing the individual, dynamic meaning of words".[6] Some of the words and expressions culled from local tongue, like ubtan, kafan, chuhas, Sain, malai, apa, dupatta, chaddars, tambaccoo, jagirdar, maulvi, chorh babul ka ghar, mohe pi ke nagar aaj jana parah, (35), so on and so forth, add another major quality to ***Blasphemy***. The portrayal of female protagonist undergoing a gruesome psychic turmoil imparts an outstanding dimension to the novel for its deft employment of stream-of-consciousness technique. As "a working model of life"[7] on the basis of the writer's experience and feeling, this novel too seems to be "the one bright book of life" since "the novel as a termination can make the whole man alive tremble".[8] A critic's remark that a good novel "does not simply convey life, but says something about life"[9] is fully apt in the case of ***Blasphemy***. Durrani has assumed "omniscience" and described characters from within.[10] Undoubtedly, this angry and bold work clearly establishes her among the foremost writers of the subcontinent.

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Fourteen

TEHMINA DURRANI'S *BLASPHEMY* FROM A MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVE

Dr. K. Sandhya

The act of writing is for a woman an opportunity to break her silence of ages because of a number of reasons: the patriarchal set up repressed her and the racial society has taught her to be culturally silent. This phenomenon has been generally observed all over the world, but is more conspicuous in some parts of the world, the Indian sub-continent being one such. The feminine becomes the marginalized consciousness caught in complex cobwebs of life on several fronts. Besides the domination of her male counterparts who suppress her and exploit her physically, mentally and morally, race and religion do play an important part in her subjugation in the name of rituals, traditions and the right code of conduct dictated specially to her because of her gender. Tehmina Durrani, a daring writer from Pakistan, throws insights into marginal self, besides various other issues pertaining to woman.

She made her literary debut in 1991 with her sensational and controversial autobiography, *My Feudal Lord.* In her fictional autobiography *My Feudal Lord,* she describes her experiences of marriage life in such a captivating way that the trauma comes alive before readers. Her husband, Gulam Mustafa Khar was an important politician in the government of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and rose to the position of the Chief Minister of Punjab. Politically strong as he was, he exercised his absolute power over his wife at home. A

champion of democracy externally, he harassed her terribly. This novel of Durrani has been translated into several languages and has also won the Italian Marrissa Bellasario prize. The novel stands as a testimony to the development of the writer from the status of an ordinary housewife exploited in real life, but regarded as elite by everyone, to that of an author giving vent to her feelings of anguish and gradually into a woman emancipated and struggling for her own identity. She also fights for her own rights as well as for those of other women.

In "*Archives*" in an interview she says, "The real oppression on women is that they must not speak. And doing something as unconventional as writing a book, makes you into a woman who doesn't have modesty."[1] She continues to be so bold as to say assertively, when her husband heard that she was writing a book about their martial life, "Well, Mustafa, now the world will know you only as Tehmina Durrani's ex-husband."

Durrani projects the Pakistani society, where the Muslim patriarchs dominate and the woman is relegated into the secondary, rather inferior rung of the ladder of importance, intellectually and socially. Her main role is to be in an object of sex, and instrument for the satisfaction of the man's sexual desires and also procreation to continue the family male order. Durrani earned the reputation of being a bold and feminist writer. She states, "Well, I'm a woman, so I naturally write from a feminine perspective. My works are about breaking a silence for a part of society which cannot speak out. I am called bold because these are issues one does not talk about, nor one talk about one's own life. I suppose my passion for reform is overwhelming. And, I think, when anything over whelms you that much, you have a natural boldness because you step out of the realm of fear"3. For 13 years, she lived that fear, as the battered sixth wife of a feudal landlord from Punjab.

Blasphemy, set in South Pakistan, is inspired by a true story, as the writer herself admits at the very beginning. It is a shocking story of cruelty, sex and violence, where a Muslim woman struggles against all that is contrary to what Islam stands for. The story blends fact and fiction in its portrayal of real and heinous human crime

and tragedy perpetrated on woman by the very powerful people of the opposite gender.

Durrani's ***Blasphemy*** revolves round the central character, Heer - *a* very beautiful woman married to a religious leader- Pir Sain, when she is barely fifteen, much against her wish. In fact, she has already got the image of Ranjha- a young man imprinted in her heart. But as destiny wished it to be, she had to marry Pir Sain- the man of God as he has been considered by the community- who is eighteen years or so older than she is. She has to occupy the position in his life as his third wife, the first two wives already dead. Her mother's ecstasy knows no bounds and she wonders, "How will I sit with him? What will I say? My Pir is becoming my son-in-law! O God, I could not even dream of sitting on a chair in his presence" [P.26 *Blasphemy]*

Imprisoned in the cage of immense wealth, clothes and Jewellry, Heer now enters the household of absolute purdah - the abode of her husband where a feeling of claustrophobia haunts her. The description of their wedding night sows the first seed of his "animal haste for food" which has to continue for years to come later without much change for Heer, even if there is any, only for the worse. For her the bed becomes a "wide grave" and the items in her bedroom- all symbols of a slaughterhouse.

Heer says, "The women in our circle did not seem to look beyond their raised noses. They chattered endlessly about disobedient servants, clothes, Jewellry and interior decoration... Many a day in the lives of these women was completely devoted to the topic of what to wear that evening." Heer can feel the presence of an eagle-like woman always "watching everyone as if everyone was committing some crime."[P.41]. Even in the haveli, there is intense spying of woman on other women. The husband desires her after lunch where once again she becomes a victim to his whimsical sexual perversions.

As a woman, she has her own dream of a loving married life which gets totally shattered gradually, piece by piece everyday. Her real torture begins when he begins to assault her physically. His violence grows brutally based on the reports he gets from the

spies he engages on her. Even the punishments imposed on her are very cruel. None dare open their mouth.

Heer comes to know that his "first wife had died of a weak heart that collapsed in the middle of her wedding night. The second wife lived to see the day, but come dusk, she had a nervous fit that she seemed to not want to come out of. Two days later she shuddered and trembled to death."[P.50].

There was a practice of 'sodomy' also in vogue. Incest was so common that even protesting against it seemed to be a crime. Physical relationship between the father and the daughter and the daughter's mute helplessness' and Heer's son to marry the same girl who happens to be a victim of her father's atrocities of incest speak about the repression of women and their agony. One can just empathize with the psycho-dynamics of such women.

Durrani vividly narrates the inconsolably woeful tale of a woman, Heer caught in the Jagirdar Sufi hero's iron hands. Women are outraged behind the veil of social status and religion. Even minor girls are sexually abused even without their knowledge, sometimes while they are sound asleep. Desiring any girl, even if she is a slave, is accepted and the wife herself takes up the responsibility of sending them to be used physically by her husband. Though these truths are widely known all around, it is taken as a normal thing expected to happen. Any protest of any kind meets with dire consequences.

It does not suffice. She has to submit herself to the sexual demands of the men chosen by him for her. There are much younger boys, normally dirty, stinking but strong, among them. The husband also gives sex serum to these village youth so that they could entrance their sexual prowess. The husband watches and records these sexual acts of his wife with voyeuristic pleasure.

Durrani also exposes the black magic, magical talismans in use and the items of sorcery widely in practice in Punjab in addition to male atrocities on women subjugated to every form of adultery. Though they have flaws, when pointed out, the accuser is guilty of blasphemy. Day after day body keeps surrendering and the soul keeps rebelling as Heer searches for a moment of peace.[4] But she is

a bold woman who traverses the hard path with perseverance and moves towards a triumphant liberation. Her body is suppressed but strength of mind and will power conquer the naturally biological inferiority of a woman. She lives a life of torture and trauma for about twenty-four years in the hands of her husband till he dies and later in the hands of her own son who becomes a replica of his father every inch. It is very typical of a woman's general societal status, living without any identity of her own; more over dying each moment while in life. But what are heartening are the final empowerment and the liberated psycho-dynamics of a woman.

Tehmina Durrani's language is very powerful and effectively mirrors the currents and undercurrents. It touches on incest, child abuses, prostitution, pedophilia and the instigated suspicion of woman against woman. The present paper focuses on the apprehensive of woman in the name of gender, age being no barrier at all. Child marriages, rivalry between two women promoted as a strategy of male superiority and aberrant sexual behaviour are a few aspects which wring readers' hearts which crave for a final solution.'

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Fifteen

MARGARET LAURENCE, CARL JUNG AND THE MANAWAKA WOMEN

Dr. Samiran Kumar Paul

"Canadian writing tends to be Jungian, whereas American writing tends to be Freudian" is the bold thesis of Robert Kroetsch.[1] The first half of it is certainly true of Canadian fiction. The influence of Jung on Robertson Davies in *Fifth Business* and *The Manticore* and on Margaret Atwood in *Surfacing* is obvious and well known. What has not hitherto been recognized is that Margaret Laurence too may be called a Jungian, in the sense that some of Jung's most penetrating intuitions are exemplified and illuminated in her four Manawaka novels: *The Stone Angel, A Jest of God, The Fire-Dwellers,* and *The Diviner.*[2] While the earlier women - Hagar, Rachel, and Stacey - represent only aspects of Jung's concept of personality, Morag Gunn, the protagonist of the last novel (which Laurence herself sees as ending the Manawaka saga[3]), goes through a process of development which corresponds closely to Jung's full process of individuation. In the Laurence novels, the quest for identity can be seen to progress, almost systematically, from the problems of the persona and the unadapted shadow in *The Stone Angel* and *A Jest of God,* through increasing awareness and acceptance of the animus-figure in *The Fire-Dwellers,* to the completed individuation of Morag in *The Diviners.* The parallels between the phases of Jung's theory and of Laurence's fiction reveal the novelist as spiritually akin to the psychologist; her work has the scope and articulation of a complete cultural myth which lends itself appropriately to Jungian

analysis - while at the same time pointing beyond Jung's ideas on female-male relations, which were deeply conditioned by his own time. Although Laurence's techniques make her characters speak and live with the force of *cinema verite,* her women derive their universal and enduring power over our imaginations from the myth in which ! their creator places them. In the analysis of this myth, the conceptual tools forged by Jung can help us to place some of the characters and relationships, can throw increased light on the achievements that evade all the Laurence women except Morag Gunn, and can contribute to a better understanding of one of the central questions of our time, the nature of woman and her relation to the male. For the woman novelist ultimately diverges into a significantly different psychological and cultural mythos of woman, one in which the integrated but isolated self must learn to be its own support and create its own finality. In linking such a condition to love and joy, Laurence gives new meaning to Rilke's definition of love as two solitude's that "protect, and touch, and greet each other" and thereby places new demands on the techniques of fiction.

"The river flowed both ways." This first sentence of *The Diviners,* in the section entitled "The River of Now and Then," presents a symbol which draws immediate attention to Laurence's Jungian concept of the self as process, as always in a fluid state of becoming as opposed to a frozen state of being. The ongoing nature of the experience of identity, which involves the self in a simultaneous relationship to time present, past, and future, is apparent in all Laurence's novels and is basic to her most central and recurrent narrative relationship, that of mother and child. Except in the case of Hagar, who mothers two sons, this means the mother-daughter relationship, which for the female consciousness is the most elementary of all. Before the girl-child knows anything of the expectations of family and society, she knows she is a daughter of a mother. This relationship provides Laurence with a clear analogue to the ongoing nature of the self- namely, the daughter who in turn becomes mother; as mother, she still retains within herself her daughterhood and with it a strong sense of the past, while at the same time she sees the future in her daughter who is, as Morag says of Pique, "the harbinger of her death and the continuer of her life."

Even the childless Rachel comes to the recognition that "she is the mother now." As she travels to Vancouver with her child-mother (Mrs. Cameron), Rachel is beginning to realize what Morag perceives as the pattern of existence at the end of *The Diviners*, as she looks once more at the river that flows both ways: we "look ahead into the past, and back into the future, until the silence."

The struggle to define the self so as to be able to live freely in the present, while conscious of both past and future, is a distinguishing mark of the Laurence's heroine. In all the novels, the preciousness of the living present is emphasized by the presence of emblems of "the silence." Death inhabits the novels: in the undertaker-father of the Cameron girls, in the cemetery with the Stone Angel which opens Hagar's novel and is in sight at the place where Rachel and Nick make love, in the Nuisance Grounds where Christie divines the garbage and the aborted child lies amidst the refuse, in the fire that destroys the Tonnerre daughter and her children (mentioned in Stacey's novel and central to *The Diviners)*, and in the suicides that thread their way from one novel to the next. All these emblems affirm through contrast that the nature of the living and free being is movement, growth, and change. However, whereas the female characters, through their mother-daughter identity, demonstrate the quality of existence as continuous process, the male figures (usually father or lover) often seem to represent discontinuity in themselves and reorientation for the female. The female quest for selfhood cannot be fulfilled unless the challenge represented by the male can be met. In Laurence's fiction, there are some male characters who represent the ancestral, societal past and the functions of rational personality as conceived by Jung (Mr. Currie; Marvin Shipley; Morag's husband, Brooke; Grandfather Connor), but there are also those who represent the opposite of rationality - namely, no rational sensation, intuition, instinct, freedom from fear of nonconformity. The latter group is the more numerous: Bram and John Shipley, Nick, Niall Cameron, Dr. McLeod, Uncle Dan, Chris, Christie, Jules, McRaith, Royland. These men are realizations of the positive animus, but they become so only through their recognition by the integrated female psyche. The recognition! on and acceptance of the animus is fraught with peril and demands great psychic

energy and courage. The special, triumphant few who divine its presence are, for Laurence, the Diviners.

For Hagar and Rachel, the acceptance of the self occasioned by the challenge of the male occurs as a shock of recognition only through the memory of time past, not in the present time of the relationship itself. In contrast, however, Laurence suggests that one of the main reasons why Stacey escapes from Manawaka so many years before her sister Rachel is that, having recognized and accepted her father for what he really was, Stacey is left free both to mourn him and yet to live her own life. Although she resembles her father in her fondness for the gin bottle and although she asks for his gun as her inheritance, she nevertheless throws it in the lake and remains untempted by the solution of suicide that her neighbour Tess adopts. The extent of Stacey's strength is revealed, moreover, through a figure of the past, Mac's father, whose confession she hears and to whom she can open both heart and home in a truly generous and life-enhancing way. Thus at the end of ! *The Fire-Dwellers*, Stacey is as triumphant as life allows any of Laurence's women to be, until Morag. The novel ends with the omniscient voice in the present tense:

Stacey heaves over onto her side. The house is quiet. The kids are asleep. Downstairs in the ex-study Matthew has been asleep for hours, or if not asleep, meditating. Beside her, she can already hear the steady breathing that means Mac is asleep. Temporarily they are all more or less okay.

The emphasis on quiet peace and intimate closeness in a continuum of past, present, and future suggests that Stacey is much closer than she realizes to fulfilling her quest for selfhood.

The patterns of growth toward selfhood which appear as Laurence moves from Hagar through Rachel to Morag run parallel to those found in Jungian psychology. Jung, like Freud, saw the psyche as having three basic parts or levels, but Jung differed from his predecessor in his analysis of these parts and in placing greater emphasis on memory and society and less on the controlling nature of sexual instinct. Jung uses the term "persona" to describe the mask which the ego consciously assumes to meet the world. Since

the world as object includes all other people, as opposed to the self which is always subject, every self is a lonely island. How true this is of all Laurence's women![6] Jung warned that if the individual becomes totally identified with this persona, other valid parts of the personality which are thereby neglected will tend to act negatively and in unexpected ways. Mrs. Cameron, Mr. Currie, Grandmother McLeod, and Grandfather Connor are characters who seem to be totally identified with their personae and to have no life apart from them. Rachel, however, in her embarrassing outburst at the Tabernacle, shows the propensity of the inner self to assert itself against a persona with which it is not in accord. Hagar's misfortune seems to be that her conscious will is so strong that she can continue to assert her mask even with Bram - at the cost of denying her love for him and her joy in their sexual union. Too late she realizes:

> I must always have wanted that - simply to rejoice. How long have I known? Or have I always known, in some far crevice of my heart, some cave too deeply buried, too concealed? Every good joy I might have held, in my man or any child of mine or even the plain light of morning, of walking the earth, all were forced to a standstill by some brake of proper appearances - oh, proper to whom? When did I ever speak the heart's truth?[7]

Jung stressed that while one can achieve individuality through the persona alone, nevertheless, because this mask-like personality centers on the ego and the conscious part of the self, its area is perforce extremely limited, cut off as it is from the richer and more creative area of the self that is the unconscious.[8] Hagar's speech is an agonized recognition of just such a situation. Only in death does she find access to this unconsciousness and its freedom which should and could have been hers in life.

