

Narratives of the Silence : *An Analysis of the Partition Narrative*

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Recovering the voices from one of the most traumatic phases of recent history of the subcontinent is nothing short of being sucked into the vortex of chaos. It is riddled with the problematics of whose voice is it, and what meaning (if ever that is possible) do we attribute to that voice. These problematics increase with the passage of time because unlike the objectivity that comes with spatial and temporal distancing two very vital elements come into play when personal and national histories become inseparable. One is the role of memory especially in narratives that have been ideologically informed by national and personal discourses. Second is the idea and implementation of the two-nation theory, which still obsesses a large population of both India and Pakistan. In recent history the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the state sponsored pogrom of the Muslims in the Indian state of Gujarat reveal a highly ingrained belief that the Hindus and the Muslims are two separate nations. The Nehruvian vision of a secular India remains largely unfulfilled vis-à-vis Hindu-Muslim relationships.

The Partition of India and Pakistan was at once the moment of celebration of freedom from colonial rule and suffering of humanity suddenly thrown into the uncertainty of new boundaries and new homes. The promise of the new beginning was overshadowed by an unprecedented migration (far beyond the imagination of both the governments) of populations across a new demarcation. Over a million people lost their lives; thousands of women were raped or abducted and countless became refugees.

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My paper focuses on the narratives of the Partition in an effort to recover those voices, which went unheard. In the Bakhtinian sense these voices are encoded in the narratives in such a manner as to highlight the complexity of the historical situation as well as the ideological positions it manifests. My paper is an attempt to study the discourse of desire for a pre-partition, secular and communal harmony mostly articulated by the authors, narrators and protagonists and those moments of rupture when the socially marginalized characters (sometimes the protagonists themselves) reveal a counter discourse of unformulated desires and which are mostly represented by chaos. Do these characters make literature the site of resistance to the dominant? What this paper aims to unravel is the tension between the dominant discourses and their inversion. I have taken two representative texts. *Train to Pakistan* a novel by Khushwant Singh and *Mottled Dawn* a collection of short stories by Sadat Hasan Manto.

The history of the time we realise has been variously represented. Gyanendra Pandey calls it the “moment of rupture”. The moment when the “Akhand Bharat” the unified India was split into India and Pakistan carving geographical spaces for the people of Muslim faith and what remained as a “secular” India. Partition is popularly viewed as a failure of the political leadership of the time. This sentiment is also echoed by the writers as the inability of the leaders of the subcontinent to resolve their differences over power-sharing. Nehru was presumed to be in a hurry in the transfer of power and leaders like Patel were perceived as anti-Muslim. On the other hand the idea of a two nation theory was gaining popularity amongst the Muslim leadership. The ideology of Pakistan comes from the thinking that the Muslims and the Hindus are not only followers of two different religions but also two social orders that have led to two distinct cultures with no similarities. That despite having lived together for more than a thousand years their differences had developed to such a point where peaceful co-existence was not possible.

There were others who equally vehemently rubbished the argument of the two separate nations. Gandhi declared his opposition to the vivisection of India. The ferocious fighting in Calcutta came to a halt, almost entirely on account of Gandhi's efforts. Though his role in the Partition was controversial to a great extent not only for the way he used religious symbols for political purposes but importantly for his inability to prevent the Partition and its consequences. His efforts in controlling the communal riots did yield some results in the east but he was largely ineffective in the western India. There were others from within the Muslim leadership who believed that instead of uniting the Muslims of India, the two nation theory has divided the Muslims of the subcontinent into three parts (Muslims of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh created out of Pakistan in 1971).

Finally the view that the two centuries of the Colonial rule had played a very subversive role in the division of the country and the destruction of mutually tolerant relationships that had always existed between these two communities. This was a view which was quickly appropriated by the Indian nationalists and it continued to be the kind of history that we did in our school textbooks. It is the history of a culture which is "pluralistic, encompassing the country's diversity, incorporating and drawing heavily from all those people who came and settled here". (Puniyani p. 46)

I would call the Partition as the moment of "historical aporia" a moment which has defied logic and codification. What can be termed as chaos is also a clash of ideological imaginations of a pre-existing idea of a nation and the western concept of a nation state. The belief that Indian culture was a repository of all that had come to this land and every faith and sect merged in a syncretism was put to test by fire literally in the Partition saga. The concept of a nation in the western sense was transmuted by the western educated leaders into this discourse of syncretism. As Sethi says, "that nationalism is an urban movement of intellectuals, involving the conception of an idyllic authentic culture

of the past presumed to be enjoyed by pre-industrialized, rural groups ... and that it is a movement initiated in the cities" though it relies on the "little traditions of the countryside for its definitions of authenticity and purity." (Sethi 1999 : 179) Not to say that there was anything inherently violent or divisive about this concept but the Partition and its attendant confusion in its explanation was a result of a clash between these two conflicting ideas. If the idea of a composite and a tolerant nation is to be believed then the violent bloodletting is beyond conception. If on the other hand the two nation theory is to be believed then there is a long history of peaceful co-existence especially in the villages and which is then brought into question. In fact this paper aims to open those moments of the inexplicable within the texts when those characters that lie outside the discourse rupture the narrative.

These representative texts do not bear any structural similarity nor do they belong to any generic grouping. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* represents one of the most common fictional representations of the Partition. A village Mano Majra located on the Indian side of a newly drawn border is rudely awoken from its idyllic "past of peaceful coexistence in the summer of 1947". Through the turmoil of a love story Singh portrays the now altered realities of the village and the nation/s and the way these bear upon the characters of the novel. The once peaceful hamlet is shattered by violence which is alien to the village. A train moves into Mano Majra and brings a young leftist revolutionary (Iqbal) full of utopian dreams and with a zeal to transform the local thinking. Then the same train becomes a metaphor of death and violence when it arrives in Mano Majra carrying only the corpses of Hindus and Sikhs. This sets into motion the cataclysmic events of migration and communal strife. The local officials in their attempt to avert riots conspire to get the village vacated by the Muslim residents who till then had no desire to go to Pakistan. Finally Juggat Singh the village rogue sacrifices his life to save the train to Pakistan which in all likelihood is carrying his beloved Nooran.

Sadat Hasan Manto in his short stories brings out the poignancy, futility and the vacuity of the Partition through his ironic and mostly sceptical representations. His short stories are full of dark humour which heightens the effect of the uselessness of grand notions/ideas like the fight for identity and the notion of a nation. His characters suffer in the existential angst and the violence within which corresponds to the violence without. In *Toba Tek Singh* the protagonist is a mentally challenged inmate of an asylum whose question “Where is Toba Tek Singh?” assumes a philosophical questioning rather than a simple geographical query in the post-Partition era.

If there is a common strain to be found in these works and others, it is that the Partition was the most undesirable thing to have afflicted India and Pakistan. Partition disrupted the harmony that existed for centuries. In *Train to Pakistan* the narrator says about Mano Majra “it had always been so, until the summer of 1947” (p. 5). All religions shared the “three-foot slab of sandstone” for their private prayers, and the train from Delhi to Lahore which when “blows two long blasts of the whistle” the Muslim and the Sikh priests get down to their business of morning prayers. Both these priests represent Indian ability to absorb and respect different cultures and religions. They are best of friends with each other. The Muslim priest is referred to as an uncle by the village. His voice carries the authority as his “age and piety had made him respected”. “His appearance commanded respect”. The opinion of these two men was very valuable in the village meetings. In a village largely populated by the Sikhs it was the Muslim priest who is shown to deserve and receive more respect. The Sikh priest in comparison inspires “no such affection and respect”. The discourse of this composite culture is built up in such a manner that anyone who discusses and believes that there is any difference between the two communities is immediately reprimanded and looked down upon. When a young man talks about driving the Muslims out of their village in a meeting he is instantly dubbed as “hot-headed”. The Sikh priest Bhai Meet

Singh is most vocal in his defence of his village Muslims in these meetings. In another incident when Juggut Singh narrates the story of a truck full of Pakistani soldiers who butchered the people on the roads with the help of the driver's expertise. A pariah dog runs across the road and the truck driver loses control of the vehicle resulting in a mishap in which the driver and a couple of soldiers are killed just a few miles inside the Indian Territory. When everyone else listening to the story approves of the manner in which the god punishes the guilty the revolutionary Iqbal questions the others as to why no dog managed to overturn the jeep carrying the Sikhs who had opened fire at the helpless Muslim refugees? Objective and unbiased interventions such as these and the way the whole narrative is built up reaffirms the master-narrative of a secular and plural India. In this novel the two characters who carry the mantle of this discourse are Bhai Meet Singh and Iqbal. The narrator invariably expresses the desire for the pre-partition sanity, a world of mutual respect and inseparable compositeness of a culture which shared its past, its rituals and language.

