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Postcolonial Perspectives

*Dr. N. K. Neb**

Since the inception of a systematic study of literature a number of theories, approaches, perspectives and ideas have been put into service to define literature that still defies a fixed definition. The distinctive feature of literature that does not allow this art form to be seen as something ossified and fixed is its inherent link with human nature, feelings, thoughts, experiences and the realities that shape them. It cannot be conceived of like insects or objects that form the subject of study for scientific enquiry. Literature rather conforms to the way people make meaning of life and the kind of meanings they accept and value. Postcolonial criticism like any other interpretation and analysis of a work of art is linked to the system or framework used to define and understand literature. It makes Terry Eagleton's views about literature more acceptable, if not in universal terms then at least for study of literature from postcolonial perspectives that award greater significance to particular socio-historical and cultural context. Literature as pointed out by him is constituted by value judgments based on social ideologies which are historically variable. It implies that literature, instead of being ontologically defined forms a part of ideology that determines social relations and their artistic representation. It relates literature to the power structures operating in society. However, literature is not to be narrowed down to ideology and its expression. Its relation with people and their experiences has roots in ideology. For Eagleton ideology itself has specific meaning: "I do not mean by ideology simply the deeply entrenched, often unconscious beliefs which people hold; I mean more particularly those modes of feeling, valuing, perceiving and believing which have some kind of relation to the maintenance and reproduction of social power" (Eagleton, 1998: 13). As ideology constitutes the way power relations get impacted and perceived it carries political implications for literature for being related to ideology.

These ideas informing political implications of literature are of particular relevance and significance for a study of literature from postcolonial views as such a study itself is more concerned with what is being talked about in it rather than how it is being done. It is more particularly so as postcolonial studies of literature are often supposed

to focus on the way literature of the erstwhile colonies has developed and the way colonial as well as the postcolonial writers have perceived and expressed reality concerning the societies that have experienced colonial rule, particularly of the British Empire. Therefore, it is presumed that postcolonial literary criticism has to take into consideration the experiential reality impacted by the imperial powers and the way it got represented by colonial writers as well as the writers writing about the people who once formed subjects of the Empire. It also involves an understanding of the very complex, complicated and power-impacted relations between the colonizers and the natives belonging to two different cultures far removed from each other in spatial terms having nothing common in religion, education, social practices, language and rituals etc. The hiatus between the two cultures involves many more issues than a simple difference due to the intervention of skewed power relations.

Multiple dimensions of colonial enterprise have been analyzed by a number of thinkers to understand the way it has impacted the life of the people who have experienced colonized existence. These insights about the implications of the imperial outreach need to be taken into account to have a proper and broader view of life situations that existed during and after the colonial rule. Their views extend the analysis of the interaction between the colonial masters and their subjects to an examination of the nuances underlying cross cultural encounter involving power. The relevance of the studies of these relationships becomes more pronounced when we see that these relationships between the colonized and the colonialists are not similar to the relations that existed between the rulers and the ruled among the natives. The sense of cultural superiority that the colonialists assume to have over the natives complicates issues concerning their relations. Consequently, the matter of political and territorial conquest takes the form of civilizational imperialism that makes the colonized people accept the hegemonic position of their masters as something metaphysical, natural and ordained. It results in a we\ they divide in binary terms that persists for years to come. How multiple shades of the relationships between the colonizers and their subjects appear and impact their epistemological representations can be understood from a broader perspective by using the observations made by different thinkers including Tzvetan Todorov, Franz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha and a host of other critics.

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Todorov, in his popular study 'The Conquest of America' concentrates on different responses of the colonialists that determine the nature of their relationship with their subjects. He explains two different colonialist attitudes through the examples of Hernade Cortes' subjugation of the Azec Empire of Mexico and Columbus's encounter with the natives with an aim of colonizing them: "Cortes slips into the other's skin Thereby he ensures himself an understanding of the other's language and knowledge of the other's political organization"(Todorov, 1984:248). However, he never abandons his sense of superiority; rather this feeling gets more confirmed with his increasing knowledge of the other. This knowledge of the native is then used by him to assimilate the native in his own culture in a subtle and effective way. It involves the acknowledgement of the otherness of the other in a specific way. On the other hand, Columbus was not able to do so. His attitude included an understanding of the natives according to which they were either human beings like his own people and did not require any special attempts to know them. Or they were altogether different in the sense of being savages or inanimate objects. In other words, the natives either had to adopt his ways for being like him or they were inhuman and required to be made human according to his own standards. One attitude demands complete assimilation and the other means total rejection and subjugation. His position is explained by Todorov in these words: "Either he conceives the Indian as human beings altogether having the same rights as himself; but then he sees them not only as equals but also identical, and this behavior leads to assimilation, the projection of his own values on the others. Or he starts from the difference, but the later is immediately translated into terms of superiority and inferiority.... what is denied is the existence of a human substance truly other."(Todorov,30).

These two characteristic attitudes that Todorov traces are both constitutive of an attempt to homogenize the world. Even the attitude carried by Cortes is directed to exploit his knowledge of the other to his own advantage. His recognition of the otherness of the other entails the protection of the other mixed with a feeling to preserve for plunder in future. It involves an appreciation of the native's intrinsic worth without an acknowledgement of the natives as subjects. Consequently, knowledge about natives is subordinated to power to ensure their continued subjugation. In both the cases discussed above, the relationship

between the colonialists and their subjects are determined and governed by the skewed nature of power structure that impacts these relations with a sense of egocentrism that Todorov finds rooted in the, "identification of our own values with values in general, or our I with the universe – in the conviction that the world is one", (Todorov, 42, 43). This homogenizing and monolithic understanding of the colonialists makes their thinking unitary, totalitarian and centralizing. For the imperialists it gives them an assumed authority to decide, fix and propagate standards for rest of the world in almost all matters concerning life and cultural practices.

Another thinker whose ideas have exerted considerable impact on postcolonial studies is Franz Fanon who has emphasized psychological aspects of the relations between colonialists and the colonized. These views are directly opposed to Mannoni's thoughts expressed in his widely read, "Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonialism (1956) where he talks about 'dependency complex', and argues that colonialism depends on "the existence of the need for dependence. Not all the peoples can be colonized: only those who experience this need". (Mannoni, 1956: 56) 'Fanon turns this argument upside down through his assertion that colonialism is not the result of a need for dependence rather the need for dependence itself is the creation and result of colonialism. His insights point out the fact that the colonialists painted, projected and treated the native always in negative and dark colours thereby impacting the very thinking and mindset of the colonized people themselves. They also started believing in their being inherently and naturally inferior to their masters. Such essentialist, unitary and centralizing thoughts destroyed these people's sense of the self that made these people understand their identity in ways provided and fixed by colonialists. For the native the ways of life, culture, and the values of the rulers become the standard, natural and true. The adoption of the ways of these masters becomes an imperative for them to gain acceptability and acquire the standard of even being human. In fact this belief in their own inferiority is hammered into these people's minds by the colonialists is not realized by them.

This sense of these people's cultural inferiority, Fanon believes, can be countered in different historical and political situations in different and corresponding ways. During the colonial rule, the sense of an inadequacy in the subjects can be addressed with an assertion of the native cultural values and celebration of the cultural past. It brings a

sense of inherent worth in the natives through an eulogization of their religious, social, and cultural activities providing them a unified structure though temporarily and for specific purpose of resisting the colonial cultural onslaught. The practical application and implications of such practices can be well imagined from the efficacy of the counter narratives offered to the colonialists by men like Mahatma Gandhi. His slogans of Swaraj, respect for ancient culture, belief in brotherhood of all combined with his charismatic personality worked wonders to instill a sense of faith in native culture and resist the constructed ideas propagated by western academic, religious, political and educational machinery.

On the other hand, Fanon doubts the success of these practices in postcolonial societies as they have the potential, he believes, to result in the subjugation of the weaker sections, marginalized classes and subalterns forming religious, ethnic and caste minorities. Such a situation is then considered as an extension of post-colonialism into neocolonialism where power gets centered within elite classes of the independent nations. To us, what Fanon seems to ignore or avoid taking into consideration is the fact that celebration of the past as a unifying force and propagation of a cultural past being the privilege of a particular section of society are two different things. The same error is often committed when Indian cultural past is narrowed down to certain communities and religions only. It happens when culture and religion are confused and mixed one into the other in essential terms. Therefore, the celebration of pre-colonial past is not necessarily supposed to have adverse impacts only. In the same way the consequences of reviving the pre-colonial culture are not always likely to result in the subjugation of certain sections of society. Such apprehensions regarding postcolonial propagation of culture of the past resulting into a repressive tool in the hands of the people who have power to push the marginalized groups into an ambit of oppression have been proved utterly false particularly in the democratic nations including India. These observations seem relevant more in a representational context rather than the experiential.

The fears implied in Fanon's observations tend to become a remote possibility in the present times due to the watch-dog role being played by media and internet through quick transmission of information. Another aspect of the celebration of the past and its relevance for the postcolonial societies can be understood from the experiences of the nations who have never experienced colonial rule. In these societies too, the demonic

possibilities of the celebration of the cultural past in monolithic terms to subjugate people on the periphery cannot be ruled out. Interestingly, even the attempts to assimilate the people from the other cultures into the Western culture are appreciated in the name of melting pot process or through cultural assimilation whereas the attempts of the erstwhile colonies of the Empire to assert their national pride are targeted through the emergence of the dangers that may never come true. It brings out a biased attitude and understanding of the Western academy towards the erstwhile colonies of the Empire.

The textual and political authority that European imperialists enjoyed over their subjects awarded them a power to exploit, destroy and represent native cultures as they desired. It resulted in their creating images of and understanding about the natives that always asserted the superiority of the masters. In this process of constructing fictions about the colonized people the role of power\knowledge is extremely significant. Said explains this process by talking about the way bookish knowledge acquires the status and authority through the support of political power. Said comments how, "Such texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe". (Said, 1985:94). It implies that the very descriptions based on the claims over knowledge and supported by power replace reality. This reality is constructed on the basis of the information and knowledge that the rulers inscribe on the natives rather than experienced reality. It explains how a body of knowledge about the subject races from the east is constructed in the form of Orient. How the construction of such an understanding of the Orient at the hands of the Orientalists marks the intervention of power\knowledge discourse is discussed by Edward Said in his seminal works including *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*.

Said's study is premised on the ideas propagated by Michel Foucault regarding the determinate impact that discursive practices generate through the intervention of power. Applied to an understanding of colonial rule these ideas point out how the Orientalists created and propagated certain fictions about the Orient or the colonized. The imperialists invested the peoples and the regions they conquered with negative features making them the representatives of darkness, incivility, barbarity, ignorance and stagnation. As the English or the White was civilized and had the light of knowledge it was his responsibility to civilize the savage subjects. Therefore, the western hold on the colonies was

propagated to be justified and in the interests of the natives. The power of the colonizers made their knowledge about life, as well as the natives, true and authentic for the natives. This power allowed the colonial powers to represent the natives the way it served their ends and projected them in superior terms. These practices ultimately colonized even the minds of the natives so that they started believing that their colonization at the hands of the imperialists was natural, ordained and legitimate. The practices used for this purpose included the western education system, religion and literature. It resulted in the creation and propagation of certain stereotypes that presented the masters and the slaves in essentialist terms developing their identities in the form of binary pairs.

The way identities of the rulers and the ruled among the British Imperialists and the natives interact in their relationships has been analyzed by Homi K. Bhabha. His study, based on poststructuralist views emphasizes that establishment of the identity of the colonizers in the colonial contexts requires the existence of the colonized. It also carries a contradiction in the colonialist's attitude that seeks the existence of the other at the same time wishing to erase the difference. It marks instability of their identities. Thus, the stereotypes created about the native are not a sign of the power of the colonialists; rather these identities are created for the establishment of the identity of the colonizer and are repeated like signs in language to maintain their validity. In case the stereotypes are not repeated for the sake of creating and maintaining identity they lose their relevance. This process develops interesting shades of relationships between the two.

The assumed sense of superiority associated with the identity of the White Man forces the natives to define their own selves in relation to the White Man's identity. It turns everything and anything English or British into a standard to be followed. The English with a sense of superiority and an intention to assimilate the native into his own culture trains the subjects to follow his ways. On the other hand, the native with a desire for upward movement and acceptance by the masters starts imitating the ways of life of the masters. As a result of his mimicking the lifestyle of the English, the native gets Anglicized without being the White. In the process the authority earlier associated solely with the White gets disrupted and the native seems to get entrusted with this authority, though partially; instead of being represented, the native starts representing himself. His adopted Englishness and original Indianans

results in what Bhabha calls 'Hybridity'. In other words, the identities of the colonialists and the colonized meet and differ at the same time marking simultaneous assertion and subversion of the colonial discourse. The native, now using mimicry as mockery starts resisting his subjugation. It implies that colonial practices in themselves carry disruptive elements that further the cause of the natives and awareness about a decolonized state of existence starts taking place. These ideas, though do not overrule the impact of colonial practices on subjects and their cultures have the potential to contest an understanding of the colonialists and the colonized in essential terms.

The complexities, complications, contradictions and irony informing the relationships between the colonialists and the colonized people ultimately relate to the role of power that determines them. In order to understand the role of power in these aspects of colonial practices and the way it transforms life, its understanding and artistic representation can be realized from Foucault. He understands that a nexus between power and knowledge functions in a way that marks the significance of power for the production, control and exercise of knowledge. He says, "Knowledge and power are simply the two sides of the same question: who decides what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided" (Foucault). It is the power that determines what is to be considered knowledge and how that knowledge is to be used. The concepts like truth, justice, reality are established through the exercise of power. This interaction of power and knowledge develops certain discourses for the understanding of the signifying practices. Discourse for Foucault is "the whole 'mental set' and ideology which encloses the thinking of all members of a given society. It is not singular and monolithic – there is always a multiplicity of discourses – so that the operation of power structure is as significant in (say) the family as in layers of government".(Foucault,1995:176). It implies that the exercise of power in a society involves the development of different organizations and institutions through which power operates in human relationships. These systems, dominated by power structures, control our lives so that, "we are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has need, in order to function ".(Foucault,1980:89). In other words, our subjectivities are subjugated to the truth and ethics established through the exercise of power. Thus, the questions concerning right wrong, high, low, civilized, savage are governed by

these discourses based on power structures. The discursive practices are extremely significant for the functioning of power as, “relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of discourse”. (Foucault, 1980:89). These ideas when appropriated to the study of the relations between colonialists and the colonizers bring out the nature of discourses built by the colonialists to exercise power and stabilize their rule. It also brings out the plural and complex nature of the relationship between the colonized and the colonizers. Contesting the singular understanding of these relations their representation in art makes postcolonialism a contested and multidimensional space. The variety concerning understanding of these forms of life enriches artistic representation of life informing postcolonial reality.

The multiplicity of perspectives analyzing the relations between the colonizers and the colonized also informs the problematic nature of the term postcolonialism. The indeterminacy regarding the periodization of colonialism and postcolonialism is pointed out by Peter Childs and R.J. Patrick Williams when they raise the question whether postcolonialism means the periods signifying the end of the Anglocentric or Eurocentric British Empires or the end of Spanish and Portuguese control also. It also implies that there has neither been one period nor one form of colonialism so it becomes difficult to associate the term postcolonialism in all inclusive way. The same kind of problem regarding an understanding of postcolonialism is discussed by Aijaz Ahmad when he talks about the way critics extend the meaning of this term to, “push the use of the term ‘colonialism’ back to such configurations.... well before the European colonial Empires began: and then bring the term forward to cover all kind of national oppression Colonialism then becomes transhistorical thing, always present and always in the process of dissolution in one part of the world or another, so that everyone gets the privilege, sooner or later, at one time or another, of being colonizer, colonized and postcolonial”(Ahmed, 1995:9) It implies that postcolonialism is not related to some fixed period in history and nor is it easy to relate it to the subjugation of people of one country by the other as this kind of process has always been there. The use of the term postcolonial for all kinds of oppression tends to make it absurd and neglects the specific ways in which imperialistic practices of the British rule in particular transformed the lives of a large population on

the globe impacting their future as well. The significance of this term in relation to the English occupation of the colonies is realized by Ashcroft and others when they define the term postcolonial as : We use the term ‘post-colonial’, however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression (Ashcroft, 1989:2). This understanding of the term also seems to see historical processes in unified and singularity of preoccupations that experiential reality denies. Instead of tracing common preoccupations as the binding force Abdul JanMohamad’s distinction between political oppression and colonialism of the type exercised by the British in terms of “Dominant and hegemonic”, (Ashcroft, 1985:12,1) seems more logical and acceptable. It was the hegemonic rather than the dominant status of the Empire that transformed cultural production in erstwhile colonies of the empire.

It brings colonialism closer to the understanding in which it is treated as a part of capital expansion in the form of imperialism. From this point of view the early phase of the expansion of capital in which cheap labor and raw material were required is considered to form colonial period. The second phase developed as postcolonial period as the West adopted the same expansionist policies to get cheap labour and maintain control over the world through economic and political channels like transnational corporations, relocation of factories to the lowest –cost labour zones. Thus taking point of production to the workers instead of the workers being taken their.

The question of historical period gets more complex and complicated, as pointed out by Peter Childs and R.J.Patrick Williams when the definition or understanding of postcolonialism is directed to trace commonalities of colonial enterprise. For example, the definition by Ashcroft and others relates to commonalities of colonial enterprise. The continuity of preoccupations that these critics elude to are difficult to trace and ignore the specificities of historical periods. In the same way the question of historicity gets complicated when Stephen Slemon defines postcolonialism in the following words: “Definitions of ‘postcolonial’ of course vary widely, but for me the concept proves most useful not when it is used synonymously with a post-independence historical period in once –colonized nations, but rather when it locates a specifically anti-or post colonial discursive purchase in culture, one

which begins in the moment that colonial power inscribes itself onto the body and space of its others and which continues as an often occulted tradition into the modern theatre of neocolonialist international relations.”(Slemon, 1991:3). It means that the colonial period started when the colonizers started writing or representing the colonized in their cultural practices resulting in an inscription or impact on the Others. But this writing about the other by the colonialists started much earlier than their real domination of the natives. Therefore, it creates an absurd situation of colonialism starting before the colonialism actually took place. In the same way, the continued attempts of the West to exercise control over the nations that earlier formed its colonies, via economic, political and cultural channels marks the renewal of colonialism as neocolonialism. The persistence of colonial practices thus makes the very use of the term postcolonial in the present context as something absurd. As the colonialism in all its forms has not disappeared the use of the term postcolonial for the present state of affairs does not seem justified. Therefore, critics like McClintock consider the use of the term postcolonialism as something, “prematurely celebratory” (McClintock 1993:294. Such a situation is explained by Gayatri Spivak in these words, “We live in a post-colonial neocolonized world”. (Spivak, 1990:166).