The unconscious areas of the self have to be recognized and opened up before the goal which Jung termed "individuation" can be achieved. Individuation he regarded as an event spread over the

whole of life: "[It] is never completed," he says; "it is always an unending approximation to which death provides the ultimate limitation."' Jung saw this process as creating a new level of being and as developing, not from a struggle between opposites, but from a dialogue between the equals of conscious and unconscious. Individuation is a goal because it involves the integration of inner and outer worlds. It is a blending of complementary elements which allows the realization of the whole self, whose conscious sphere will be enriched and enhanced by its access to the unconscious. In Jung's view this process of individuation has to be preceded by adaptation to a necessary minimum of collective social and environmental standards. He thought that the self, after achieving individuation, will expand naturally and necessarily to concern itself with collective or universal interests.[10] This, it must be stressed, is Jung's view of normal, not abnormal, psychological development. The characteristic narrative voice of a Laurence novel is that of internal dialogue. At times this dialogue parallels the conflict through which the inner self and the mask achieve integration and growth. We can watch this process most clearly and most often in Morag. But it is clear too in Stacey:

> How good to hear nothing, no voices. I thought you were the one who was screaming about nobody wanting to talk. Yeh. Well. How good it feels, no voices. Except yours, Stacey. Well, that's my shadow. It won't be switched off until I die. I'm stuck with it, and I get bloody sick of it, I can tell you. Who is this *you*? I don't know. Shut up. I'm trying to be quiet and you won't let me.[11]

At times, momentarily, the note is struck with Hagar, too, as in this example from her night in the cannery:

> They can dump me in a ten-acre field, for all I care, and not waste a single cent on a box of flowers, nor a single breath on prayers to ferry my soul, for I'll be dead as

> a mackerel. Hard to imagine a world and I not in it. Will everything stop when I do? Stupid old baggage, who do you think you are? Hagar. There's no one like me in this world. (S.A., 250)

These examples show two selves which, knowing one another in different degrees and accepting, though grudgingly, their relation to each other, are able to argue as equals, as Stacey does so often with God.

Morag's quest for selfhood begins early and abruptly as a result of the accident of her parents' death, which leaves her under the guardianship of Christie Logan, the Manawaka garbage collector, and his wife, Prin. The snapshots Morag keeps of her parents are raw materials for the legends she creates of them - legends which raise her above the sordid reality of her life in the shadows of the municipal dump (called, in Manawaka, "the Nuisance Grounds"). Surrounded by the detritus of the town, from bottles to aborted babies, Morag despairingly searches for order and meaning with the aid of legends - her own stories of her family and Christi's tales of an historical and racial past which he personalizes for her through the Celtic Piper Gunn and his woman Morag.[12] Yet, ironically, Morag's dream-life becomes a way of denying the living reality of Christie and his "garbage telling." He is the first of the novel's diviners and Morag's first (though unacknowledged) anim! us projection. The first time Morag goes to the Nuisance grounds, Jules is there too, and together they hear Christie "tell the garbage." Her sexual initiation comes with this same Jules Tonnerre. A Metis living with his father on the edge of the town. In her attempt to deny her Manawaka past. Morag chooses, however, to identify with the world of reason and order, for that, apparently, is what is represented by Brooke, one of her University professors of English. To marry Brooke, Morag gives up her university career and moves with her husband to Toronto, but, more than that, as her new surname indicates, she gives up a part of her inner self when she becomes Mrs. Skelton. Morag's denial of her inner self (in contrast to Hagar's), however, is a conscious choice. She vows to conceal everything about herself which he might not like (D, 159), although she knows that she is

being untrue to herself in never letting Brooke see the "Black Celt" in her (D, 186)!.

In Jung's analysis, as in Laurence's world, the inner self and the mask will always be in some opposition, but in the secure personality, the persona will rest solidly on the unconscious; otherwise, extremes in the persona may be balanced by extremes in the unconscious. At this point, one of the aspects of the unconscious, the shadow, may give trouble by shooting up into the conscious without warning, causing moods, blunders, and so-called Freudian slips. "The Shadow" is Jung's term for the autonomous, weaker, unadapted side of the persona. Aside from the persona and its other self, the shadow, Jung argued that the personality expresses itself in four functions, linked in pairs -namely, the rational pair of thought and feeling or duty, and the nonrational pair of sense and intuition. What matters is not which pair is dominant but whether in fact the stronger pair is distinguished as the persona.[13] That Morag is not meeting this condition is shown by the increasing division between her persona and her inner self which grows until finally she comes to "hate the external self at variance with the inside" (D, 203). The external disguise of coiffeured hair, carefully tailored dresses, and matching accessories becomes more and more sterile: it represents intellect divorced from creativity, material security without inner peace, respectability which is really only conformity, a false pose which makes it finally impossible for her to bear Brooke's child. To be Brooke's anima, Morag must live totally in the present and deny completely the Black Celt in her that is associated strongly with sensation and intuition and with the past. What he loves and needs, Brooke tells her, is what he first found in her:

> When you first came to me, you had no past. I liked that. It was as though everything was starting for you, right then, that moment. You used to make me laugh -I don't mean *at* you. I mean with you. Don't you remember? I don't, I suppose, laugh easily. You had a lightness of heart that I loved -I really loved. (A 210)

During this period of psychic stress Morag begins and completes her first novel, *Spear of Innocence.* The process of creative writing seems to enable her to stay alive and to keep strong enough and independent enough of her false persona to be able to respond to Jules when he reappears. Through him, she frees herself from Brooke to be re-born, even as her child is born.

The structure of the novel, at this crucial point for Morag, throws considerable emphasis on the curious and seemingly unlikely figure of Prin. Although when Morag breaks free of Brooke she speaks Christi's words, it is the title of Prin's favourite song, "The Halls of Zion," which is used to name the section; and it is Prin's funeral that immediately precedes Morag's separation from her husband. Brooke attributes Morag's odd behaviour to her having had to return to Manawaka for Prin's death. What then is the importance of Prin, who does no more than rock and eat jelly donuts? The reader who stops to reflect on this question finds himself uncovering more and more connections through contrast between the two women. Prin is connected in Morag's mind with the scene in the bakery when Morag suffered what she fears most, public scorn. Prin retreated from the same menace into silence and dream, but Morag pushed herself on, developing, in school and college, the verbal protection and escape of writing. Later in her life, however, her conversations with Catherine Parr Traill reveal Morag's awareness of a continuing temptation within herself to withdraw as Prin did from the front line battle of life. Prin, the Princess without a Prince or subjects, draws no nourishment from society; she becomes only a silent mountain of flesh. For her, there is no release or support for psychic energy, any more than there would be for Morag if she stayed in Manawaka, in her legend world, or in the false life she has created with Brooke. Prin's dreams have no connection to society; they are Utopian, formed in exile as were those of the Jewish exiles who wept by the waters of Babylon when they dreamed of Zion. Prin, old yet young, with a simplicity that Morag recognizes as that of the pure in heart, is a strikingly close dramatization of Jung's description of the shadow.

Jung's researches convinced him that the shadow, despite its repressed tendencies, is not evil. It is "merely what is inferior,

primitive, unadapted and awkward, not wholly bad. It contains inherited, childish or primitive qualities that would in a way vitalize and even embellish human existence."[14] For the shadow to be positive rather than negative, it must be consciously accepted. However, as Jung observed, commonly the shadow is projected onto another person instead. Hagar projects hers onto Lottie, but also, it seems, back onto her dead mother. Even as a child, she denies the part of her self that is represented by her mother, indeed, so completely does she repress it that she will not take the mother's place even in disguise to comfort her dying brother. Only in retrospect does Hagar see how much she resembles her father and what a price she has paid for denying the totality of her nature. Her refusal to join Lottie in killing the new chicks at the dump can be interpreted as the rebellion of her unconscious against the destruction of the fertility symbol. But even though she remembers the incident later in life[15] and is convinced that her reaction was right, she has no awareness that in this solitary incident she has revealed her truest personality. The night scene in the hospital ward, in which Hagar is unaware of her own voice crying out Bram's name, indicates the extent of her denial of her inner self. Nor is she fully conscious when she begs forgiveness of John during her night in the cannery.

In contrast, Morag is aware of one similarity between herself and Prin when she muses at Prin's funeral:

Those halls of Sion. The Prince is ever in them. What had Morag expected, those years ago, marrying Brooke! Those selfsame halls? ... And now here, in this place, the woman who had brought Morag up is lying dead, and Morag's mind, her attention, has left Prin. *Help me, God; I'm frightened of myself.* (*D*, 207)

Right after this, Morag returns to Brooke, and Christi's words pour from her as she astounds her husband:

> ... Brooke, I am twenty-eight years old,
> and I am five feet eight inches tall, which
> has seemed too bloody christly tall to me
> but there it is, and by Judas priest and all
> the sodden saints in fucking Beulah land,

> I am stuck with it and I do not mind like I did once, in fact the goddamn reverse if you really want to know, for I've gone against it long enough, and I'm no actress at heart, then, and that's the everlasting christly truth of it. (A 210)

Through the activation of the contents of her unconscious while she was writing, Morag's conscious mind seems to have come into contact with the shadow content of her personal unconscious in such a way as to assimilate it. In this way, she is prepared for Jules who represents a deeper level of being for her, a content of the collective unconscious and another projection of her soul-image or animus.

The animus/anima figures represent the opposite of the dominant sexual attitude in the conscious female/male personality. The dominating male attitudes of Western civilization have made the anima figure all too familiar to us, although she may appear in a variety of forms from Venus to the Virgin Mary, or even to Mary the bank's advertising helper. The animus figure, though less well known, is pertinent here since the Laurence protagonists are women. In addition to the sexual attitude, the animus figure will represent the opposite functions of personality to those chosen by the persona and will thus be associated with the shadow. The unconscious is not, however, like Freud's Id, dominated by sex; instead this is the level of the psyche which includes the spiritual element of the personality. It may appear in dreams as ugly and imperfect; but, if like the Ugly Fairy, it can be loved and accepted, it can be transformed into a powerful spiritual and creative force to balance or supplement the conscious life. If the personality is to be integrated in universal terms and elevated beyond the societal truths represented by the persona, an engagement with the animus must occur, out of which rebirth can ensue. Indeed, Jung felt that the appearance in dreams of the symbol of the child was the mark of the adult's momentous moment of rebirth. Before this can take place, however, it is essential that the shadow be dealt with, for it blocks the way to the deeper levels of the unconscious.[16]

The considerable moral effort which Jung posits as necessary before one is conscious of the shadow can be seen in both Hagar and Rachel, both of whom also dramatize Jung's belief that the personal unconscious, which is associated largely with the shadow level, is essentially negative and constricted. Although the shadow exists for everyone, it is dangerous only if it remains hidden, because then it blocks the way to the deeper levels of the unconscious. For Jung the positive, creative force within the unconscious is the storehouse of the archetypes and the dwelling of the animus/anima. One of the commonest archetypes for the animus is that of the Father; others are Son, Hero, and Wise Man.[17] The hindrance caused by the unknown or unacknowledged shadow can be seen in the difference between the Cameron sisters, between Rachel who rejects and Stacey who accepts her father as animus. Consequently, the rebirth symbols are strong in *The Fire-Dwellers*. Duncan, the child undesired by his father, is reborn from the sea into the arms of his father. In a novel where the dominant search is for ways of communication, the moment when Jen, the flower child, begins to speak may also be interpreted as a moment of rebirth. Throughout the novel Stacey's science-fiction fantasies suggest an opening of her unconscious life that leads her to Luke, who is to her a lover and an animus figure. Nevertheless, her identity is strong enough for her to recognize that her life cannot deny the past (as Luke would wish) but must affirm and include it, even to the extent of making a home for Mac's father and in effect including him as one of her children. Her growing perception of Mac's hidden needs and real strength offers fresh hope for their marriage. Mac, or even his father, may offer her an animus-projection, something to check that narcissism and over-preoccupation with inner processes that afflict those who lack a person on whom to project the animus.[18] That danger, however, remains, though Stacey's narcissism seems much healthier than Rachel's, even as her arguments with God contrast to Rachel's acceptance of God's jest.

In "Marriage as a Psychological Relationship," Jung points out that while the male seems to have only one anima, the female may have several animus projections. The type of male who seems destined by nature to be an animus projection is described thus:

"Not every man of real intellectual power can be an animus, for the animus must be a master not so much of fine ideas as of fine words - words seemingly full of meaning, which purport to leave a great deal unsaid. He must also belong to the 'misunderstood' class, or be in some way at odds with his environment so that the idea of self-sacrifice can insinuate itself. He must be a rather questionable hero, a man with possibilities, which is not to say that an animus projection may not discover a real hero long before he has become perceptible to the sluggish wits of the man of average intelligence.'"[19] Although this description fits, in varying degrees, Bram, Nick, Luke and Mac, it applies best to Jules Tonnerre. Jules, whose name Morag always mispronounces as jewels, appears time and time again in the novel as if in a dream, suddenly, without preparation or forewarning. A generation younger than Christie, he bears, nevertheless, a strong resemblance to him. Both are dominant in feeling and intuition; both share a sense of historical loss, of dispossession, and of alienation from society; although strongly individual and unrestricted by the claims of society, neither is happy, and both die with their speech failed or constricted. Both wrestle with their demons alone, and while Jules, in his music, seems to have greater opportunity than Christie for creative expression, he is no more able than Christie to resolve his inner turmoil. The war, the crucial demoralizing experience for Niall Cameron as well as for Christie, does not have the same potency for Jules.

Union with her true animus projection, Jules, releases Morag on her night journey to selfhood, described in the section "Rites of Passage." During this period she completes two novels, *Prospero's Child* and *Jonah,* the titles of which indicate the stages of her development. The first suggests the rebirth she undergoes as she frees herself, along with her protagonist, to "be her own person," and the second hints at the downward plunge she must take to engage the deepest levels of her psyche before she can return like Jonah from the whale's body. This is a period when there is an evident expansion of consciousness for Morag as she meets and responds to the witch Telfer and to the temptation to seek an antidote

to loneliness in sexual relations with Eva, with the lonely males, and then finally with McRaith.

Just before Morag returns to Manawaka for the last time to say farewell to Christie, McRaith paints her portrait. The description of her eyes as "angry and frightened, frighteningly strong" (310) suggests the final condition of her selfhood in which she has achieved a union of both partial systems, consciousness and unconsciousness, and has established a new center of psychic totality uniting the divergent realities within. Her strength in this condition is undiminished by her lack of what she had earlier dreamed of as happiness. Her individuation is tested and proved by Christi's death. She blesses him in recognizing him as father and survives the paralyzing vacuum created by his death to find and establish her real home beside a river in Canada, at a spot close to, but not part of, a town like Manawaka. No longer is it of consequence that she is known to the town, as Jules tells her, as being "crazy as a bedbug." When Jules visits her here, their union is no longer sexual! 1. According to Jung, the second half of life (which begins gradually between the ages of thirty-five and forty) has as its goal "above all the psychic 'conjunction' a union with the contra-sexual (animus) both within one's own inner world and with its image bearer in the outer, in order that the 'spiritual child' may be born."[20] It is at this stage that Jung posits the possibility of rediscovering God within us as a unifying presence." The amusing passage in which Stacey argues that God should return to earth in the likeness of herself is reminiscent of Jung's God within. This inner dialogue occurs just before Stacey meets Luke. She argues:

> Listen here, God, don't talk to me like that. You have no right. You try bringing up four kids. Don't tell me you've brought up countless millions because I don't buy that. We've brought our own selves up and precious little help we've had from you. If you're there. Which probably you aren't, although I'm never convinced totally, one way or another. So next time you send

> somebody down here, get it born as a her with seven young or a him with a large family and a rotten boss, eh? Then we'll see how the inspirational bit goes. God, pay no attention. I'm nuts. I'm not myself. (*F.D.*, 168)

Stacey's retreat at the last moment here is indicative of her stage of potential but incomplete individuation.

Jung considered that the symbol of God within, the mark of true individuation, might appear in dreams as a mandala, a wheeling magic circle with a center. In the last Manawaka novel, the divining rod comes closest to this symbol. Its center is the self holding the rod whose mysterious gift, Royland says, is inherited from others and passed on in turn to another. Morag, secure in her individuation, possesses the divining gift at least momentarily through her writing. Although the future for her is still mysterious, still requiring growth until the silence, in contrast to Hagar, Rachel, and Stacey (for whom God finally remains "out there"), the principle of unity which is divinity exists within Morag. Indeed, there may be a pun in the title of the novel. The special few are the divine ones.

Laurence, however, pursues the question of identity beyond the individual female consciousness to the consequence for creativity, which is the ultimate end of the Jungian conjunction - the emergence from opposites of a new identity. When that new identity is the living, rather than the inner, reality, of a child, the consequences may indeed be threatening, for the temporal future belongs to Piquette Tonnerre-Gunn. Will she be a diviner? Will the process of individuation be any easier for her, born as she is without the constrictions of society which are the sources of fear for most of the Laurence heroines? The evidence of the last section of the novel suggests that the answer is No - that Pique's struggle will be even more difficult than Morag's. Here again one is reminded that a major difference between Jung and Freud is Jung's insistence on the societal nature of the self. This means that, in Jung's opinion, man cannot operate without culture, that no individuation is possible without "society,"[21] 'which he defines as implying continuity in

time and as incorporating the communal or racial memory which is reached only at the deepest psychic level. This level, reached by Morag through legend and literature, may be tapped through song by Pique, as it was by her father. The Tonnerre songs, however, are songs of loss and deprivation. The strong sense of a society characterized by loss of meaning and purpose can be found also in *The Bird in the House* in the gulf between the past and present generations and in *The Fire-Dwellers* in the violent death of Buckle, the breakdown of Tess, and the vacuity of the whole "Richalife" operation. (In the first two novels, by contrast, the violence and emptiness is predominantly personal.) This is the world which Pique inherits, and she is highly conscious of its emptiness even in her teens. Perhaps the explanation for the lesser effect of war on Jules lies here too in the suggestion that his generation, unlike that of Christie and Niall Cameron, finds in war only a slight variation on the peacetime condition of man. Perhaps that is why Jules cannot write his own song.