In the *Train to Pakistan* this idealised vision is also discernible from the fact that the perpetrators of violence both physically and metaphorically come from outside Mano Majra. The first is the ghost train which brings with it the horrors of violence committed outside the limits of the village. The dacoits who come from another village are indirectly and then directly involved in the expulsion of the Muslims from the village. Both the officials are also outsiders. Finally a group of Sikh refugees who come to Mano Majra after crossing into India seek their pound of flesh from the Muslim residents of Mano Majra who are eventually forced to leave the country by the evening train. By having Juggut Singh the village bad character to sacrifice his life in order to save the train from a massacre, the narrator reinforces the author's hope or as Anup Beniwal calls it the “visionary utopia”.

All this reveals a simplistic fall into the discourse of a broad commonness of cultures of both the communities. This is an extension

of the Gandhian discourse in politics that the common people are sick of the political rhetoric of division. The political aspiration of a few elites in the Muslim League and the Congress had been subversively scattered among the populace as a desire for autonomy and independence. Like all dominant discourses it is hard to pin down the origin of this one as well. Though the articulation of this discourse is visible through a desire for the past and the order that was associated with that past, the present is seen as the disruption of the order in the form of chaos. A return to this order is also visible in the attempts at narrative ordering. Juggut Singh's sacrifice is the final attempt at the bringing back of the known sanity.

What on the other hand becomes a counter discourse to this dominant discourse is the breakdown in the narrative and the language. The socially marginalized characters and their voices reveal a breakdown and the isolation of the sign from its signification. This counter discourse poses not a serious resistance in the action of the novel but it is the loss of meaning which reveals the incapacity of language. An example of this is a series of questions that on the face of it seem rhetorical but actually these questions do not have any answers. The young man who questions Bhai Meet Singh, "What had the Sikhs and Hindus in Pakistan done that they were butchered? Weren't they innocent?" When asked the same questions about the Muslims he is clueless. The same man then vows to protect the Muslims of his village. Language becomes interrogative and there is an agony at the loss of answers.

All through the narrative Bhai Meet Singh and Iqbal carry the flag of brotherhood and the equality of humanity. The reader is led to an expectation of their ability to resist the onslaught of violence, one through the religion and the other through the Western discourse of leftist ideology. But at the moment of crisis they are both severely afflicted with inertia. They represent the indifference of a large population who inadvertently become accomplices to violence. Bhai

Meet Singh becomes inconsequential in village meetings especially during the hour of crisis. Later his dialogues reveal that he has completely switched off his mind from the current problem. When Iqbal is asking him about the migration of the Muslims he replies in monosyllables or short answers. "He was more interested in watching Iqbal inflating the air mattress." (p167) Iqbal on the other hand lapses into long internal monologues. Interestingly the language rather than performing the function of signification and thereby giving clarity and impetus to action is turned inwards and leads or becomes the cause of non action.

What is the significance of Juggut Singh's role as a Saviour? As a social out caste more concerned about his personal/selfish gains his elevation to the state of a hero raises important questions about the way the discourse of the composite Indian culture is first created then ruptured in the text. This culture that the author so painstakingly builds cracks up without too much pressure. The Saviour responds from the margins. Someone who is not a member of this cultural solidarity, who is never a part of the temple and village meetings, displays his humanitarian zeal to save a train of Muslims. The genocides that gripped the two nations in the months leading to the Partition and after are therefore perpetrated by the normal peace loving people. On the other hand, a character like Juggut Singh holds the significance to the rupture in the discourse of communal harmony. The acts of these marginalized characters are the author's props for his ideological stand for the peaceful coexistence of the communities which has been disrupted by a temporary aberration called Partition. My argument is that the "normal" characters fail to perform and the village bad character responds to the situation. The bad character is within the realm of action whereas this action cannot be in consonance with the desire of the author. The "desire" for pre-partition utopia of harmony is then altered by another vision. Juggut Singh would be the last person to desire for the status quo. Within the given social and cultural conditions Juggut

Singh's position would have remained unenviable and the only hope for his love-life would have been late-night rendezvous meetings with Nooran. The possibility of a relationship with a woman of Muslim faith was almost nonexistent. He (Juggut Singh) also belongs to the realm of action as well as violence which the author wishes to counteract. His motives and desires are not articulated though we very well understand that these are not compatible with those of the author. This contradiction presents a rupture and it is best described in the dialogue between Juggut Singh and Bhai Meet Singh. Juggut Singh's inability to understand the scriptures and then finally the realization that meaning has become meaningless for him. It reveals the vacuity of the ideological discourses that are embedded in language. (p174) Finally he becomes a man without a voice and without a face.

Sadat Hasan Manto's purpose in representing these marginal voices is different from that of Khushwant Singh's. If Singh's protagonist becomes a martyr and that Singh uses him to carry his own conviction of harmony, Manto writes from the vantage point of total indifference to emotion. On the surface Manto's tone is almost journalistic with no authorial intervention or the delineation of characters. No comment or contextualisation of the actions comes forth. He simply narrates without a trace of emotion quite unlike other writers of Partition literature. His tone is satiric and the use of irony and black humour are used to convey the total breakdown of order. His satiric mode nevertheless reveals his humanistic vision. His works present moments of essential human goodness and also moments of redemption through love. But once again these voices are not entirely in consonance with that of the humanistic/harmony discourse of the author.

In *Toba Tek Singh* Manto questions the nature of nationalization and the procedures of nationalization. If Bishen Singh refuses to budge from the no-man's land it signals the moment of truth for both India and Pakistan and their idea of nationhood. The idea of Partition comes across as a senseless disruption. The whole project seems devoid of

any signification. Questions like "what is Pakistan?" might not get a serious, logical answer from the inmates of an asylum it nevertheless comes into the realm of language and structuring with all the possibilities of slippage even within the political realm. Because after all, the alleged claim for Partition was lasting peace and the happenings on the subcontinent is the unfinished business of the Partition itself.

At the micro-level the asylum becomes the representation of the "madness" that was Partition. But it is also ironically the only place where saner voices can be heard. This contradiction or the New Critical "Paradox" reveals the ruptures that I am interested in. The most important aspect about the story is the complete breakdown in linguistic signification which is then extended to the geographical signs. Bishen Singh rarely talks in coherent language and his gibberish represents the muddle that he is. The other inmates who are "normal" but even they fail to make sense of the division of the country. The guards and the helpers are equally clueless. "The newspapers were no help either". This confusion leads to reactions which are the moments when the narrative makes its statements about the uselessness of the project of Partition. If one inmate declares his desire to neither live in India and Pakistan, he does so because he hates the idea of separation from the others. This Muslim exhibits his sanity by embracing the Sikhs nor in Hindu inmates. Again the narrative displays the undesirable aspect of the Partition.

In this story we see a similar pattern of the breakdown of language especially at crucial moments. The discourse is ruptured not by a counter discourse but by a loss of meaning and signification (p5). Interestingly the inmates show a keen perception of the chaos that has engulfed the historical moment. They also reflect this awareness through their troubled responses. But ultimately at the time of their division and movement from Pakistan to India they resist the move (p9). Bishen Singh's refusal to move into a place which would give him a new national identity without Toba Tek Singh (his village where

he was born), is the rejection of the idea of nationhood unlike Manto's idea of a unified secular, humanistic India. The no man's land between India and Pakistan then metaphorically reflects the space of the marginalized even though interestingly it occupies the central space between India and Pakistan.

In another story *Mozail* a young, eccentric Jewish girl in strife-torn Bombay sacrifices her life to save her lover's fiancée. Parsees, Jews and Anglo-Indians represented an entirely different dimension in the communal strife between Hindus and Sikhs on the one hand and the Muslims on the other. Their status remained ambiguous and their political stand was also ambivalent. In the British raj they had enjoyed a superior position but the Independence/Partition suddenly pushed them to an insignificant position. In this story the protagonist makes the most direct and disparaging comments on religion. In a time when religious identity was a question of life-and-death (Iqbal in *Train to Pakistan*), she denounces its validity to establish an identity.