Another aspect of the debate concerning colonialism and postcolonialism is related to the understanding of history as a discipline; the way it is approached, written, theorized. As a cultural practice history carries substantial significance. In order to obliterate any sense of cultural past the colonialists often debilitate the sense of history for the natives by treating their past as a period of mere darkness. It makes history and its understanding a central point in postcolonial studies. . It has been pointed out in these words: “Since the West has a deplorable record of simultaneously denying the existence of any worthwhile history in areas it colonized and destroying the cultures which embodied that history, an important dimension of postcolonial work has been the recovery or revaluing of indigenous histories....”. (Child,1997:8)). It also suggests that postcolonialism involves rejection of colonial models of history. Therefore, an understanding of history in terms of colonial and postcolonial times would mean acceptance of colonial model of history. Gyan Prakash contests this view while commenting about Indian history: “We cannot thematize Indian history in terms of the development of

capitalism and simultaneously contest capitalism's homogenization of the contemporary world. Critical theory cannot simply document the process by which capitalism becomes dominant, for that amounts to repeating the history we seek to displace.”(Prakash, 1992:13). Postcolonial critics treat the idea of Westernness of History as a functional tool to exercise power in discursive practices. : “The significance of history for postcolonial discourse lies in the modern origins of historical study itself, and the circumstances, by which ‘History’ took upon itself the mantle of a disciplines. For the emergence of history in European thought is coterminous with the rise of modern colonialism, which in its radical withering and violent annexation of the non-European world, found in history a prominent, if not the prominent, instrument for the control of subject peoples”(Ashcroft,1995:355). All these points of view reject western view of history that understands it in terms of the colonial and postcolonial times only as it tends to present pre colonial times as a prehistory of colonialism. This sense of history makes an independent and autonomous past of the colonized peoples nonexistent or worthless.

Despite all these controversies and multiplicities of perspectives and modalities informing an understanding of colonial domination throughout history colonialism has adversely affected the natives through its different trajectories. Though it cannot be studied in a reductive way, its far reaching and persistent impact cannot be overlooked in the name of debates regarding its periodization. It is particularly so in postcolonial study of art, particularly literature. In fact, postcolonial perspective is supposed to expose chinks in epistemological representations of the colonized cultures by colonizers as well as by those whose minds have been so colonized that they have an inveterate faith in the superiority of the culture of the colonized much after political independence of their countries. As different critical theories are themselves in dialogue with one another, one dimension of postcolonialism can be studied in its relation with feminism.

II

The power structures that impacted the relations between the colonizers and the colonized subsequently had far reaching implications and ramifications in the world of ideas and understanding of different forms of life including art, science, philosophy, historiography, culture, language etc. Therefore, its role in determining the nature of the theory and practice of literature too is far from being negligible. The exploration

of literature from this angle is also an important feature of postcolonial studies as it involves a concern that literary and critical theory has been dominated and determined by western academy. It has assumed the authority to set the standards and fix the canon for the rest of the world. Even their claims to objectivity are a strategy to introduce a sense of their own superiority. The writers from colonial background, particularly in English, accept western hegemony and follow their practices and ideas to gain acceptability. The sense of privilege and prestige associated with the use of English as a medium of literary expression that intensifies a desire to follow the western academy is succinctly expressed in these words: "The producers signify by the very fact of writing in the language of the dominant culture that they have temporarily or permanently entered a specific and privileged class endowed with the language, education and leisure necessary to produce such works." (Ashcroft, 1989:5). The Empire). The postcolonial writers reject this hegemonic position awarded to language based on its hierarchical understanding that awards it the authority to establish concepts of truth, order and reality. In fact the superior status granted to the language of the rulers is supposed to be indicative of their cultural superiority. The postcolonial writers contest such thoughts and practices to highlight that the European theories themselves were the product of specific cultural traditions and had falsely assumed the status of being universal & the ideal to be followed by all.

The hegemonic position that the western thought has imposed on their subjects is countered by the postcolonial writers often by developing a national and regional consciousness in their writings. These attempts also involve a valorization of their cultural past or the reality of the pre-colonial times. This process highlights the significance of the alterity created to signify the existence of multiple possible ways of life having positive nature. In the same way, their challenge to the authority of the western academy's right to establish and set parameters for understanding and analysis of art comes forth in the construction of narratives that do not conform to the western models. They also emphasize that English language is not adequate enough to express native culture in all its shades with all its nuances. Sometimes it marks the position of privilege given to regional languages and their literature. So far as Indian writers in English are concerned, their use of a mixed language involving code mixing and code switching, instead of pure English, is also treated as a form of protest against colonialists'

understanding of language and literature. Their restructuring of colonial reality and juxtaposing it with the pre-colonial past as well as the postcolonial reality is aimed to interrogate the philosophical assumptions of the west. Their viewing the cultural encounter in the postcolonial world, without limiting it to an endless conflict between their erstwhile rulers and the natives, marks a vision of cohesion through accommodation and adjustment in the times to come: "Both literary theorists and cultural historians are beginning to recognize cross-culturality as the potential termination point of an apparently endless human history of conquest and annihilation justified by the myth of group 'purity', and the basis on which the post-colonial world can be creatively stabilized." (Ashcroft, 1989:36). It also brings out the significance of the postcolonial studies for providing new and alternative ways of understanding cultural development.

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Style and Language in Raja Ralo's Novel *Cat and Shakespeare*

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Like theme, plot, character and point of view, style is an integral, though somewhat personal, element which is tangibly there in a novel, even though it is not easy to define it. Broadly speaking, it refers to the characteristic ways in which a writer uses language and arranges aesthetic experience. To put it differently, it consists in a writer's uses of tone and diction, his handling of space and time, choice of phrasal and syntactic patterns in a certain sequence, his choice of rhetorical strategies and manipulation of language so as to ensure the desired response from his readers. As all these are, essentially, means to a certain end (for instance, the mock-heroic style in works like *Mac Flecknoe*, *The Rope of the Lock* and *Don Quixote* is after all employed to expose certain pretensions and ways of life), their sustained use in a certain way provides a key to the author's vision of life. As Richard Ohmann succinctly remarks in his admirable book on George Bernard Shaw, "Stylistic preferences reflect cognitive preferences."¹ For a close understanding and appreciation of a writer's art and vision, therefore, it is essential to study his style, at least in the broad sense of his characteristic uses of language and arrangement of aesthetic experience. As the latter aspect has been discussed in detail in the preceding chapter of this study, the focus in this chapter is largely on the former: namely, the stylistic elements which deal specifically with the uses of tone and diction and the rhetorical and Linguistic features in Raja Rao's novels.

The element of style assumes added significance in Indo-Anglian fiction because the writers not only have to write in a medium which is not their own but also to communicate experiences, feelings and thought processes which are alien to this medium that Raja Rao is himself aware of this problem is evident from his following observation: One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'alien', yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up-- like Sanskrit or Persian was before -- but not of

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our emotional make up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it.²

Different novelists have tried to solve the problems in their own individual ways. For example, while Mulk Raj Anand has evolved his own variety of English by providing literal translation of many Indian words and expressions, R.K. Narayan has relied on Chests English and taken few liberties with English as used in England and U.S.A. Raja Rao is perhaps the only Indo-Anglian novelist who not only modifies conventional English usage to accommodate native speech habits and syntactic patterns but also varies his style and language in accordance with the requirements of both the narrative experiences and the personality of the narrator from whose point of view the story is told. In this sense, perhaps it is better to speak to the varieties of his style and language rather than look for oneness in them. For, expect some general features of his style such as interpersions of myths, symbols and allusions, a certain poetic, even ritualistic quality in his earlier novels, prayer each of Rao's novels has its own style consistent with the narrative experience and the point of view.

In *The Cat* and *Shakespeare* Raja Rao moulds his stylistic and linguistic strategies to the requirements of the narrative experience, the narrator from whose point of view the story (whatever of it is there) is told and, more significantly, the central thematic concern. As the theme of the novel is a metaphysical one-- the theory of complete surrender before God -- the nature of the narrative largely visionary, and the narrator him-self an initiate to this mystic experience, the style has a certain enigmatic, paradoxical quality about it. Sentences are short, quizzical and paradoxical; words, commonplace, symbolic and evocative: I saw nose (not the nose) and eyes seeing eyes seeing \, I saw ears curved to make sound visible, and face and limbs rising on perfection of perfection, for form was it. I saw love yet knew not its name but heard it as sound, I saw truth not as fact but as ignition. I could walk into fire and be cool, I could sing and be silent. I could hold myself and yet not be there. I saw feet. They made flowers of stems and the curved hands of children. I smelled a breath that was of nowhere but rising in

my nostrils sank back into me, and found death was at my door. I woke up and found death and passed by, telling me I had no business to be there. Then where was I? Death said it had died. I had killed death. When you see death as death, you kill it. When you say, I am so and so, and you say, I am such and such, you have killed your self. I remain over, having killed myself.(*The Cat*, pp. 115-116)

To a reader of western and even modern Indian fiction, the style may appear to be a crude mixture of humour and pathos, fun and seriousness, ambiguity and riddles. It needs to be mentioned, however, that such a style belongs to many ancient Indian treatises on philosophy, astronomy and medicine in which a serious, somewhat abstruse theory is explained with the help of commonplace stories and examples. Secondly, it partakes of the verbal tradition associated with many legendary shamans and godmen who speak briefly, pointedly and enigmatically and frequently employ humour, irony and even farce to make abstruse metaphysical doctrines clear and comprehensible.

Used in this way, words lose their dictionary meaning and, indeed, become floating signifiers in search of essece they can be made to signify, much to the same way that the melodramatic cat at the trial is a poor, even ridiculous representative of the essential Mother cat. This use of words is quite consistent with the nature of the mythical experiences described in the novel. After all, what can words such as life and death mean to person who has transcended both and is, in his enlightened stage, capable of substituting one for the other :To die is fanciful. Reality is when you die really. Shridhar's death is my joke. When you fall unconscious they say you are dead. In fact where were you, brother, when Shridhar thought you were dead? Were you dead to yourself, my friend? You purge to live. You sleep to die. When sleep is life, where is death? Ha, ha,..... (*The Cat*, p. 21).As we read this novel, we find a striking change in language, that is, diction, sentence structure and the overall rendering of the fictional material. Unlike many complex but poetic passages in *The Serpent*, we have in *The Cat* simple descriptions offered by the characters. But when it comes to stating the essential world-view, we observe a definite dramatic shift. Govindan Nair's statements about his faith in the Cat-Kitten theory are quite enigmatic. For instead of explication of idea, a process which is pervasive in *The Serpent* and *the Rope*, there is apparently simple but philosophical statement couched in images and metaphors. Since here Govindan Nair does not consciously

indulge in rigorous examination of relativistic philosophical thoughts as is done by Ramaswamy, we came across an enigmatic statement instead of exposition.

We love what we cannot have. When we have it, we have it not, because what it is not, is what we want, and thus on to the wall. The Mother Cat alone knows. It takes you by the skin of your neck, and takes you to the loft. It alone loves. Sir, do you know love? O Lord, I want to love. I want to love all mankind. Why should there be spleen when in fact there is no malaria? Why don't children sit in scales and play the game of ration cards? Who plays, Lord, who plays? (The Cat, p. 44) Another striking feature of Raja Rao's linguistic experiment in The Cat consists in the use of simple words and short sentences to convey abstract ideas. For, while Raja Rao frequently makes use of philosophical terminology to state his ideas in The Serpent, his The Cat avoids academic jargon : Birth is instantaneous with time. Who is born where? Time is born in time. And that is Shantha. To be a wife is not to be wed. To be a wife is to worship your man. Then you are born... You annihilate time and you become wife. Wifeness, of all states in the world, seems the most holy. It stops work. It creates. It lives on even when time dies. Suppose you broke your clock, would the garden go? Suppose the garden were burned, where will the sky go? Such is woman. (The Cat, p. 32)

Not only that: while the discussion of ideas and the narration of experience remains serious throughout The Serpent, The Cat employs a mixture of the serious and the funny. Mark, for example, the situation between Govindan Nair and the seductive Lakshmi in the clinic of the doctor :

“Are You happy?” asked Govindan Nair.

The Girl threw a bit of her sari over her body.

“Are you?” she asked.

“Can't you see I am happy?”

“Where does it come from?”

“Where does water come from?”

“From the tap?”

“And the water in the tap?”

“From the lake?”

“And the water in the lake?”

“From the sky?”

“And the water in the sky?” (The Cat, p. 50)

This conversation has in it something of the madness that Hamlet pretends before Polonius :

Polonius : My God, the queen would speak to you, and presently.

Hamlet : Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?

Polonius : By the' mass and 'tis, like a camel indeed.

Hamlet : Methinks it is like a weasal.

Polonius : It is backed like a weasal.

Hamlet : Or, like a whale.

Polonius : Very like a whale.

Hamlet : Then I will come to my mother by and by. (Hamlet, III.ii. 376-87)

But its essential pattern is that of the Socratic dialogue in which the apparently irrelevant questions are a means to discover the truth. It is not that such patterns are lacking in the native tradition. The sage Ashtavakra employed such simple questions to teach knowledge about God and ultimate truth. Raja Rao's contribution consists in his use of humour and irony to bring the erring Lakshmi to the path of righteousness.

The conversation in the court where Nair faces a charge of embezzlement employs a similar method.

“Sir, why do we admit then that a chair is a chair?”

“Why, have you not seen a chair?”

“Ho, ho!” shouted the crowd.

“Has anyone seen a chair?” asked the judge.

“Nobody has,” said the Government Advocate. He was plainly taking sides with the accused.

The judge said: “I sit on a chair.”

“Who?” asked Govindan Nair.

(The Cat , pp. 106-107)

A close reading of this dialogue reveals Raja Rao's deft handling of language. Through apparently a simple exchange of comments revolving around the chair, he questions the foundation on which expression is based and leads his readers to think of the essence underlying the object. The result of this language is that the judge, who decides the fate of people through his judgement and is proud of his knowledge of jurisprudence, begins to wonder about himself. This is the magic of Raja Rao's language which urges us to confront existential issues of great significance. Mark how he leads us from concrete to abstract speculations not only about the objects but also about the relativistic superiority of the devotional path over the rational path by coining such thought-provoking definitions. Take, for example, Nair's definition of happiness :The mind that is not when the cat carries the kitten, that is happiness. That's not very clear. It is just like saying, my nose is that which I catch by carrying my hand behind my head, and turning round quickly hold a facial projection which could be called my olfactory organ. Strange, such round about definitions. man, do two and two make four or not?"First, tell me what two is, and I shall answer the rest," he said, and laughed. "You is one. I is one. Where is the two?" He asked.(The Cat, p. 95)Instead of defining "happiness" in a Johnsonian manner and thereby drawing attention to itself: Nair's definition leads to ontological question. What seems to be a nonsensical statement turns out to be a paradox. This is also true of some other definitions he offers.

Life is a riddle that can be solved with a riddle. You can remove the thorn with another thorn. You solve one problem through another problem. Thus the world is connected.(The Cat, p. 37)The unknown alone resolves the unknown. So, brother, work and be merry,....(The Cat, p. 37)Another important innovation of Raja Rao is that he weaves an entire passage around a single word in order to emphasize its value. One such word is "truth" which is the centre of both metaphysical and social norms :“Your Lordship, I speak only the truth. If the world of man does not conform to truth, should truth suffer for that reason? If only you knew how I pray every night and say : ‘Mother, keep me at the lotus feet of Truth.’ The judge can give a judgment. The Government Advocate can accuse. Police Inspector Rama Iyer can muster evidence. But the accused alone knows the truth.” (The Cat, p. 103)Whatever the literary merit of The Cat, in comparison with The Serpent, one thing appears certain : stylistically, it shows Raja Rao grappling with the

problem of evolving a new pattern which leaves the poetic atmosphere, the clusters of metaphors and images, and the paragraph - long sentences far behind. Instead, consistent with the requirements of the narrative experience, this novel experiments with a style which relies on short, aphoristic sentences, and commonplace but symbolically surcharged diction and paradox. Furthermore, the seriousness of tone in his earlier novels yields place to a detached ironical tone which employs a socratic manner to arrive at, or at least provoke, serious thinking on vital ontological and existential issues and problems.

The novel discussed in the present study may not show progressive improvement, richness and complexity ,it is certain that Raja Rao's novel shows his constant conscious effort to experiment with both style and language and to adapt them to the needs of the narrative experience.

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Transnational Identities in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*

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The collection of human communities united by a desire to work for common political destiny is termed as a nation. Ernest Renan believes that nation is a 'spiritual principle' which perpetually affirms a common life (19). The word nation alludes to people with common racial, religious, linguistic, cultural and historical ties. The main defining feature of a nation is homogeneity but fusion of diverse groups can also occur within a geographical space. Nations are not only simple entities but also social constructions (Ashcroft 150). Many nations across the globe are the products of dynasty and empire but numerous countries are an amalgam of diverse ethnic groups. This diversity leads to the emergence of transculturalism, cosmopolitanism and transnationalism. Migrant populations, whether during the colonial rule or in the postcolonial times, create a hybrid space. Their dispersal cut across the geographic, cultural and political borders to build "transnational social fields" (Nanda 2). The development of technologies and the demand for high skilled migrants in the present times create a hybrid society. Such hybrid societies are built on a willingness to abide by the duties and responsibilities. This fusion of cultures also results in a social regeneration.

The practices, exchanges, connections and activities that transcend the national space are labelled as transnationalism. The contemporary neo-liberal globalization brings cultures in conversation. Immigrant transnational activities integrate diverse cultures and promote multiculturalism. The emergence of global economy and capitalist expansion lead to more immigration and the phenomena of transnationalism. Overpopulation and poverty in a country pressurize people to explore new avenues. When immigrants (low or high skilled) engage in transnational activities, they create social fields. These fields link them to their country of origin as well as the country of residence. The social fields are also a product of the interconnectedness of the economic, political and cultural activities. Transnationalism integrates diverse cultures to bring about assimilation – conformity with the dominant culture. It also impacts the policy making framework of a nation.

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Disciplines and discourses emerge in a historical and cultural context of nations. Transnationalism creates greater degree of connection between individuals, communities and societies across borders. It brings change in the social, cultural, economic and political landscapes of societies of origin as well as residence. It is a process by which migrants create social fields that cross national boundaries. Migrants, refugees, ethnic diasporas, corporation networks, low and high-skilled people form a transnational group. The migrant ethnic groups identify with both cultures. This identification gives rise to hyphenated identities. The immigrant gets entangled between two cultures. A comparative study on adaptive and assimilative patterns of the Indian immigrants reveals variance in the adjustment patterns, lifestyles and attitudes. It shows that ethnic groups evolve in the receiving countries to facilitate cultural conformity.