Jung cautioned that the individual who is not furnished by his society with a meaningful social role or set of symbols on which to build a strong psyche will be prey to neurosis - a condition which he defined as ultimately consisting of absence of meaning. In his view, the whole of Western society was in this neurotic phase, from which it could be freed only by an effort to find new symbols which would surface in archetypes from the past.[22] The present time of *The Diviners* is concerned exactly with this search for meaning. Two talisman surface from the past, linking Christie and Morag with the Tonnerres and connecting them back to Hagar's family. One is the Scottish pin with its motto, "Gainsay Who Dare; My Hope is Constant in Thee"; the other is the knife with the hieroglyphic I, an inverted T for Tonnerre and a visual divining rod. The pin seems to represent a cultural past in which the struggle for self-affirmation was constant, as it must be in the present, but which relied on another, unlike the present in which the hope rests on the self alone. The knife is associated much more closely with the untamed world of the West, where hope is balanced by despair, where the tradition of hunting involves the solitary self in a confrontation with death in nature, and the cultural tradition of the

Indian enables him to live with the land and not in opposition to it. Catherine Parr Traill made a successful attempt as an individual to bridge the two cultures; now, in a time of greater collective crisis, the same task faces Pique, the half-breed. The pin and the knife are not, however, the archetypal symbols which Jung seems to have had in mind, and, significantly, in the Laurence novels the social archetypes that do appear are not expressive of unity. The twins of *A Jest of God* are separated by death, wives are without husbands, mothers are not wives, children are without fathers or mothers, the land is prairie without water, there is fire and thunder (in the conspicuous Tonnerre name), but there is no water to save the original Piquette. In the Laurence novels, the only role which continues to generate real psychic power is that of the mother. Rachel, the one childless heroine, recognizes what is true of Hagar, Stacey, and Morag: the child is important for what it does for the mother (*J of G*, 50). Conventional sexual roles in such as those of husband and wife no longer identify because they are time-conditioned, and, as Laurence makes clear, the present time and society as organized at present have no meaning. Furthermore, as Jung pointed out, although the animus projection may satisfy and produce an effective tie for the moment, the object will scarcely be able to correspond consistently with the changing soul image. Nor is it likely that two people will find their projections in each other. Morag found hers in Jules, but he apparently never found his.

One of the conclusions to which this last novel clearly points is that the relation of the sexes remains an unresolved problem. At this point Jung offers little help. His researches take as a postulate the complementary function of opposites. Although he apparently came to his belief without benefit of biological research, Jung approximates a biological concept of the origins of sexual difference when he says: "The whole nature of man presupposes woman, both physically and spiritually. His system is tuned in to women from the start, just as it is prepared for a quite definite world where there is water, light, air, salt, carbohydrates, etc."[23] Jung cannot of course be called sexist, since he clearly believes that only through the balancing of these equal but different parts can either male or female be complete. However, he refers constantly to the male as

dominant in Logos that is, in thought, rational feeling, mind, order, initiative, judgement, and discernment. Woman, on the other hand, is dominant in sensation and intuition, and representative of Eros as relationship and connection. Psychologists must be left to determine whether Jung was scientifically correct or whether he was drawing questionable conclusions from data which were already socially determined. The fact remains, however, that the novel *The Diviners* presents an increasingly common social phenomenon: the woman who chooses not to be constrained by the tradition that expects a woman to enact a home-centered role of wife and mother. Instead, Morag has found within herself the strength to unite the diverse aspects of the feminine which society has so long kept apart.

In the feminine typology described by the Jungian psychologist Toni Wolff, the feminine appears in four forms, which she terms the Mother, the Hetaira, the Amazon, and the Medium.[24] In Morag, Mother and Amazon, which are collective forms of relatedness to persons and to nonpersonal values respectively, are expressed in the nurturing support she gives to figures as different as Prin, Jules, O.K. Smith and the young Dan, and in her own career as novelist. The Medium, expressed in the archetype of the Wise Woman, is described by Wolff as "immersed in the psychic atmosphere of her environment and the spirit of her period, but above all in the collective (impersonal) unconscious. . . ."[25] Morag's role as "diviner" expresses the medial woman's ability to "inspire others to become conscious of their own psychic contents and those of others," an ability dependent upon her own firm sense of self as well as upon her aesthetic talent as a novelist. The Hetaira is the female as companion rather than mother. This attitude is expressed in a "personal identity which centers around the values of individual relationship and the fulfillment of personality" and "finds love an end in itself rather than something subordinated to family and social forms."[27]

Morag's relationship with McRaith demonstrates the vitality of the Hetaira in her, and the deception of Pique, which it necessitates suggests that this is the orientation most difficult for her to unite with her other aspects. McRaith seems ideally suited to Morag,

since like her he is creative, dominant in sense and intuition and connected to the Celtic cultural tradition with which she identifies. But once more, as with Jules, it appears that the male is unable to integrate his inner and outer selves. McRaith cannot paint anywhere except beside the great archetype of creativity, the sea, but he cannot stay there for long because of the presence of his wife and large family. His unconscious is not freed through his wife, yet his psyche is too fragmented to live without her protection. June Singer points out that "... unless we are partners with that contra-sexual side of our natures, the soul that leads us to our own depths, we cannot become full and independent partners with a beloved person in the outside world."[28] This unhappy state characterizes Christie, Jules, and McRaith, while Morag, thanks to the inner marriage, is able to remain strong, despite the absence of a beloved mate. Stacey, the only other Laurence heroine who approaches the completeness of individuation achieved by Morag, and like her unites all the feminine aspects, is alone among the Manawaka women in having a real chance to find that joy and that enlarged potential for enriched experience which a happy marriage offers.

Although Morag is ready for love as the translation into personal terms of the outward reaching impulse of the individuated self, nevertheless, at the end of *The Diviners*, as she returns to her empty house to record the title of her latest novel, Morag walks alone. Thus in the Laurence fictional world the woman again appears as a lonely island, forced through the inadequacies of her chosen mates into an isolated independence which is the price of developing her consciousness to the full and achieving individuation. That Morag is not diminished by this deprivation of her feminine function of relatedness points to the way Laurence seems, if not to reject, then at least seriously to question Jung's views on sexual complementing. The significant and positive male figures in the Laurence world represent the Jungian female traits and qualities, linked to strongly masculine physical sexuality. None represents a traditional hero; with the possible exception of Bram, the on! e closest to pioneer society, none finds self-integration. The women consistently respond to animus figures of sense and intuition, and are themselves complex mixes of Jungian male and

female with a slight dominance in the logos qualities of thought and duty. Such women thus have little temptation to try to realize themselves spiritually in a man, but little hope, either, of being able to find fulfillment through a man. The salvation for the Manawaka woman lies inside the self and outside traditional and recognized societal patterns for the female. The problem this represents is described by .one male Jungian psychologist as follows:

> One might speculate upon the possibility that there may be no archetypal pattern available in western Christian culture - that is to say, no archetypal pattern that has been accepted by this culture - that would enable certain types of women to find their true individuality in terms of their femininity. The basic rejection and denigration of feminine values as compared to masculine values is the heritage of our historically patriarchal culture. This has resulted in a situation in which the feminine individuation problem has become a pioneering task that is perhaps meant to usher in a new period of culture.[29]

In this respect, *The Diviners* may be a pioneering novel, for it may suggest that truer animus figures will be found in primitive or pioneer societies than in the rich cultural but male-dominated European ones where Jung carried out his research. The problems seem immense, and one wonders what Pandora's box the feminist movement has opened. Can we give up or re-orient deeply rooted societal givens? Will the new possibility of real feminine consciousness free the male as well as the female from a one-sided, either/or definition into an awareness that is more truly expressed by the androgynous figures than by the contrasting, though complementary, male-female ones?

What will be the consequences for fiction itself of such a revolution of expectation as that involved in the changing female consciousness? Will there be a marked alteration in the characterization of the male in his animus roles as Father, Son, Hero, or Wise Man? Like many other women writers, Laurence has often been criticized for the unsatisfying nature of her male characters who are known only through memory (Bram), waking dream (Nick or Luke), or, as in *The Diviners,* as reflections of Morag's

inner being, not as individuals in their own fight. Will readers come to understand and accept such males as products of the woman writer's fidelity to the female process of self-discovery? One of Laurence's great achievements is to have been able to give voice and vitality to a woman's inner being without destroying her necessary Eros response of relationship to an external world which has its own, though separate, validity. Novelists of both sexes face the problem of how to use the techniques of fiction so as to be true both to social reality and to a twentieth-century understanding of self-fulfillment.

The river of time carrying us back into pre-history may bring us forward into a future we have no way of gauging. If Morag's tragedy lies in her isolation, across the river from the Smiths, and a continent away from Pique who is travelling West once more to live with her father's brother, her greatness lies in her ability to continue to do what is demanded of all of us in Laurence's world. We must continue, not as boats against the current carrying us back into the past, as in Fitzgerald's American mythic world, but, as in *The Diviners,* looking ahead into the past and back into the figure - through our children, our inheritors in the river of time in whose waters flow our mysterious links to the past and to our as yet unknown heritage. Hagar's pin must be linked by Pique to the knife of Lazarus, but it remains for the time being with Morag, as perhaps "the hope that is constant with thee" remains with the timeless mother found in and through the father but separate! from him.

Notes:

1. Robert Kroetsch, "The Canadian Writer and the American Literary Tradition".
2. *The English Quarterly,* 4 No. 2 (Summer 1971), p. 47.
3. Although *A Bird in the House* is set in Manawaka and provides a strong link between *The Fire-Dwellers* and *The Diviners,* it will not be considered here since its short story form differs from the novels and its protagonist is not seen as a mother.
3. Margaret Atwood, "Face to Face with Margaret Laurence," *Madclean's,* May 1974, p. 46. Like most readers, 1 am familiar

with Jung's work but lack extensive knowledge of it, nor do I understand its application as would a psychologist. There is no indication that Laurence has any more than a lay knowledge or interest in Jung, although in her discussion of her writing methods she emphasizes issues and attitudes that are central to Jung's psychology. See Donald Cameron, *Conversations -with Canadian Novelists, Part One* (Toronto: Mcmillan, 1974), pp. 96-114.

4. Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974). p. 239. All further references will be contained within parentheses in the text.
5. See Margaret Laurence, *A Jest of God* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966), p. 124, for the scene in which Rachel enters the darkened funeral parlor for the first time and hears Hector speak the words that liberate her into self-responsibility.
6. See C. M. McLay, "Every Man Is An Island: Isolation In *A Jest Of God*" *Canadian Literature,* No. 50 (Autumn 197 1), pp. 57-58.
7. Margaret Laurence, *The Stone Angel* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart), p. 292. All further references will be enclosed within parentheses in the text.
8. I. Progoff, *Jung's Psychology and Its Social Meaning* (New York: Grove Press, 1955), p. 224.
9. Jolande Jacobi, "The Process of Individuation," *Journal of Analytical Psychology,* 3 (1958), 105.
10. Carl Jung, *Psychological Types* (London: Pantheon Books: 1923), p. 56 1, ff.
11. Margaret Laurence, The *Fire-Dwellers* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969), p. 171. All further references will be contained in parentheses within the text.
12. Progoff points out that "the typical Celtic tale portrays the struggle of the psyche forindividuation" (p. 241).
13. Jung, *Psychological Types.* The complexity of Jung's "futictional compass" is beyond the scope of this paper and is not reflected in the novels.

14. J. Jacobi, *The Psychology ofC. G. Jung*, 5th ed. (London: Routledge, 1951), p. 130.
15. Laurence, *The Stone Angel*, pp. 28, 213.
16. Jung, *Psychological Types*, p. 583 ff.
17. E. Whitmont, *The Symbolic Quest* (New York: Putnam, 1969), p. 207.
18. *Ibid*, p. 598.
19. Jung, *The Development of Personality*, p. 199.
20. Jacobi, *Psychology*, p. 141.
21. Progoff, p. 230.
22. *Ibid*, pp. 231,232.
23. June Singer, *Boundaries of the Soul* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), p. 204.
24. Ann Ulanov, *The Feminine*, (Evanston, I11.: Northwestern University Press, 1971), p. 194.
25. *Ibid*, p. 208.
26. *Ibid*, p. 208.
27. *Ibid, p.* 203.
28. Singer, p. 237.
29. Whitmont, p. 214

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Sixteen

NEGRITUDE IN NADINE GORDIMER'S MAJOR NOVELS

Dr. (Mrs.) Pradnaya V. Ghorpade

Negritude, as a literary and cultural movement, was founded and propagated by three black intellectuals: Leopold Senghor, Aime Cesaire and Leon Damas. The fundamental objective of the movement and its founders was the need to define black aesthetics and black consciousness against a background of racial injustice and discrimination around the world. Samuel W. Alien (1970:9, 182) remarks:

> "The Negro is denied an acceptable identity in Western culture. And ... this preoccupation with the situation of the Negro in a culturally alien world common to the vast majority of Negro African poets has given birth in the French language to the central concept of ***negritude.***" Abiola Irele (1964:10) asserts :

"A fundamental basis of negritude is the unity of African culture." Negritude, after all, was nothing if not an exploration of the collective dreams of the black men who had only just awakened from the nightmare of colonialism. It became the essential medium for the expression of the 'negroness' of Negro people. In this connection Ezekiel Mphahlete (1962:36) emphatically states: " I

say, then that Negritude can go on as a socio-political slogan, but that it has no right to set itself up as a standard of literary performance." He further argues: "If there is any **negritude** in the black man's art in South Africa, it is because we are African. If a writer's tone is healthy, he is bound to express the African in him." (53)

Negritude was primarily a move neat of political reaction. It begun in the 1930s and 1940s which attempted to recover a sense of black dignity, by celebrating the sensuality of the black body and spirit. In a most illuminating interview describing the precise conditions which gave rise to the negritude concept, Aime Cesaire (1972 76) argues:

> "We lived in an atmosphere of rejection, and we developed un inferiority complex. I have always thought that the black man was searching for his identity. ...we must have a concrete consciousness of what we are -that is, of the first fact of our lives: that we are black; that we were black and have a history... Therefore we affirmed that we were Negroes and that we were proud of it, and that we thought that Africa was not some sort of blank page in the history of humanity; in sum, we asserted that our Negro heritage was worthy of respect, and that this heritage was not relegated to the past, that its values were values that could still make an important contribution to the world." (76)

As a movement of political revolt against the tyranny of Western culture over those who were colonised by Europe, negritude was fairly easy to understand or defend. Its link with nationalism is all the same certain in that a special rationale was developed along with it; it furnished the most important mystique of African nationalism. Negritude has also meant to a considerable extent an assiduous cultivation of the black race. Negritude, by confronting

white domination with its own racial protest and zealous partisanship of the Negro race, did more than draw together the sentiments and attitudes that went with black reaction and embody them in a heightened form. It moved in fact very distinctly towards a racial ideology. Negritude was thus at the most an ideological movement with remote political purposes. For Senghor, this is not an abstract system but an existential philosophy, a practical view of life. He (1965:43) believes that the Ail i an society is an extension of the clan, which is a kind of mystical family, " the sum of all persons, living and dead, who acknowledge a common ancestor." Thus African Society has a religious character -it is not so much a community of persons as " a communion of souls." Senghor's view or; the African, and even on the whole Negro race, opens out towards the large perspectives of a broader humanism. His defense of cultural and racial mingling is founded on this key concept, which is summed up in the following passage. He (1965:45) says: "The only 'pan-ism' which can meet demands of the 20th century is - let us proclaim it boldly-pan-humanism, I mean a humanism which embraces all men at the double level of their contributions and their comprehension." In short, negritude is a break with tradition: although African in content, it is western in its formal expression. At last, negritude as part of a history of ideas, as much as for its past and present influence-on black writing, must continue to provide an area of legitimate interest for any student of African Literature.

In Nadine Gordimer's sympathetic assessment of the black situation and the black people, the spirit of negritude gets emphatically revealed. In her novels, she presents negro characters as noble, more sensitive, more given to the warmth of life. In the white and the black confrontation, Nadine Gordimer seems to take the side of the black, as she believes in the black as being unjustly treated by the white. Nadine Gordimer seems to plead for herself in Toby's and Steven's case, in the novel *A World of Strangers*. She has identified herself so naturally with the South African world that her version of the black life does not suffer from any European bias or prejudiced misinterpretation. Though a white writer, her presentation of racial discrimination nowhere falls short of sincere authenticity. In her novels, she has successfully defined black

consciousness asserting itself in the teeth of Western oppressive pressures.