Rather than the slippage of language we encounter a character in this story that resists fixation. Her non-fixity gives her the mobility not only to move out of physical spaces but the ideological spaces as well. She is totally "unpredictable". Tarlochan finds her "vulgar" after she runs away on their wedding day. Her sacrifice cannot be seen as a sacrifice for her love or redemption, but she represents that "other" which although fascinating for Tarlochan subverts whatever he values most (a middle-class identity fostered by religion). Her own religion at once situates her outside the frenzy of violence but it also subsumes her. The voice which comes from the margin by its very ideological position subverts the dominant which the author in an idealist mode re-creates as harmonious and utopian. The discourse of the majority community's peaceful coexistence enshrined within their religion and cultures is exposed as hollow with a mass hysteria that is whipped up.

Mozail gives her clothes to Tarlochan's fiancée in her final bid to save her. A woman without clothes loses her religious identity and

at once becomes the object of desire for the attackers. Symbolically the naked body of a woman reveals the empty claims of identity acquired from cultural, national and religious names. Instead a woman as a victim of this violence, as a marker of social and cultural subjugation of the other, and as trophies of conquest explains this discourse of nation as not only meaningless but also oppressive for her. She is not an active participant of this discourse and consequently lies outside it. The story *Return* takes it up further when a group of young boys act voluntarily to retrieve abducted girls of their own community. They promise a father that they will find his daughter for him. Instead they become her rapists and she is found in a hospital in a state of shock and trauma. Characters such as these reveal how these discourses are created without the active participation of all those concerned and how they get appropriated at the time of reinforcing these very discourses.

Most of the writers who have responded to the crisis of Partition have done so from their ideological position of a humanistic perspective, which is largely essentialist and sometimes reductive. There is an inherent contradiction in their appropriation of the dominant discourses of a communal harmony that existed before the Partition and the sudden and inexplicable hatred that led to violence. These contradictions can also be viewed as attempts at self subversion. Somehow this idea of self subversion does not hold its ground because the dominant discourse is more forcefully presented even though the resistance is in-built in the text. The aim of this endeavour is not only to reveal concepts which are able to describe such orders of larger discourses but also to dissent from, interrupt and resist the techniques and desires that produce and sustain them because after all it is an ongoing process. The voices that come from the margin by their very nature are subversive and beyond appropriation, because they are outside the realm of language and therefore culture. My aim was to bring these margins into recognition to an acknowledgment of the questions that come up in the text even though they have no answers. Not only is text opened up but it also reflects on the way the present views the history.

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7

Interrogating History : Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*

–Jagroop Singh

In *The Great Indian Novel*, Shashi Tharoor aims at thematizing the cultural history of India while challenging and subverting the western paradigms of historiography and narrative. The Eurocentric theories may not deftly articulate the complexities, cultural provenance and ethos of a postcolony because such theories are the upshot of particular cultural traditions resulting in essentialism and universalism. However, theories about the universal features of language, epistemologies and value systems are being interrogated and challenged by the postcolonials. Many of the postcolonies, which have enduring indigenous traditions and metaphysical systems such as India and African countries, are in a position to challenge the Western perspective with "alternative ontological systems" (Tiffin 176).

Tharoor's narrativization of the Indian history is an endeavour to reclaim his country's pride in its own rich culture and tradition. The study of national traditions is "the first and most vital stage of the process of rejecting claims of the centre to exclusivity" (Ashcorft 16). Tharoor is proud of the rich heritage of India with "multiple truths and multiple realities" (Singam). He believes that India is not an underdeveloped country but "a highly developed one in an advanced state of decay" (Tharoor 17). His major contribution is that he has reminded the Indians of the ancient culture and the great philosophical traditions and their relevance to the modern times. After the publication of the novel, Tharoor, in his many essays and articles, has highlighted the relevance of *The Mahabharata* in our lives. He has found *The Mahabharata* "the

perfect medium for an attempt to retell the political history of 20th century India, through a fictional recasting of its events, episodes and characters" (Tharoor, "Timeless epic"). He says that the *Mahabharata* has permeated the national consciousness of India. Almost every child learns about the tales of *Mahabharata* at his home and school. People of India from all the classes and castes still derive inspiration, guidance and entertainment from this great epic. Tharoor quotes an eminent scholar, R.N.Dandekar who writes, "There is indeed no department of Indian life, public or private, which is not effectively influenced by the great epic. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the people of India have learnt to think and act in terms of *The Mahabharata*" (Timeless epic). Its characters and personages, its myths and legends are the content of our collective unconscious. However, Tharoor warns that to distil a single absolute message from the epic as a whole is a disingenuous exercise. He believes that the epic offers enough textual evidence for practically any conclusion one wishes to derive from it.

The colonization of India by the British was a major unsavoury event, which led to the worst kind of cultural subservience and oppression. The Britishers treated the Indians as inferior and constantly reminded them that they were uncivilized, backward fellows of an underdeveloped country. They lost no opportunity to humiliate the Indians and never owned or accepted the Indian culture. The Orientalist's placement of India as a land of snake charmers, superstitious and illiterate bums, criminals and petty 'thugs' who needed to be civilized, was a part of strategy to subjugate and exploit a nation. The Orient, as Said points out, has been observed as an illustration of "a particular form of eccentricity", as "a reservoir of infinite percliarity" and as "a living tableau of queerness" (Said 102-3). Tharoor believes that India is an ancient land with literary, cultural and historical heritage which existed long before Europe came into being, a land of Rama where "truth and honour and valour and dharma were worshipped as the cardinal of existence", a land where "epic battles were fought for great

causes" (412). Nevertheless, Tharoor's presentation of the history of ancient India by retelling *The Mahabharata*, "a fifth *Veda* of the Indian masses" (Tharoor, "Metaphor for our times"), is not an attempt at the approbation of ancient Indian culture, rather his purpose is to convey the pluralism, heterogeneity and openness of the vast cultural, philosophical and spiritual heritage of India. By using the ironic mode and by "cleverly and pointedly intertwining" two somewhat "disparaging subjects *The Mahabharata* and the history of modern India" (Goldman) Tharoor aims to broaden the understanding of culture and history of India.

Broadly speaking, postcolonial studies focuses on the social, cultural, economic and political practices which are concomitant with response and resistance to colonialism. The Eurocentric view that many value-assigning practices, epistemologies and social models are 'universal' and apply across time and place, have been questioned and resisted by the postcolonial theorists like Franz Fanon, Edward Said, Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin et al. The postcolonial theory attempts to rediscover indigenous theories of epistemology and language and in the process "subvert the political and textual authority of the imperial European perspective" (Tiffin 174-5). Many postcolonial critics cast doubts on the Western academy's preferred imposition of postmodern formulations of hybridity, syncretization and pastiche on the postcolonial literature and theory. The postcolonial narratives have their own local issues that cannot be elided as tangential concerns. The formulations like hybridity and multiculturalism may hold good for the diaspora but not for the material realities of a postcolony. The colonized people's predisposition to reclaim their past is to be valorized. Though it cannot be reconstituted, it "must be revisited and realized in partial, fragmented ways" (Lye). *The Great Indian Novel* is one such attempt at cultural reclamation. The present is seen through and equated with the past. In this context Chinua Achebe in his article : "The Role of a writer in a New Nation" makes a relevant

observation: "The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self-respect. The writer's duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost... the writer's duty is not to beat this morning's headline in topicality, it is to explore in depth the human condition" (qtd. in Salat 132). In *The Great Indian Novel* Shashi Tharoor is attempting a 're-vision' of history to counter the West's view that India is an underdeveloped country. The metaphoric parallelism between the ancient India of the epic times and modern India of 20th century not only serves as a political satire but also highlights the subjectivity and ontological and epistemological underpinnings of a nation. The narrative "seeks to recover an adequate sense of pride in India's cultural history and by juxtaposing the past with the present, attempts to show in human terms what happened to us and what we have lost" (Salat 133). Tharoor does not reconstitute the past; he revisits it and realizes it in partial, fragmented ways to regain the lost glory and because there are lessons to be learnt.