According to the Collins Dictionary of Sociology, ethnic group shares an identity which arises from a collective sense of a distinct history. An ethnic group shares a defined tradition and language. Ethnic communities form when members of a different way of life find themselves as guests of a complex community. Despite the adaptation to new society, immigrant ethnic groups maintain their particular identity and cultural diversity. Indian immigrants living overseas recreate an Indian socio-culture wherever they live. Though they face the challenges to identity formation in a new environment, Indian immigrant retain the native culture. They get assimilated in the host culture. The immigrants/ethnic groups are delocalized physically and geographically but remain attached to the old memories of the culture. Stuart Hall defines cultural identity in two different ways. The first one is in terms of a shared culture, " a sort of collective ' one true self,' hiding inside many other, more superficial or artificially imposed ' selves' "(223). This "oneness" underlying superficial differences is the essence of identity that is excavated and represented in literature/cinema. The second one is a matter "of becoming as well as of being" (225). This cultural identity, according to Hall, belongs to the future as well as the past. He observes that cultural identities have histories and "undergo constant transformation" (225). These are not eternally fixed in some past but are subject to rupture and discontinuity due to the continuous play of history, culture and power. The past continues to speak to the present and is constructed through memory, myth, fantasy and narrative. Cultural identities thus become those unstable points of identification which make

the discourses of history and culture (226). Cultures define the range and focus of behavioural variation in individuals. Behavioural potentialities are enormously wide in range in broad cultures like America. The limits of socialization are restricted in narrow cultures like India. Family practices reflect and transmit values of a culture. Parents do not simply create parenting practices but conform to the learned practices that meet the expectations of the community. While the children of broad cultures modify the cultural pattern and assert their preferences, immigrants from narrow cultures are under greater normative pressure (as the parents demand conformity and obedience) (Arnett 618-620).

Indian English fiction and much of the Indian diasporic literature pertains to the subject of migration, adaptation and assimilation in the host societies. It is an imaginative representation of the cultural identities. Such fiction gives an expression to the intimate experiences and consciousness of the Indian immigrants. These immigrants constantly produce and reproduce themselves "anew, through transformation and difference" (Hall 235). Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003) deals with the processes that either create or deny culture among generations settled in America. These processes reflect on the degree of assimilation and the formation of new identity in the new culture. The institution of parenthood and marriage within the Bengali immigrant family in *The Namesake* reflect these variations in the cultures. Living in an environment of cultural diversity offers a new cosmopolitan way of life to the immigrants. The meeting of an existing culture and a migrant culture transforms both to create a neo-culture which is also subject to transculturation. This cultural interpenetration incorporates openness towards the other. It also promotes harmonious cultural interaction. The exploration of the life of the first and the second generation characters in *The Namesake* does not simply reveal the diversity of cultures. It also studies the transnational identity that results from the dynamics of cultural integration. The narrative delineates the processes by which the fragmented identities of the immigrants get reconstructed. An effective cultural exchange interweaves different ethnicities to build a blended culture and a cosmopolitan citizenship in the transnationals. Cosmopolitanism or transculturalism, hence, redefines the transnationals. The movement from ethnicity to transnationalism envisions the world through a cultural prism (Cuccioletta 9). Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, observes : I do not want my house to be walled in on all

sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. (Quote)The concern voiced by Gandhi in the context of colonized India holds ground even in the postcolonial globalized times. The synthesis of cultures has two phases – deculturalization of the past and an intermingling in the new for the reinvention of the new identities (Grosu-108).

Identity and culture are the building blocks of ethnicity. When individuals and groups address the problematics of ethnic boundaries, they reconstruct identity. The dialectics of ethnic group and new culture keeps evolving to reshape selves and culture. Ethnicity is not simply an historical legacy of migration but a redefinition of the ethnic process and transformation (Nagel 152-153). Identity, in case of the transmigrants, is the result of internal and external opinions. The socially defined array of ethnic choices open to the transmigrants produces a layering of identities through negotiations. This combination reconstructs identities (154-55). Culture, which provides meaning of ethnicity, authenticates ethnic boundaries. Culture is not simply an historical legacy but is also a construct due to the 'picking' and 'choosing' of items from the shelves of the past and the present (162). These cultural construction techniques define the boundaries of collective identity in case of the transmigrants (163). Revival and restoration of historical cultural practices alongwith revision and innovation of culture revitalizes the cultural repertoires. The transmigrants thus invent the present by reinventing the past/tradition.

These traditions establish social cohesion. The reinvention of traditions includes construction or reconstruction of rituals, practices, customs and beliefs (Nagel 163). The processes of globalization and the phenomenon of transnationalism have dislocated/decentred the cultural as well as national identity. Stuart Hall conceptualization of identity as a subject is distinguished into three – enlightenment subject, sociological subject and post-modern subject. He considers the enlightenment subject to be individualistic. In the sociological subject there is a continuous dialogue between self and society. Identity, according to Hall, stitches the subject into the structure. He believes post modernity transforms the subject into a shifting and fragmented self (Modernity 597-598). In the absence of a sense of national identification, the transmigrants suffer a deep subjective loss. National identities get eroded in the global post modern through cultural

homogenization. New identities of hybridity which arise in the contemporary times are in direct contrast to the local identities which resist the onslaughts of the processes of globalization (619). Jhumpa Lahiri portrays the problems engendered by migrancy such as displacement, fragmentation, crisis in identity and cultural dilemma in her novel *The Namesake*. With a masterly touch Lahiri negotiates the dilemma of cultural spaces lying across the continents. She narrates the predicament of the Indians settled in America. The novel brings out Lahiri's personal experiences as an immigrant and her connections with Kolkata. The "author's own real homeland" forms the 'organizing centre' to understand the dialogics of two cultures in the discourse of the novel (Bakhtin 105). Lahiri makes the following observation in one of her interviews to Elizabeth Farnsworth :I think that, in part, it's a reflection of what I observed my parents experiencing and their friends, their circle of fellow Indian immigrant friends. It's also, in part, drawn from my own experiences . . . I've inherited a sense of that loss from my parents because it was so palpable all the time while I was growing up, the sense of what my parents had sacrificed in moving to the United States (Interview)

The *Namesake* reveals the details of Bengali customs in Kolkata vis-à-vis their adaptations into a different culture in America. Though the novel deals with life in the United States, Bengal continues to form an important part in the fictional landscape. The novel foregrounds the tradition/practice of Bengali nomenclature (naming or christening) as a marker of cultural identity. The *Namesake* is the story of two generations of Bengalis in the United States. Ashoke Ganguli and Ashima Bhaduri immigrate to the US in the late 1960s. Ashoke comes to Massachusetts Institute of Technology as a graduate student in engineering. He returns to Kolkata after two years for an arranged marriage with Ashima. Both leave India and settle in Cambridge "with a continuous feeling of out of sorts" (Lahiri 49). Ashoke does his best to adapt while Ashima pines for home. Ashima holds traditional values in the midst of materialistic realities of American life. She remains immune to the multicultural milieu of America. She clings to the words of her parents – "not to eat beef or wear skirts or cut off her hair or forget her family" (37). Her personal space represents the feeling of the first generation and is filled with her concern for her family. Ashima's life is quite similar to Nina (protagonist of Manju Kapur's *The Immigrant*). She is in the role of :The immigrant

who comes as wife has a more difficult time. If work exists for her, it is in the future, and after much finding of feet. At present all she is, is a wife and a wife alone for many, many hours. There will come a day when even books are powerless to distract. When the house and its conveniences can no longer completely charm or compensate. Then she realises, she is an immigrant for life. (Kapur 124)She looks after her family members. Though her loneliness decreases with the coming of her children, Ashima is unable to overcome her nostalgia for home. She keeps rereading her parent's letters and cries on finding "no letters from Calcutta" (Lahiri 34). She preserves the "tattered copy of *Desh* magazine " and "printed pages of Bengali type" (6). She does not want to raise her son Gogol alone in an alien country (33).

Ashima learns to cope gradually. In order to overcome her distress and nostalgia, Ashima goes to Calcutta for a six weeks trip. But soon realizes that being a foreigner "is a sort of lifelong pregnancy – a perpetual wait" and "a constant burden" (Lahiri 49). Ashima chooses to stick to traditional way of dressing because any transition in clothing would imply disintegration/rupture of self. She celebrates Gogol's annaprasan (consumption of solid food/rice ceremony). Dilip Nandi plays part of Ashima's brother to hold the child and feed him rice, the "Bengali stuff of life" (39). She sends him to Bengali language and culture lesson, goes to Kathakali dance performance or sitar recital and visits Calcutta regularly. Ashima wants to make (house) Calcutta a marker in her expatriate experience in America. Ashima makes Gogol memorize poems written by Tagore. Every Saturday she sends Gogol (in the third grade) to Bengali classes to learn his "ancestral alphabet" (66). She lets him watch the TV show *Sesame Street* in order to keep with the use of English in school. Though Ashima is rigid in her conventions, she learns to make sandwiches. She celebrates American festivals like Christmas and Thanksgiving for the happiness of her children. The newly arrived wives of doctors, teachers and engineers in Cambridge turn to Ashima for recipes and advice. They become friends as they all "come from Calcutta" (38).Ashoke and Ashima befriend so many Bengalis that at Sonia's (their daughter's) rice ceremony (annaprasan) they have to rent a building. These Bengalis get together not only on weekends but also on Bengali festivals and special occasions – name ceremonies, birthdays, pujas. They wear their best traditional attires on these occasions to revive their traditions in an alien land. The first generation Bengali immigrants

construct a sense of community in America and perceive themselves as different (by their cultural and historical legacies). They refer to Bengal as *desh*. The first generation immigrant strike a balance between the past and the present by keeping the traditions and culture alive. The homing desire shapes their cultural identity in an adopted land (America).

The practice of Bengali nomenclature (naming) is also a marker of cultural identity. Every Indian, reveals Lahiri in *The Namesake*, has two names – public and private, good name and pet name, *Bhalonam* and *Daknam*. She narrates Gogol's experience of growing up with a pet name and a good name in a place (America) where such distinctions do not exist. Gogol calls this "emblematic of the greatest confusion of all" (Lahiri 118). The name becomes a metaphor for divided identity of the child of the immigrants. As Gogol grows, he begins to feel that his name is absurd and irrelevant. He believes it to be the weirdest namesake which is neither Indian nor American "but of all things Russian" (76). He wants to cast off his awkward name. This reflects his longing to abandon the inherited values of his Bengali parents. Gogol is given the good name *Nikhil Ganguli* for school. Whenever the teacher calls him *Nikhil*, Gogol feels scared. Therefore, he remains 'Gogol' in school. After Gogol's instance, *Ashoke* and *Ashima* do away with the pet name for their daughter *Sonali*. Her good name and pet name remain same. Another child of Bengali immigrant, *Moushumi* also dislikes her name.

Nikhil and *Sonali* try to create their own lives in America. Gogol (*Nikhil*) begins having relationships with white/American women. He keeps his private life secret. *Nikhil's* parents never suspect of him being an American teenager. Gogol's sister *Sonia* knows everything but does not tell her parents. Gogol and *Sonali* act as each other's confidants. They help each other hide their social relations from their parents in order to avoid confrontation. They discuss things among themselves. This reflects a gap in communication between parents and children. The bond between the siblings strengthens because they share the similar sense of confusion and sense of being fellow sufferers. *Sonali* abbreviates her name to *Sona* and eventually changes it to *Sonia*. She gets trendy haircuts, goes to dances and has boyfriends in high school.

While his parents wanted Gogol to be an engineer, doctor or lawyer, he likes architecture. *Nikhil* begins to live with *Maxine* in her parents' "beautiful Greek Revival house" (Lahiri 188). He moves far away from his parents' world. He avoids the group ABCD (American Born

Confused Desis – acronym for US immigrants) as they remind him of the ways of his parents. He is reluctant to visit home on weekends and does not like to accompany his parents for Bengali parties (119). For the second generation immigrant, Gogol, the American way of life is normal. Therefore, eating beef, drinking, live-in partnerships and girl friends come naturally to Gogol. Both Gogol and *Sonia* dislike going to *Calcutta* to visit relatives. They yearn to get back to their western ways whenever they are in *Kolkata*. *Moushumi* also suffers the same lack of belongingness like Gogol and *Sonia*. She tries to find her roots in the third language and culture of France. The generation gap between father and son becomes more visible on Gogol's fourteenth birthday. Gogol is fond of American music which is in sharp contrast to his father's inclination to classical Indian music. Gogol's aversion to Indian music shows the second generation's indifference to Indian culture and tradition. *Ashoke* and *Ashima* discourage Gogol's courtship with *Ruth*, an American girl. They distrust this relationship because they have witnessed marital disharmony and divorces in the lives of Bengali men married to American women. After the termination of his affair with *Ruth*, Gogol dates *Maxine*. He shifts to *Maxine's* home to forget painful memories of his affair with *Ruth*. He detaches himself from his parents and gets disoriented. He becomes *Nikhil* for the entire world and remains Gogol only for the family.

It is the death of his father that reconciles Gogol to his culture. The death of *Ashoke* shakes Gogol and brings in him consciousness of his filial duties. Gogol flies to *Cleveland* to get his father's dead body. *Ashoke's* death and the ceremony of mourning with the extended community of Bengalis reorients Gogol. Gogol acknowledges the relevance of funeral rites. He recalls his father's shaving off his hair after the death of his grandparents. He learns the significance of shaving head in wake of a parent's death. As a young boy Gogol is disappointed with "meatless meal" for ten days after his grandparents death (Lahiri 180). But Gogol gives up meat and fish and eats a mourner's diet (only rice, dal and vegetables) during the ten days mourning after his father's death. He returns to his family. He tries to support his mother. He realises the cultural distance between himself and *Maxine*. *Maxine* is not the least affected by his father's death. Gogol notices her self-centred attitude when she asks about his plan for New Year's Eve during the mourning period of his father's death. *Maxine* dislikes *Ashima* and *Sonia*. She wants

Gogol to move away from them. This makes Gogol break his relationship with Maxine. After Ashok's death, Sonia's behaviour alters. Her relationship with Ashima undergoes a change. She starts staying at home to give her mother company.

Gogol succumbs to his mother's pressure and gets into an arranged marriage with Moushumi. By his marriage with Moushumi, Gogol understands as well as satisfies the shared concern of the community. Unfortunately, the wayward attitude of Moushumi brings disharmony in the relationship. Moushumi's alienation from Bengali identity and indulgence in sexual adventures lead to the breaking up of their relationship. Though Gogol is a shattered man, he speaks to his widowed mother and sister, Sonia, every evening. He visits them on weekends. He, at times, drives to the university where his father taught. He begins visiting the homes of his parents' Bengali friends. Gogol helps his mother dismantle her Pemberton Road house. He feels sad because Ashima leaves for Kolkata. With the death of his father and mother's departure Gogol does not feel comfortable on the prospect that there would be no one around him to name 'Gogol : "without the people in the world to call him Gogol, no matter how long he himself lives, Gogol Ganguli will . . . vanish from the lips of loved ones . . . Yet the thought of eventual demise provides no sense of victory, no Solace "(Lahiri 289). The narrative shows Gogol maintaining distance from his origins but is unable to erase his background (past). Gogol, in the end, plays host at Pemberton Road – on the occasion of his mother's departure – to his family's Bengali acquaintances.

There is a contrast in the sanctified familial traditions of the first generation immigrants and the American life style of the second generation immigrants. But this intergenerational conflict involves the process of searching identity in the country of settlement. The duality of his orientation confuses Gogol but the death of his father brings new awareness and understanding of self and community in him. The in-between state ceases to vex him and Gogol accepts his ambivalence. Ashima never shows any sign of betrayal to culture. Her life in America brings certain changes in her as Ashima adapts the new culture. Her ethical and cultural mores do not change. She takes a job at public library and makes American friends. Ashima learns to do things on her own. She wears saris and puts her long hair in a bun. She is not "the same Ashima who had once lived in Calcutta" (Lahiri 276). She misses Calcutta for thirty-three years but will miss her job at the library and the time spent in America on returning to Calcutta. Ashima feels the warmth of the country to which she had earlier resisted. She decides to divide her time between two 'homes' after her husband's death.

The struggle and in-betweenness strengthens the comprehensibility of self in both the generations. In an effort to construct identity every character participates in multiple identities and finally gets aligned with self/specific role. The sense of displacement in the immigrants is alternatively emancipation – a freedom to assert true self. Ashima's transformation to a transnational figure is true to the meaning of her name, "without borders, without a home of her own, a resident everywhere and nowhere" (Lahiri 276). In the age of transnationalism immigrant identities are central to the nation building projects of both home and host society. The degree of belongingness and identity reinscribes boundaries of nation state. Transnationalism plays a key role in the globalized economy and political processes. It is a silent subtext that remains undocumented (Schiller 50,59). Lahiri's novel decentres subjectivity, juxtaposes the ethnic and the transnational to rediscover the real self. The transnational turn connotes "exchange" between nations and marks a "return to roots" (Nanda 2).

Literature encodes the "intensity of lived lives" (term used by Stephen Greenblatt) to provide a critical lens to study the emerging transnational trends. It recognizes the changes brought by time to territorial boundaries and the culture of the world (Nanda 4). Literature reveals the transnational currents by examining the effect of diasporas movement on human identity (as people migrate from one place to another). It also deals with sense of loss (of homeland, of culture, of legacy) and explores the geographical (and metaphorical) borders to usher in "new ethnic revisions and re-visions" (Sardar 184). Gogol's actions and decisions in the present can be evaluated, discussed and dissected for their future implications. Lahiri's narrative gives a foresight into the cultural practices of the immigrants to figure out fresh views on future possibilities of transnational identity. *The Namesake* explores future immigrant identities by a meaningful assessment in the present. It provides a vision through the layered analysis of identities. This could bring changes in the perception of people (transnational as well as national). The realization that past is an integral part of the present and there can be no future without a past could galvanise them for collective social action. The transnationals would thus attempt to empower their present with the past (184). Lahiri's connection of the past to the present suggests a viable future which recognizes and appreciates the past (174).

The narrative reveals that identities get constructed in cultures. Migration juxtaposes different cultures and nationalities. This lead to a struggle for identity as the culturally displaced immigrants experience an in-between situation. They become captives of two cultures and search for alternatives. This quest envisages a desire for emancipation as well as sense of self realization to align with specific roles. This

diffuses the borderline between the cultural past and the present to give rise to new transnational identities. The immigrants swing between homogenisation and diversification. While cultural identity attaches them to local context (symbols, values and language), the global context decontextualizes symbols. The process of uprooting results in loss of cultural tradition but it also enables the immigrants in redefining their identities (Hauser 1-4).