A World of Strangers :

Toby Hood comes from England to South Africa on assignment for his family's publishing house. He divides his time between the townships and white high society, he feels concerned about the black world of Johannesburg. He makes friends with Steven Sitole, his kindred black bachelor friend, similarly apolitical. Steven Sitole is destined to play a major part in Toby's African experience. Toby's relationship with Steven throughout the novel is a puzzling one. Steven tries to assert *his* separate identity in the novel. He talks with Toby about racial politics, serious art, about Tolstoy. On the other hand, fascinatedly watching the organ; movement of black dancers at a party of Steven's, Toby registers for his own part only the absence of the same capacity in himself. He understands for the first time, as he puts it, "the fear, the sense of loss there can be under a white skin." (59) In this connection Stephen Clingman (1986:53) says: "The possible converse, it appears, of a moment of white "Negritude', is quite literally one of self-denigration." As far as the assumptions of the 1950s are concerned, the novel offers its interracial socializing. For example, *Toby* remarks on the pitfalls of a white liberalism in which, 'it became 'an inevitable fashion' to mix with blacks, or even to have a 'pet African' whose name one could drop in company'. (117) Some of the more glaring incongruities of this behaviour are well documented in the novel. At one interracial party the white hostess feels so relieved at the way in which she has been 'accepted' by her guests that she remarks to Sam and Steven black men, 'I'm going to see if our black brothers in the kitchen cant rustle up some tinned soup for us'. (164)

Toby has a counterpart in the black world because of his friendship with Steven, his best friend. Toby has never really had any social commitment, Steven, however, has rejected his. Having experienced, as a black man, only bitter frustration in all quarters, Steven instead finds, solace in reckless living, in a personal refusal to be beaten, in a personal refusal to care. He is 'sick of feeling half a man': "I don't want to be bothered with black men's troubles."(96)

Toby's encounters with the African community began with a visit from Anna Louw, a Legal Aid lawyer. Anna Louw's marriage to an Indian has been broken up by the pressures of apartheid, and she lives in a much harder world than the liberals. Yet, for all that, the novel shows a deep admiration for her courage and clarity, and her unceasing attempt ever to widen the frontier zone and make it more genuinely habitable. As a black girl,' Anna asserts her separate identity in the novel. She is a disillusioned ex-communist. She became a social activist. She had made a trip to Russia in 1950, but she had not remained in the chronic slate of exhaustion, which prevented any new commitment. In short *A World of Strangers* is full of typical secenes and presents a great variety of South African types: among them She 'liberal, the Black intellectuals.

Occasion for Loving:

Nadine Gordimer's presentation of negro characters in her novels as noble, more sensitive is quite truly reflected in the novel **Occasion for Loving.** In the novel, a white female character gets attracted towards a black man because of his noble qualities. The novel focuses on a cross-racial affair between the black artist and the young white English woman. Ann Davis is an opportunistic girl, who has come to South Africa with her husband Boaz. She gets attracted towards Gideon Shibalo, who was an African painter, and teacher with 'the moody lace of a man who pleases everybody but himself.(34) Gideon takes her to the boxing matches and to other colourful affairs, and to parties at the homes of his friends, both white and black. Gideon was the man whose painting had attracted attention overseas and won him a scholarship to work in Italy. He was known and welcomed everywhere. Ann takes pride in his interest in her, recognizes and welcomes her sexual power, and likes showing other men that she finds a black man interesting, he had his own status and dignity in the society. Gideon has no contact with the African musical heritage but he tries to acquire a lot of knowledge about it by asking the seminal questions to Boaz, who works on the African musical heritage. He had painted Ann's several portraits very beautifully. These paintings refer also to the creative energy she inspires in him. She is so much interested in the picture that she is frequently drawn to look at it, though she finds

'no surface likeness to provide reassurance', though "she knew it was the likeness of what he found her to be', (151) Gideon glorifies of everything i.e. African tradition and culture, African musical heritage etc. A brilliant dancer, Ann is increasingly drawn to Gideon through an attraction described as having 'the rhythm of a dance'. (104) While describing their interracial relationship, Gideon remarks, 'Every contact with whites was touched with intimacy — —. It was always easier —to have a love-affair than a friendship'. (120) Throughout the novel Gideon Shibalo is presented as a tolerant, intellectual painter, who becomes very sensitive after the failure of their love relationship.

The Conservationist:

The possibility of a black inheritance of the land and of the responsibility for its cultivation is presented in the novel. The black people had a capacity to cultivate and manage the farm, in the novel, we find that Jacobus is a black farm-manager. He helps Mehring, the central protagonist and rich industrialist, who lays plans for the future in planting oaks and European chestnuts on the farm. He fulfills his duty as a farm-manager very well. It is true that Jacobus manages the farm capably in Mehring's absence after the storm, but his capabilities merely imitate the individual control and dominance of the white Master. He drives the other black workers to make repairs about the farm, and administers medication to a cow. (224) The novel could be seen as Gordimer's version of ***The Waste Land***, as this novel fictionalizes the collapse of all familiar structures of power in South Africa.

Mehring's son, Terry, visits the farm from his boarding school, was sympathetic to the Namibians' struggle against white hegemony. Jacobus, the black overseer, discusses how to find work for a jobless migrant with Terry. He is able to respond appropriately to Jacobus's greeting. There is the corpse of the unknown black murdered on Mehring's farm and rudely buried by the heartless Boer police. Anniah Gowda argues: "In Gordimer's novels the dead have more power than the living." The corpse of the obscure black occupies a central position in Mehring's reflection. The novel devoid of discussion, demonstrates that the black farmers are indifferent to Mehring; they do not care for him.

Mehring is on easy terms with his Bantu farm manager, Jacobus, who is fond of his master and thinks a great deal of young Terry who readily identifies with both - the Africans on the farm and the Indians at the store. Jacobus stands out as a mediator between the simple farmhands and their white boss. He has a strong sense of duty. Jacobus dresses in overalls and rubber hoots and speaks in broken English.

Burger's Daughter:

The 'Black Consciousness Movement forms the background of the novel. It was very popular amongst the Africans. Due to the impact of the Black Consciousness Movement's ideology, we find the changed attitude of the blacks towards the whites, which is apparent in ***Burger's Daughter***. Baasie, Rosa's childhood companion and a black boy who lives with Burger's family. But after the death of Rosa's father, Lionel Burger, he leaves their home; now he is a black exile in London. When Rosa joins the French branch of the anti-apartheid movement, she proceeds to London from Paris in order to meet other revolutionaries in exile. In one of the parties Rosa meets Baasie, her childhood playmate. The conversation with Baasie shakes Rosa out of her complacency. There was a change in his identity. He asserts his separate identity. The name he was given 'Baasie' means 'Little Boss'. Infuriated by Rosa's easy reassertion of their childhood friendship, Baasie insists on his new identity as Zwelinzima, not Baasie. He attacks her for posing as different from other whites because of her political commitment. He replies, 'You didn't even know my name. I don't have to tell you what I'm doing." (322) Here, we find that in Gordimer's novels the black people have a capacity of leadership. Here, Baasie becomes the voice of the Black Consciousness Movement. He rejects the false brotherhood he had with Rosa and the paternalism of Lionel. He rejects the heritage of Lionel Burger himself.

A Sport of Nature:

In ***A Sport of Nature,*** Gordimer describes the total dedication of blacks to the Liberation Movement. Whaila Kgomani, a black revolutionary, was a noble African. In the novel, a white Jewish girl, Hillela gets attracted towards Whaila because of his noble

qualities. He is repeatedly described as godlike, 'the disguised god from the sea' (231), 'the obsidian god from the waves'. (251) He first meets Hillela in the sea, appearing from the waves to bring news of an assassination to Arnold, the commander in exile. Due to his inspiration for the revolutionary activities, Hillela undergoes a transformation, Hillela, constantly questions Whaila about his plans for South Africa.

When Hillela marries him, she seeks to find ' a sign in her marriage (202) She refuses merely to accept their different skin colours. Whaila is surprised to see the change in her mind. He is a very sensitive man. When she shows keen interest in his work, he tries to acknowledge his identity, he says: 'What am I to you, that you transform yourself?'(188) Her love for Whaila leads her to become interested in his revolutionary work.

My Son's Story :

In the novel ***My Son's Story***, Gordimer portrays a character of coloured school teacher who later becomes a revolutionary activist. Here a young white women named Hannah Plowman gets attracted towards a coloured man because of his noble qualities. Sonny is the 'pride of his people as he is the first person in his family to gain formal education. Initially he is not interested in joining the black struggle. But, later on he participates in the rally and he is banned from teaching. He leads a hectic life as a revolutionary. Amongst his several admires, Hannah is one of them. Sonny and Hannah first become acquainted with each other during his prison term when she writes encouraging letters to him. Their love for the cause draws them closer. She admires the courage of the prisoners. To Hannah the struggle against injustice is of prime importance. At the end of the novel, when Hannah leaves Sonny, not out of feeling of anger but simply because of her passion to serve the needy Africans, Sonny accepts her departure easily because he likes her temperament, her urge in working for the oppressed Africans. He is a large-hearted man. As a coloured man, his courage and hope for his people are remarkable which asserts his identity. He gains prominence as an orator and a revolutionary leader. He is, by all accounts, a good man who lives by his political convictions.

None to Accompany Me :

Gordimer's presentation of negro characters as noble and sensitive is truly revealed in the novel **None to Accompany Me** (1994). Here, a white female character gets attracted towards a black man because of his noble qualities. The novel focuses on a cross-racial connection between Vera Stark and Zeph Rapulana. Vera, the atheist and white woman, accepts Zeph, a Christian, the black man, as a friend. Zeph is a businessman working within the system. Vera is very much impressed about him, after hearing Zeph's involvement in a violent attack by Afrikaner landholders. Zeph is the responsible, pragmatic new black tactician. He had his own status and dignity in the society. The novel focuses their non-sexual relationship. Their relationship is not only beyond sex, but also race as well. At the end of the novel, Vera leaves her husband, Ben and moves into a garden-house on Zeph's property. Throughout the novel, Zeph is presented as a noble and intellectual businessman.

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Seventeen

IDEOLOGICAL CLASH BETWEEN PRIMITIVISM AND MODERNISM: A THEMATIC STUDY OF CHINUA ACHEBE'S NOVELS *THINGS FALL APART* AND *ARROW OF GOD*

Radha Kanta Mishra

The history of human civilization expatiates on the past upheavals of various social, political, racial and ideological crises and turmoil. It attributes their emergence to man's inadaptability to transition and his resistance to infiltration of new theory and philosophy. The evolution of various crises has invariably contributed to revolutionization of the past trend of life and given birth to a new civilization. Whenever any change was heralded in the existential state of man in the past, he outrageously opposed the advent of a new order of life with a view to perpetuating the old order of life to which he was acclimatized and accustomed. History cites numerous illustrations of how man in the past has all along struggled against adverse forces that threatened to subvert his mode of living, and mould his ideological concepts and outlook. He resisted the evolution of new conventions, new ideas, new ways of life and ideology. He seldom welcomed any change unusual, unconventional and unprecedented in as much as a change in his way of life posed various existential hazards and problems to him. He has, therefore, combated the vicissitude in order to maintain his

age-old traditional life without novelty and reform. But never has man succeeded in the sustenance of his convention, tradition, ideology and philosophy of life. He has inevitably succumbed to the universal law of change in human life after consistent failure in his struggle.

Like historians, novelists too borrow from the realms of human history the themes of racial wars, religious conflicts and ideological clashes between two hostile groups of people. They exploit these themes in their novels and project their own perspective in support of the life and culture of their own race of people to which they ethnically belong.

In the pre-colonial period, the dark continent of Africa was a treasure trove for the Europeans, who migrated there and colonized the land with an imperialistic objective as well as a missionary motive and contemplation. As a result of their colonization, the impact of colonialism was experienced more in African countries than in commonwealth nations. The waves of colonialism flooded far into the interior regions of Africa and affected the ancestral life of the Igbo clan. Hence, the colonial rule over these lands stirred revolt among the natives against the colonizers. The natives considered the settlement of the White in their Igboland as an encroachment upon their traditional life and living. They were outraged and provoked by the enforcement of colonial rule in their own land and by the imposition of Christian religion on them by the White. The natives meditated to overthrow the European administration and decolonize their land with a view to sustaining their primitive way of life. Thus, the dark continent of Africa presented a scenario of racial war between the natives and the outsiders. This issue was a major concern with which the African writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Echewa, Nguai and Ama Ata Aidoo were preoccupied. Chinua Achebe occupies the first rank among these novelists, who highlight this anti-colonial conflict in support of their own natives.

Achebe has dealt with this issue of racial war in his two novels *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964). He has conceived of the stories for these two novels in the light of his own experiences

during the colonization of Africa by the White. Since Achebe was a Nigerian by birth and upbringing, he has witnessed the rebellion of the inhabitants of his clan against the colonial forces. Although these novels are interpreted as stories of racial war yet the cause of war is rooted in the disharmony and incompatibility between two ideologies primitivism and modernism. This war can be attributed to ideological discord and disharmony. In this perspective this article concentrates on the discussion on ideological clash between primitivism and modernism. As we delve deep into the causes of war between the two races, the Igbo and the Whites, we explore that the natives fight against the hostile forces on the ground of ideological differences.

Now let us discuss the features of Primitivism and Modernism. Primitivism is identified with aboriginality and barbarity. It presupposes mental and cultural crudeness and backwardness. It is characterized by pristine way of life, adherence to tradition and beliefs in superstitions, dogmas and rituals. Modernism on the other hand implies new mode of living, new concept, outlook and above all an opposition to the tradition. Now let us account for the antagonism between the two races of people. The Igbo as an aboriginal clan of Africa has been living in this continent from time immemorial. Hence, they are not predisposed to forsake this way of life with which they have been happy and complacent. Primitivism manifests in all aspects of their socio-cultural life.

Modernism as a new concept and a new mode of life is reflected in the culture, administration and various activities of the colonizers. From this view point the White represent modernism through and through. The clash between the natives and the outsiders ensues only when the latter attempts to thrust its modernist ideology on the former in order to revolutionize their tribal way of life. Mere settlement of the White on the Igbo land did not antagonize the natives. When the White tried to gain their upper hand and exercised their supremacy over the natives through missionary activities, the inhabitants of the land waged a war against the dominance of the outsiders and persisted in their struggle to decolonize their land. This concerted resistance of the natives against the external forces precipitated them to a war. The natives

opposed any kind of change in their ancestral life. They were always bent upon perpetuating the primitive life which they were living for generations. Since the Igbo are illiterate, illcultured and uncivilized they are impervious and insusceptible to any kind of change or novelty.

The White colonize the Igbo land to dominate over the tribal people and impose their own ideas and religious beliefs on them. As a result, the enforcement of colonial administration on the Igbo land by the White and the resistance offered by the natives led to the outbreak of racial war between the Umuofians and the Europeans. Whereas the Umuofians bear the stamp of primitivism in all their attitude, behaviour and outlook, the Europeans manifest modernism in their colonial administration and in their own culture.

Now let us discuss these issues on the basis of the novels *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. In the first novel, Chinua Achebe depicts the disintegration of the Ibadan tribe and ascribes this disaster to the overpowering impact of colonial rule that ushered modernism into the primitive life of the Igbo.

With reference to the novel *Things Fall Apart* the life that the Igbo had been living was primitive and aboriginal to the backbone. Primitivism is reflected in the Igbo traditions, customs, beliefs ritualistic performances and observances of festivals.

Let us illustrate the primitivism of the Igbo in the light of their mode of living and culture. The inhabitants of this clan are savage, brutal, ruthless, obstinate and belligerent. Okonkwo the hero of the novel *Things Fall Apart* embodies in his personality the characteristics of the primitive men. He is physically strong, mentally courageous and morally brutal and obstinate. Cruelty and ruthlessness are considered the heroic attributes of a tribal chief. Kindness and compassion are viewed as weaknesses of a heroic personality. From this view point Okonkwo is heartless and ruthless. He does not hesitate to kill his fostered son Ikemefuna with the cruelty and brutality of Chengiz khan or Id Amin. He is neither penitent nor remorseful for such inhuman and treacherous murder of a boy he loved most. These qualities embodied in him evince his

primitiveness and aboriginally. He represents his clan in all respects by his words and deeds. He is truly an epitome of primitivism.

The Igbo like the primitive men are polytheists as they believe in the power of so many gods and goddesses, such as Agbala, the Oracle of the Hills and Caves, Amadiora, the god of thunderbolt, Idemili, the python god and Chi as personal god and guiding spirit. Agbala the Oracle of the Hills and Caves is worshipped by the priestess Chilo. The spiritual relationship between Agbala and Chilo is enshrouded in mystery. Besides, Ezeani who is the chief priest enforces the will of the clan as the will of Ani, the earth goddess. Likewise, Agbala also manifests the will of the clan and forecasts its future. The inhabitants consult the Oracle at any time of crises or disaster. In the novel *Arrow of God* Anato Amalu consults Oracle about the second burial of his deceased father Ogbuefi Amalu.

Besides, the Igbo tribe lives in the grip of numerous superstitions and blind beliefs. The inhabitants of the dark Continent of Africa believe in ogbanje the presence of an evil spirit in the womb of a woman. A woman who suffers from ogbanje, generally gives birth to an infant that dies and returns to the womb of the same woman to be reborn. This is a strange and mysterious phenomenon that tortures a woman psychologically and emotionally every time whenever she gives birth to a child. Such a disease can be remedied by a medicine man who is called in to exorcize the evil spirit abiding in that woman. The novelist gives an account of how a medicine man exorcized Ezinma Okonkwo's daughter for being an ogbanje. The medicine man asked Ezinma to point out the place where she had buried her iyi-uwa. She indicated the place of burial from where the exorcist dug out the iyi-uwa to root out the rebirth of the malicious spirit. This belief frightens Ekwefi, Ezinma's mother.