The theorists of historiography such as Frank Ankersmit, Hayden White, Michael Foucault, and others believe that historiography is 'invented' and is a political act. The relation of the event to a particular age and its impact on it is the construct of imagination of a historian or is invented by him. History by these theorists is perceived as figurative and imagined and as such history cannot be construed as either mimetic or empirical. The historian like a novelist makes use of emplotting strategies and linguistic tropes. He may exclude, emphasize or select for the imposition of a particular structure of the story and he may decide about the use of a particular form of trope even before his narration and consequently pre-figuring the narrative into certain forms. Thus for Hayden White history becomes "a verbal structure in the form of narrative prose structure" (qtd. in Salat 126). The postcolonial writers endeavour to contradict such emplotted and thus distorted histories of their culture and attempt to re-write history to re-invent their inherited

past. It is in this way that "the historical fiction becomes a means to un-invent received histories and investigate the ontological issue of what constitutes fact and fiction and the relation between the fact of history and the act of recording in inherited historiography" (Salat 126).

The postcolonialists aim at correcting the orientalist discourse which is directed towards "disregarding, essentializing, denuding the humanity of another culture, people, or geographical region" (Said 108). The contemporary Orientalist attitude towards Chinese as 'perfidious', Indians as 'underdeveloped' and Muslims as 'passive' can be corrected by "refusing, realigning, deconstructing the 'master narrative' of western history" (Tiffin 179). Challenging the western view of India as 'underdeveloped' in the very first page of the novel, Tharoor asseverates that India is a spiritually much advanced land of *kundalini yoga* and the people with the western mind set cannot "tell their *kundalini* from a decomposing earthworm" (17). He hints at the over-developed social structure, the bureaucracy, the political process and reminds us of the Golden Ages of the Mauryas and the Guptas and the great epic periods of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The novel has been divided into eighteen chapters, which obviously is an adaptation of the structure of *The Mahabharata*. The titles of many chapters are, in fact, parodic inversions of books on India for the Orientalist perspective, for example, "Passages Through India" alludes to *A Passage to India* by E.M. Forster, "The Bungle Book" to Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* and "A Jewel in the Crown" to *The Jewel in the Crown* by Paul Scott. These books were written by the elite British settlers or visitors who expressed opinions and beliefs as representatives of the Empire, on the one hand and, on the other, presented a comprehensive report of the customs, attitudes and language of the natives which often were seen only through the eyes of one who held his own country to be vastly superior one (Ashcroft 5). No doubt, the novelists like Forster and Paul Scott seem to be portraying the colonizers as disgusting and pompous, and unduly rude and disdainful towards the native people but the overall impression

that one gathers from their writings about the attitude towards the local people is that of condescension at the most. One of the Britishers in the novel, Rony Heaslop, makes a comment on E.M.Forester, thinly disguised as Maurice Forester, "Never quite managed to get the hang of what India is all about. Considers it all a mystery and a muddle or so he keeps saying" (62). Tharoor expostulates the stereotypes such as 'mystery' and 'muddle', 'laziness', 'stupidity', and 'sensuality', etc. thrust upon the East by the Orientalist discourse that hegemonises the western superiority over the Orient, identified as the 'other'.

For the western mind history is a recordable and rational construct whereas myth is something pre-historic and hence fictional or irrational construct. M.F.Salat has made a valueable study of Tharoor's challenging the western paradigms of history and myth as separate realities. Salat believes that colonized mind's "exposure to and internalization of Euro-American thought" has conditioned it to accept blindly such categories and dichotomies whereas no such distinction or divisionism has been made in the Indian culture. The characters and events of the Indian epics are not mythical or fictional to an Indian mind but rather real and historical. So many places associated with the events and persons of the epics are still frequented by millions of Indians and regarded as historical. It is because of strong oral tradition in India that co-exists with the written tradition whereas in Europe this oral tradition is almost extinct. In India "everything that has come down through the ages, whether oral or the written tradition " is "itihās". In *The Great Indian Novel* Tharoor values this cultural specificity of India. And "by allowing his historical fiction to move freely from the ancient epical to the modern Indian narrative, often obviating the distinction between the two narratives by confusing one with the other, Tharoor contradicts the Western dichotomy and asserts the unitary concept of Indian historiography" (Salat 128-9). Tharoor's assertion of this unitary concept of Indian historiography is an important element in developing a specific national consciousness and reclaiming the past. The open and circular

ending of the novel is, again, in keeping with the Indian traditions and epistemology where Ved Vyas, the narrator, declares that the "stories never end, they just continue somewhere else" (418). The story having a beginning, a middle and an end is a western concept where "life and art must be defined by conclusions, consummations devoutly to be wished and strived for" (162). In the Indian ontological system nothing begins and nothing ends. We live in "an eternal present in which what was and what will be is contained in what is" (163). There is "no end to the story of life. There are merely pauses. The end is the arbitrary invention of the teller" (163). Such ontological underpinnings allow Tharoor "to suggest an alternative in Indian literary tradition to the paradigm of the western realist narrative with a beginning, middle and end" (Sharma 148).

Tharoor's showcasing of India's past is neither laudatory nor is wholly depreciatory. His parodic mode that persists throughout the narrative is a postmodern literary device employed to maintain distance and objectivity so as to re-interpret and re-invent Indian history and culture without prejudice. Casting *The Mahabharata* onto modern history is an ingenious device through which Tharoor has presented a holistic picture of Indian culture. The narrative covers a history of modern India from Mahatama Gandhi, the venerable Bhishma (Gangaji) of the epic to the recapturing of power by Indira Gandhi (Priya Duryodhani) in 1982, though a passing reference to her assassination has also been made. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru becomes the modern Dhritarashtra and Pandu's role is given to Subhas Chander Bose. Almost all the prominent leaders of India's struggle for independence have been represented in the novel.

Gandhi is an appropriate link between the past and the present, the ancient and the modern traditions, "reading the *vedas* and Tolstoy with equal involvement, studying the immutable laws of Manu and the eccentric philosophy of Ruskin" (25). No doubt, the parodic mode of presenting Gandhi has made his characterization amusing but

underneath this raucous fun is the objective presentation of an Indian hero of the masses without any personal predilections of the author. His views on Truth and non-violence are elaborated with the same sincerity that is found in his autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth*. Ved Vyas, the narrator, who is Chakravarti Rajgopalachari like figure, tells Ganapathi that for Gangaji (Gandhiji) the truth was the cardinal principle, "the standard by which he tested every action and utterance" (48). His gospel of truth was firmly based on his convictions of what was just and right. Truth could not be obtained by untruthful or unjust or violent means. What Gandhiji was showing through non-violence was "a new weapon - One which can only be blunted if one goes back to the old" (127). Some Englishmen describe this philosophy as one of passive resistance. Vyas, the narrator, asserts that "there was nothing passive about this resistance. Gangaji's truth required activism, not passivity" (48). However, the narrator is critical of Gandhi's orthodoxy and audacity in ossifying his beliefs and moral principles : "By asserting his moral principles, by upholding abstract canons of Truth and justice, he was laying nothing more than his beliefs on the line" (99). On resorting to the fast, the narrator comments that Gangaji (Gandhiji) made "our very weakness a weapon" (105). He firmly believed that "the best way to bring his principles to life was, paradoxically, by being prepared to die for them" (105). Fast may ideally suit an upright national leader like Gandhi but in hands of lesser mortals, the narrator feels, it may become an "insidious form of blackmail abused and over-used in our agitation-ridden land" (106). Gandhi is shown as a small, balding, semi-clad saint under whose stewardship a nation was rising. But Tharoor never misses the opportunity to create humour even at the cost of a 'star' : "He is a star - hairless, bony, enema-taking, toilet cleaning Ganga, with his terrible vow of celibacy and his habit of arranging other people's marriages, is a star !" (52) And this star "peering at you through round-rimmed glasses that gave him the look of a startled owl" (35). Thus he is not idealized or deified but, nonetheless, he becomes a symbol of what is unique and valorizing in the Indian culture.

The modern Dhritarashtra is an unfair caricature of Pt. Jawarharlal Nehru, the First Prime Minister of independent India. He is shown as blind to the realities of the world and as a man with an air of ostentation. His historical mistake of ordering cease-fire in Kashmir when the Indian Army was winning decisive battles has been scoffed at: "My blind and visionary son had decided to appeal to the UN" (260). The Nehruvian model of development of heavy industry to the neglect of rural sector and continuation of British model of education are found deficient :

India was well on the way to becoming the seventh largest industrial power in the world, whatever that may mean, while 80 percent of her people continued to lack electricity and clean drinking water... The British had neglected village education in their efforts to produce a limited literate class of petty clerks to turn the lower wheels of their bureaucracy, so we too neglected the villages Our medical schools produced the most gifted doctors in the hospitals of London, while whole districts ached without aspirin. Our institutes of technology were subsidized by our tax revenues to churn out brilliant graduates for the research laboratories of American corporations, while our emaciated women carried pans of stones on their head to the building-sites of new institutes...(293-4).