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Treatment of Philosophy, Spirituality and Desire in Gita Mehta's *A River Sutra*

Dr. Ashoo Toor*

Gita Mehta's *A River Sutra* is a study of the conundrum of life through expedition stories entwined with a worldly humanistic approach. It offers authentic interpretations of Indian cultural values, music, art forms, heritage and a liberal dose of Indian metaphysics. *A River Sutra* is a lyrical series of interlocking stories told with a higher level of conscious story telling. Each bewitching tale reflects the depth and complexity of India's spirituality. A sutra literary means 'thread'. As a literary form, it is aphoristic and often strings together parables that encapsulate concepts or experiences. The thread in the novel is a bureaucrat, nearing his retirement, who has opted to take a government post of a manager of a rest house at a small town on the banks of the holy river, Narmada, which is worshipped as the daughter of God Shiva. In the solitude of this quiet retreat, the nameless narrator befriends Mr Chagla, his secretary, Tariq Mia, a sufi mullah and Dr Mitra, a rational idealist.

The narrator of the story comes across different people and thereby different stories. If we look at the stories individually, they seem unconnected and the novel appears loosely knit. However, the stories are bounded by three elements- love, death and the Narmada River. The novel is an exposition of Indian metaphysics; and renunciation has always been an important element in Indian metaphysics, culture, life and literature. At the superficial level, it seems that renunciation means to physically depart from the society and live a life of a recluse, but in Indian metaphysics, renunciation can be explained as achieving inner calm and bliss. As the novel gains momentum and the stories progress one by one, it becomes the story of the Narmada- the symbol of our culture- of Shiva's penance and birth of the Narmada; and of men running around in an attempt to grasp the meaning of life. Even the narrator at the end realizes that only involvement can lead to detachment. The author also endeavours to perceive the nature of human desires like nirvana, love, peace, luxury, devotion and immortality. Thus the novel

becomes a study of life and life's philosophy. It can be interpreted on a larger canvas- it can be read as a treatise on the Indian concepts of animism, materialism and spirituality.

The river becomes the object of his reflections and from his forest retreat the narrator is a witness to a large number of white-robed pilgrims, who, as vanaprasthis are out to seek personal enlightenment and renunciation from the binding world. Of the innumerable stories told to him by his guests, the narrator selects six stories- unconnected from each other, which form the beads on his string. The only common thread amongst the stories is the complex intra-personal relationship and a search for a higher experience- be it spiritual, sensual or moral. The river silently flows through the novel and becomes as much of a living entity, touching the lives of the narrator, the characters and the readers. The uniqueness of the stories lies in the unsettled nature of man, swinging between happiness and despair, attachment and detachment, obsession and renunciation, desire and death.

The novel begins with the words of a 14C Indian poet: "Listen, O brother. Man is the greatest truth. Nothing beyond" (14). The Monk's Story begins with Ashok, the monk, who is probably only thirty years old and has already tired of a world that has offered him everything he has wanted: extreme wealth and a loving family. He keeps withdrawing from life, longing to be free. No one understands why he desires to renounce the world and the monk has no rationale to forward, for such lessons can be "learnt only by the heart, not the mind" (35). It is easy to know the world but the secrets of the human heart are still a mystery. The monk himself seems to be in a dilemma more than once whether he has chosen the right path or not. While the heart may want to tread strange paths and the realisation of God's glory may be a coveted desire, yet somehow the transition from one world into the other is not an easy one; it is perhaps the most arduous journey of the self. It is strange to comprehend why human bonds at times seem to weigh heavy, burdensome and useless just like the ash on the fag end of a cigarette bud; and yet how one clings to human relationships at other times.

At one point, the monk entreats the narrator not to hold him too long for he fears his brother monks might leave from Mahadeo, where they are waiting for him. The conclusion surprises the readers, since the monk, even after renunciation, is awed at the prospect of being left alone!

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The need to align, cling, relate and bond being primordial, it is indeed hard to sever ties from this earthly network of relations. "I am too poor to renounce the world twice", he says. (41). The ascetic has a new birth and birth itself has its pangs. The Monk's Story leaves an unanswered question- "I have loved just one thing in my life" (14). The answer is found in the second story! Tariq Mia, the narrator of The Teacher's Story, hence, tells the sutradhar that the human heart secretly longs for freedom. "Many men die before they learn the desire for freedom lies deep within them like a dammed river waiting to be released" (31). Master Mohan, the Music teacher, with an unfulfilled desire of being a famous singer, meets an orphan, Imrat, and gives him music lessons devotedly. Although his efforts to help and train the child are magnanimous, in his latent psyche, Imrat becomes a means to revive his lost self and to relive his own unfulfilled childhood. There is also a desire to show his critics and particularly his wife that after all his life is not an utter failure. He hopes that Imrat's brilliance will illuminate his life again.

Unfortunately, Imrat's murder leads him towards a path of guilt-ridden madness and he comes on the banks of the river Narmada, seeking solace. Tariq Mia apparently cures him from his malady but while returning home, Master Mohan commits suicide. Tariq Mia tells the narrator, "Perhaps he could not exist without loving someone as he had loved the blind child" (91). Human heart has an immense capacity to love; but at the same time, it dies when the object of love ceases to be. Longing to be free from the burden of a loveless and failed life, the only recourse for him is to end his life. The young executive, Nitin Bose in The Executive's Story is "suffocated by the sheer weight of Calcutta's inescapable humanity" (114) and the solitude of the tea-estate appears an attractive prospect to his bored mind. It is a tale of physical consummation. It devours everything- love, poise, sentiments, peace and sanity. The self-disciplined young man is taken over by Rima, a married tribal woman. His tranquil mind is coiled by the voluptuous woman and he gets into a relationship with her. Even though he returns to the city on the command of the chairman's telegram, he does not come out of Rima's dreams. He buries his immoral act in his mind and the effect of his suppression results in his utter madness.

The story reflects the Indian psyche and tradition in which these kinds of acts are not permissible. When Nitin revisits the tea estate, he

encounters Rima and is subjected to some kind of tribal magic. It is believed that he is possessed and worshipping the tribal goddess at any shrine that overlooks the Narmada River alone will cure him. There is a myth about the Narmada that it cures one of a snake's venom. Here snake is not to be taken in the literal sense. Snake is a symbol of desire and its venom is the harm of desires on human existence. Nitin Bose takes refuge on the banks of the river to immerse the figure of the tribal goddess to weaken his possession. The river's tranquility helps him divert his attention from sex to creativity. Thus he sublimates his lust and regains his lost balance and intelligence. The Courtesan's Story is a raw tale of abduction, of crime, of coquetry and of love superceding lifetimes- the profound love of a man- a bandit, for a woman- a love he believes has survived innumerable births and deaths, and how his soul has always sought his beloved in every lifetime. Rahul Singh, the bandit finally wins over the heart of the young courtesan woman, who he believes has been his soul mate in all births. True love can find its way into the toughest heart, and the young woman finally starts believing him. However, after the police shoot Rahul Singh, the girl accompanies her mother to go back home and while the narrator looks out of the window watching them, he sees the girl embracing her mother and disappearing from the scene. The narrator's assistant informs him later that the girl drowned in Narmada and her mother felt relieved that her sins would be forgiven as she had become one with the Holy River. The narrator is surrounded by his own thoughts at the stranger than fiction love bond between Rahul Singh and the young woman and he is left wondering how like other lifetimes, the two had not enjoyed each others' companionship for long, thus sowing the seeds of another birth in another lifetime. By ending her life in the river, the young courtesan draws a parallel between her own immortal love and the immortality of the Narmada. The flowing waters of Narmada speak of the unending charm of men coming and going according to the dictates of destiny. The love tale in the backdrop of Oriental Hindu Philosophy bespeaks of a love of a higher order, a love which is stronger than death.

The Musician's Story is yet another tale of love- rather an amalgamation of love in its various hues- the sensuous love of Lord Shiva for Parvati which made him immortalize the beauty of his wife by creating the first instrument of music- the Veena. It is also the love of a musician for his music. It is the story of desire and unrequited

love of a young musician woman. Her training is nothing less than a penance. For one year her father does not allow her to touch the musical instruments. She is asked to notice and listen to various sounds. Thus her sharpness to perceive the notes clearly does increase. She learns various notes from natural sounds. The musician's attachment with music is also appealing. For him art is something sublime as he says that when one chooses to be a musician, one enters into a pact with Lord Shiva. Thus the musician's daughter learns to listen to the music of the rippling waters, the whispering tress, the rustling leaves, and the chirruping of the birds. But unfortunately she could not listen to the false notes of a human heart. Her father's young disciple fails to return her love, leaving her broken hearted. Her father consoles her saying that she should consider herself married to music and not to a musician. But jilted in love, she does not have the capacity to accept such consolation. She rightly asserts, "... it is an impossible penance ... to express desire in my music when I am dead inside" (226). The forlorn woman refuses to touch her musical instruments and so does her father bring her to the banks of Narmada- to pray, to meditate, to undergo penance until the time she has cured herself of her "attachment to what has passed and can become again the ragini to every raga" (225). As the Narmada is the daughter of Shiva, it will cure her of the attachment and resultant anguish. It is only the sublime quality of love of nature that has a redeeming and curing element. Thus the theme of love interconnects these elements in this story- the elemental nature, human nature and the forms of art.

The last story in the 'Sutra', The Minstrel's Story, is of a naga mendicant, who renounces the world and treks the length and breadth of the country seeking enlightenment of a different order. "You cannot be a naga without overcoming human limitations", his teacher had said (239). And hence, he had become fearless- overcoming the fear of death, danger, starvation and vagaries of the weather. He had overcome weaknesses not only of the body but of the spirit as well. The little girl 'Chanda' whom he rescued from a brothel was re-christened 'Uma-peace in the night' by the naga, which is the authors' way of suggesting that the sadhu had overcome his passion and lust as well. "She was the fruit of his austerity ... Uma was born of the Naga Baba's penance" (258). They live in caves where he nurtures her and teaches her to sing the songs of the Narmada. They live on the river bank for nearly three

years. Uma thus becomes the river minstrel. She is set on the path of devotion and spirituality but this path is not an easy one. Naga Baba knows the importance of austerity and penance in the process of learning and therefore he makes it sure that Uma also learns it that hard way. He knows that when she is initiated on the path of self-realization and spirituality, her previous life should be totally annihilated in all respect. Baba's treatment to her is as stiff as his guru's:

The Naga Baba grabbed her, his breathing harsh above the stems breaking under his feet as he carried her through the darkness toward the river. ...suddenly he gripped her arm and lowered her into the water. The paralyzed child stared into the ascetic's eyes. Then the water closed over the child's head and she heard only the sound of her own blood pounding in her ears. She no longer even had the will to scream, knowing she could do nothing to prevent herself from being drowned... (253).

This treatment hints at a suggestion that the enlightenment has all the pain of death and rebirth. By describing minutely the Naga Baba's training imparted by his guru, his penance, austerity and humility, Gita Mehta also seems to refer to an important element of Hindu religious matrix. The author seems to be making a deliberate attempt to erase misconceptions regarding this community and raise it to its due level. The community of Naga Baba is not a cult of naked ascetics but they carry with them a lot of energy derived through penance.

The Naga Baba encourages Uma to sing at temple festivals, travelling from temple to temple and finally leaves the singer-saint to disappear into the wilderness, to follow the next stage of his enlightenment. Aroused by such a description and learning that the naga finally left Uma, to seek higher enlightenment, the narrator desires to find him out, only to be reminded by the Mullah that such people are like the flowing waters, whom we encounter only once in a lifetime.

The strange turn of events next reveal that the new occupant of the Guest House, Professor Shankar, the archaeologist and author of 'The Narmada Survey', is in fact the Naga Baba himself! The narrator's befuddled questions are just the queries every reader is struck with- "Is this your enlightenment? Is this why you endured all those penances? Why you became an ascetic, why you stopped?" (281) The professor's calm and resilient response to such queries is simple and yet teasing- "I have no great truths to share, my friend. I told you, I am only a man" (281).

In fact, this intriguing concluding sutra in the novel brings full circle the epigraph- "Man is the greatest truth. Nothing beyond" (281). It is indeed difficult to give up a world one has attained after a penance of centuries of births and deaths. No philosophy, however absorbing and binding it may be, is complete enough to comprehend the enigma called man. It is a futile exercise to define man in limited terms! The decision of the naga mendicant to renounce the ascetic's life is almost a regression on the path of spirituality. It epitomizes the ambiguity in the contemporary Indian thought system. We find ourselves on a threshold. On the one side we have traditional thinking highly influenced by religion. On the other side there is a rational approach which completely denies the traditional outlook.

All the sutras in the novel are deeply thoughtful, reflective and somewhat harrowing at the literal level and any explication or analysis would only dilute and dissipate the experience of reading them. In essence, though one can renounce the world for the greater glory of God, yet it is not a coveted dream in totality. The mortal man still clings too much to the world. The writer has intensely concerned herself with the enlightening of a different order, an awakening of the inner psyche. She has explored the inner pull of freedom, liberation and identity. River Narmada is the final refuge if everything fails in the world. It is among the holiest pilgrimage sites where people from diverse walks of life converge to get salvation.

The stories give moral lessons to the people. The river with its mythology, superstitions, religion, spirituality and archaeology represents the traditional, primitive and modern Indian. In fact the depiction of the river and the inter-related stories repeatedly draw attention toward the theme of love, desire and renunciation and the impact of Indian ethos is so powerful that it dominates the narrative. Gita Mehta makes an excellent use of Indian myths, folk lore, rituals and superstitious beliefs in this novel. She expresses the psychology of the human mind which cannot deny the influence of culture, religion, faiths and desires on it. Man at last surrenders before such complex confluence of dichotomies- attachment and detachment, desire and renunciation, bonding and nirvana. Each man, therefore, is on his own individual journey and seeks to tread his own path and responds to his own calling.

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R. K. Narayan's *The Dark Room*: A Sociological Study

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Abstract

The Dark Room is the only novel in the whole oeuvre of Narayan's writings which deal exclusively with the problems of an Indian housewife who is financially dependent on her husband. In the novel Narayan has exhibited his understanding of the socio-economic dimension of marriage. The major motif in the narrative is the marital dissonance which arises from maladjustment. The Dark Room is centered on Savitri's revolt on this issue from the 1930s women's movement. The present paper tries to explore how Narayan grounds his novel on the female politics of the time, which reveals the reality of women's lives in the thirties.

Narayan takes the subject matter of *The Dark Room* (1938) from the socio-political events of the thirties when All Indian Women Conference was organized to further the women cause in general and their economic Independence in particular. Founded in 1927, the AIWC was first dedicated to the cause of women education. By the thirties, it emerged as an influential social reform organization which was determined to fight for the cause of women. Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya, the secretary of AIWC pointed out that this agitation cannot in any sense be said to be a rebellion against men. She moved a campaign which was intended to make all people aware of the subjugation under which women are forced to live after marriage. In 1936, a book named *Our Cause: A Symposium by Indian Women* was published, which is an attack on the institution of marriage. The editor of the book Shyam Kumari Nehru writes: "it is a cunning device to keep women economically dependent on men, chained with the four walls of the zenana, confined to the performing of household duties alone. Usually marriage is thrust on her much before she can think for herself, and the tie is indissoluble." (xii) G.J.Bahadurji, one of the contributors of the book considers marriage as bondage. According to her, marriage not only transforms a woman into either a "dressed-up-doll" or a "beast of burden" but its corollary, motherhood, ensures her lifelong slavery:

her creations become the bonds that tie her to the yoke of family life, which, once entered, leaves no room for self-expression, or self-realization" (324). This discourse later became the main agenda of AIWC. Like these women, Savitri is concerned with her economic dependence. *The Dark Room* is centered on Savitri's revolt on these issues from the 1930s women's movement. The present paper tries to explore how Narayan grounds his novel on the female politics of the time, which reveals the reality of women's lives in the thirties. Narayan himself writes about this novel in *My Days*:

I was somehow obsessed with a philosophy of Woman as opposed to Man, her constant oppressor. This must have been an early testament of the "Women's Lib." movement. Man assigned her a secondary place and kept her there with such subtlety and cunning that she herself began to lose all notions of her independence, individuality, stature, and strength. (Narayan: 1975, 119)

The theme of economic independence of women is reinforced not only from the character-focalizer Savitri's situation but from Shanta Bai's and 200 other women applicants at Englandia Insurance Company. Savitri is very keen to see her daughters educated and independent: "Sumati and Kamala must study up to the B.A. and not depend for their salvation on marriage." (*The Dark Room* 93) But the narrator also seems to suggest indirectly that women should throw this oppression from their minds only then their access to work can bring them self-reliance. Shanta Bai who is modern and self-reliant but carries this oppression inside her and enjoys the subjugation forced on her.

The opening sequence of the novel introduces us to the nature of the action of the novel and also the three major characters – Ramani, Savitri and Babu. The nature of interaction between the two main characters Ramani, and Savitri foretells the nature of action during the whole narrative span of the novel. The nature of action revealed in the first paragraph is reinforced again in the succeeding paragraph: "I don't know when I shall have a little decent food to eat. I slave all day in the office for this mouthful. No lack of expenses, money for this and money for that. If the cook can't cook properly, do the work yourself. What have you to do better than that?" (DR 2) Ramani's outburst makes the dominance clear and Savitri's subordination to masculine authority sets the nodes and anti-nodes of the tension that shapes the narrative.

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In his novel, *The Dark Room*, Narayan deals with the theme more serious than that of his earlier novels *Swami and Friends* and *The Bachelor of Arts*. In it he draws the picture of a middle class South Indian domestic life run by an irritable and whimsical husband. The novel is different from the other novels of Narayan in that it was written with the definite social purpose. Set in the pre-independence India, it was written to project the helpless position of a housewife in a man-dominated society. The novel centers on Savitri, middle aged wife of Ramani, an officer in an Insurance company. She is conscious of her identity, self-respect and rights as an individual. But she has adjusted herself to the role of a self-less mother, and never complains the tyrannical behavior of her husband. The novel can be divided into three parts; each part shows different aspects of a middle class house-wife in an Indian society. The first part of the novel introduces Savitri who is struggling as a woman and finding herself unable to maintain a rapport between her role as a mother and as a wife. In the second part, the narrator has focused on the institution of marriage in India where husband has all the liberty to the social norms. A husband can maintain an extramarital affair and his wife has no right to question it. It is just "a little fun now and then" (DR 109) for a husband and a wife is left to her own gloom and misery which Savitri experiences at her marital discord. In the third part, Savitri learns to live with her problems. She realizes that facing them is a part of her married life. A woman has to learn how to manage her emotional and social problems in order to survive in the society. Despite having failed in finding a solution to her problems, she being with her dead part finds solace in the company of her children.