The Igbo also believe in the ominous birth of twins. The inhabitants abandon the twins in the dense forest to die alive. Besides, swelling sickness is considered abominable and whoever suffers from this sickness is dragged in to the forest and tied to a tree to perish alive. The Igbo also consider act of suicide as abominable and never bury the dead body of the deceased. Suicide is construed by the natives as sinful and sacrilegious. The dead body of such a man is left unburied and untouched in the forest.

When Okonkwo committed suicide his body was not buried as the Umuofians treated it as obnoxious and desecrated.

The Umuofians believe in the custom of human immolation rooted in the primitive life. They never hesitate to execute any kind of brutal action to propitiate the deities. In this context we can illustrate how Okonkwo immolates his fostered son Ikemefuna without slightest hesitation and inhibition in response to the demand of the deity.

The Igbo also believe in Egwugwu cult. Each Egwugwu represents an ancestral spirit that returns to earth and manifests in the personality of an Egwugwu. All these beliefs signify the primitivism and savagery of the Igbo clan.

Polygamy was customary in the community of the tribal life of the Igbo. People with many wives enjoy the privilege of a great man of the clan. Okonkwo has three wives living in three different huts on the same premises. This custom is a product of primitive life and ancient culture. Thus we have pointed out how the natives represent primitivism in their life and activities.

In the novel *Things Fall Apart* Achebe seems to have lamented over the disintegration of his tribe and decadence of his primitive culture. The novelist presents a vivid picture of the familial, social, spiritual, economic and cultural life of the Igbo in the chapter from 1 to 15th of the novel. Chapter 16 recounts the impact of colonization of the land of the Umuofians on their corporate life. Achebe has sought to evoke the sympathy of the readers towards the disaster suffered by his clan due to disintegration. Now it is to be focused how modernism represented by the White came to subvert the primitivism in the life of the Igbo.

It is through the character of Obierika that the protagonist comes to know how the White came to settle down at Umuofia and succeeded remarkably in gaining the confidence and good will of the natives by establishing church, school and hospital on their missionary campus. The White carried on their missionary activities in the region with the help and co-operation of the native convert like Nwoye, the son of Okonkwo. They influenced the inhabitants by instilling in their mind the faith in Christianity and colonial

administration. The White managed to win over some inhabitants by taking advantage of latter's simplicity and gullibility. The Igbo were led to believe in the superiority of the European culture and their new modernist ideology. A few of the natives began to imbibe the European thoughts and theories. They further became loyal and subservient to the White at the cost of their traditional dignity and in total disregard of the will of the Umuofians. This conversion of the natives and their subservience to the White alarmed the inhabitants and provoked antagonism in them against the colonizers. In the words of Chielo the priestess of Agbala. "The converts were the excrement of the clan and the new faith in Christianity was a mad dog that had come to eat it up"(l)(p-130). When the Igbo apprehended that the seeds of new modernist ideology and culture sown in their mind would gradually germinate and undermine their communal harmony resulting in total disintegration, they embarked on a racial war against the colonizers by killing a White man with his iron horse. This assassination of the White man provoked the colonizers to open fire on a congregated mass of the villagers at Abame on a market day and massacre large number of inhabitants with vindictiveness.

This unapprehended and unforeseen carnage alarmed the Igbo and dampened their spirit of combating the external forces. In spite of growing fear in them, the Umuofians mustered their courage emboldened by Okonkwo to launch a mass attack on the White in order to decolonize their land. With this hope and objective they attacked the mission compound and demolished the church and the surrounding walls of the premises. To their misfortune this attack proved abortive and ineffectual in as much as it hardly exerted any impact on colonial administration. On the other hand it undermined their racial integration and unity. The Umuofians found themselves panic, suppressed, demoralized and imbecile. To their utter disappointment their own kith and kin joined the hostile group of the colonizers and strengthened the roots of colonial administration in the Igboland by solicitously accepting their new modernist ideology and new order of life and living. The Umuofians found the new ideology of modernism in the thoughts, plan, actions and outlook of the colonizers.

The citadel of primitivism built by the ancestors of the Igbo and strengthened by their successive generations began to collapse due to onslaught of modernism. Okonkwo fought bravely against the colonizers but failed miserably in destabilizing the colonial rule over his ancestral land due to lack of concerted attacks. The protagonist eventually found his "war like men" disgracefully "soft like women" and cursed the timidity and cowardice of his belligerent clan. This moral degradation of the Igbo is attributable to their conviction in the invulnerability of the colonizers. The betrayal of his own men and his sense of discomfiture in the anti-colonial war drove the hero Okonkwo to suicide. The suicidal death of the protagonist marks the defeat of primitivism and the victory of modernism. Thus the novel ends with a pessimistic note that change in life is the law of life; it is inevitable and irresistible. We can infer from the racial war between the Igbo and the White that it is at bottom a clash between two ideologies primitivism and modernism. Modernism eclipsed the primitive life of the Igbo by affecting a radical change in their social cultural and religious life.

In the context of this novel we can aptly refer to Emmanuel Meziemadu Okoye, who has written a volume on the encounter between the traditional Igbo religion and Christianity.(2) He concludes that Achebe in his novel deals with the theme of religious conflict but he does not explore the inner mind of the Igbo who struggle against subversive forces to sustain their primitive life with all its characteristic features. The sentiment of the Igbo clan is hurt more by the imposition of modernism on their life than by the thrust of Christianity in to their religious beliefs.

Abdul Jan Mohamed in his book *Sophisticated Primitivism The Syncretism of Oral and Literature Modes* in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* presents a two world view the world of primitive and that of the modernist.(3) It is the readers rather than the combatants who feel that their fight against the other is nothing but an ideological clash between two orders of life the old and the new, the traditional and the modern.

The theme of Achebe's third novel *Arrow of God* corresponds closely with that of *Things Fall Apart* from the viewpoint of racial

war waged on the ideological ground. This novel *Arrow of God* tends to impress upon the readers the idea of universal law of change. It seeks to establish the fact that change in human civilization is inevitable and irresistible. Like Okonkwo, Ezeulu the old priest who is the protagonist of the novel *Arrow of God* fights against British administration and persists in his encounter as the representative of the natives of Nigeria. His nativity coupled with the barbarity of his culture evinces his primitiveness in his personality. In contrast to Ezeulu, Winter-bottom the British administrator like the District Commissioner of the first novel represents the new modernist western culture and ideology. The novel depicts the encounter between the old priest Ezeulu and the British administration. The protagonist combated the colonial forces with an objective of resisting the changes that the English attempted to bring about in the tribal life of the Igbo.

The novel seeks to focus on the racial conflict between the primitive race and the White on the issue of impact of modernity on the traditional life of the African tribes. Ezeulu the priest who controls the harvesting of the vital Yam crop of the village estimates himself equal to his god Ulu. He gets much exasperated when the British offers him chieftain-ship in view of his honesty and integrity. He repudiates this offer disdainfully and arrogantly and hence suffers imprisonment for his defiance of the British administration. He is betrayed by his own villagers in the same way Okonkwo was deserted by the Umuofians in his encounter with the White. The silence and inaction of his villagers against the White enraged him so much so that he decided to punish them before wreaking vengeance on the colonizers. He considers himself the arrow in the bow of his god, who, he believes, would shoot him at the villagers to inflict punishment on them for having betrayed their own priest. In this novel *Arrow of God* Ezeulu represents primitivism in his temper, embitation and activities and Winter-bottom poses modernism in his action against the Igbo. In this novel also Achebe focuses on the influence of Christianity on the villagers. The British missionary implanted in their mind the belief that Christ can bless their crops for a rich harvest. With this assumption the villagers observed the first Christian harvest festival in their village. This observance marks

the end of the encounter with the British and cessation of resistance to all forms of change that the White planned to affect in the life of the Igbo. The submission of the natives to the colonial forces signifies the death of an old way of life and the birth of a new one.

Just as Okonkwo's death is significant in respect of the decline and disintegration of the primitive life, so is the death of Ezeulu, who represents primitivism in all his thoughts and deeds. Thus, in both the novels the death of the protagonists presupposes the defeat of primitivism by the superior power of colonialism which heralds the birth of modernism. Both these novels concentrate on the identical theme of ideological clash between two opposite theories antithetical to each other. The novels assert the universal truth that there can be no compromise and synthesis between primitivism and modernism. These two theories are irreconcilable. The new ideology of modernism prevails over the life of the Igbo.

In the context of ideological conflict references are made to novels which deal more or less with the same issue of hostility between tradition and modernity.

In the novel, *The River Between* Ngugi depicts how the peaceful life of an African tribe named Gikuyus was disrupted by the intrusion of the Europeans into Africa. The conflict of the novel centers round Waiyaki's failure in his attempt to bring about reconciliation between traditionàlism and Christianity. The theme of the novel is based upon the same issue of racial war between the natives and the Europeans who fought to assert each other's supremacy. The novel takes the readers back to the year 1920 when Africa was presenting such a scenario of racial war. Ngugi emphasizes the religious influence of Christianity and British culture on the life of the Gikuyu tribe and accounts for the conflict arising out of religious and cultural clash between the natives of Africa and the White. In his other novel *Weep Not Child* he relates to the struggle of the Gikuyu people for repossession of their alienated land and for achievement of political emancipation from the colonial rule of the Europeans. In this novel Ngugi inspires the Kenyan youth to join the freedom struggle and provokes them to stand united and maintain solidarity against the White. He said "we are the children of Mumbi and we must fight together in one political movement or else we perish and

the White men will always be on our back". (4) The novelist has conceived of the plot of this novel on the background of anti-colonial movement between the African and the European. The struggle of the African for emancipation implies their freedom to lead their traditional life and to repudiate modernism which is brought in through colonization of the Igbo land.

In the context of the struggle between two ideologically hostile groups of people Echewa's *The Land's Lord* bears thematic similarity with the novels discussed so far. This novel depicts the religious confrontation between Roman Catholicism and Igbo religion. The European missionary father Anton Higler and his convert Philip undertake a challenging mission to Christianize the inhabitants of the Igbo clan. Echewa focuses particularly on the hazards of conversion and delineates the disastrous situation faced by the missionary father Higler and his assistant Philip. Philip serves the former as his domestic servant and liturgical assistant in order to gain some material benefits. He dedicates himself entirely to missionary activities but encounters terrible resistance of his own clan upon which he and Higler try to impose Christianity. Philip's dream to Christianize his own clan results in his failure. His erection of a spacious chapel to accommodate maximum number of converts proves futile. The exotic landscape of the Igbo not only poses a pragmatic challenge to Higler but also threatens to thwart any attempt to Christianize the inhabitants in the African forest. In consequence of Philip's failure in his attempt he undergoes considerable mental tension and finally resorts to suicide. Thus the novel *The Land's Lord* criticizes the White's missionary objective and espouses the Igbo's resistance to imposition of new religion and ideology on their age-old primitive life. The endeavors made by Anton Higler and Philip to Christianize the inhabitants is intended to modernize them with the imposition of new religion in to their primitive life. It also means an attempt to undermine the primitivism represented by the African natives. Thus the novel *The Land's Lord* also suggests the ideological conflict between primitivism and modernism. This novel highlights the religious conflicts between the Europeans and the Igbo clan of Africa. In this case too the Europeans represent modernism in their way of Christianizing the

Igbo and the Igbo clan represents primitivism in repelling the imposition of Christianity on them. The only difference that is surfaced in this novel is that it supports the retention of old traditional concept of value and repulsion of any change in faith, theory and religion where as Achebe's novels tend to bring home the universal law of change. They emphasize the evolution of new order of life and inevitability of its acceptance. Thus the novelist in this novel *The Land's Lord* is preoccupied with the concern of religious conflicts between two different races of people, the Europeans and the Africans. This religious conflict can be interpreted as a clash between primitivism and modernism.

Another novelist who deals more or less on the same theme is Ama Ata Aidoo a committed woman writer of Africa. In her novel *Everything Counts* she deals with the menace of colonialism to native culture of African nations. She points out how introduction of new education system and propagation of Christianity jeopardize the traditional life of the Igbo land. She denounces the influence of the Western culture on the Nigerians and criticizes particularly the imitation of practice of wig-wearing and the use of domestic appliances by the Igbo. The tendency to use wig and domestic appliances is suggestive of modernist culture. Sussie the protagonist of the novel *Everything Counts* goes to a university to prosecute higher studies. She tries there to uphold her racial and social integrity and dignity by disdaining the national craze for European wigs. She ascribes the degradation of her own culture to the fascination of her own inhabitants for the new modernist culture that infatuates them by the glamour and exotic beauty of the European way of living. As an adherent and supporter of her own traditional culture she revolts against the general tendency of her own people to Westernize their mode of living and outlook. At the end of the story Aidoo gives a sarcastic remark on the struggle of a few pseudo-intellectuals who intend to safeguard the native culture and life style against the menace of the Western culture. They determine to perpetuate their own culture by repelling the influence and impact of new modernist culture and ideology.

The themes of these novels are reminiscent of the plot in Nadine Gordimer's *July's people* in which the novelist presents a picture of

a conflict of ideology that leads to disintegration of the self-assured bourgeoisie World of White South Africa on account of dominance of the native African world. The plot of this novel *July's People* approximates thematically to Achebe's novels *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* as portraits of racial war.

Another novel that deserves a comparison with these fictions is *Wole Soyinka's The Interpretators*. Soyinka a contemporary African novelist is concerned in his novel with the theme of clash between tradition and new values in a transitional African Society. Hence there is a relevance to compare the novel *The Interpretators* with Achebe's first and third novels mentioned above on the ground of thematic similarities.

In the light of the thematic study of Achebe's novels *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, we can draw a conclusion that ideological clash underlies the theme of disintegration that is surfaced and fore grounded in these novels. A perceptive reader can explore this new fact deeply embedded in the themes of these novels and can attempt a new interpretation in the ideological perspective.

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Eighteen

TASLIMA NASRIN'S *FRENCH LOVER*: A FLAWED JOURNEY TOWARDS SELF-DISCOVERY

Dr. (Mrs.) Shalini R. Sinha

Taslima Nasrin's novel, *French Lover,* has been translated into English by Sreejata Guha. The blurb at the back of the book says,

> Bold in concept & powerful in execution, *French Lover* is a fascinating glimpse into the workings of a woman's mind as she struggles to come to terms with her identity in a hostile word. (Back)

Nila, the protagonist of *French Lover,* is ostensibly on a journey to discover her own identity. However, the journey leaves much to be desired as the heroine meanders her way in and out of every kind of situation such as a failed affair, an indifferent marriage, a lesbian relationship and finally-sexual satisfaction. She seems to sleep walk into these situations and wakes up to herself right at the end of the novel, when she says:

> Do I have a land of my own? If your own land spells shelter, security, peace and joy, India is not my own land. ... Do women ever have a land of their own or a motherland? I really don't think so. (291).

Sree Rashmi Talwar says that:

> Janet Radcliffe Richards puts forward an idea similar to Friedan's, in *The Sceptical Feminist* (1980), wherein she warns the feminists that their "radical impulse to reject patriarchy" would only trap them in a path which would take them away from the goal they themselves want to achieve..... The Western feminist movement has thus been the generator of a world-wide struggle that has made women visible and offered her a freedom to choose, in the path of self-direction and determination which is in alignment with others, rather than the competition against them.(Talwar,4).

Time and again, the feminist journey has consisted of the struggle not to be swamped by a male-dominated world but to listen to their own inner voices and establish their separate identities. The first step is to discover one's true self and this then leads to establishing one's personality. Self-discovery thus leads to self-realization. Taslima Nasrin has been a vocal feminist, however in her novel, *French Lover*, she has not been able to portray the feminist journey of her protagonist with clarity but has allowed herself to have got confused between the issues of sexual realization and self-discovery.

Nila's life lies in shambles around her, when her lover and fiancé ditches her to marry someone else. She jumps at the chance of marrying a non-Bengali settled in Paris, Kishanlal, and escaping to Paris with him. He is her meal ticket to a rosy, rich and secure world.

The novel traces the racist feelings that exist on both sides of the world. The French airport authorities detain Nila and subject her to an inquiry only because "her skin is not white enough" (10). Nila herself would rather go to a white airport official than to a

black one. Her husband and his friends all hate the blacks and blame them for all the problems they face.

Nila has been conditioned all her life by the example of her mother to cater to the men of the family. So initially in her marriage, she tries to do just that. She tries to cook and clean for her husband and lay herself prostrate before his desires. But being a modern, educated woman she soon finds herself clashing more and more with him. It begins with little things like his fondness for coffee and hers for tea, his vegetarianism against her non-vegetarianism, but slowly builds up until his whole attitude of North-Indian condescension towards women, jars against her well-read Bengali mind. In her own way, Nila is also quite a snob who looks down upon Kishanlal because he is not so well read as she is. She is very proud of her education and Kishanlal's paucity of knowledge infuriates her. When Nila is talking of James Joyce to Sunil, Kishanlal asks her who James Joyce was and when he says that he himself had to struggle for twelve years before he could open a restaurant in Paris, Nila says in Bengali to Sunil "It would take an ass like you twelve years" (74). The conflict comes to a head when Nila gets a job for herself and then one day invites her friends home to a non-vegetarian meal cooked by her. Ultimately she walks out on her husband and goes to live in a tenement with her friend from work, Danielle. Up to this point, Nila's feminist journey towards discovering her own identity seems to be justified though there are times when one feels sympathy for the poor husband Kishanlal, irrespective of his being a male chauvinist. Nasrin's delineation of the character of Kishanlal seems to be a bit implausible even for an Indian man. More so, since this throwback to a bygone era, has been living in France since the past twelve years, and has gone ahead and married a girl from another culture and language, fully knowing about her past love affair with another man. Kishanlal is also quite considerate to Nila, who never lacks anything in the material sense. But this is explained by the writer as being due to Kishanlal's looking upon his wife as his possession and hence wanting to show her off to the world. However, Nasrin fails in her portrayal of Kishanlal and his actions do not blend with his character or the justifications given to that character.