The villain of the piece in *The Mahabharata* is Duryodhana who reappears in the novel as Priyadarshini Indira Gandhi (Priya Duryodhani). It is during Indira Gandhi's period as Prime Minister that India passed through one of the darkest periods of history of independent India which helps "revive the memory of the battle of Kurukshetra" (Chaudhury 104). Many postcolonial novelists such as Nayantara Sahgal (*Rich Like Us*), Salman Rushdie (*Midnight's Children*), Rohinton Mistry (*A Fine Balance*) have deprecated Indira Gandhi for unwarranted promulgation of Internal Emergency and wanton violation of all the democratic norms for personal aggrandizement. Tharoor seems to be

"most savage in his portrayal of Indira Gandhi as the heartless and scheming Priya Duryodhani" (Goldman). However, Tharoor's thrust of castigating Indira Gandhi is not so much the emergency as willful exploitation of the innocent masses through vote catching devices such as the slogan of 'Remove Poverty', devoid of any sincerity and ingenuousness. Though her father Dhritarashtra ignores the 'advice' of Kanika Menon (Krishna Menon), she would remember every word of his 'counsel' and would not hesitate to act upon it.

There never is a genuine need
 To issue an ultimatum;
 Before a rival does the deed—
 Simply eliminate him.

 Dissimulate ! When angry, smile;
 Speak soft; then strike to kill;
 Then weep - oh, never show your bile—
 And mourn your victim still. (272)

Subhash Chander Bose (Pandu) with "the smell of sweat on his brow and the dust of India on his sandals" (112) is presented sympathetically but he also has to bear the brunt of narrator's sharp irony. Mohammad Ali Jinnah (Karna) with his "taste for Scotch and cocktail sausages" and "scientific, and therefore agnostic, cast of mind" (142) and Morarji Desai (Yudhishtir) with his unbearable self-righteousness and his too much fondness for his own urine make for very interesting and entertaining reading. However, the remaining four Pandav brothers-Bhim as representative of Army, Arjuna of Press, Nakul of Bureaucracy and Sahadeva of Foreign Service - seem to be shadowy and less convincing figures. The character of Krishna who plays a major role in the battles of Kurukshetra is poorly realized and is one of the weakest parts of the narrative. However, the major tragedies and triumphs of the colonial times have been handled with seriousness. Jalianwallah Baag (Bibigarh gardens) massacre is termed as "a symbol of the worst of what colonialism could come to mean" (82). Gandhiji's

Satyagrahas for the Indigo workers, the Jute workers and the famous Dandi March (Mango March) for salt workers are characterized as the beginning of a new epoch.

As a political satire the novel caricatures the heroes of the modern Indian history as well as the heroes of the great epic in order to re-interpret both the epic and the history. In the very beginning of the novel the narrator's proud announcement that India is not an underdeveloped country is significant of his genuine concern for India, old and new. In an interview with Harry Kreisler he justifies his use of satire because it "enables to recast and to reinvent both the epic and the history" ("Shashi Tharoor Interview") with a fresh way of looking at the great ideas, the great stories and the great men and women responsible for shaping or 'mis-shaping' the destiny of a nation. The coalescing of the events and characters of the epic with those of the 20th century India results in the thinning of margins between history and myth, present and past. There is "no real line between myth and reality - the whole novel is like a rich tapestry with the reality of Indian politics and history woven together with the epic, mythical threads of *The Mahabharata*" (Singam).

The novel has been much criticized for its parodic mode as it "leaves no scope for any other philosophical point of view to attain significance, giving the novel a monolithic posture, and much that is tragic and sad, or the alternative modes of cognition escape the insistently farcical, the excess of which nullifies the comic and ironic and a sense of vacuity and fatigue descends on the reader effecting bathos" (Tripathi 129). It has been dubbed by many as an irreverent or sacrilegious parody. There may be some truth in such observations if we define parody in the traditional way as a humorous and satirical imitation of a serious piece of literature in such a way as to make it ridiculous. However, in the postmodern sense the term parody signifies a process of revising, replaying, inverting and 'trans-contextualising' previous works of art. For Linda Hutcheon the parody is a typical

postmodern device that interrogates and challenges the authority of the tradition to use and abuse it for alternative modes of interpretation (7-9). Fredric Jameson argues that parody is opposed to pastiche, which is strictly postmodern (quoted in Colebrook 181). Parody, in the postmodern sense, tends to suggest "a proper or rational way of speaking against which the parodied voice is set" (Colebrook 181). It is in a 'proper or rational way of speaking', in revising, replaying, inverting and trans-contextualising, in using and abusing the texts and conventions of tradition and in contesting the authority of the tradition that Tharoor's novel, *The Great Indian Novel*, can be called a parody. By using this parodic mode Tharoor has achieved the double purpose of "distancing from his culture and, at the same time, the recognition of his own deep stake in and involvement with it" (Salat 131). Further, his creation of raucous fun and rambunctious humour becomes understandable when he quotes Moliere that "if you want to edify, you have to entertain" ("Shashi Tharoor Interview"). Tharoor believes that the readers get the intended instruction through the process of having been entertained.

Tharoor's two other novels, *Show Business* (1992) and *Riot* (2001), which explore the movie culture of Bollywood and the theme of love and betrayal in the background of waves of communalism that lashed India in the late eighties respectively, have been well received. Comparatively, *The Great Indian Novel*, has a broader canvas as it endeavours to interrogate and reinvent the entire history of 20th century by paralleling it with the ancient epical history. However, there are some aberrations in the novel that cannot be elided by an Indian reader who has some knowledge of his tradition. For example, Kunti is presented as a modern woman smoking Turkish cigarettes. She is wearing Benaras Sari, Bangalore sandals and Bareilly bangles which "all advertised her fabled elegance" (265). The birth cry of Priya Duryodhani (Indira Gandhi) has been equated with "a rare sharp, high-pitched cry" of a donkey (73) and she is shown as representing not Duryodhana alone but all the hundred sons of Dhritarashtra. The fall

of Janta Party government of Yudhistir (Morarji Desai) is attributed to his auto urine therapy. In the epic story Drona sides with Duryodhana but here modern Drona fights against Priya Duryodhani. There are many such aberrations that disorient and confuse the Indian reader of his idea of the epic characters.

Nevertheless, such aberrations and excesses are not obstructions in comprehending the basic concern of the novel: the recasting of the ancient history to interrogate and review the modern history through the parodic mode. The parodic mode serves the double purpose of distancing and at the same time involvement with the ancient culture. The ancient culture is not simply deified rather it is dispassionately and ironically viewed. The same holds true for the heroes of modern Indian history. Shashi Tharoor knows that the great epic, *The Mahabharata*, has other side of the picture. Talking about the contemporary resonance of *The Mahabharata* he quotes Prof. P.Lal who says that *The Mahabharata* is "referred to when compromises are made, shady deals struck" ("Metaphor"). "*The Mahabharata*", Tharoor writes "is a tale of the real world, one whose heroes have feet of clay" ("Metaphor"). The epic, he says, is an unending source of metaphor for the rhetoric of our public debate. The true and genuine leaders are equated with Yudhishtir whereas Duryodhana and other 'Kauravas' stand for villainy. Tharoor's metaphoric parallelism of the modern with the ancient is an ingenious device for presenting lessons from the history - the lessons which are relevant and thus must be learnt.

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Swift's Verse

–*Poornima*

"I have been only a man of rhymes, and that upon trifles, never having written serious couplet in my life: yet never without a moral ..."1

So says Swift in a letter to a friend. But this self-assessment as a poet is not to be taken seriously-as Philip Roberts does. Commenting on his verses, he says that they are in the main "bad and forced" owing perhaps to the absence of ironical mask. (Philip Roberts, p.49) To accept this prejudiced opinion is to underestimate Swift whose powers of versification are by no standards such less than his acknowledged powers as a prose writer. A perusal of his poems shows that the subject and themes of his poems are the same as those with which he was occupied in his prose works. That his aim too was to reform the world becomes obvious in the lines :

My hate, whose lash just heaven hath long decreed,
Shall on a day make sin and folly bleed.² (11.133-34)

But as in the prose works his serious intent is very often concealed by a large variety of literary techniques especially the persons which he employs to entrap the readers and produce the desired satiric effect. Philip Robert's contention that the persona is conspicuous by its very absence is not to be accepted. For even in the apparently autobiographical poem "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift" the speaker is partly Swift and partly the reader. Let us examine some of his most familiar poems to see how successfully this ironic intention is carried out.

"Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift"... a poem which was undertaken" only to tell what my friends and enemies will say on me

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after I am dead"³ seems for most of its length to be a truthful self-intermination and sincere and direct statement of Swift's attitudes until its very sincerity and directness tease the mind of the reader. It turns out to be "as much about himself and no more about himself than is **A Modest Proposal**."⁴ An analysis of the subject and the structure and techniques employed to convey it can make this point clear.

The fundamental idea in the "Verses" is one which Swift never tires of asserting both in prose and verse, that is, "Know Thyself". In the **Verses**, however, he insists on the need to know oneself ironically, by a literal translation of Rochefoucauld's maxim :

In all Distresses of our friends
We first consult our private ends,
While Nature Kindly bent to ease us,
Points out some circumstance to please us. (11.7-10)
(Swift's Political works. p.496).

The maxim though delightful in the extreme is hard to relish owing to the unpopular implications it carries. The assumption here is that man is basically selfish, proud and vainglorious and his every act and every thought is impelled and governed by self-love. The irony here is maintained in the serious simplicity of the espousal and supported by the reassertion of the fact.

Self-love, Ambition, Envy, Pride
Their Empires in our Heart's divide. (11.41-42)

The thought of a man seeking comfort in the miseries of others, especially friends, is disconcerting but Swift, "Master of literary entrapment"⁵ as he is, wins the assent of the reader by demonstrating the universality of its appeal and application. He states in a deceptively calm, matter-of-fact tone :

We all behold with envious Eyes,
Our Equal rais'd above our Size,
Who would not at a crowded show,
Stand high himself, keep others low ? (11.13-16)

Lest the reader see through his game of the entrapment he moves from the general to the particular, from the behaviour of men at large to his own case. Drawing from his own life and experiences he says :

Arbuthnot is no more my friend
Who dares to Irony pretend;
Which I was born to introduce
Refind it first and shew'd its use. (11.55-59)

There is no mistaking the irony here. Irony was no doubt a mode congenial to his mind and effectively employed to attack vice but he never believed that he was the innovator or that it was his prerogative to employ it. But the fact that a personage like Swift is motivated by self-interest and prone to fits of jealousy and above all the rationalization that "If with such Talents Heaven's hath blest e'm/Have I not reason to detest e'm?" (11.65-66) invariably draws the reader's assent. Swift's argument that self should be given priority therefore, carries conviction by virtue of the subtle logical procedures. Fisher argues that Swift's insistence on self in all human relationships is in keeping with the Christian concept of friendship which states "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."⁶ The implication, he says, is love for one's neighbour and one's friends, should be on a pattern similar to one shown for oneself. Quoting Plato to the effect he says just as a copy of an imitation cannot be better than the original similarly love for friends cannot exceed self-love. It follows, therefore, that strongest friendship "must yield to pride/unless the odds be on our side." Fisher's argument cannot be accepted for he has turned the Biblical phrases so as to conduce to the end he upholds. Love as "Thyself" in the phrase means that love for self should be treated at par with self-interest. That Swift himself believed in enduring friendships built upon the foundation of faith and strengthened by self-sacrifice becomes obvious in the lines :

Without regarding private Ends,
Spent all his credit for his friends. (11.331-32)

Viewed in this context the **Verses**, despite Swift's admiration for

Rochefoucauld's maxims, are not an appraisal or a demonstration but a "direct rebuttal" of the maxim. (Marshal Waingrow p.517) Swift the satirist is just the person who does not take comfort in the distress of others.

Another passage which has perplexed the readers is :
In Pope I cannot read a Line,
But with a sigh I wish it mine,
When he can in one couplet fix.
More sense than I can do in Six (11.47-50)

Swift's praise of Pope's artistry in packing the lines with thoughts has been taken to mean Swift's frank admission of Pope's superiority as a versifier. Fisher interprets it as a radical transformation of Swift's envy into magnanimity. (Fisher p.431) What in fact, Swift is pleading for here is the force of intellect, good sense, a propriety of words and thoughts as against flights of fancy and imagination.

Having inferred the truth of the maxim deductively Swift goes on to study the response which the news of his death will evoke among his friends and foes. In his description the richly diverse responses varying from sheer happiness to hypocritical mourning to heartfelt grief and calm acceptance of death—all dependent ultimately upon the factor the good effect it is likely to produce, involve and order/energy polarity which pressurises the reader into serious thinking.⁷

The time is not remote, when I
Must by the Course of Nature die :
When I foresee my special Friends,
Will try to find their Private Ends :
Tho it is hard-by understood,
Which way my Death can do them good : (11.73-78)

The irony here lies in the fact that Swift's friends fail to discern any good in his death. There is yet another level on which the poem operates, Swift's meditation on his own death and his description of it as something in accordance with the "Course of nature" have moral overtones and are strictly in keeping with the seventeenth century

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meditative tradition. (Fisher, 425) The lines while suggesting that death is inevitable point to the transitoriness of human life. He observes :

Poor Pope will grieve a Month and Gay
A week, and ARBUTHNOT A DAY. (11,207-8)

Superficially viewed this is a mockery of his unfeeling friends. But beneath this lies the realization of the essential truth that no passion is all-consuming and that time is a great healer. As to the ladies :

My female friends, whose tender Hearts
Have better learn'd to act their Parts
Receive the News in doleful Dumps
The Dean is dead (and what is the trumps?)
The Lord have mercy on his Soul
(Ladies I'll venture for the Vole). (11,225-30)

The reference to the ladies with "tender Hearts" who remain unmoved by the death of others but "act their part" sets the ironic tone. Swift is here having a dig at the fashionable ladies who are so engrossed in their daily rounds of cards that they forget their ultimate fate and even fail to recognize it in the death of others. The intermingling of the words "death" and "trumps", "Soul" and "vole", suggests spiritual chaos in the world.

Pained by the cold indifference of his so-called friends, Swift proceeds to examine the effect of his death on an impartial, even indifferent but keen, observer. The observer lavishes praise on Swift for all that he accomplished in the face of strong opposition :

He never thought an Honour done him
Because a Duke was proud to own him.
He never courted Men in station,
Nor Persons had in Admiration
Of no Man's greatness was afraid,
Because he sought for no Man's aid.
Though trusted long in great aid.
He gave himself no haughty Airs. (11,319-30)

Swift's self-praise has brought on him the charge of vanity - the very fault he is out to expose. Regarding it "an unqualified eulogy" set down

in "flat contradiction to the first part"⁸ Murry attributes it to the radical weakening of Swift's vigour of mind. It may be argued, however, that this self-adulation though not in keeping with Swift's own character is in so far as it conflicts in keeping with the earlier sections and is characteristically Swiftian. Self-contradiction, paradoxes, ambiguity of motives are the procedures of insinuation. Slepian argues that structurally too it is not only convincing but necessary "to complete his thesis that all mankind is egotistical, selfish and proud."⁹ The contradictions and falsification of facts, however, are sufficient to show that Swift was not earnest. In his comments on his own practice as a satirist, for instance, he says:

Yet malice never was his aim :
He lash'd the Vice but spared the Name.
(11,463-64)

This is sheer distortion. He indulges in character assassination not only in the **Battle of Books, A Tale of a Tub** and other prose works but the "Verses" itself exemplifies the falsity of the assertion. He has routed the Grub Street writer Edmund Curll, Robert Walpole and others by name. This assertion, therefore, may be taken as an advice to the writers to direct their attack against the vice and not the individual.

Slepian's justification of the panegyric is not without its difficulties. Its implication that Swift is humble but has assumed the mask of pride to attack vanity has laid him open to the charge of meaningless humility. Marshall Waingrow, for instance, remarks that irony at one's expense, censure of one's self is nothing but oblique praise (Marshall Waingrow : 513). But Swift's praise, though it smacks of pride, is not vain. It is the pride of a man who aware of his weakness is not contented with illusory, vainglorious ideas and pursues his goal - the knowledge of self with a single-minded devotion. This knowledge of self, of his infirmities is what distinguishes Swift from the run of the people in general. His life becomes an example of what Waingrow calls "morally well lived life" and hence worthy of emulation. In the

light of above, the "Verses" with Dr. Swift representing both Swift and the reader is an interesting as an instructive satire as a penetrating, deeply searching study of the considerations of Jonathan Swift's own death.