The narrative portrays the condition and atmosphere in the family of Ramani, the secretary of Englandia Insurance Company. He is presented as a very arrogant, eccentric and self-opinionated husband, and governs his house according to his own sweet will. The happiness or unhappiness of the house purely depends on his mood. As he is always irritable, the atmosphere in his house is generally very tense, and his wife, children and servants always remain in a state of terror. His wife, Savitri is a traditional Indian woman. She is very beautiful and completely devoted to her husband. But Ramani does not respond to her sentiments even with ordinary warmth. His wife has received nothing from her husband except his temper during the fifteen years of their marriage. Ramani's elaborate ritual of dressing, his elegant and prestigious

Chevrolet and his enviable position in Englandia Insurance Company gratifies his sense of self-importance but a deliberate attempt to discourage and subdue his wife's self-assertion.

Narayan's *The Dark Room* is a sociological study of an Indian middle class household. It is an example of the recreation of a middle class milieu with its agony and ecstasy fused into one structure. The narrative is structured on the interaction between the family members of Ramani. It demonstrates the typical conventional ridden Indian attitude to life where the husband is lord and master who will call for the tune and it is the duty of his wife to dance to it, for it is a sin to disobey him. As M.K Naik observes, "It is a sort of thing that takes in every society where the old double standards are still valid and the women are economically so helpless that they just have to lump what they do not like." The hapless life of an Indian housewife is vividly depicted in the novel, through the protagonist, Savitri, the wife of Ramani. The third person omniscient narrator narrates the story of Savitri as a detached observer and focuses the attention of the readers on the feelings and emotions of both husband and wife. It is very difficult to guess where Narayan's sympathies lie in the novel. But the whole discourse in the narrative is comprehended by a consciousness that makes us sympathetic towards Savitri.

R. K Narayan writes in his autobiography *My Days* about the theme of *The Dark Room*: "This must have been an early testament of the women's liberation movement. Man assigned her a secondary place and kept her there with such subtlety and cunningness that she herself began to lose all notions of her independence, her individuality, stature and strength. A wife in an orthodox milieu to Indian society was a victim of circumstances. My novel dealt with her with this philosophy in the background". (119) *The Dark Room* is conceived of the author's obsession with the philosophy of "Woman as opposed to man, her constant oppressor." (Narayan: 1975, 118)

Narayan as a heterodiegetic narrator seems overtly critical about the chauvinistic husbands like Ramani whose behavior is always dictatorial towards his wife, Savitri. He believes in the women's "primary duties being wives and mothers". (DR 109) The narrator describes Ramani as self-willed, lawless, conceited and arrogant and a domineering husband. He is shown rash and impetuous who takes delights in belittling

others by his stinging comments just from the beginning of the novel. He behaves cynically and irrationally with his wife Savitri and his son, Babu. Even the servant Ranga and the cook have to bear the brunt of his ill-will and flight of moods. He holds his wife responsible for anything and everything from the vegetables chosen to looking after the duties of cook and habits of children. The narrator depicts Ramani as a typical Indian husband who bosses over and nags his wife for the money he earns and spends over her and her children. "Brinjals , cucumber, radish, and greens, all the twelve months in the year and all the thirty days in the month. I don't know when I shall have a little decent food to eat. I slave all day in the office for this mouthful. No lack of expenses, money for this and money for that. If the cook can't cook properly, do the work yourself. What have you to do better than that?" (DR 2) But when he so chooses and in a romantic mood , he begins to make love to Savitri elaborately in the presence of children and the servants much to the discomfort of Savitri . Ramani is everything a husband should not be. He keeps a mistress and the revelation of the fact is too much for Savitri and she ultimately decides to leave the house.

On the other hand, while portraying Savitri the attitude of the narrator is not so critical. Savitri is depicted as a docile, traditional Hindu wife who is devoted to the household and her husband even though the husband treats her badly. Savitri "never interrupted the running commentary with an explanation." (DR 3) "As this was almost a daily lament as regular as her husband's lecture, Savitri ceased to pay attention to it." (DR 5) The narrator focalizer also makes passing observations on the institutions of marriage in India. It is not inter- personal man - woman relationship. William Walsh, who is less than enthusiastic about certain aspects of *The Dark Room*, has no doubt about its central theme: "It is the account of marriage given throughout from the point of view of wife, in which the image projected is that of the Indian woman as a victim, written, it should be remembered, some thirty five to forty years before the current talk of woman's liberation." (43) After fifteen years of married life, the protagonist Ramani and Savitri portray a marriage crisis, which despite its receptive superficial tranquility is beset within by discord because Ramani's behavior with his concubine in the office is directly in contrast with his attitude towards Savitri in the house. In the name of tradition and so called ancient cultural views about women, Ramani tries his best to exploit his meek and docile wife. He is shown

as a man who is of the opinion that India owes its spiritual eminence to the fact that the people here realize that woman's primary duty is being a wife and a mother, and a woman who disobeys her husband cannot retain the right of being called a wife.

It appears as if the narrator constructs marriage as a form of slavery in which women are kept in bondage for life. The narrative conforms to the statements made by women activists of the thirties that the Institution of marriage in India instead of making the women happy subjugates them. Gangu's marriage is an example of freedom but at the cost of social acceptance; Ponni reveals a tyrannical power in marriage; Janamma shows an extreme submission and Savitri finds herself trapped in a marriage which she can neither end nor alter. The narrative voice projects the sad truth of women's helplessness to the task of living alone. Throughout the text, the narrative voice remains third person. However towards the end of the novel and particularly in the final section of the text, Narayan takes the step of switching it into the first person plural: "What despicable creations of God are we that we can't exist without a support? I am like a bamboo pole which cannot stand without a wall to support it" . . . "This is defeat. I accept it. I am no good for this fight. I am a bamboo pole." (DR 146) The incorporation of collective voice 'we' is a way to make the novel multi-voiced. The plural use is an effective device in creating a sense of inclusiveness and shared identity. All Indian women are included in Savitri's condemnation of herself and the text becomes a testament to a particular kind of female loneliness and loss. Savitri is shown oscillating between several competing models of womanhood—the traditional, westernized and the lower caste woman. Out of these the traditional model is most unambiguously critiqued by the narrator. Savitri's name on a traditional Hindu wife of the Mahabharata is a clear sign of this critique. Savitri of the Mahabharata is most obedient and devoted wife of a loving and respectful husband Satyavan and his parents. Ramani, however, is no Satyavan and Savitri's retreat to her home is not presented as an acceptance of a traditional role, but as a defeat.

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Transformation of Raju from Tourist Guide to Spiritual Guide in R. K. Narayan's *The Guide*

*Rajni Devi**

This research paper explores the transformation of Raju from his role as a tour guide to that of a spiritual guide. The title of the novel, *The Guide*, has a double meaning, and Raju also performs double character. In his first role as a tour guide and lover, he is careless, unprincipled, and self-indulgent. But in his second role after his imprisonment, and after his transformation as a spiritual man, he is careful, thoughtful, and self-disciplined. Thus the research paper describes the phases of Raju's life history.

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami (R. K. Narayan) is one of the most famous Indian novelists writing in English. Through his stories he describes the lives of ordinary Indian people which reflect the greater concerns of national identity and historical change. He is a realist novelist narrates in very beautiful manner. *The Guide* is the most complex novel of R.K. Narayan published in 1958 that won him not only popularity but also the Sahitya Academy Award in 1961. *The Guide* is the most complex of R.K.Narayan's novels and its protagonist Raju, highlights the problems and possibilities of spiritual transcendence in a materialist world. The novel describes two stories, first one of Raju's relationship with Rosie, and another one of Raju's relationship with the villagers as a spiritual man. The novel opens with the release of the Raju from prison and talking refuge in an old temple on the banks of the river Sarayu. Raju hides himself to live in secrecy. Because before his imprisonment he was a public figure and because of his ingenuity he succeeded in playing several roles: a corrupt tourist guide, an adulterous lover and at last a spiritual guide. Raju, the protagonist, grows up near a railway station, and becomes a shopkeeper. After some time he becomes a tourist guide. Sen points out in his book *Critical Essays on R. K. Narayan's The Guide* that "The Guide is the story of Raju, a lovable rogue, who rises from humble origins to become a successful tourist guide in Malgudi" (8). Raju as a tourist guide pretends to know every detail about the sites, which are also not known by him. But he played his role as an expert guide to know everything. V.S. Rao rightly said that "he might not have been greatly educated and fully knowledgeable,

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but he was certainly and warm in his dealings with the tourists, who visited Elephantine Caves” (43). This is the main point that lies in his polite manner and welcome familiarity for the strangers always attracted everybody.

R. K. Narayan unfolds the concept of spirituality through the characterization of Raju. In the third phase of his life he becomes a convict, an ideal prisoner. After release from prison, Raju takes refuge in an old temple on the river Sarayu. One evening when he was sitting on the steps of the temple Velan recognized him as a spiritual man and seeks his advice on his domestic problems. By chance, he helps Velan to find a solution of his problem. His old habit of affording guidance to others overpowered him. R. K. Narayan describes clearly:

Velan said, ‘I have a problem, Sir’ ‘Tell me about it,’ Raju said, the old, old habit of affording guidance to others asserting itself. Tourists who recommended him to one another would say at one time, ‘If you are lucky enough to be guided by Raju, you will know everything. He will not show you all the worth-while places, but also help you in every way’. (8-9)Raju says such words which reflect his character as a spiritual man, “whatever is written here will happen. How can we ever help it? We may not change it, but we may understand it, Raju replied grandly. And to arrive at a proper understanding time is needed” (21). Raju sincerely attended the people who come to him to seek his advice in their problems. Raju just like a saint does not disappoint them.

That is Raju’s nature to perform every role with perfection. He has a brilliant wit that helps him in all phases of life to become a spiritual man. He delivers moral lessons which are based on education and necessity of life. These lessons or story grow in popularity until Raju becomes a public figure. He teaches the lessons of spirituality and becomes the savior of the local people. As a Swami Raju had to perform an act of indirect suffering to purify the sins of others. It was a suicidal risk. But Raju did it well. At the very early days of his role as a saint, he assumed and faked that role due to the needs of his hunger. But at the last day, however, it was the belief of the people that forced him to perform as a saint, “he felt moved by the recollection of the big crowd of women and children touching his feet. He felt moved by the thought of their gratitude” (97). This is an action in which an individual acquires the power to go beyond his self and Raju performed it well.

Railway Raju becomes the most popular tourist guide in Malgudi

because “it was in his nature to get involved in other people’s interests and activities” (9). The village teacher also shows positivity towards his authoritative attitude, “I’ll do anything under your guidance” (46). Raju never did anything; things always happened to him. At the railway station he works as a shop-keeper but popular as a guide. He becomes a tourist’s guide not as a result of his choice, planning and intention but by chance. Tourists from all apart insisted on his services. His answers to his questioners bear no relation to conviction or reality. The pattern of Raju’s life is determined by his inability to say “I don’t know” (55) in any circumstances. So it was his faith on himself that makes him very famous as a guide. Raju takes no active role in shaping his own career. He becomes a tour guide by accident, because other people expect it of him, so that he becomes a swami. But he played all roles with great perfection.

R.K. Narayan is chiefly concerned with the analysis of the character of the individual as he lives in the roles of guide. In Raju’s life things being neither particularly wrong-nor right, but just balancing. Thus The Guide becomes an embodiment of both forms of affirmation-self-recovery and self-transcendence. Optimistic declaration of Raju that the rain is falling in the hills is most comical because even at the time of death he is living under self-deception. What happens to the village and its people is not mentioned, but Raju had definitely attained spiritual maturity. He sacrifices his life for the happiness of people. With great confidence as a guide Raju has definitely attained spiritual maturity and also developed into a self-effacing and altruistic Swami. Thus, in The Guide, Narayan had really achieved the portrayal of the process of metamorphosis of an ordinary tourist guide into a spiritual guide, of a sinner into a saint and of a rogue into a saint. As a tourist guide, he meets Rosie, and her husband Marco, an anthropologist, who is more interested in his research than in his young wife Rosie. Raju feels pity for Rosie which is clear from the following statement of Raju:

I sighed deeply, overcome with the sadness of her life. I placed my hand on her shoulder and gently stroked it. ‘I am really very unhappy think of you such a gem lost to the world. In this place I would have made you a queen of the world’. (86)Raju guides Marco, in his research, and Rosie, Marco’s wife becomes his beloved. Raju’s habit of guiding others is seen in his guiding Rosie. She belongs to a family of professional dancing girls. She is a lovely girl passionately fond of dancing but her husband Marco an antiquarian is interested in his research activities. His

nature flourishes on solitude, and cave-frescoes. His imagination is fired only by dead and decaying things, so, Raju feels sympathy for Rosie and decided to guide Rosie in the field of dancing. Here his career as a well-known guide has come to an end. He begins to guide Rosie for dancing for commercial purposes. Dramatic turn comes in the life when he is charged and convicted of forgery. He is sentenced to two years' imprisonment for this act. But in this stage also a miracle happened. He becomes a guider or teacher to the other prisoners. He describes his moments in jail: If this was prison-life, why didn't more people take to it? They thought of it with a shudder, as if it were a place where a man was branded, chained and lashed from morning to night! Medieval notions! No place could be more agreeable; if you observed the rules you earned greater appreciation here than beyond the high walls. (228)

Returning out of jail, he completely forgets his past and sets up as a sort of Mahatma or a saint. Here, he guides villagers for their domestic conflicts and also in other matters. Velan is the first person who considers Raju as a Swami. Raju guides Velan's sister in a very systematic way and tells them. 'What must happen; no power on earth or in heaven can change its course just as no one can change its course, just as no one can change the course of that river.' (22) These words bring a great impact in Velan and his sister's mind and after all she has agreed to do exactly as she is told to do. These miraculous words considered by villagers as a words of God and Velan sister spreads his popularity by saying, "He doesn't speak to anyone, but if he looks at you, you are changed" (30). Thus, the reputation of his miraculous power begins to spread all around, and he becomes a swami for villagers. When drought has caused serious problems for the people, it has taken away many lives. The villagers fight with each other because of the paucity of grains. Raju sends the message that he will not eat until they stop fighting. The message is wrongly conveyed by Velan's brother that he will not eat until it rains. At this stage K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar opines that Once again he is caught in the coils of his own self-deception, and he is obliged to undertake a twelve-day fast to end a drought that threatens the districts with a famine.... We are free to infer that, he dies opportunely, a martyr. (378) Raju in this case dies for others and attains happiness, peace and fulfillment which was alluding him all his life, through suffering and 'Sanyas.' He redeems himself of all his sins on his transformation as a saint who is ready to make any sacrifice even his life for the humanity. During the course of the novel we see

that Raju really makes Rosie the queen of the world. Rao observes, "The Guide is the story of Raju's romance, his greed for money, his sin and repentance. It is the story of everyman's growth from the ordinary to extra-ordinary, from the railway guide to the spiritual guide"(40).

The novel ends with Raju's transformation from tourist guide to a spiritual guide. Raju is perceived to be a holy man by the innocent villagers of mangal. Raju's redemption comes with his attachment with the villagers. At the end of the novel Raju becomes a savior. The new culture, new ideologies, new trends in society, gradually transform the idyllic mindset of Raju, and he embraces the transformation in society. It is through Raju that Narayan explores the problems and possibilities. In The Guide, Raju is both the focal point of the novel, and the main internal focaliser in the novel that is, the person from whose point of view the action and the other character are seen and interpreted. The transformation of Raju's life is infact the spiritual victory of Narayan's art of characterization. At the end of the novel, Raju dies in the real spirit of a saint. Raju's truly says "I am only doing what I might have to do; that's all my likes and dislikes do not count" (243). These words describe the true spirit of a saint. Thus the character of Raju reflects the elements of a spiritual man.

To conclude it can be said that Raju undergoes a number of experiences- experiences that arise out of and affect a life lived instinctually without adhering to social ethics. Raju is an outgoing, resourceful, romantic and materialistic young man whose heart obviously rules over his hear. In a long series of unscrupulous acts he cuckolds a husband, drives out his old widowed mother, forges Rosie's signature and to top of it all plays on the belief of innocent villagers. It is an account of a congenial goodness in him and the unique inner compulsion of being naturally helpful that Raju is metamorphosed from an imposter to a Martyr.

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Narrative of Nativism in Dalit Literature: Rationale, Relevance and Ramifications

*Kirandeep Singh**

Abstract

Post-modern literary firmament has witnessed literary canonization of Dalit literature which had hitherto been marginalized by hegemonization of the elite literature. Thanks to forces of post-colonialism unleashed in the present postcolonial period of world history, the marginalized Dalit writers have penetrated into the pinnacle of power, upon which Anglo-Indian elitists have been perched, so as to bring the marginalized strata of the society into the mainstream through its representation in the Dalit literature.

Imparted impetus in late 1960s, nativistic Dalit literature sought to expose the politics of the Anglo-Brahmin elitist literature entrenched in racio-cultural bias on one hand and negotiate space in the mainstream literature on the other hand. Homing in on this pro-democratic agenda, Dalit writers have carved out canonical niche for nativistic Dalit literature on the literary firmament which had been monopolized by the erstwhile elite populations by dint of knowledge and power bestowed on them by the socio-economic dynamics of civilization. Evolved as a corollary of stiff resistance from the time-honored elite writers, nativism in Dalit literature has bobbed up as a reactionary and a progressive form of indigenism which tends to emancipate literary works from the stranglehold of a civilized sensibility. Narrativized in the form of poems, short stories, and most importantly autobiographies, it highlights stark portrayal of reality lurking in Dalit political scene using the nativistic methodology of stylistics.

In the light of the above-sketched scenario, the present paper attempts to delineate the definitional contours of the concept of narrative of nativism Dalit literature. Thereafter, it aims to analyze the very rationale of the narrative of nativism within the rubrics of Dalit literature. Having done so, it seeks to highlight its relevance. Thereafter, it aims to home in on ramifications and ultimately sum up the discussion.