Nasrin has managed to capture the scents and the colours of Paris perfectly. Through the eyes of Nila, we are shown the different sides of the city. Whether it is the open homosexual crowd of cafe Bo-Bo, the die-hard feminists at Nicole's house, the illegal second-hand goods market run by the multicolored crowd at Port de Sinequorte or the art and culture in Montparnasse. The clash of the cultures of the East and West are also described beautifully. The very independent nature of French society, the stress upon obeying the rules and regulations, the emphasis on correct manners - are things that cause Nila no end of surprise. Even the change in cuisine and the manner of eating is expressed well in the words of Nila, when she thinks:

> The Bengalis and the French had five in common, the former spent five hours to cook and five minutes to eat and the French cooked in five minutes and ate over five hours (94).

The racist nature of the French is also shown, when two inspectors, who board the bus in which she is travelling, examine Nila. She is the only coloured person in the bus and the inspectors go up straight to her and ask to check only her ticket. She is not able to immediately come up with the ticket and:

> The inspector's lips were twisted in a 'see, I'm never wrong. I can make out from the colour who has bought a ticket and who hasn't' kind of smile.(115).

The aimless nature of the western society is another topic handled well by the writer. The French people did not suffer from poverty or overpopulation, but still committed suicides in the spring, if they were lonely, because:

> In the spring your loneliness taunts you because it tells you that summer is here; summer, which is the time of joy, of loving and enjoying life. All summer long

> lovers walk hand in hand, have fun and
> those who are alone feel even lonelier
> when they see so many happy couples.
> The distress drives them to suicide in
> spring, even before summer arrives.(128).

However, from the time Nila leaves Kishanlal to the time she meets her "French Lover", her journey appears to be an aimless wandering. She comes across as a selfish person who has forgotten her own mother as quickly as she puts Kishanlal behind her. She remembers her mother belatedly, only when she is diagnosed with cancer and she has to return to India to care for her. She castigates her father and brother for their neglect of her mother, not realizing that she too is equally to be blamed. In the short period of her stay in France, Calcutta appears to her to have 'shrunk' (131), her relatives seem pretentious and the city seems dirtier. But all her ravings and ranting at her father and brother would have been of no avail, if her mother had not empowered her with a cheque of Rs. 20 lakh at her death. She flies back to Paris and literally falls into the arms of the first French man who takes an interest in her.

Benoir Dupont becomes Nila's *French Lover* and she falls straightaway into a tempestuous affair with him. She mistakes sexual gratification for liberation and fancies herself in love with him. She then proceeds to spend her inheritance upon living lavishly, even though she is without a job and without any kind of work permit. Nasrin has portrayed Nila as an emotional and unpractical modern women, who has no sense of money or belongings. Even though she has enlightening views she does not practice what she thinks. She wishes to impress Benoir and so buys things, which will be of no use to him.

Nasrin has brought out the difference between the Western and Indian attitudes and way of life, through her protagonist, Nila. The farmers in France are asked by the government not to produce, or to raise cattle, since their markets are overflowing. It was cheaper to buy from other countries than to produce them. France faced a problem of plenty while India faced a problem of scarcity. Nila feels sorrowful for her country and its numerous problems:

> Nila began to feel she, too, was chained. If only she could unshackle herself and bow low before her country! She didn't know why she was living in this cruel, foreign land. The more she saw this country, the stranger it seemed. What would this country give her? Security? Of what - happiness or life? Sometimes Nila felt there was no point in living! There was no point in happiness.(266)

Nila with her love for fine arts, Nila with her poetry, Nila with her self-conceit, Nila with her pride in her intellect - is on a flawed journey. After giving of herself and her money to her "French Lover", she discovers at the very end, that she does not love him any more and that he is a totally selfish person in love with himself. That too, when Benoir begs her to marry him for the sake of their unborn child. He professes his deep love for her and is even prepared to divorce his wife. However Nila has had her fill of him and would rather sever all relationship with him. "Nila pulled away. Benoir's mouth smelt of dead rats."(284). She decides to go for an abortion thus making a rather harsh statement of self-glorifying separatism that shows her lack of respect for her own body. She shows herself to be prey to the desires of her body without a thought for its care and protection. The only discovery that she does make is that all men of whatever culture, society or nationality are just the same. This seems to be the sum total of her quest and the final denouement of her journey.

At the end of her journey she stands alone in a strange country- penniless, friendless and jobless. However her instinct for survival that had always seen her through, is intact even now. She again makes plans to begin life afresh though on humbler terms in a humble locality. She is like the proverbial cat that always lands on its feet.

Nasrin's heroine is more a creature of instincts than of intellect. Her whole journey, thus, is flawed and centers only around her. She accuses Benoir of being selfish without seeing that she too has managed to survive only because of her self-centeredness.

Though, this novel is better than Nasrin's controversial novel, **Lajja,** yet it disappoints in many way. All the men in the novel are blackguards and epitomes of selfishness. The novel shows its gender bias in this way. The characters believe in being superficial and there is very little that is genuine about them. Sree Rashmi Talwar says:

> The goal of any balanced feminist aesthetics would be not just to stigmatize Man as the enemy, but the aspiration for human liberation. (Talwar,4).

Nasrin says about the novel:

> I wanted to portray a woman caught in the conflict between the Western and Eastern cultures. It dwells upon racism, the insecurity of minorities and the slave mentality of the people of the subcontinent in regard to the whites. You may call me a feminist, but I think I am protesting only against oppression and I would continue to stand by people who are meted out injustice. Why should people suffer in this world? (Dhar, Interview, 2002).

Nasrin's protagonist Nila, however, is a strong woman who on her journey in life, metes out some injustice of her own to some of the men in her life. Kishanlal and Benoir are in some ways more sinned against than sinning.

> If Nasrin is missing home and pining for a place in Kolkata ("which is closest to Bangladesh") she is telling the world again and again now, she does not let it show in her protagonist. Nila hardly misses home, Paris will do very well, thank you. With or without the "French Lover". (Datta, 2002).

Sreejata Guha, who manages to retain the east-west background with a sprinkling of French and Bengali words, has wonderfully translated the novel into English.

Nila's journey from Dum-Dum to Charles De Gaulle and her journey to self discovery is full of uplifting theories that she does not put into practice. She sets upon a warped road of self-gratification and selfishness and has only her bold spirit and instincts to sustain her.

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Ninteen

CUTTING EDGES: BIOLOGY OF EXPERIENCE IN THE WORKS OF THE NOBEL LAUREATE PATRICK WHITE

Dr. Ashok Kumar

Patrick Victor Martindale White, one of the greatest writers in English, has been an ostentatious novelist and travel-writer as well. He carved a variety of magnificent and incredible novels and assortment of essays. As a novelist, he is an internationally acclaimed figure and extraordinary in that issue. Similar to Katherine Mansfield, Chinua Achebe, R.K. Narayan, M.R. Anand, and others, he has written voluminously. His prolificacy is enormous and venerable. There is no other writer in the Third World who can excel him in excellence and magnitude. His dozens of novels and non-fictional works, no doubt, can make the general readers wonderstruck. He is among the most admired and cherished contemporary novelist today.

Patrick White is the first and the only Australian writer to attain the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1973 and with this prize money he has formed the *Patrick White Literary Award* to endorse the expansion of Australian Literature. He was born on May 28th 1912 in Knightsbridge, London, to an outstanding and well-heeled Australian glazier's family with strapping ties to England. When he was six months old his parents returned to Australia and settled in Sydney. He received his school education particularly in Australia, partly at Cheltenham College, England. At King's College,

Cambridge, he studies French and German languages and literatures and spent considerable time in France and Germany. The experience of the Australian landscape on the one hand, and European literature and thought on the other were later on became two major sources of influence on his writings. It's vital to recognize his conflicting loyalties to Europe and Australia, so in many respects the European background and influences are obvious in his works. Patrick White in all his creations has shared parable, symbols, and allegory and his novels often set in the Australian outback usually give a picture of the anguish of amazing society and his approach relies profoundly on narrative. His sturdy, somber novels, Australian in setting, yet universal in theme, reveal the author's ambivalence just before his native province. His novels are mainly set in Australia, belong to the European epic tradition as they are inspired by and based on Greek mythology, Judeo-Christian mysticism, G.G. Jung's Psychology, and the Joycean stream of consciousness technique. External Australian conditions and details have merged with abstractions from his European experience. Consequently, tensions both between Europe and Australia and between a 'real' and a 'symbolic' Australia have become significant. There is also an obvious love-hate relationship with the country of his childhood. His disappointment in the materialism and shallowness of what he terms the Great Australian Emptiness is unequivocally revealed in his essay *The Prodigal Son* (1958), in which he expresses serious misgivings about the country's future. This attitude also comes to the fore in his writings, and caused many critics to accuse him of elitism and intellectual snobbery. His Australianess and commitment to the continent are nevertheless generally recognized in the sense that his writings brought true colors back to his palette. After the war, he revisited to Australia, buying an old house in Castle Hill, Sydney and settled down with the officer he had met during the war and they lived there for next eighteen years, for the moment he started to make a reputation for himself as writer, publishing *The Aunt's Story* and *The Tree of Man,* in the United States in 1955 and afterwards, in England. His first international break-through in Australia came when his next novel *Voss* won the inaugural Miles Franklin Literary Award in 1957. *The*

Aunt's Story and *The Tree of Man* stain the commencement of an extremely intense and productive writer's career and considered as the initial phase of his novel series. They reveal the most fundamental issues of humanities, such as the relationship between madness and sanity, reality and illusion, and the problems in exchange of information in existential matters. The feelings of movements are structurally and consistently combined with the search for truth, the quest for excellence. In these novels characters are divided into two categories from a spiritual point of view: the living and the dead. The real questers are explicitly heading for salvation or damnation in a religious sense, not only for an intense form of life but they are opposed to the materialistic characters, which are deeply rooted in social conventions, dreaming of possessions and gentility.

The Aunt's Story is a comic account of the travels of an independent Australian spinster. Theodora Goodman; she is the first in a sequence of alienated, humble seekers in search of a true reality behind the appearances of social life. They are all facing the choice "between the reality of illusion and the illusion of reality". Increasingly estranged from ordinary life style, she passes through a series of heightened moments of insight and awareness, "epiphanies" to use James Joyce's term, leading upto final illumination. The question is asked whether spiritual illumination is compatible with the retention of selfhood and mental sanity. Her ending is characteristically ambiguous and she seems to be mentally disturbed when led away by Doctor Holstius, whose name hints at a sense of ultimate wholeness. The alternations in style between the different parts of the novel are about the psychological changes of the protagonist to such an extent that it is obvious whether Theodor's odyssey carries her across oceans and continents in a physical sense, or whether the complete journey takes place in her deranged mind.

The Tree of Man, which was published in 1955 in USA and subsequently in England, immediately, established him among the internationally acclaimed greatest writers like Thomas Hardy, Leo Tolstoy, and D.H. Lawrence. When White initiated to write this novel he doubted whether he should write another word after his

works were absolutely unnoticed in Australia. At this whirling peak he reacted strappingly to impede writing works. Subsequently, contemporary Australian dynamism beleaguered him and he then assumed to write his next novel. He confesses:

> "___Because the void I had to fill was so immense; I wanted to suggest in this book every possible aspect of life, through the lives of an ordinary man and woman. But at the same time, I wanted to discover the extraordinary behind the ordinary, the mystery and the poetry which alone could make bearable the lives of such people, and incidentally my own life, since my return.....", indicating that *The Tree of Man* reflects the restored faith of White.

This novel is based on ordinary people, hardship of a farming couple Stan and Any Parker in New South Wales at the beginning of the 20th Century. Stan Parker is a young farmer, establishes his family and farm in the Australian wilderness, also has children and grand children, but the land is eventually engulfed by suburb. The narration of the theme is that of the conventional pioneering saga, abliel with biblical overtones and associations. This novel reveals the typical features of Australia's natural trials and disasters, such as bushfires. drought, and floods, but above all it enacts the psychological drama of Stan's various desires. About *The Tree of Man* Prof. C.D. Narasimhaiah writes:

> He thinks he was reading in it about the American Middle west...
>
> What he (Patrick White) has done in his novels is to take external Australian conditions and details and to infuse into them abstractions born from his English experience. He wants White to come down to earth in Australia. But to do this he should know what is alienated in himself and what is alienated in the world. [179]

It was the elation of the average that made him fright most, in this psychological turmoil; he initiated to conceive another novel. Because the vacuum he had to fill was extremely difficult, he tried to suggest in this novel every possible aspects of life, through the lives of an ordinary man and woman. But at the same time he discovered the extraordinary behind the ordinary, the mystery and the poetry, which alone could make bearable the lives of such people. Kalpana Purohit further explains:

> What is appealing is that White attempts to do this in the conventional manner, by telling us the life story of his characters. Patrick White's successful handling of traditional form of the family saga has invited critics to make comparisons with D.H. Lawrence and Leo Tolstoy.
>
> .....White's intention is to give a comprehensive picture of common people and the whole book is pervaded with a sense of the larger rhythms of life, the endless cycles of birth, growth, reproduction, decay and death. [171]

White's theme is contrary, namely to show the ordinariness in which man's divinity is contained behind outward exceptionality. All the characters are aware too of their otherness in a way. Theodora and Stan were not, and they seem to accept it to the extent that they even seem to take a pride in it. His all writings have a dimension of religious mysticism and contain celestial images related to different myths and archetypes: the comet, the chariot, the Sun and the Moon. In this constructional system we find symmetrically grouped principal figures such as the circle, the square, and the cross. There is a general movement towards a centre representing wholeness, psychological and religious.

Voss, which relates to the multihued Australian history, reveals the doomed endeavor of a Nietzschean German visionary, Johann

Voss, to lead an expedition across the continent in 1845. It has mystic communion with Laura Trevelyan, who lives in Sydney, and shares his fever until his death by recapitulations. It reveals the precise witness of Ludwig Leichardt, who died in the desert in 1848. Similar to White, Voss as well planned to cross the Australian Continent from East to West with a group of men. The different points of quest are symbolized by coast, city, bush and desert respectively. Voss, who is full of self-determination, megalomania and egocentricity, compared both to Faust and Hitler. The desert, he thinks will prove a worthy opponent when he wants to demonstrate his superhuman status. Before he begins he meets Laura Trevelyan, a spinster who made good impression on him. Drawing his journey in to the desert he becomes transformed through her telepathic influence as they communicate in dreams and delirious visions. Voss is a typical character in White's stories, who often dealt with misfits or eccentrics, people some how separated from the society.

Australian novels accomplish its mellowness in the hands of Patrick White. In *Voss*, his notable achievement, we see the country does 'contrive' to make the Ahab-like spirit of Voss its own. Voss, the survivor agrees, has not died in vain. And Laura who found the country intractable at first could now put her head on the ugliest rock and find her rest there. Appropriately, Patrick White borrows for the epigraph of his first, novel. *Happy Valley* the words of Gandhi, 'When man is truly humbled, when he has learnt that he is not God. and then he is nearest to being so'. White may have known, too, that Gandhi put a high premium on suffering as the law of life:

> The seed suffers for the sake of the tree and the mother suffers for the sake of the child.
>
> No country has ever risen without being purified through the fire of suffering, the purer the suffering, the greater the progress.

In 1961, White published the bestseller *Riders in the Chariot*, and won him a second Miles Franfin Award. In this novel White

have several outcasts - a Jewish refugee scholar, a half-caste painter, a spinster, and a washer woman, Ruth Godbold, who finds a mystic feeling together with her living friends and the dead ones. In this novel the corresponding Christ-figure is Himmelfarb, a Jewish refugee from Germany. Himmelfarb's death by crucifixion on Good Friday suggests that the capacity for evil in Australian suburbia is comparable to its realization in Nazi Germany as well as in the Bible. Alf Dubbo expresses the unity of the four illuminate in his last painting, which represent the chariot of fire. "Their hands, which he painted open, had surrendered, their suffering, but not yet received beatitude". In this novel it was the scene in which Himmelfarb is subject to a mock crucifixion by drunken workmates which outraged the blokes and the bluestockings alike. Naturally, "it could not happen here — except that it does, in all quarters, in many infinitely humiliating easy, as I, a foreigner in my own country, learned from personal experience".