In the scatological poems which deal with his horror of the female body, its filthiness and anal functioning, Swift elicits a response more intense than can be easily accounted for by employment of the appearance - reality motif. "The Lady's Dressing Room" one of the most "scandalous places of Swiftian scatology and the most frequently commented on of all Swift poems, is a variation on the theme of "Oh Caelia Caelia Caelia ..." ¹⁰ Swift's main concern in exposing the repulsive reality of female body with the disparity between illusion and reality, form and matter as manifested in a woman before and after make up. Strephon, the romantic young man in love with Caelia lives in fantasy world, of his own creation gloating over the physical charms of his beloved - "The goddess from her Chamber issues/Array'd in Lace, Brocade and Tissues" until it is shattered by a direct contact with distressing reality of his beloved's room :

Strephon, who found the Room was void
Stole in, and took a strict survey
of all the litter as it lay
Where of, to make the Matter clear,
An Inventory follows there. (11,5-10)

The "Inventory", "strict survey" that follows instead of strengthening the illusory edifice he inhabits, destroys it ruthlessly. It is nerve-shattering experience. He realizes that men deceive themselves" in calling Celia sweet and cleanly."

A "pair of tweezers" "Pettycoats in Frowzy Heaps" "Handkerchiefs" Varnished O'er with snuff and snot" nothing escapes the eye of the watchful Strephon. Swift's purpose in describing the ostentatious artifices, the labour a woman puts in to falsify the naked, almost repulsive truth of her body to pass for a lady is to ridicule the metaphysical poets like John Donne who was eloquent over the glamorous physical female body.

This disparity between the "varnished" o'er" Caelia and the real Caelia goes far beyond an exposure and attack on the conventional love - poets in the lines where he describes the exquisite and imposing cabinet which like Caelia is well-adorned with "Rings" and "Hinges". The smell "flew out of the vent" is a sufficient indication of the despicable reality that it conceals but Strephon's insatiable curiosity and determination to penetrate behind the facade into the reality of things has the better of him and he frantically gropes "the bottom of the pan" but only to "fowl his Hands." Strephon's irrepressible desire to acquire knowledge, his peering into reality, is like that of First Man's an act of disobedience, and is likewise followed by tragic consequences. The shocking almost unbearable reality— "O Caelia, Caelia, Caelia— !" disillusions him and alienates him from himself and the society.

Swift's obsession with excrementitious subjects, his rage at the filthiness of the female body has affronted and puzzled the readers. Middleton Murry finds this abhorrence of a woman simply because she evacuates "nonsensical and intolerable" "So perverse, so unnatural, so mentally diseased and so humanly wrong" (Middleton Murry : 440). and links it to Swift's own non-acceptance of the essential recreatory functions of the human body. Lawrence in more recent times, attributes Swift's "Insanity" to the mind's (Swift's)" grovelling fear of the body and body's potencies. This kind of identification of the persona and the creative artist - Strephon the lover and Swift the man - though very common among critics, is dangerous in the understanding of any particular work in question for a point by point relationship does not necessarily exist between the artist, his life and his art. It is pertinent, therefore, not to interpret the poem and persons from biographical considerations.

Reading the poem in this manner, Tajinder Singh to whom Lawrence's views on Swift's poems are "somewhat irresponsible" finds Lawrence curious but his easy identification of Strephon, the lover and Swift the man paradoxically erroneous.¹² The identification in so far

as it is based on biographical details is no doubt a "serious error" but in its helping Lawrence to make a right assessment of Swift instead of a false one as persons critics like Read, Browne and Donoghue do, it is right and to be accepted.

Let us consider in this regard, the universal disgust for woman engendered in Swift's heart by the haunting sight of excrement.

His foul Imagination links
 Each Dame with all her Stinks
 And, if unsavvy odours fly,
 Conceives a Lady Standing by :
 All women his Description fits,
 And both Ideas jump like wits
 By vicious Fancy coupled fast,
 And still appearing in Contrast. (11.119-26)

Viewed in this light this drastic change in Swift's attitude to woman in the concluding lines is Swift's attack on the corrupting influence of the "foul imagination" and unreasonableness. It is the "vicious fancy" of the lover that operating downwards equates the form and matter, Celia's physical charms and her stinks. In the **Tale** also the sight of woman who on being "flayed" was altered for the worse" had led him to state that "happiness is the perpetual possession of being well-deceived." Denis Donoghue who separates the unrealistic lover from the real maintains that Swift's motto in the scatological poems is "live with illusion, but know that you are being deceived, beguile yourself with the image before you, but know that it is pleasant fiction. (Denis Donoghue : 209). The need to rest content with appearance is further emphasised in the lines :

Such order from confusion spring
 Such gaudy Tulips rais'd from Dung. (11.141-42)

The suggestion here as elsewhere is that a positive is a positive only by virtue of a negative. Strephon's allusion to the Bible, his awareness of the fact that the ordered world arose out of chaos and that

the 'gaudy' tulips have their origin in "Dung" is positive assertion of the fact that "ointments, daubs and Paints and Creams" and "Stinking OOZE" must be accepted as essential accompaniments of the "Queen of Love".

Read's conclusion, based as it is on Swift's awareness of reality, seems to be right. But it is only apparently so. Swift's art is not completely divorced from his life. This conclusion which seems to be just can be applied to the poem only if it is isolated from the body of Swift's work. His poems and even prose illustrate his obsession with foul odours and the excrementitious functions of the body. "A Beautiful young Nymph going to Bed, "strephon and Chloe" – the poems in which he exposes the filthiness of the human body especially the female, show his obsession with the essential excremental function. Defaecation and other physical functions though animal-like in nature are essential. He knows it but finds it hard to digest. Strephon's horrified reaction "O Caelia, Caelia, Caelia !" is thus Swift's own reaction, a product of his own mind Strephon, the lover who loses his wits then becomes what Tajinder Singh Calls "Swift's own surrogate." (Herbert Read quoted by Tajinder Singh p.153)

In "A Beautiful Young Nymph going to Bed" – a kindred poem which reverbrates with the similar concern and demonstration, irony is at the root of the whole vision. Swift's procedures here involve what England calls on "imbalance of analogical procedures." He makes fun of the deceptive, surface beauty of woman by taking literally the comparison between a beautiful body and a machine. Describing the routine of Corinna the "lovely goddess", he says :

Then , seated on a three - legg'd chair,
Takes off her artificial Hair
Now picking out a crystal Eye,
She Wipes it clean, and lays it by
Her Eye-Brows from a Mouse's Hyde,
Stuck on Art on either Side,

Pulls off with care, and first displays' in
Then in a Play-book smoothly lays, em.

This treating the body as if it were mechanical is characteristically Swiftian, Bullitt calls it as already pointed out "Mechanical diminution".

A much later but perhaps one of the best poems, which embodies in its carefully sustained irony Swift's pessimistic conviction about human destiny is "The Day of Judgement". It is based on the Christian belief that the dead will come back to life on the "Day of Judgement"—the Doomsday and will be apportioned rewards by God according to their deeds. Doubtful as he was about the salvation of humanity at large, chiefly because of their gross importunity, Swift tries to grasp imaginatively the human dilemma by carrying the metaphor of doomsday, conceived in the very title, into the texture of the poem in a way which initiates subtle process of thought. The poem opens with the poet oppressed by the viciousness of humanity as embodied in doctrine of self-sufficiency, pride, self-love, quarrelling religious sects, political bickering envisaging doomsday. Swift proceeds logically, invoking the Supreme deity, Jupiter to pass the final sentence on mankind. The very appearance of Jupiter in the skies frightens men hopelessly debased and decadent out of their sense. Their wicked deeds, their indulgent lives, their immorality, their bogus visions - all haunt them and make them anticipate the dire consequences. Each "pale sinnex" trembles in his shoes "hangs his head" in anxious expectation. The irony here resides in the fact that man who in his proud claims of being a rational creature is afflicted with pride and self-sufficiency fails to rationalize his delinquency on earth and is helpless before the Almighty. Swift's attack is here directed against the reason which accentuates vices and leads men to make a pretense of spiritual superiority and invulnerability. He gives his irony a final twist in the mock-tragic catastrophe whereby Jupiter contemptuously dismisses him, refusing to subject him even to a merciless scrutiny. The implication

is that man is too puny to be given the consideration of criminal. Redemption of man who is an incorrigible sinner is practically impossible. The situational metaphor derived from Christian doctrine thus becomes in the hands of Swift - a corrosive, caustic attack on human race.