Dalit literature is debated to have evolved in a reaction orchestrated against the sociological epistemology wherein literary iconography of

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Dalit scenario is deemed to have been inked by the elitist writers in such a manner that Dalits remain relegated to a subaltern nadir. Keying in their innermost feelings through poetry, stories and autobiographies, Dalit literary figures [1] have made foray into literary realm and thus instilled spirit of nativism into the narrative which was merely elitist so far. This is how, they have jostled their way into mainstream from the abysmally marginalized spaces. Bhalchandra Nemade [2], initiator of nativism, “streamlined the subaltern voices by legitimizing their just claims to occupy the literary, social, cultural and political spaces by offering them a “deshi” or pure nativist stylistic and aesthetic platform.” (Kamat 2015) Nativism in Dalit narrative gathered momentum in late 1960s and 1970s with burgeoning number of Dalit poets and writers penning down poems, short stories, dramas and autobiographies representing the themes of caste oppression, untouchability, poverty, repression and revolution. Since then, the phenomenon of nativism is noticeable in the narratives of Dalit literature.

Before reflecting upon rationale, relevance and ramifications of narrative of nativism, its definitional contours need to be chalked out. Aikant defines nativism in the following way:... a militant, aggressive assertion of one's native cultural heritage, to countervail the threats from homogenizing, though not necessarily alien, cultural systems. The nativists use history, orality, linguistics, and folklore to counter the claims of the Brahmanical Sanskrit tradition on the one hand, and the colonialist (European) culture on the other, so as to provide space and articulation for the bhasa tradition. (Aikant 2000.348) Demystified in the light of current postmodern and postcolonial approaches and defined in both positive and negative manifestations, it has been defined in these words: Nativism can be a liberating impulse if it fights against the universalistic claims of Western discourse, but it would be dangerous to flaunt it as a badge of cultural exclusivism. It must be kept in mind that its relationship with other ideological formations like the nation, class, gender, religion, and caste is extremely complex and mediated. Nativism is progressive insofar as it resists the destruction of native plurality, but it can also be regressive if it simply creates an alternative past and obstructs the evolution of a modern sensibility. In fact, the academic discourses which deploy the rhetoric of premodern and (unqualified) anticolonial indigenism also reinscribe an essentialist notion of traditional India, which was part of the orientaling discourse. Vico has remarked

that traditions are live and not passive and are the product of human beings. Nativism, however, tends to reify traditions. (Ibid. 346-47)

After demarcating definitional contours of narrative of nativism, immediate question to be addressed is the underlying basis underpinning narrative of nativism. A slew of deep-seated reasons are said to have been employed for necessitating narrative of nativism under rubric of Dalit literature. First reason at the bottom of narrative of nativism is to prioritize 'anubhava' over 'anumana'. The proposition is well-explained in the following manner. Dalit literature questioned the mainstream literary theories and upper caste ideologies and explored the neglected aspects of life. Dalit literature is experience-based. This 'anubhava' (experience) takes precedence over 'anumana' (speculation). Thus to Dalit writers, history is not illusionary or unreal as Hindu metaphysical theory may make one to believe. That is why authenticity and liveliness have become hallmarks of Dalit literature. These writers make use of the language of the out-castes and under-privileged in Indian society. Shame, anger, sorrow and indomitable hope are the stuff of Dalit literature. Because of the anger against the age-old oppression, the expression of the Dalit writers has become sharp. (Mishra, 2015.2) Besides, it is the bid of Dalit writers to dehomogenize and dehegemonize the elitist literature that forms the fulcrum of nativistic narrative. Since the 'downtrodden' has no place or hardly any place in the established canonical literature of India, Dalit writers call it "Hindu literature" and challenge its hegemony. (Kumar 2012) Referring to folk lore, they make an assertion that Dalits were members of an ancient primitive society and were uprooted by the alien Brahminical civilization. These writers make a fervent plea for a complete overhaul of society. (Mishra, 2015.3)

Moreover, it zeroes in on denting invincibility of "the colonial matrix of power underpinned by four interrelated tenets: control of economy; control of authority; control of gender and sexuality; and control of subjectivity and knowledge" (Quijano 2007:168-178; Mignolo 2007). Furthermore, it homes in on including those iconic literary figures in the literary paradigm who have hitherto been excluded. In this regard, Satyanarayana may be quoted stating: The [Hindu] writers who have internalized the Hindu value structure find it impossible to accept heroes, themes and thoughts derived from the philosophies of Phule & Ambedkar. The lowest castes are excluded from Indian literature because of its Hindu character. (Satyanarayana 2014.162)

In addition, quest for Dalit identity is the bedrock buttressing narrative of nativism. Raj Kumar puts: The search for identity is a basic dynamism of Dalit culture. That is why, issues related to poverty, powerlessness, untouchability, hypocrisy and several other corrupt social practices have generated a variety of responses among Dalit writers. These responses are basically forms of protest aimed at bringing about social change through a revolution. This has been vehemently opposed by the establishment in our country. What is more unfortunate is that some critics of Dalit literature do not accept it as 'creative' art and term it as 'reactive' and 'propagandistic.' Dalit writers refute these charges by arguing that all literature for that matter is propagandistic because all writers follow a certain philosophy while writing something. The difference between non-Dalit and Dalit writings is that in the first case one insists on the so-called literary values and in others, on values of life. (Kumar 2012.148)

To cap it all, postcolonial anatomy of imperial historiography unearths politicization of literature in which literary representations are entrenched in racial, ethnical, social and cultural bias. It reveals literary endeavor of Dalit writers to elbow space for themselves in the canonical cloister luxuriated by the elitists.

Relevance of narrative of nativism lies in its triumphantly orchestrating and operationalizing support for carving out an emancipatory agenda [3] for subalternised Dalits for their literary emancipation and empowerment. Such agenda underscores relevance of nativism in the following vein:

1. It effectually jeopardizes and junks away the Brahmanic hegemony from literature
2. It nudges towards Dalit assertion, protest and mobilization.
3. It churns out Dalit writers and, thus catalyzes creation of literature of Anubhava.
4. It brings about emergence of Dalit literature where both the writers and readers are mostly Dalits.
5. It makes "efforts to engage with the ignored histories and neglected perceptions of marginalized people." (Rahman 2014.xiii)
6. It makes "way for demonstrating how literature could become a major instrument towards giving voice to those relegated to the background. (ibid)

7. It helps in identifying and contextualizing Dalits in larger perspective of mainstream discourse.
8. When new kinds of students entered in higher education from supposedly uncultivated backgrounds, Nativistic theory helped them to emancipate literary works from the stranglehold of a civilized sensibility. Consequently, nativism expected literature itself to be an ordinary kind of language instantly available to everyone. Thus, nativistic theory is shaped by a democratic impulse. (Babar 2011.8)

Narrative of nativism has gone a long way in nurturing socio-cultural, stylistic and linguistic nativization of literary expression of Dalits. There is a volley of ramifications cropping out of narrative of nativism. These ramifications may be enumerated in the following manner:

1. The immediate ramification is Dalits' very own literary outpouring which goes a long way in representing them in the way they actually experience the world. It vacuumed out room for any vicarious representation.
2. The Dalit writers have been able to "critique the upper-caste/ Brahminical literary history of India & portrayed Dalit life from the point of view of Dalits." (Satyanarayana 2014.162)
3. Besides, Dalit writings have extended gamut of mainstream literature in terms of content.
4. Dalit writers have rediscovered the low caste saint poets of the Bhakti movement.
5. Dalit writings have acquainted the reader with some of the dominant and non-dominant themes Dalits grapple with in their everyday existence.
6. It has literalized Dalit struggle against the casteist tradition and its spin-off in the form of change and revolution
7. It has brought out literary decolonization by bringing Dalit writers at par with the elitists.
8. It has helped Dalit writers raise basic theoretical questions, examined paradigm-shifts and interrogate the set canons.
9. It has paved way for self-definition, self-assertion, negotiation of relationships, claiming of rights, and indictment of Dalit violation

10. It has provided Dalit writers with platform to resist the forcible confinement of their history, values and identities to the barbarian margins of the world.
11. It has helped Dalits take control of the public sphere so as to publicly articulate their common concerns.
12. It has led to redeployment and reconfiguration of Indian public sphere and the overall structuration of post-colonial literary communities.
13. It has paved way for nudging the agenda of Dalit liberation from the snares of colonial matrix of power.

To sum up the scenario, negotiated against the nagging backdrop of imperialist historiography, Dalits literary representation, before the dawn of post-colonialism was marginalized. Post-colonialism ushered in tumbledown of hegemonic canonizing of Dalit literature and unleash the hitherto repressed voices. These marginalized voices made inroads into the literary mainstream and nativize narrative in the vein which best represented the repressed voices. However, a caution ought to be exercised to purge nativism of the pangs of its having ossified into a militant and closed ideology. Therefore, a sense of self-discipline and self-search should continue to be its governing gospel as well as goal.

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Violence in Girish Karnad's *Tale-Danda*

*Manju Joshi**

Girish Karnad is one of the most influential and prolific dramatists in modern Indian Writing in English. A recipient of Janapith award, also conferred with Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan, Karnad holds a mirror to the very evolution of Indian theatre during nearly four decades. His plays are steeped in Indian culture for the author draws heavily from Indian myths, legends, folktales and history with a modern vision. As Aparna Dharwadker asserts "Karnad employs traditional Indian narrative materials and modes of performance successfully to create a radically modern urban theatre."¹ Karnad's awareness of the two realities in India, the traditional and the modern has succeeded in developing a credible style of social realism. His plays are a commentary on the Indian social set up.

Taale-Danda is a play with historical and political background in its plot. Karnad writes, "I wrote Tale-Danda (1993) in the 1989 when the 'Mandir' and the 'Mandal' movements were beginning to show again how relevant the questions posed by these thinkers were for our age."² The plot of the play is small city of Kalyan, a part of modern Karnataka during the 12th century. It was ruled by King Bijjala. Basavanna was in charge of the king's treasury. Basavanna, a poet and a saint, led a reform movement by establishing a separate sect called Sharanas. This movement aimed at reforming the ills of caste ridden society.

This paper seeks to study violence in Taale-Danda. Violence is suggested in the title itself. Taale-Danda means death by beheading. Originally a Kannada play, Taale-Danda has been translated into English. This paper will be a study of the English translation. There was violence and bloodshed in the city at Kalyan during the last two decades ending A.D. 1168. Contempt for Sanskrit, idolatry, inequality and caste-system forms the background of the entire play. The attempts to eradicate casteism leads to violence at large. Violence seeps through the very holes left wide open in a society afflicted by the claims of religion. The political strife between King Bijjala and his worthless son Sovideva, and the latter's attempt to confiscate his father's throne, also results in violence inside the palace walls.

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The play is divided into sixteen scenes. The first scene opens with Bhagirathi, a Brahmin woman condemning Basavanna. She says, "In every household in Kalyan, it is the same story. Father against son-brother against brother." (8) Bhagirathi's son Jagadeva is a follower of Basavanna. Jagadeva has renounced his religion and became a Sharana. He has no time for his ailing father. Religion claims that a Brahmin street or a Brahmin household is desecrated by a person from a low caste. Mallibomma, the son of a tanner cannot enter Jagadeva's house. Bhagirathi says, "This is a Brahmin household. Do you mind standing a little aside so the woman of the house can move about freely?" (9) Such an unwanted visit may need purification of the house.

Basavanna, as a poet, philosopher and a seer, believed in the equality of human beings. He brought about 1,96,000 people from all sections of society under one name called Sharanas. These sharanas formed a class of people who were followers of Lord Shiva. They believed in equality of religion. Their beliefs came into a direct clash with the deep-rooted Varnashrama dharma. The Sharanas were those class of people who had broken the caste barriers. They were hard-working people who brought rich profit to mercantile trade in the city of Kalyan. So far the prospering economy was concerned, King Bijjala was satisfied as those profits added laurels to his throne. It was then the settling of the marriage alliance between Brahmin girl and a Cobbler boy that really earned the irk of high-browed Brahmins in Kalyan. King Bijjala did not quiet approved of the marriage alliance as he saw it as a direct threat to his peaceful reign.

Looking at the history of King Bijjala, he was a Kalachurya, a barber by caste. His forefathers ravaged the land as robber barons. Thereon they became feudatories and married into royal families. They were then branded as Kshatriyas. According to King Bijjal, "One's caste is like the skin on one's body. You can peel it off top to toe, but when the new skin forms, there you are again! a barber-a shepherd-a scavenger!" (21)

King Bijjal strongly supported Basavanna and his Sharana movement. It was Basavanna's philosophy under the influence of which King Bijjal accomplished his journey from being a feudatory to the ascending of the throne of Kalyan.

King Bijjal's son Sovideva is angry with the sharanas. His tongue speaks violence. He says, "I shall bury them alive! Hack them to pieces and feed them to my hounds!" (14) He also curses his father, King Bijjala for encouraging the Sharanas. Bijjala calls Sovideva "the accursed fruit of our family." (17) Sovideva is beaten up by King Bijjala for trying to temper with the treasury locks. Queen Rambhavati begs of the king not to humiliate Sovideva for he being a grown-up man.

King Bijjala is proud of the battles he won and flaunts his royal titles. For Basavanna, these war smell of violence, painful wailings of widows and endless cries of orphans. There is nothing to boast about war because it means decay and suffering. Wars end up in economics subservience.

Sharanas was a kind of a reform movement that believed in the equality of all human beings. Even the precepts of this reform movement failed to contain violence residing in the deep labyrinths of its followers. Sharanas failed to understand the complete import of the reform movement otherwise they would not have smashed the idols in Jain temple and turn it into Shiva temple. They too were stung by bigotry. Famine ridden low caste people are not allowed to stray on a particular side of the river. This is violence against the very humanity

Further in the play, the marriage alliance between Brahmin girl and a cobbler boy leads of communal violence. The Sharanas themselves stand divided as far as the acceptance of such an alliance is concerned Basavanna himself, is reluctant at giving his permission. Basavanna says, "We are not ready for the kind of revolution this wedding is. We haven't worked long enough or hard enough!" (51) The Cobbler boy hesitates to marry the Brahmin girl as he fears she will not be able to stand the foul smell of leather. I would also like to mention here, the Brahmin girl in question is not ripe in age as suggested in the play. The very idea of marrying a girl child is a violence of its own kind against the girl child.

The marriage alliance is settled to give practical shape to the teachings of Basavanna. Madhuvarassa considers it is as a privilege to sacrifice his daughter by marrying her to a cobbler's son. The marriage alliance leads to communal violence all over the city of Kalyan in which the Sharanas run ruin upon the city. Communal hatred is ignited as a result of which there is a large scale massacre. Innocent people are slaughtered. This marriage alliance between Brahmin girl and a cobbler

boy was an attempt by the Sharanas to break free from the rigid rules of casteism. The ideological differences leads to the conflict. Religion or caste is a matter of emotions. Great many wars occur due to differences in the ideologies that take control over the minds of people. It is also not easy to topple the age-old customs of Varna-ashram dharma. In this play, King Bijjala's son Sovideva stands in direct clash with the Sharanas. As already said, Sovideva wanted to temper King's treasury over which the Sharanas stopped him from coming anywhere near the treasury. Sovideva intends revenge upon them. After the completion of marriage ceremony, the city of Kalyan is set ablaze with the fire of revolt with people thronging in hundreds from the adjoining cities. Houses in the city of Kalyan are described as turned into armouries. The wedding ceremony itself takes place in a tense atmosphere. The wedding as described by Damodar Bhatt, the Brahmin priest is like "the desecration of the body of Purusha."(63)

Sovideva revolts against his father, King Bijjala and takes him as a prisoner in the palace. The king is surrounded by infantry. Treason is the declared and Sovideva puts on a crown. King's faithful bodyguard, Kallapa is killed. Some seven hundred and seventy Sharanas surround the palace. Basavanna's timely support does bring temporary release for the King Bijjala.

Coming back to the marriage alliance of Brahmin girl and a cobbler boy, the resultant violence reaches its achme when their fathers Madhuvarasa and Haralayya respectively are taken by King Sovideva's soldiers. Sovideva, by now, had proclaimed himself as a king. He is supported by the Brahmin priest; Damodar Bhatt and Manchanna Kramita, a Brahmin advisor to the king. Madhuvarasa's and Haralayya's eyes are plucked out with iron rods. Their hands and feet are bound. They are tied to elephants and dragged through the streets. Gundanna says, "Torn limbs along the lanes, torn entrails, flesh, bones - They died screaming!"(90) This is clearly gruesome physical violence. Karnad's works shows his fascination for Camus' philosophy of existentialism. The absurdity, the essential meaninglessness of our existence finds an expression through violence in the play. The resulting fear, frustration and despair hovers over the Sharanas who shut themselves into their houses.

Jagadeva and Mallibomma plan an attack on the king's palace. They enter the palace with naked swords. Violence here is intentional. It is exhibited because the Sharanas do not want to be remembered as

incompetent. King Bijjala, who had taken refuge inside the temple, refuses to come out. Jagadeva kills King Bijjala. Violence becomes imminent when there arises a necessity to convey what is otherwise impossible. Jagadeva wanted to prove the worth and the significance of a revolution. King Bijjala is the victim of a violence that no religious belief could stop. The temple's sanctum, the very epitome of religious purity, is desecrated with the spilling of King Bijjala's blood. Jagadeva fails to interpret the vision of "Allama" as passed on to him by Basavanna. King Bijjala clings to the linga, the very God whose existence he had denied earlier. King Bijjala had denied faith in the existence of God. As for Jagadeva he does understand and interprets Basavanna's message and which upon King's dead body does interpret at last. Human body is the spiritual haunt, the very temple of its existence. Jagadeva says, "The legs are the pillars. The body the shrine. This head the golden cupola."(98) Jagadeva stabs himself. Violence, then is a key in the existential perception of human bonds.

The city of the Kalyan became a seething cauldron of blood. The play presents a gruesome picture of the royal guards looting the city. Temples were sacked, trading houses were brought down, rape, murder and rioting became order of the day. Sovideva, the self-declared King is astonished to see his kingdom oozing blood. His supporter, Damodar Bhatt suggest building a new city. Violence here, becomes creativity where new and pure is brought forth from the ashes of destruction. As W.B. Yeats poem 'Easter 1916' envisions "terrible beauty" through violent conflict. "All changed, changed utterly: A terrible beauty is born."³

The Sharanas are forced to flee out of Kalyan. The king, Sovidebva, orders his soldiers to cut them whether men and women or children. Fear, pain, suffering engulfs the city. The city of Kalyan blazes forth into fire. Sovideva is crowned the king amidst bloodshed.

Any change in the structure of caste-system brings down the path of the orthodox. The play tries to review and reassess the relevance of orthodox custom and traditions with the changing times. Caste-system needs to be recodified which shall treat all human beings as equal. Sharanas believed in it and wanted to restructure the society by breaking down the taboos laid down by the orthodox advocates of religion. But this is also a fact that deadliest wars have been fought in the name of religion. The play also presents a harrowing picture of animal slaughter for the purpose of pleasing the Gods.