The straight moral principles of Austrian society regarding mateship and human solidarity have no place in White's works. He had been distressed at "the material ugliness which does not raise a quiver from the average nerves". This desire to "raise a quiver from average nerves," and raise men to a "perception of the infinite" permeates every novel of his in succession. That it doesn't remain at the level of the hero is clear as we see the transformation that has come upon Jackie who has served Voss's head. The pariah, the outcaste, the nigger, has become the seer, the prophet. And Jackie passes into Alf Duboo of *Riders in the Chariot:*

> Because he had grown physically incapable of hating his capacity for wonder led him to embrace objects he had refused to contemplate until now...Everything finally was a source of wonder, not to say love. [145]

White has turned the innocent and the guilty, the black and the white in to his new image of man and sees the future of Australia and the future of man in a contemplation of the absolute which the

aboriginal man tucked away from "the lush jungle of modern thought," knew so well. Prof. C.D. Narasimhaiah writes:

> There is a generosity that marks the highest point in the European consciousness of the aboriginal in Australian literature. For it was customary for the white man to think that he knew all the answers whereas White's characters discover their answers were wrong. In so doing the novelist brings to his work more than a Shakespearean kind of understanding and wisdom. That the Blackman in America and the Aborigine in Australia have been the cause of this awakening are pointers to a strikingly fresh conception of the novel since the novel of social density has been in prisoner in the socio-moral universe of the Englishman and reached a saturation point. It will be seen that social reality is after all a part of the larger reality which life is. [198-199]

The Solid Mandala (\966) was influenced by thoughts of Carl Jung. The protagonists are elderly twins Arther and Waldo Brown. They are contrary beings, or rather contrasting aspects of the same being, contending but wholly interdependent. Patrick White says that the Brown brothers represent his two halves: "Waldo is myself at my coldest and worst" Mentally retarded Arthur, a Christ-figure like Himmelfarb, assumes the burden of suffering, responsibility and the guilt to rescue that other part of himself, and when Waldo dies, Arther proclaims himself guilty and ends up in an asylum. The mystery of failure is a common denominator in the novels of the second, religious phase. As stated in *Voss:* "The mystery of life is not solved by success, which is an end in itself, but in failure, in perpetual struggle, in becoming". Similarly, *Riders in the Chariot* suggests that "atonement is possible perhaps only where there has been failure."

In 1968, White wrote *The Vivisector*, a character portrait of an artist. Many people drew links to his friends, artist Sidney Nolan, but White always vehemently denied that it was about Nolan. This novel has single protagonist, Hurtle Duffield, a painter whose artist's eye indicates his special instinct, enabling him to discern truth behind appearances. As the title indicates, the eye is also a knife, an instrument of torture. The artist's fellow-beings must try to protect themselves from "his third eye", used ruthlessly to vivisect vulgarity, pretentiousness and falsity. The dual aspect, creation and destruction, the artist as torturer and victim, divine truth as the goal of human will, and human will as subordinate to inevitability, dominates the whole novel.

The Eye of the Storm appeared in 1974 and its protagonist is Elizabeth Hunter, a dying, old, almost blind, greedy, and cruel lady. The title suggests to a climactic moment in her life when she was left alone on an island and was caught in a tropical cyclone. The experiences indicate suffering and humiliation, closeness to death, but also a moment of incredible grace and stillness. To her, as to Hurtle Duffield, the eyes come to stand for the core of reality, the centre of our true existence inside all the layers of appearance. In the end, both protagonists become obedient instruments of the Divine Eye. Their will is wholly concentrated on reaching the eye of truth and infinity, a process that ultimately implies the destruction of that same will. They both make the act of dying a work of art, and the novel ends on a positive note by combining the fundamentally human aspect with the concept of divinity.

White's next novel *A Fringe of Leaves* appeared in the year 1976. It is a historical novel in the sense that the story of its heroine, Ellen Roxburgh — a Cornish farm girl who has married into the gentry and visits Hobart and Sydney with her hypochondriac, bookish husband — is based on that of Eliza Eraser, who in 1836 was shipwrecked on a reef off the Queensland coast. She was the only survivor and spent six months, totally naked, with the aboriginal tribe that saved her. In the novel, the idea of nakedness suggested by the title is related to the general message. To the very last, Ellen Roxburgh defends her fringe of leaves, her "gesture to propriety".

She does not like Voss, become part of the Australian continent in a dying vision of the Southern Cross. Nor does she experience the blessing of sea, sky and land in the way Elizabeth Hunter did. Her return to England suggests that she is withdrawing physically and spiritually, that she lacks the will power to go up to such extents as White's true questers do. In detailing the experiences, White shows himself to be the type of the novelist Elizabeth Costello disapproves of, and Alien Roxburgh is in many ways her opposite. Intelligent but far from intellectual, she declares, "I shall only ever know what my instinct tells me"(35), and the novel promotes the superiority of instinct to reasoning, and of experience to academic learning. The novel further explores, "*the* darkness in which human weakness plunges mortals" (268). When during her debasing experience as a "slave" (266) to the Aborigines she thinks "surely she could not sink any lower" (266) then "the level of bestiality at which she has arrived" (267), she is brought to eating human flesh.

White's final as well as momentous novel, *The Twyborn Affair* was published in 1979. This is marvelous romance, in which he has exhorted depths of human psyche. In this novel theme of homosexuality and transvestism come into focus for the first time. The central character, Eddine/ Eudoxia/ Eadith Twyborn, has a male body and a female consciousness, and in his search for identity he uses various external disguises, which keep even the readers in the dark. In one section he appears as the young wartime hero, in another he/she assumes the part of Mrs. Trist, the keeper of a fashionable London brothel. He fails to find fulfillment and true sexual identity either as a man or as a woman, but learns to value friendship and the importance of recognizing the woman in the man and the man in woman. This novel reads as an enquiry into bisexuality, and sees androgyny as a symbol of wholeness. This novel was short-listed for the Booker Prize, but White requested that it be removed, in order to give younger writers a chance. Soon after, he announced that he had written his last novel, and in the future, he would only write for radio or the stage.

In 1981, White published his autobiography, *Flaws in the Glass: A Self Portrait*, which explored several unopened issues he had said

little about publicly beforehand, such as his homosexuality and his refusal to accept the Nobel Prize personally. White, who guarded his privacy, did not attend the award ceremonies, but persuade his friend, the artist Sidney Nolan, to accept it in Stockholm on his behalf. Homosexuality was a theme which he had not much dealt before. It is his autobiography which has aroused antagonisms as it sought to settle scores, was the only substantial work that he produced.

His autobiography is an indispensable channel for biographical facts, for accepting his personality, beliefs and views of human nature, for reading his novels, and for background information on the real-life models of many of his fictional characters. White died on September 30, 1990 in Sydney after a long illness. Throughout his career as a writer, he had protected his privacy, and on his own instruction, the news of his death was made public only after the funeral had taken place. To strangers and even to his friends, he was an austere and forbidding figure, he complicated the task of biography by keeping many of the compartments and people of his life quite separate. He refused to grant interviews, tour or appear on television to promote his books; he ordered his relatives and friends to destroy his letters and documents. In his last years he becomes publicly involved in political and ecological issues. It was nevertheless surprising that he wrote *Flaws in the Glass*, with its candid and dignified acknowledgement of his homosexuality, a subject that was seldom mentioned in his presence.

His strong narrative voice and wrenching themes make him always a fascinating read. His writings evolved from the very traditional to ultimately, the very experimental. In his early writings too he is resolutely modern, trying to do more with fiction than most novelists care or dare to. In many contexts there is a logical but unresolved tension between the spiritual seeker and the surrounding society. The recurring notions of suffering and loss of self will indicate that the state in which his questers live is not compatible with an ordinary social existence. Without exception they are described as socially inhibited because of their otherness and the

power of their individual vision. An effect of paradoxical elitism is achieved when their outward inferiority and spiritual superiority is portrayed against the background of mental mediocrity and materialism. His novels demonstrate how will power, permanence, possessions and safety must be sacrificed. A journey of exploration is always painful and solitary business through "that solitary land of the individual experience, in which no fellow footfall is ever heared", as it says in the first epigraph in *The Aunt 's Story.*

Patrick White's novel represents no orthodoxy or conviction regarding existential, mystical or psychological matters. In his novels, there is a fusion between the more traditional Christian and Dantean aspects, the mystical writings of Moisten Eikhart, and the mythological beliefs of the Australian aborigines in a way that is typical of White's literary technique. We find layers of significance in which White uses different Australian associations combined with archetypal or literary European ones. His attitude is pessimistic in the sense that his successful questers are narrated as innocent simpletons, isolated or alienated, physically or mentally handicapped, whose final insight is achieved only through ordeals and humiliation. His style — careful, solid, but also very daring -is captivating, and the readers can never be certain of what will come next. Willing to learn, adapt, and experiment, White's works continued to evolve, peaking not once but several times.

His writings give the readers food for thought - often, it seems, too much for comfort. His Australia may not be the true Australia but it serves his fiction extremely well in novels such as *Voss, A Fringe of Leaves, Riders in the Chariot* and *The Eye of the Storm.* Years before his death, White had left other Australian novelists to their own courses and devices. All were sensible of his influence. Few resented it. He was a great enabler: Principally because of White's efforts, all forms of Australian literature gained a surprising degree of popular and institutional recognition abroad. Foe of academics White assuredly was, yet he had done more than any other Australian writer to ensure that his national literature would not only be central to syllabuses at home but also become a subject of study in more than forty overseas countries. It is not altogether coincidence that fiction, which form he favored, despite a long,

inventive, and productive career as a play write and an apprenticeship as a poet, is in an apparently more robust condition in contemporary Australia than is drama or verse. The essentials of life run throughout the novel: wind, food stuff and fire, together weaving a pattern of ancient cosmology and Biblical drama. He asserts on the possibility of healing and redemption, which can be attained with simplicity and from within.

Consequently, Patrick White is one of the most important English language writers of the second half of the twentieth century who contributed a lot, and still the grand old master of Australian Literature. His works are juxtaposition of the influences and day by day sacraments, thus they generate a united soul state which is tributary to a place, symbolic or real and to it pays homage to.

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Twenty

THE TAMIL MIND AND IDENTITY IN SRI LANKAN TAMIL SHORT STORIES IN ENGLISH : REPRESENTATIVE OR LOPSIDED?

KANDIAH SHRIGANESHAN

Introduction :

There have been many arguments regarding the pieces originally written in English by the writers from the former colonies of the Great Britain. The term 'Commonwealth' gained legitimacy alter the Leeds conference in 1964 when the Association of Commonwealth Literature was formed. (Syal 1999; 16) However the phrase Literature in English was favoured as there have been pieces in English emerging from countries other than the former colonies. Syal divides Commonwealth literature into two major categories: Literature in English and Literature in other languages. Under literature in English, the literary pieces written by writers from Australia, New Zealand and Canada are categorized: Literature in other languages include writing from India, Africa, West Indies, the Pacific and Island countries. In fact, there is confusion about the term Literature in other languages. It does not mean the pieces written in English. Further he makes a point about the literatures being written in English in non- English cultural contexts as Africa, India, West Indies, Singapore and other countries (Syal 1999: p 17). This kind of Literature was termed 'Contact

Literature (Praff 1987). This is rather confusing and complicating. Of course, there is an argument for a different English—a nativised English as Kachru(1983) pointed out (Syal 1999: 17& 18). Therefore, it could be argued that there could be two major divisions namely English Literature by writers who are English and Literature in English by non-native writers. Under the banner Literature in English, there could be two major divisions, namely, those originally written in English and the translations from other languages to English. Both categories have the same language style, cultural aspects and political aspirations. In this context, one can speak about the Indianess or the Africanness in literatures in English from the respective countries (Syal 1999: p 3). Similarly Tamilness could be identified in Sri Lankan Tamil literature in English. The present study will delve into this aspect in relation to English translations from Tamil creative writing.

Indian Literature in English :

Cronin Richard discusses V.S.Naipaul's point of view (1964) that Indian literature in English had ceased to exist. Since Hindi was made the national language, Naipaul must have concluded that the need for English is over. But the reality existing ever after Independence speaks volumes of the significance of English in the present modern world. Cronin continues:

> The most fertile period of Indian writing in English began in 1981 and has since shown no sign of coming to an end There seems to be four reasons for this. First the establishment of Hindi as the national language was resisted by speakers of other Indian languages, particularly in the South, fiercely. In consequence, English has maintained a role as a common language. Second, even as the British Empire was dissolving, the United states was establishing itself as the dominant power across the greater part of the globe, a fact that in itself did much to

> sustain the status of English. Third, since 1947, there has been a substantial migration from India to the English-speaking countries of the West The fourth reason in Salman Rushdie .(Syal. 1994).

Cronin places the fourth reason as Salman Rushdie because his *"Midnight's children"* published in 1981 paved the way for emerging a strong tradition in writing in English after the clutches of the colonial rule. (Strurrock 1997:p 204-206)

The Sri Lankan Context :

The same argument holds good in the Sri Lankan context as well. Though Sri Lanka got freed itself from the yoke of British rule, the influence of English is, still greatly felt. It is heartening to note that the national languages of Sri Lanka replaced the English language by 1956. What is lamentable is the corresponding deterioration of the standard of English. However the need for expressing our aspirations in English has persisted due to its importance in the international scene. Jayasuriya poses this question:

> After independence was obtained , the dominant position of English as the literary language was called into question. Was it possible to express the authentic feelings of the people in a foreign language? (Jayasuriya, 1995:2)

Goonetillike places various views on Ceylonese writing in English (as then called) in the introduction to the *Modern Sri Lankan Poetry- Anthology.* There was a pessimistic note about creative writing in English. In 1964, it was said nothing significant had been achieved, and it would not be possible to achieve it in the period following after that. Again, in 1971, it was argued that there was no distinctively Ceylonese style for creative writing in English. In 1981, it was asserted that for the most part, the prognosis for creative writing in English in Sri Lanka is gloomy. (Goonetillike, 1987, I). Finally, winding up the argument, Goonetillike says:

> Sri Lanka English writers have reached particularly in the field of poetry a degree of achievement which compares favorably in quality with good poetry in English or in any language any where. (Goonetillike, 1987, 1)

For this development, the Sri Lankan ethnic crisis and the riots in 1983 has contributed a lot. Rajiva Wiyesinge (1988) contends:

> "My thesis here is that poetry in English has come of age in Sri Lanka only during the last five years, and that was largely because the need for self-expression to which the political and social traumas caused by the ethnic crisis in the country had given rise. The concepts expressed and the language used are for the first time distinctively and unselfconsciously Sri Lankan, in a manner that seems to make it clear that English has now established itself as a genuine means of self-expression through creative writing for a specifically indigenous point of view. (Wijesinghe, 1991:36)

Sri Lankan Fiction in English :

Unlike Sri Lankan poetry in English, Sri Lankan fiction in English had a narrow scope. With Patrick Fernando and Lakdasa Wikkramasinge poetry in English took off the board in the late sixties. Unlike the genres of short stories and novel, poetry is easy to make experiments in and publication-wise too, it is manageable. With the 1971 insurgency it flourished. As noted above, the 1983 riots gave much more themes to the development of poetry. With regard to fiction, Punyakan the Wijenayake and James Goonewardane contributed much to its early development. The collection of short stories *The Third Woman : Awakening of Dr. Keerthi and Other Stories* are remarkable ones. Later, we have had a set of writers like Chitra

Fernando, Vijitha Fernando, Maureen Senevirante, Jean Arasanayakam, Rita Sebastian, Anne Ranasinghe, Eva Ranaweera, J.S. Tissanayakam, Sita Kulatunga Swvimalee Karunaratne etc. (There are novelists too. I confine myself to the short stories). Wijesinghe remarks:

> "Thus there is room to hope; given too the impressive work of the younger writers. I have mentioned, that Sri Lankan fiction in English will develop considerably over the next few years. (Wijesinghe, 1998: 39)

Writers like Wijeyanayake and others were writing about villages and village life in the beginning. This tendency was termed as *a village -well syndrome* by Wijesinghe (Wijesinghe 1997: p27). Later in the seventies, it was a Professor of Sinhala, Ediriweera Sarathchandra who gave some life to the fiction in English by his translation of his own novel titled *Curfew and a Full Moon.* Later he wrote a novel titled *With the Begging Bowl* originally in English. With Prof. Sarathchandra's novels related to 1971 insurgency fiction in English received much acclaim among the academics. As for literary status and artistic creations one has to depend on the social milieu. It could be achieved only through captivating the real undercurrent of the socio, economic and cultural aspects.

Sri Lankan Fiction in English by Tamil Writers :

With regard to Sri Lankan English Fiction by Tamil writers, the story is much disappointing. We have Alagu Subramaniam, Thambirasa, Raja Proctor for fiction, Thambimuttu and C.V.Veluppillai for poetry, and Sumathy Sivamohan for drama. A.J.Canagaratne gives the account as follows:

> The reading public is not aware that there are several Sri Lankan writers who have used English *for* creative purposes. Santhan's predecessors are the late Thambimuttu, the late Alagu Subramaniam and Raja Proctor, to name just a few. (Canagaratne. 2000)

Alagu Subramaniam, wrote two collections of short stories namely *The Big Girl and The Closing Time and Other Stories* and a novel *Mr.Moon.* Canaganayagam comments:

> Alagu Subramaniam's contribution to Anglo- Ceylon writing is perhaps not great but it certainly merits attention. Its significance lies partly in its range and partly in its involvement with the Jaffna community- a region untouched by any other writer in English. (Canaganayakam. 19 78 p. 2 7).