Violence has affected civilizations. War and bloodshed is an epitome of violence. *Tale-Danda* takes a collective account of it as it is represented in the forms of religious and political violence. Basavanna's body as said in the play gets merged with the elements. Violence tends to perpetuate itself and always causes unnecessary suffering instead of promoting potential mutual benefits. Human empathy, friendship love and cooperation enrich life for everyone and this is the message conveyed by the play. As Basavanna rightly says in the play, "There's such a thing as common as humanity!"(41)

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Technique of Stream of Consciousness in *Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse*

Sushma*

Abstract

This research paper explores how Woolf is attempting the representation of reality in a different and modern way through the technique of stream of consciousness. The 'Stream of Consciousness' is the peculiar product of the twentieth century. The rise of the literary form, on the eve of First World War, marks the beginning of a new epoch in the history of the English Novel. The use of devices of the 'Stream of Consciousness' and 'Interior Monologue' mark a revolution in the form of novel because through these devices, the author can present the flux of a character's thoughts, impressions, emotions and reminiscence often without any logical sequence.

The term 'Stream of Consciousness' was coined by William James in 1890 in his *The Principles of Psychology* and in 1918 Mary Sinclair first applied the term 'Stream of Consciousness' in a literary context while discussing Dorothy Richardson's novels. 'Stream of Consciousness' writing is usually regarded as a special form of interior monologue and is characterized by associative leaps in thought and lack of some or all punctuation. 'Stream of Consciousness' and 'Interior Monologue' are distinguished from 'Dramatic Monologue' and 'Soliloquy' where the speaker is addressing an audience or a third person. As William James remarks: Consciousness then does not appear to itself as chopped up in bits... it is nothing joined; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter let's call it the stream of thought, consciousness or subjective life. (3)

In Literary Criticism, 'Stream of Consciousness' also known as 'Interior Monologue' is a narrative mode or device that depicts the multitudinous thoughts and feelings which pass through the mind. The stream of consciousness commonly uses the narrative technique of Interior Monologue. 'Stream of Consciousness' is a form of writing while 'Interior Monologue' is a narrative technique that represents the inner

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thoughts of a character. It is pertinent to differentiate between 'Interior Monologue' and 'Stream of Consciousness' because we cannot use them interchangeably.

'Interior Monologue' is the expression of a character's thoughts, feelings and impression in a narrative. An 'Interior Monologue' may be either direct or indirect. 'Direct Interior Monologue' is spoken directly by the character without author commentary. With 'Indirect Interior Monologue' the author provides his or her commentary on the character's thought. The 'Interior Monologue' is a technique for narration that was first used by Eduard Dujardin in 1887. It is a compilation of thoughts and memories, wishes, ideas and assumptions that the character has reunited throughout the different event of his or her life. The thoughts are very rational and the thought occur in order and with more organization than in 'Stream of Consciousness'. The idea behind the 'Interior Monologue' is to dramatize a conflict using thoughts. 'Stream of Consciousness' is not the same as Interior Monologue, 'Stream of Consciousness' is a combination of thoughts and reaction presented as a flow of thought, not in the organized and rational way that in 'Interior Monologue' occurs. As such the 'Stream of Consciousness' is more of a manifestation of what is going on inside our minds much more than attempting at analyzing facts.

In the essay 'Modern Fiction' Virginia Woolf makes a survey of the existence, contemporary, literary scenes and asks the important question, "Must a Novel be like this?" Woolf while discussing the narrative technique of the important writer of the period like Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy concludes that they are "materialistic" by which she meant they wrote of unimportant things and spent immense skills and immense industries making the trivial and transitory appear the true and enduring and in this process life escapes and perhaps without life nothing else is worthwhile. If life is not what these writers have projected what is life like? Virginia Woolf says in her essay "Modern Fiction":

Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives myriad impressions trivial, fantastic evanescent or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come as an incessant shower of innumerable atoms ...Life is a not a series of gillamps, symmetrically arranged, but a luminous halo, a semi transport envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. The proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have

us believe it...Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall.(104)

When we mention Virginia Woolf's *To the Light house*, it is very natural to talk about her 'Stream of Consciousness' technique. In the novel the structure of external objective event is demise in scope and scale. It is composed of the continual activity of characters consciousness and shower of impression. In the novel the writer takes a group of characters from the upper middle class London society and wringing some rarified meaning out of their states of the mind. The basic plot is simple enough and the book is divided into three sections: "The Window", "Time Passes" and "The Light House". Upon this frame work Woolf weaves a delicate pattern of symbolic thoughts and situations.

Through this paper I want to explore how Woolf is attempting the representation of reality in a different and modern way through the technique of 'Stream of Consciousness'. The representative chapter that had been chosen is the fifth section of part I "The Window" the exterior occurrence in the chapter involves Mrs. Ramsay and James and the action is that of the measuring of a stocking that Mrs. Ramsay is knitting for the light house's keeper boy. This entirely insignificant occurrence is constantly interrupted with other element which although they don't interrupt its progress takes up for more time in the narration than the whole scene can possibly has lasted. Most of these elements are inner processes that are the moment within the consciousness of individual personage and not necessarily of the people involved in the exterior occurrence but also of other, who are not even present at the time. After analyzing the passage we can say that Woolf writing is marked by a number of stylistically characteristics: 1) The writer as a narrator of objective reality has almost completely vanished 2) Almost everything stated appears by way of reflection in the consciousness of characters 3) We are taken into Woolf's confidence and allowed to share her knowledge of Mrs. Ramsay character. Rather we are given his character as it is reflected in the consciousness of other character and as it affects various figures in the novel such as people who wonder about her, Mr. Banks and Lily Briscoe. Moreover, there seems to be no objective reality apart from what is in the consciousness of the characters. A brief reference here and there is made to exterior frame of the action.

This device employed by Woolf to express the content of the consciousness of the dramatic personage is termed as the Stream of

Consciousness technique. It is a narrative device in which the author attempts at presenting a reality which is different from the one presented by early traditional writer who interpreted the actions, situation and characters with proper assurance, that is with certainty. They know everything about their characters, yet there was hardly every any attempt to render the flow of consciousness. The author with his knowledge of an external truth never gave up his position as the final and the governing authority. Unlike James Joyce's stream of consciousness technique, however Woolf does not tend to use abrupt fragments to represent characters' thought processes; her method is more of lyrical paraphrase. The novel lacks an omniscient narrator (except in the second section time passes); instead the plot unfolds through shifting perspectives of each character's consciousness.

Here in this novel *To The Light House* Woolf uses a specific form of 'Stream of Consciousness' technique called the "Interior Monologue" Interior means that we are inside the consciousness of one's character speaking to herself (monologue) thinking or remembering some past experiences. Unlike direct interior monologue where the reader knows which character's consciousness is being presented the consciousness being explored in the 'Indirect Monologue' is not always, obvious. Sometimes it's one character's consciousness, and often these are blended without one sentence without obvious signals being given as the change of perspective.

And so in *To the lighthouse* with a limited collection of characters Woolf passes from one consciousness to another, from one group to another, exploring, the significance of their reactions, following the course of their meditation and thoughts carefully arranging and pattering the images the rise up in their mind bringing together with care and economy, a select number of symbolic incidents until a design has been achieved. Woolf delves deep into the mind of its character in a stream of consciousness approach. The character's thoughts and feeling blend into one another, and outward action and dialogue come second to the inward emotion and ruminations.

To conclude *To the Light House* is a master piece of construction. It is a great work of art which fully deserves the praises that have been lavished on it. Virginia Woolf has cleverly avoided the drawbacks of the 'stream-of-consciousness' and given form and coherence to her material. She is not haphazard and incoherent like the other stream-of-

consciousness novelists. Indeed, through her flexible style of thoughts, impart form and unity and conveys a sense of the amazing richness and complexity of life.

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English Literary Criticism : Major Milestones in Critical Thought

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Abstract

Literary criticism is an analytical tool to unearth the multifaceted dimensions of a literary work. It helps us to ponder more deeply and insightfully about the literature that we read. Over time, different champions of literary criticism have emerged, each with their own approach to the act of interpretation of the written text. Each critic marks an important milestone in the development of a rich canon of Western critical tradition.

All forms of art have their critics. Criticism is how you evaluate and interpret art. Likewise, Literary Criticism is an expert practice aimed at judging and evaluating literature. It is a discipline concerned with an array of enquiries about the quality of literary texts. Literary Criticism helps us to go deep into the text and understand the written text from multifarious angles. Moreover, as there are million different ways to dissect written works, Literary Criticism provides general guidelines to help us analyse, deconstruct, assess, evaluate, and interpret written text. However, these variegated perspectives will not be readily apparent to us unless we divulge into the work and learn how to look past the surface of the text.

English Literary Criticism has its genesis in Plato, who cautioned against the risky consequences of poetic inspiration in the 'Republic'. Considered as the earliest example of western critical tradition, Plato accused the poets of imitation. He undermined the art of the poets as 'it appeals to the worst rather than to the best human nature'. Plato's curt criticism held that literature could only mislead the seeker of truth and therefore, the poets should be banned from Plato's imaginary Republic. A generation later, Aristotle wrote 'Poetics', to counter Plato's indictment of literary art as an appeal to the irrational. Aristotle seconded the universal need of the poet to imitate. Aristotle held that a tragic poet is not so much divinely inspired as he is motivated by a universal human need to imitate, and what he imitates is not real objects but rather noble actions. Aristotle further introduced the concepts of

'Mimeses' and 'Catharsis', that literature satisfies and regulates human passions instead of inflaming them. He posed that though tragedy arouses emotions of pity and terror in its audience, these emotions are purged in the process. This 'cleansing effect' through art is called catharsis. Thus, Mimesis (imitation) plays a civilizing role for those who empathize with it. Aristotle considered poetic art in terms of relationship of six components of tragedy. The Plot is considered to be the first principle and the soul of tragedy, followed by Character, Thought (the object of imitation), Diction and Melody (the means of imitation). The last element is Spectacle which describes the manner of imitation. Aristotle is credited by the Neo-classical critics to have introduced the concept of three Unities; of time, place and action. Aristotle describes Unity as a combination and ordering of parts on a literary artistic production that constitutes a whole and results in an undivided and single total effect. This consistency of style and character extended to drama, requiring a play to have a single action represented as occurring in one place and within one day. Aristotle opined that poetry is more philosophical and of a higher value than history. The task of the poet was not to describe what actually happened; rather the poet was trusted with a more daunting task to explain the kind of thing that might happen according to probability or necessity. Aristotle thus developed a set of principles of composition that were of lasting importance to European literature.

European literary criticism from the Renaissance onwards, has majorly focused on the issue of moral worth of literature plus the nature of relation of the literary text to reality. At the end of the sixteenth century, Sir Philip Sidney argued his stand in 'The Defence of Poesie', written in 1582 and published posthumously in 1595. Sidney laid that 'it is the special property of literature to express moral and philosophical truths in the way that rescues them from abstraction and makes them immediately graspable'. Further, Sidney's other work, titled 'An Apologie for Poetrie' masterfully refutes Platonic objection to poetry. This iconic essay, considered as the finest work of Elizabethan literary criticism suggests that literature is a better teacher than history and philosophy. Sidney's treatise undertakes to defend imaginative writing from charges of time-wasting, prevarication and allurements to vice. The Apologie explores the classical concept of imaginative writing, crediting the poet as a 'creator' or 'maker' rather than a sterile copier of forms located in the real world.

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A century later, John Dryden, in 'Dramatick Poesie' (1688) forwarded the viewpoint that business of literature is primarily to offer an accurate representation of the world 'for delight and instruction of mankind'. This essay, the first substantial piece of modern dramatic criticism defended English Drama against the champions of both, Ancient Classical Drama and the Neoclassical French Theatre. Furthermore, Dryden attempted to discover general principles of dramatic criticism. This remained the underlying assumption of the great critical works the eighteenth century England. Alexander Pope's 'An Essay on Criticism' and the works of Samuel Johnson adhere to this point of view.

The Romantic period marked a significant change from the above mentioned ideas of the mid-eighteenth century. William Wordsworth's 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' (1800), Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'Biographia Literaria' (1817) and Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'A Defence of Poetry' (1821) are important statements of critical theory of early nineteenth century. William Wordsworth asserted in his Preface to the second edition of the Lyrical Ballads that the object of poetry is 'truth...which is carried alive into the heart by passion'. Wordsworth's Preface is considered to be a poetic manifesto attacking the 'gaudiness and inane phraseology' of poets who attempt to separate language of poetry from that of real life. Wordsworth's contentions were soon put to incisive analysis when Coleridge, who first felt entirely one with Preface, later subjected to Wordsworth's theories of poetic language. Coleridge's Biographia Literaria pointed that 'No man was ever a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher'.

The later nineteenth century saw a development in the direction of aesthetic theory of 'Art for Art's Sake'; a philosophy that the intrinsic value of art is free from any didactic, moral or utilitarian function.

The nineteenth century arena was also surrounded by another viewpoint expressed by Matthew Arnold who proposed that poetry should replace religion. He held that literature has a cultural role and so it should take over the moral and philosophical functions that had previously been fulfilled by religion. Arnold's leading ideas were laid in 'Essays on Criticism', which is majorly a discussion of the relevance of criticism both to creative literature and to society and civilization.

Eventually, the volume of Literary Criticism increased greatly in the twentieth century. I.A. Richards' 'Principles of Literary Criticism'

(1924) became influential as the basis of practical criticism. The notable literary critic dominating the first half of the twentieth century was T.S. Eliot who re-valued the idea of tradition in the essay 'Tradition and Individual Talent'. Eliot proposed that every literary work should be understood and judged in the context of all European Literature from Homer on. His preoccupation with Tradition manifested clearly in his insistence to go back to past writers, especially Dante and Shakespeare, as the essentially, truly valued ones. He relegated the nineteenth century to a subordinate position, rebuking it of unnecessarily embellishing and idealizing poetry.

Eliot pondered on the difference between the emotion aroused by a poetic work and a truthful acceptance of whatever philosophical or religious message it may convey. He maintained that 'Poetry is not turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality'.

Moving on, a new type of literary criticism developed in England and the United States after World War I. This New Criticism of the 1940's and 1950's argues that a work of literature should be studied as a separate and a self-contained entity. The American critics as John Crowe Ransom and Cleanth Brooks insisted on the intrinsic value of art and focussed attention on the work alone as an independent unit of meaning. This stance stood in opposition both to Biographical criticism and to other schools of Criticism like Marxism, Psychoanalytical Criticism, and Historical Criticism which advocated examining literature from perspectives external to the text. New Criticism focussed intensively on language, imagery, emotion plus intellectual tension in literary works. The New Critics therefore, employed the primary technique of analytical reading of the text with an attempt to explain its formal aesthetic organization. The New Critics were opposed to the critical practice of bringing historical or biographical data to bear upon interpretation. The late twentieth century witnessed a reappraisal of traditional modes of Literary Criticism. The literary theorists now began to value the overriding importance of the concept of 'Author' as the source of text's meaning. The influential school of Structural Criticism grew out of the ideas of Ferdinand de Saussure who held that language is a self-contained system of signs which is the major determining principle in the establishment of meaning. Structural and Post-structural critics as Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida of France, additionally, directed attention

towards the way in which meaning is created by determining structures of language and culture.

Thus, the study of literature is intertwined with the cult of Literary Criticism. The tradition of critical thought has travelled a long way from being essentially Biographical to an increasing importance being laid on the text itself. Literary Criticism is a continually progressing field with manifold perspectives dominating the critical appreciation of the text.

Literary Criticism is the reasoned consideration of literary works and issues. By learning how to deconstruct literature, we get to experience novel perspectives of a text. The literary critic is a scholarly detective, on a tedious task of unearthing, scrutinizing and expounding the heterogeneity of literary works.

Politics of Meaning Making and the Trickster Impulse in Dario Fo's *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*

Monika Dhillon*

Abstract

The myth of the trickster contains extremely useful insights about the way meaning is conveyed in human societies. Trickster is usually a mythic figure, a god or god like deity, who plays endless tricks on humankind. The present paper proposes to analyze how Dario Fo employs the myth of the trickster in his play *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* to unveil the politics involved in the meaning making process in society and language is manipulated to disguise the truth.

Keywords: Meaning making, trickster, language, politics, truth, history, myth.

The Trickster impulse, which is a symbol of transgression in world literature, is variously defined by anthropologists, sociologists, psychotherapists, cultural theorists, writers and film critics. Enemy of boundaries, trickster figure resists the narrow framing of definition. Creativity- the ability to influence the world in a positive and constructive manner- is one way of regaining mastery over one's environment. Another way- uncreative and often destructive- is to control others via a pre-existent system of rules. By contrast, the trickster is someone who prides himself on being out of control as well as creating havoc in the well-ordered world." (Morozow *The Trickster and the System* 8) Most writers, however, agree that trickster figures, diverse as they are, nevertheless possess a number of common qualities. They are foolish, rebellious, asocial and anti-social, inconsistent, outrageous and self-contradictory. The trickster exists in a kind of cultural, social and psychological limbo between different states, outside of the conscious world. Paul Radin states in his prefatory note to the Winnebago trickster cycle that the trickster is at one and the same time creator and destroyer, giver and negator, who dupes others and is always duped himself, while Karl Kerényi calls the trickster figure the spirit of disorder, the enemy of boundaries (Morozow *The Trickster in Contemporary Film* 5)

In the patterns of myth, legend and folklore narrative, the trickster is incarnated as a clever, mischievous man or creature, who

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tries to survive the dangers and challenges of the world using trickery and deceit as a defense mechanism. The trickster's simultaneous involvement and defiance of structures, his mockery of social norms, signifies free will of man and the overall evolutionary process. The present paper proposes to analyze the politics involved in the meaning making process in society and how language is manipulated to disguise the truth. The play warns about the powers of language. It shows how language can shape people's sense of reality, how it can be used to conceal truths, and to manipulate history. "Language is one of the key instruments of political dominations, the necessary and insidious means of the 'totalitarian' control of reality" (Rai 122). The paper will also scrutinize the trickster impulse portrayed in the play. In the play, the mixture of the grotesque, the tragic, the absurd and the comical reflects the trickster impulse inherent in society that can outwit corrupt and volatile authority figures. Through the portrayal of this impulse, Dario Fo suggests that the institution, and not the man, is the true origin of madness. In the play, the character of the Maniac embodies the trickster impulse. A madman summoned to police headquarters to answer to charges of false identity, luckily happens to steal the file on the anarchist's death. He then changes his identity, posing as an investigating judge. He is employed by Fo as a theatrical strategy to investigate truth. Authority figures are more concerned with maintaining an illusion that protects their position of power than they are with uncovering the truth. They do not want social change to happen. Constantly in a state of transition, the Maniac is a shape shifter and change personified. He behaves in a paradoxical way and engages in increasingly more elaborate lies and disguises to create imbalance and destabilization into the corrupt political system, thereby revealing the truth.