At present, there is Shanthan who is very successful writer in Tamil, has published two collections of short stories titled *The Sparks* and *In their own Worlds.* Tissanayake(2002) says:

> Quantitatively, Santhan's output as a Lankan English writer has not reached the levels achieved by most of his first collection, 'The sparks' in 1990. (Tissanayake, 2002, p.6)

As there is a dearth of English educated, creative writers among the Tamils, it has been, assumed translations from Tamil could help to throw some light on the English literary scene.

Thus Sri Lankan Tamil writing could contribute its share to the corpus of Literature in English. In this context, Professor Sivathamby's words are worthy quoting.

> "With the sincerity of expression, and the depth of the wound, Tamil poetry is truly becoming 'international' if not universal. And with writings of thin nature, we are now knocking at the doors of the Hall of World Literature. Our sufferings have added a new dimension to our literature "(Sivathamby 2002)

Like poetry, fiction too would take its place in the world of literature in English at least through translation. It is a generally-accepted theory that if you are able to learn your mother tongue well you have the capacity to learn a second language. Likewise, if we are able to produce good literature in our mother tongue we could produce good literature in English too.

The Tamil Mind and Identity in Sri Lankan Literature in English:

When we speak Sri Lankan Literature in English, it accommodates sensibilities belonging to Sinhalese, Tamils and other communities. But Goonetillike rules out the possibility in his introduction to the *Penguin New Writing in Sri Lanka*

> "Sri Lanka is still largely rural, nonindustrial and Singhalese speaking, and this kind of milieu naturally predominates in the literature in Singhalese."

However Goonetillike included four short stories and nine poems translated from Tamil.

In my paper presented earlier (2000) at the Conference held at the British Council on Sri Lankan English poetry, I pointed out that due to various reasons our writers find it very difficult to create our own expressive medium with a local flavour and idiom accommodating Sri Lankan imagery. (See Silva & Wijesinghe, 2001, 63-64). And one of my recommendations is to translate original pieces from national languages and obtain a well-represented Sri Lankan literature in English with its variety of crises and themes. Attempts have already been made by Prof.D.C.R.A. Goonetillike through his *Penguin New Writing in Sri Lanka.* Now Prof. Ashley Halpe (et.al.) continued and the latest arrival is *A Lankan Mosaic.* In between a purely Tamil creations were translated and got edited by Professor Chelva Canaganayakam of University of Toronto under the title *Lutesong and Lament.*

Lutesong and Lament:

"Lutesong and Lament" speaks of Tamil crisis due to socio, economic, and political reasons and continues to list problems

raised due to the turmoil caused by war, displacement and the diaspora. Tamil writers from Europe, North America and Australia write about their older homes with nostalgia and problems at new home. Canaganayakam, the editor of the anthology records:

> The most recent phase of the literature grows out of and draws on the political turmoil but moves in new directions as a consequence of the Diaspora. Written partly by displaced authors who, from Europe, North America or Australia, write about old or new homes, this literature fuses nostalgia with the cultural context of new lands. Paradoxically Diaspora combined with globalization, has prompted writers to forge new connections experiment with new forms, and publish their works in both South India and Sri Lanka. (Canaganayakam 2001 XV)

The first ever-published anthology of Sri Lankan Tamil writing in English is *Lutesong and Lament: Tamil Writing from Sri Lanka*. There are thirteen stories in this anthology along with some poetry.

Earlier, there have been six collections of Sri Lankan Literature in English such as *Modern Sri Lankan Stories — an Anthology (1986), Modern Sri Lankan Poetry-Anthology (1987), The Penguin New Writing in Sri Lanka(1992), and Sri Lankan Literature in English* all edited by Professor D.C.R.A.Goonetilleke, *An Anthology of Sri Lankan Poetry in English (1988 & 1993)* edited by Rajiva Wijesinghe and the *Journal of South Asian Literature* (1987), edited by Ranjini Obeyasekara. Some of these editions have included some pieces of Tamil writing. That is commendable. However, there wasn't a single collection that represents the Tamil mind and identity before the publication *of Lutesong and Lament.*

Lutesong and Lament accommodates a fairly representative collection of Sri Lankan Tamil writing in English. Prof. Sivathamby

in his review serialized in *The Daily News* (on three Saturdays from 20/07/2002 to 03/08/2002) has this to say:

> The significance of Chelva Canaganayakam 's publication is that this is a collection of only Sri Lankan Tamil writings and it has been done in a manner designed to give the reader an idea of die chief concerns of Tamil literature in Sri Lanka in the last fifty years. (Sivathamby. 2002)

The anthology consists of forty-five creative pieces from thirty-three writers translated from the originals in Tamil into English by seven translators namely A.J.Canagaratne, S.Pathmanathan, S.Rajasingam, S. Sivasekaram, Suresh Canagarajah, Lakshmi Holmstrom, Chelva Canaganayaham and S. Thirunavukkarasu. The present study concentrates on the short stories. The translation retains in English the original Tamil flavour to a larger degree. Professor Sivathamby comments:

> The translators have been quite successful in communicating to the reader in English, the 'bhava' of the original writings. By and large, the subtle nuances and meanings of Sri Lankan Tamil literature have been quite adroitly conveyed. A truly cross-cultural communication has been realized. (Sivathamby 2002)

Tamil Stories in English in 'Lutesong' :

There are thirteen stories in the anthology. The first story is taken from Illangyarkone who represents the first generation of short story writers. His story titled *A Silver Anklet* depicts the feelings of the Tamil man of the Post-Independent era. In the fifty years covered, one could hear voices of pluralistic nature with heterogeneity. The aspirations and struggles of Sri Lankan Tamils,

the Tamils of Indian origin and the Srilankan Muslims find expression in this edition.

N.K. Ragunathan, K.V.Nadarajan, Dominic Jeeva and S.Ponnuthurai represent the second generation of writers. All the four were from the Progressive/Marxists camp though the last became more conscious about artistic finesse. His story 'The Chariot" reminds the readers how a family, from the point of view of an old man moves like a chariot on the eve of the Sinhala-Tamil New Year. The cultural patterns and religious rituals coupled with the web of human relations speak a lot in the story along with the human relations. The stories of Ragunathan and K.V. Nadarajan deal with caste, a typical Jaffna problem. Ragunathan handles the theme of caste discrimination satirically. He describes how a high caste host shrewdly takes the visitors of low caste group to the outside of the house for a chat as if he would prefer to entertain them under the cool, bright moonlight. The hollowness of the so called high caste man is explicitly brought out.

K.V.Nadarajan's story reveals how moral corruption takes place in a family. A lady of high caste having an illicit affair with toddy tapper casually announces her lover that her husband would come home from Colombo and requests him to bring some toddy for him. The author does not declare anything in particular but allows the reader to make the inference.

Dominic Jeeva's 'Shoes' deals with two issues: one is poverty and the other honesty. A cobbler wanted to present his new wife a pair of shoes, which was given to him for mending by a Malayan Pensioner. A few days later he turns up. The cobbler insists that he threw the pair away the same day. He has to swear upon his mother, his father and his God, which he does. But finally, when asked to swear upon his profession, he couldn't.

Jesurasa and Saddanathan represent the second set of the second generation. The main character in Jesurasa's *A Destitute Heart* longs for a company in his own village. He couldn't get the same in the city and couldn't bear up when it was refused in his own village. The theme deals with loneliness of humans due to the

changes wrought by modernization. Saddanathan's *The Strike* revolves around a love affair that crumbles due to the politics of a trade union. Again it speaks a lot about political participation of the Jaffna woman in the post Elam war period.

The anthology becomes most meaningful with the inclusion of the third generation of writers namely Uma Varatharajan, Ranjakaumar and Thirukkovil Kaviyugan. Prof Sivathamby remarks:

> "The genre of short story too began to change. Ranjakumar, Uma Vartharajan and Thirukuvil Kaviyugan changed the contours of Sri Lankan Tamil short stories" (Sivathamby, 2002)

Ranjakumar is perhaps the most outstanding writer to burst into the creative scene in the late eighties. *Kosalai* that appeared in *Lutesong and Lament* is rated as the best story written on war.

Women's Writing:

The contribution of women writers' is also remarkable. Kokila Mahendran and Thamaraiselvi are important women writers. The anthology includes one of the important women writers among the Tamil writers namely Thamaraiselvi. Her story *The Gap* introduces a new problem created by the war and displacement. The old man faces ill treatment and humiliation in the present context of the displacement. He has lost everything he had in his house in the village. His daughter-in-law looks down upon him as he has nothing for his livelihood. Chelva Canaganayakam records:

> Diaspora is as much internal as it is external, as the story "The Gap" so poignantly demonstrates. As the symbiotic relationship between culture and landscape comes under stress, human relations suffer and often the victims are the elderly and marginalized, and the weak. (Canaganayakam XVI)

Migrant Writers :

The other important group of writers emerged from the diaspora. They speak about their dilemma which is more than their physical displacement. Canaganayagam comments again:

> "Visa" by Muttulingam might well be representative of the predicament of exile, but it too drives home the notion exile is much more than physical displacement Hybridity manifests itself in complex ways, as writers struggle to merge two words, reflecting on the and depicting the past through the prism of an alien culture (Canaganayakan 2001XVI)

The common themes like caste discrimination, class struggle, ethnic unrest, riots of 1983, war and the displacement and the diaspora find expression in the stories. Since the 1980s a new phase comes into existence, the 90s two important voices were heard. One is the voice of the Muslims and the other one of the diaspora from the world across. The latter came to be named as Refugee writing or Migrant literature. They speak of the frustration and suffering undergone due to war and displacement and the new suffering encountered in the new place of living. They write about the nostalgic feelings of the life in their birthplaces and the new colour prejudice faced in the European countries.

Tamilness in the Pieces :

The use of words like *Amma, Anna, Aththan, Thangkachchi Kaivryalam* is the reflection of the Tamil culture. Tamil sensibilities are expressed through the myths and proverbs and cultural patterns. The Tamil identity and the Tamil mind could be realized through these types of writing. The space given to characters in their respective communities would be analyzed if their sensibilities were allowed to speak in the international language. In this anthology there is a fair representation of Tamil human predicament spoken. Their individual, cultural and political conflicts are recorded. The writers speak through their myths and cultural patterns that adds flavour to their speech. Thus the collection is well represented and

artistically balanced. I would conclude my analysis on this anthology with the editor's note:

> The movement from one to another all within a space of five decades, has given to writing in Tamil a range of material, depth of experience and a technical sophistication that makes it worthy of serious study. At a time when "nativist" critics and scholars have successfully argued for the need to pay closer attention to the contribution of vernacular literatures there is an urgent need to make Tamil writing from Sri Lanka accessible to a wide readership through translation. *(Canaganayakan XVI. 2001)*

Different camps or groups of Tamil writers have been articulate at different times: The traditionalists of the forties, the revivalists of the fifties, the Progressives/Marxists of the seventies and the ethno-nationalists of the eighties.(Nuhuman.2002.p.242). Of these the progressives were perhaps the most articulate- they had a political (Marxist) base. There has been a tendency among Marxist critics to over-rate their contribution and ignore the voices from the other ranks. *Lutesong and Lament* gives a fair representation not only of the above mentioned (Jaffna-based) groups but also of Eastern province, hill country and expatriate /migrant writers.

A Lankan Mosaic :

Early last year the Gratiaen Award launched an ambitious collection titled *A Lankan Mosaic* edited by Ashley Halpe, M.A.Nahman & Ranjini Obeyesekere. It has 16 Sinhala short stories and 17 Tamil short stories (in translation).

The Tamil stories are by writers most of whom belong to the second set of the third generation. The selection is well balanced: it includes 4 Muslim writers and 3 expatriates along with other ten Sri Lankan Tamil writers. Most of the stories understandably deal with the effects *of* war: Military repression, bereavement, loss of habitat, displacement and exile.

> The stories included in this anthology represent more recent Sri Lankan Tamil writing. (Nuhuman 2002. p.241)

Stories Reflecting War and its Effects : The first story *Gone with the Soil* by Arafath is a poignant and accurate portrayal of the last days of a father who refuses to leave his home at the cruel face of war. Thirukkovil Kaviyuvan *(What living means)* captures vividly the tangle of relationships among which is the bond between two brothers - the older one abandons his studies and becomes a militant only to be caught and tortured by the army. Finally, he returns home broken and sick. He dies. The story ends with a beautiful poem - a monologue by the younger brother.

Forgive my inability, Anna
To overstep, like you,
And bum out
the burden of life
and blow it in the wind
I never had the guts
To look at the gale
till the palm rustled
in my garden
I know
from the day your face hardened
every movement of yours
was meaningful
even your lips
parted amidst streaks of blood
wrote a chronicle
yet there isn't
even a gravestone for you!

I feel ashamed
To narrow down life
Like birds in the rainy season
Flying close to land
What to do
I have a wife, a child

And a home
I feel ashamed!

Halpe (et.al.) 2002 p.291 -292).

Ranjakumar's *Invocation* is, yet another war story related to IPKF Occupation. It blends the primitive with the modem. Snamugam Sivalingam's 'The Wild Oranges', too deals with IPKF atrocities in the North East. *A Tale of Three Cities* by Kalamohan presents the anguish of a Tamil refugee in Paris. His father dies(in Jaffna) and the uncles and aunts phone him for money (and on top of it he has lost his job!) He is forced to find solace in drink offered by a Portuguese immigrant worker. In S.L.M. Hannifa's *Aunt and Nephews*, an old lady becomes the victim. Though she helped everybody, nobody gives her a hand at her time of despair. The war or riots have no trace of humanity. Francis Xaviour's 'Dawnless Nights' narrates the story of a family which suffered during the early days of the war. Sakkarawarthy, Sunset Coast portrays how an innocent young man was caught and tortured by both the militants and the army on suspicion. 'Anguish' by Saddanathan pictures an innocent young boy's death at the hands of the army. Raja Sri Kanthan and Sutharaj make ethnic harmony their themes. Thamaraiselvi shares her view in 'Life' of how people share the effects of war sacrificing their ambitions and aspirations.

Nuhuman, the one of the editors comments:

> The selection is, I hope, balanced and not one sided The stories portray different aspects, different kinds of victims of the conflict - victims by both sides, - the armed forces and the militants. (Nuhuman 2002:241)

Stories Dealing with Individual Issues : However stories like *Rattology by* Uma Varatharajan *The Outlet* by Shanthan, *Despondency* by Al Azoomath speak personal problems of individual characters. *Rattology*, satirically narrate the story of the unsuccessful attempts of a man who tries to rid his home of rats. Al Azzomath,'s *Despondency* portrays the suffering and alienation of a plantation worker who is forced to move to the city by the riots and other

individual problems. Shanthan's 'Outlet' reports an individual's personal problem.

The Purdah's Laments by M.L.M Mansoor records the laments of an unmarried Muslim girl against the backdrop of prevailing harmony among the Sinhalese and the Muslims. A.Ravi's *Dust* depicts the bitter life of a young man who strives hard to promote his family and ends with frustration. Unlike the *Lutesong and Lament* which opens with the first generation of writers, Prof. Nuhuman has chosen the recent Sri Lankan writing dealing with war and its effects, and other individual and social problems. The protagonists of these stories are not only victims of war and displacement but also of the other social evils and personal weaknesses.

Though writers of the nineties write mostly on ethnic war and displacement, problems like Caste and Dowry still persist. These problems, much spoken during the seventies and early eighties have been by passed in the face of the ethnic conflict.

The old man in *Gone Wist the Soil,* the old lady in *Aunts and Nephews,* The Young girl in *The Purdah's Laments* struggle for their space in their respective spheres. The pieces become literary evidences in exposing human suffering through the issues discussed.

Tamilness in the Stories : In this collection too, words like *Fish vadi, adampan, vidane, machah, annachchi, anni, vaththiyar, annar, nana, vapa, achchi,* etc. are used. Further, some cultural aspects of the Tamil speaking people are used in imagery. Here are some examples from the stories in *A Lankan Mosaic:*

- Keeping a virgin in the house is like tying fire to one's stomach, (p.299)
- Hunger as fierce as fire (p. 269)
- I have quenched the fire in their bellies by bringing down bunches of young coconut, (p.269).
- The cold needle pricked the body. (p.329-342)

Beliefs and Sayings Add Colour :

- When the crow was cawing this morning sarasamma said a guest would be coming. (p.261).

- She collected some loose earth from the junction and performed the ritual to protect us from the evil eye. (262)
- Something more than a satisfied plate goes with one's mother, (p.262).

Conclusion:

It is interesting to note that the migrant writers have learnt the language of their host country and have started writing in their respective languages. A.Sivananthan writes in English, Uthayanan in Finnish, A.Balamanokaran in Danish and Kalamohan in French. The Sri Lankan Tamil experience throws a wider spectrum of writing to the international readership not only through English but also through other European languages.

Before I conclude I would like to mention the theatre is very much lively and powerful in the North and East Province especially in Jaffna. Therefore, translation of scripts in Tamil would add much richness to any proposed collection. But the Novel form has not been successful up to now.

The stories in these two volumes speak various problems faced by the Tamil speaking community. *Lutesong and Lament* does not stop with progressive writing and the other. *A Lankan Mosaic* does not confine itself to the war and displacement. Thus both volumes are representative enough to accommodate the issues related to Tamil Muslim and Plantation workers.

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