The play is written in response to the death of Giuseppe Pinelli, an anarchist who died in police custody while being questioned about a bombing in which he played no part. Nobody knows the full truth of what happened that day, but Italian newspapers reported that anarchist groups were responsible. Pinelli was one of the first anarchists to be taken in for questioning. He was detained for three days before falling out of a fourth-floor window to his death around midnight on December 15. Another anarchist, ballet dancer Pietro Valpreda, was put in jail for three years for his supposed involvement. Neither Pinelli nor Valpreda were actually involved in the attacks, nor were any members of anarchist

groups. Inspector Luigi Calabresi was in charge of Pinelli's interrogation. Calabresi, whom many suspected of being sympathetic towards the fascists, blamed the Piazza Fontana bombings on left-wing extremists and was unlikely to be impartial to Pinelli. There were five additional officers in Calabresi's office when Pinelli died, as well as a group of journalists in the courtyard below. An autopsy revealed that Pinelli had bruises on his neck. We never learn what definitively happened the night of the anarchist's death, although what most likely happened is slowly revealed. There were massive inconsistencies between the various reports of what happened that night, a fact Fo has portrayed throughout the play. Some of Fo's regular playgoers requested that he should write a play to provide counter-information to the misinformation being propagated about the event by the media. He researched the case thoroughly, drawing from two official inquiries as well as facts shared by friendly journalists and lawyers.

The play was partly a response to the 'hot autumn' of working class struggle of 1969 in Italy. On 15th October there was a demonstration of 50000 workers in Milan against the high cost of living. On 19th November a hugely successful 24 hour general strike took place to demand changes in government housing policy. Rents were often high for appalling accommodations, while many flats were left unrented. On 11th December a labour charter between the government and the unions was signed. As the historian Paul Ginsborg argued: It represented a significant victory of the trade unions and a new militancy. Equal wage increases were to be granted to all, the 40 hour week was to be introduced in the course of the following three years and special concessions were made for apprentices and worker student. The trade unions also won the right to organize mass assemblies at the workplace. They were to be held within the working day and were to be paid for by the employers, up to a maximum of ten hours in each calendar year. (qtd. in Behan 64)

The following day a bomb exploded without warning in Milan at the National Agricultural Bank. The strategy of tension started and it marked the beginning of modern terrorism in Italy. The thinking behind the strategy of tension, whether it is the neo-fascist groups (which planted a whole series of bombs in those years) or their accomplices and protectors within the secret services and the state machinery, was to halt the growth in the strength of the working class. The placing of

bombs at random targets, generally with no warning, was bound to create severe tension within society. It was vital for these forces to create the impression that the anarchists, communists and members of the trade unions were behind the bombs, just as they had unquestionably been behind numerous strikes and demonstrations in recent years. This impression was to be created by the judicial system in particular and the state machinery in general, with the help of a compliant media. Once people accepted that the left was to blame, and the bombs continued, they would demand a clampdown on the left. On the first anniversary of the Piazza Fontana bombing the Christian Democrat Committee for the province of Milan passed a motion which called on the government to ensure the security forces in order to bring to an end the climate of disorder and violence which could undermine the credulity of democratic institutions.

As a trickster, the Maniac is not only an aesthetic and narrative strategy in the play but also the bearer of subversive meaning. The Maniac acts a harbinger of social change. Through his quick wit and humour he can present counter-information on the death of the anarchist to shock the audience in a way that would be accessible to all thereby making them swing into prompt action. Meaning, discourse and culture are deeply connected by means that are not always evident. Social reality is constructed through intricate mechanisms that involve psychological, social, and symbolic levels of cooperation between individuals. Though the play is comic, Fo is communicating the serious consequences of fear and violence on the public. The deconstructive work of the Maniac serves different functions, such as raising awareness, creating optimal conditions for a cultural paradigm shift or introducing a fundamental meta-narrative in the life of a community (Schmidt 65-76). He reflects on the way language has been abused so that, instead of being a means of the acquisition of wisdom, communicating the truth and entering more deeply into it, and of the acquisition of wisdom, it is being used to control people and manipulate them to achieve practical ends.

Reality becomes intelligible through words. Language becomes a mind-control tool, with the ultimate goal being the destruction of will and imagination of public. Fo has inserted farcical and grotesque elements in the play to satirize the police, revealing the inconsistencies in their stories and presenting counter-information to that being presented about the case in the press. It deals with the inhuman and unethical methods

of social democracy and its crocodile tears as well as the immediate indignation of a passive mass that find relief in social scandals and forget the incidents of state outrage very soon. Both the Maniac and the journalist allude to this 'strategy of tension.' The Journalist brings up the theme of police infiltration into political groups, and the Maniac adds that such infiltrators "also carry out atrocities to give themselves a good excuse for a police crackdown" (70). The Journalist also shares statistics about the number of terrorist attacks carried out by far right organizations: So you'll be unaware that of the 173 bomb attacks to date... 102 have been proved to be the work of fascists? And fascist or parallel organizations were strongly implicated in half of the remaining seventy-one cases (72).

The terms 'trickster impulse' and 'trickster' have been used interchangeably in this paper. The trickster principle is a general concept, a kind of psychological force (both personal and social) that has at its core the dynamic between restraint and breakthrough. By contrast, the trickster is a concrete realization of the principle, a character or structural element in myth, work of fiction, cinematic narrative or even in real life (Morozow *The Trickster in Contemporary Film* 4). One point of view concerning the trickster mythology links the trickster with the comic side of the discourse. At the heart of the trickster discourse is a comic spirit that demands a break from formulas. It disrupts social and cultural values. Trickster discourse involves risk taking, boundary testing, deception, and cruelty in an effort to teach culturally appropriate attitudes and behaviour (Robertson 18). It belongs to a certain culture, but at the same time it tries to undermine that very culture. It creates a type of anarchic discourse that puts to the test the dominant discourse within that culture. Bakhtin's concept of dialogized heteroglossia helps us understand the function and development of the trickster discourse as it accounts for the representation of the widest possible range of social classes. Trickster discourses arise in times of change and therefore it becomes a site of struggle, carnival and subversion. In times of cultural and historical change, memories, facts, identities and ideologies mix in unpredictable ways. Trickster discourse warns us about the mixing of identities along with the change of power equations because in any case oppression may remain same. Here it is important to note that Dario Fo is interested in the discourse of the trickster as it negates boundaries and compartmentalization. Whatever is represented in the play is as true

for Italy as it is for any other country because the oppressor may change his language games along with the changes of the power and discursive centres.

In his book, *Sculpting in Time*, the Russian filmmaker Nandrey Tarkovsky outlines the operative principle of creativity, undermining the concept of normality and challenging the boring stability, which holds the social fabric together. In other words, creativity is a trickster, a malicious, but brilliant rebel, a bringer of fire who introduces progress into society impulsively and forcibly (Morozow *The Trickster and the System* 157). It is not surprising that the creative trickster force is treated by the society with caution. It is an impulse that is essentially anti-systematic as its aim is to alter the established practices and conventions as it asks us to recognize the limitations of our cultural formulations. Works of art and other products of human creativity are born where the trickster impulse, the exploring impulse, the individuating force, is allowed to express itself freely instead of being ignored, repressed or buried under a pile of everyday rituals. Releasing the trickster, setting it free, is the highest form of self-understanding through self-expression.

Dario Fo picks up figures from popular forms, like Attellan farces, medieval morality plays and commedia dell arte, and carves them in the contemporary mold to register protest. In the play also, he presents the Maniac as an updated version of the Harlequin, devious, irreverent, and free-spirited. He contradicts convention and owes loyalty to none. The Harlequin can both die a silly death and defy the laws of life and death by coming back to life in the next scene. Similarly, the Maniac also moves freely from one mimetic convention to another, speaking directly to the audience one moment, interacting with props the next and using both mime and verbal communication. In the commedia dell arte, the Harlequin was commonly seen with a long, hooked nose, a half-mask over his eyes and mouth, and a multicoloured costume. Henry Fielding referred to Harlequin's sooty countenance in his journal *The Champion*. In the *Dunciad*, Alexander Pope described John Rich's Harlequin as the 'sable sorcerer' of *The Necromancer* that marked the start of the pantomime boom in the 1720's. Similarly an anonymous verse satire on the pantomime entitled *British Frenzy* described the Harlequin as a black magician. These last two references, associating the Harlequin with diabolical magic, invoke the long standing link in European culture between blackness and the devil. Some instances where English

performers wore black faces were clearly intended to invoke these associations. Early in the twentieth century the German historian Otto Driesen asserted that Harlequin derived from a twelfth century devil figure named Hellekin who claimed the souls of the unrepentant. Antoni Sadlek argues that one early manifestation of Harlequin can be identified with a devil figure called Alichino who appears in the *Inferno*, and may have originated in religious plays that Dante witnessed in Paris.

The evolutionary trickster impulse contains extremely useful insights about the way meaning is conveyed in human societies. The Maniac in the play *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* is in fact saner than most of other characters. He feigns madness and his trickery is only a theatrical device. It is ironic that the Maniac is labeled 'mad' when he is the character most dedicated to revealing the truth. In order to uncover what really happened, he has to lie and impersonate others. For this reason, we may say that it may be the world around him that is truly mad. In the figure of the Maniac, Fo as a creative artist evokes the duality of the mythic trickster, thereby overcoming social constraints. In so doing, he calls into question the constraints themselves, so that the social system as a whole evolves and develops, just as the individuals within it. The technique of grotesque is willingly used by the playwright to deconstruct a corrupt political system. With his torch of skepticism, Maniac brings to light the ugly truth of political institutions. As a trickster, the Maniac dismantles or deconstructs the cultural text. He is imparted with quick wit to unveil the political aporia where institutions of justice have become institutions of discrimination and suffering, and where language is manipulated to confuse and disguise the truth. As a Trickster, the Maniac is questioning not only one single act of injustice but an unending system of exploitation. By confronting and reconfiguring the corrupt social and political systems he truly acts as a trickster figure as he slips from a system of classifications that normally locates states and positions in cultural space.

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Poems

*Rajiv Khandelwal**

(1)

Longing for an Absence

Shamelessly addicted
Spice and spark emotions
Looking for emotional sex
Have nowhere to go
Like the parents
Of the foreign female tourist
Who disappeared
From the Kashmir valley
Without a trace
Except towards fantasies

The emotional vortex
Invaded by the bunch of moral imbeciles
Like those governing the country
Wish you to come
And un-break the heart

(2)

Refusal to Stay Put

When you remained uncommunicative
For long without clarification
My mind recapped
Moments of warm fellowships
In unreal slow sliding motion of glaciers
Or with haste of daylight robbers

The author of three anthologies of poetry:

1. *Conch Shells and Couries*
2. *Love is a Lot of Work*
3. *A movement to Pigeons* (Live in Agra, rajivk92@gmail.com)

At times rational like Fidayeen movements
 At time illogical ludicrous
 Like Indian politician's on terror tourism
 When helpless happiness fled
 I relived each replay
 As did Ratan, when iconic Taj bled

Memories
 Vivid
 Detailed
 Unshakeable
 Come swiftly, silently

(3)

Presence

That day
 When we sat at the lily pond
 In silence
 I
 Gazing raptly
 At your super-model features
 And you
 Occupied with your thoughts

Your signature scent
 Consumed
 As ferociously
 As the California wild fires

Minutes burned
 Yet,
 We sat unawares

Unimpressed
 Years have passed
 Yet,
 When I pass the lily pond
 Invariably
 Those silences
 Behave like
 Undisciplined, spoilt, unruly children
 Running amok
 Deserving immediate attention
 That's when
 The Lily Pond beckons
 With an as-if-we –have –met-before-expression

(4)

Fusion – 2

Rainbow collide
 In cloak of darkness
 As carnal splinters explode
 Under guise of anonymity
 Mind uses palette of thoughts
 Paints subway graffiti
 As everything permitted

Criteria?
 Do it well
 Do it quickly

Before fantasy fusion flirts away

(5)

Dreams – With Eyes Open

All night they were there
 Creating a stir
 Of the type Most middle aged men
 Crave and dream all their lives
 Playing naughty games
 Almost
 To extremes
 Creating a funny pain

Not like the birth giving pain
 Or wisdom tooth removal

But the comfortable, relaxing pain
 Experienced by the concrete drill
 Entering
 Wet and tight terrain

All night they were there

Making me feel
 On top of the world

Please! Drop in
 Today!

So I can feel
 On top of the world
 With eyes open

(SHUBH)

PROPTITIOUS

We desire
 That the new year
 Be auspicious for all

We desire
 This year
 The shadows of morality
 Fall on politics
 Language this year
 We desire
 Be replete with meaning

We desire
 Relationships this year
 Blossom like sunshine
 Musky they be like sandal
 The new year
 Be auspicious for all

Those whose
 Sky above their heads
 Quivered and fell
 Due to the quake
 Earth once again
 Take them in her lap
 Let it sing
 The song of the rising sun

Poems*Dr. Kulbhushan Kushal**

This year
 May we feel
 In the deep interior
 The power of blessings
 May they expand
 Our physique and minds

Sea, mountains
 Sky and birds
 Rose, jasmine
 Let all of them come home
 As our guests

We desire
 This year once again
 We narrate stories
 Of the thirsty crow
 The cunning fox
 Of Neelu jackal
 To our kids

Auspicious be
 The new year
 For all
 Be it propitious.....

(MAHANAGAR)
BOOM TOWN
 The metropolis is laughing
 The grand display of
 Infinite hands, legs
 Ears, lips, teeth

All sanitized
 From showman to salesman
 All are glittering
 They are shimmering

 The coins are tinkling
 The coins are not visible
 Only the tinkling is heard
 Only the tinkling is visible
 The tinkling of coins
 Clatters in the sound tracks
 Of the archaeology department

 The metropolis talks not with
 coins
 It talks with cards
 This is not the season
 To retrieve, give, take
 Count, weigh, scrutinize
 The coins
 You care for the card
 And the card will take care of
 you

 The metropolis daily
 Gets a facial massage done
 Goes to the gym
 And it highlights
 Its unique selling features
 The metropolis
 A great, yes great trader
 The metropolis has become
 Its hands raise simultaneously
 In all agreements
 And disagreements
 The legs of the metropolis

Neither run, nor walk

 The metropolis neither runs
 Like the lion
 Nor does it like the horse
 Swiftly cross the way
 The metropolis is practicing
 To glide over water.....

 The metropolis is laughing
 With clippings of ears in its pocket
 The metropolis is running swiftly
 By the shores of the sea
 The metropolis is rehearsing
 To listen
 Not with ears
 But with eyes

 The metropolis has thoroughly
 understood
 The geography of lips
 And the chemistry of lips
 No one is behind
 In the sculpting of lips
 In their embellishment

 The lips here are such
 That they will not open
 But they speak
 And also such
 That keep talking
 But do not chat

 The laughing metropolis
 Does not show its teeth
 Its countless teeth

All together
 Are chewing iron flakes
 They are singing a song
 They are sure
 They will be successful
 One day.....

 On a silken rope
 Run the roads of the metropolis
 And on the roads
 Half naked, seven hued
 Children are playing
 Hide and seek
 With the cars
 Red eyes open
 And they come to a stop
 Vehicles and horse-carts

 The footpath is exempt
 From the rule of the red eyes

 As soon as they open
 Green eyes
 Fuming slowly
 The cars, buses
 And motors start
 Recuperated
 They swiftly run again

 These red-green-yellow eyes
 Are secular by religion
 Are secular by caste
 Caste, creed or color
 They do not know
 The cars are happy

The eyes cannot identify them
 And the eyes are unfamiliar
 With the cars

 The game of
 Chasing and nabbing
 Is on round the clock
 In the metropolis

 There is hustle
 There is bustle
 Dance and song
 Eating and drinking
 Drinking and eating
 Swinging and kissing
 All at once
 Can be seen

 Behold! The metropolis
 Has become a prism
 All at once
 You can see
 In countless colors

 Raju guide
 Gabbar Singh
 Thrilling us in Pakeezah
 The sound of the train
 The song "Coming to Khandala"
 The portraits of Gandhi
 Going to the Community Centre
 Sculpted maidens
 Selling fish, smiling
 Sachin tossing the ball
 And dejected children
 Trudging to school

Smiling children
Coming back from school

Frolicking metropolis
The centerpiece is
Mid-Day
At once in the air
Twenty-five balls
Of promises, precepts
Losses, gains
The drill is going on

Up for sale is
Harshad Mehta's house
Ketan bhai no more
Continues to be a bhai
Ketan- for how long now
Will you continue to remain
banished

The metropolis
Is distributing jalebis
With philanthropic acts
Is earning good fortune
Do not disturb the metropolis
On its mobile
The meeting is in progress

And in its lap a bear is playing
Narrow-waisted drums
The monkeys are dancing
Dam-dam diga diga
The weather is cool-cool
Look, as if in a game
The metropolis
Spouted currency notes
The frogs have come out

With their instruments and
orchestra
Everything looks green
The stage is set
Dreams are rocking
In cloud-capped houses

At times the metropolis
Severely thrashes the clown
People do not clap
The clown smiles
The clown is rehearsing
To become the magician
The magic is yearning
To become the hero

The metropolis knows
The rules of the game
At all times
Only one player wins
Till the metropolis desires
The monkey emerges triumphant
And vanquished is Alexander

The metropolis is playing
Do not disturb him
Let him play
During the game
There shall be this pageantry
Upbeat for some time
Disenchantment for eons....

**(Translated from Hindi
into English by the poet)**

The Flooded Desert is a story of Devika, a middle class traditional Indian woman who finds it impossible to protest even when the consummation of her marriage fails to take place and the conspiracy hatched by her in-laws makes her life miserable. Her journey in the new world, where the trouble torn situation in the Punjab lands her, brings new possibilities for her. Her own compulsions and the temptations of the life around mark her growth into an altogether different woman. The startling ways of life that she experiences and the ones that she finds around her build a contrast between the world of the traditional women and the life of the modern liberated ones. The psychological realism trapped in social mores and obsessions explores the dynamics of relationships.

The novel takes the readers back to the world of 1980's to trace the changes in the material and the social reality. The impact of these new developments comes out the way women react in the new scenario. It reveals the helplessness of the powerful social forces to check the process of the margins coming to the center.



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