Thus even in his poetry Swift uses a plethora of ironic and distancing techniques which yield their full import only to the scrutiny of an intellectually alert and emotionally mature reader.

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Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*: A Feminist Perspective

–Seema Jain

With the multiplicity of critical theories prevalent today, analysing a work of art is an extremely challenging task as well as a rewarding experience ; challenging because there is always a risk of getting bogged down into critical jargon, and rewarding because the critical tools available, if applied discreetly and judiciously, can yield very meaningful and perceptive insights into even dark and obscure areas of literary works. The present paper is an attempt to analyze Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* from a feminist angle by going into some of the basic assumptions, issues and concerns of feminist literary criticism and then making an application of these tenets to the work under consideration.

Feminist criticism has a long background to it in its dormant form but it gained momentum as the new women's movement since the 1960s with some of the seminal works like Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* , Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of their Own* and Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics*, just to mention a few. Some of the assumptions fundamental to feminist literary criticism are that most civilizations of the world are patriarchal : controlled and dominated by men.As Ernestine Friedl, a noted anthropologist observes : "In all known societies, there is a degree of male dominance – greater power and prestige bestowed upon the male than upon the female... Indeed, most researchers and theorists, regardless of their ideological stance on issues of sexuality, agree that male dominance is a fundamental and universal feature of social life" (Friedl 1975 : 141)

Most feminists, in spite of differences, agree that patriarchal civilisations are structured in such a way as to lead to the subjugation of women, ideologically secured over the ages. In this context, Laurel Richardson Walum talks of Beauvoir's analysis of patriarchy : "De Beauvoir shows with great erudition that man's dominance has been secured through the ages by an ideological power : legislators, priests, scientists and philosophers have all promoted the idea of women's subordination" (Walum 1977 : 521). Even philosophers like Aristotle and psychological thinkers like Freud have strengthened the notion of women as suffering from a lack : "Aristotle declared that 'the female is female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities.' One might see a continuity between this and Freud's assumption that female sexuality is shaped by penis-envy" (Selden 1988 : 520).

Julia Kristeva, a noted French feminist defines femininity in terms of positionality : "If femininity then can be said to have a definition at all in Kristevan terms, it is simply as 'that which is marginalized by the patriarchal symbolic order.' This relational definition is as shifting as the various forms of patriarchy itself, and allows her to argue that men can also be constructed as marginal to the symbolic order, as her analyses of male avant-garde artists have shown. 'What is perceived as marginal at any given time depends on the position one occupies'" (Moi 1982 : 212 -213). Interpreting Kristeva's theory, Moi further remarks, "In so far as women are defined as marginal by patriarchy, their struggle can be theorized in the same way as any other struggle against a centralized power structure. Thus, Kristeva uses exactly the same terms to describe dissident intellectuals, certain avant-garde writers and the working class;" (Moi 2002 : 163).

Arundhati Roy, who catapulted to fame with her maiden work of fiction *The God of Small Things* winning the prestigious Booker award, has received great critical acclaim for her unique narrative style from critics like John Berger (Never again will a single story be told as though

it is the only one).(Arundhati Roy 1997) But she has delineated, in an equally gripping and powerful manner, the socio-cultural realities of our system. She portrays the society of Ayemenem - a place in Kerala which is deeply rooted in the patriarchal value-system and epitomizes all places where patriarchal structures reign supreme. Consequently, almost all the male characters in the book behave in a male chauvinistic manner, with the possible exception of Velutha who, like Ammu, is a victim of the oppressive centres of power.

Ammu and Velutha, the two central characters in *The God of Small Things*, are marginalized creatures of society. If Ammu is marginalised by virtue of her gender, Velutha is marginalized by virtue of being a parvan, an untouchable, in an orthodox, rigid and restrictive caste system. In this context, the following remark by Raman Selden is quite relevant, "Nevertheless, there is an obvious parallel between the notions of class oppression and gender oppression. Consciousness of these ideologies (race would be a third focus) is a major source of revolutionary or reformist ideologies in modern societies" (Selden 1988 : 520). The novel can be described as a social tragedy, apart from being a complex, multi-layered work of art, rich in imagery, motifs, similes and metaphors, with deep sociological and psychological implications.

Ammu in the novel is a woman who from her childhood suffers at the hands of her male chauvinistic father, enters into an intercommunity marriage, gets divorced and comes to stay as a dependant, with no *locus standi*, in her parents' home. Velutha is a man of versatile talents and skills and is considered invaluable for 'Paradise Pickles and Preserves,' and yet is looked down upon because he is an untouchable by caste. This socio-cultural environment shapes and determines the destiny of both these characters and tragedy strikes when both of them try to break the cocoon of their social realities, transgress the social laws, which constrain them to their fixed social roles. Ammu and Velutha are guilty of violating "Love laws, ... The laws that lay

down who should be loved and how. And how much" (Roy 1997 : 33). Their quest for happiness outside these laws, outside their pre-ordained social boundaries leads to tragedy. After the death of Velutha and Ammu, Rahel and Estha, Ammu's twin children, drift without any emotional anchor or support and suffer from warping socio-psychological effects of disastrous and traumatic childhood experiences. On their subsequent growth into adulthood, they drift into an incestuous relationship, and once again break love laws as the narrator remarks about this: "But what was there to say? Only that they held each other close, long after it was over. Only that what shared that night was not happiness but hideous grief" (p.328).

The novel, written by a female author, focuses upon some of the key feminist issues like lack of legal and inheritance rights for women, women being subjected to violence in marriage, psychological or otherwise. For instance, it reveals how in a patriarchal and phallogocentric system, women having no *locus standi* are oppressed, marginalized and made to suffer (e.g. Ammu, Ammu's mother and Rahel). Sometimes, they tend to derogate their own sex and co-operate in their own subordination (e.g. Ammu's mother and Baby Kochamma) because of their having, unquestioningly and unconsciously, internalized the values of the patriarchal system, (e.g. Mammachi, Ammu and wives of Kathakali men).

Ammu, "As a child, ... had learnt very quickly to disregard the Father Bear beat Mother Bear stories she was given to read. In her version, Father Bear beat Mother Bear with brass vases. Mother Bear suffered those beatings with mute resignations" (p 180). Her father, Shri Benaan John Ipe or Pappachi, who had been Joint Director, Entomology at Pusa Institute, Delhi, was charming and sophisticated with visitors. He donated money to orphanages and leprosy clinics. He did everything to build up his public profile as a sophisticated, generous and moral man. But when he was at home with his wife and children, he would become a monstrous bully and beat them in the same inhuman

and callous manner as the illiterate and unsophisticated Kathakali men beat their wives. Ammu would spend cold winter nights in the garden of her Delhi house because Pappachi would beat her and Mammachi (Soshamma) and turn them out of their home. The novel is replete with instances of violence, psychological and otherwise, against women. After Ammu completes her education in school, Pappachi insists that "college education is an unnecessary expense for a girl" (p.38), whereas Chacko, her brother is sent to Oxford for his education. At the age of eighteen, Ammu gets desperate to escape from "the clutches of her ill-tempered father and long-suffering mother" (p.39). Ammu marries a Bengali man at the first opportunity, much against the wishes of her parents. But her husband, who turns out to be a full-blown alcoholic, often beats her. In her married life, there was a pattern of "Drunken violence and post-drunken badgering" (p.42). When her husband is ready to prostitute her to his English boss, Mr Hollick, in order to save his job, Ammu decides to leave him and returns, unwelcome, to Ayemenem, where she had no *locus standi* "because Ammu as a daughter had no claim to the property" (p.57). Baby Kochamma, Ammu's aunt and a spinster, dislikes Ammu as "the unfortunate sometimes dislike the co-unfortunate" (p.45). She resents Ammu because "she saw Ammu quarrelling with a fate that she, Baby Kochamma, had graciously accepted. The fate of a wretched Man-less woman" (p.45). Her aunt also subscribed to the commonly held view that "a married woman had no position in her parents' home. As for a divorced daughter, she had no position any where at all" (p. 45).

If Ammu and her mother here represent the oppressive and restrictive effects of an orthodox patriarchal society on women, Baby Kochamma represents the negative side of femininity, which, after, all is again a part of the way the patriarchal system operates. She exemplifies women who imbibe the values of patriarchy and collude in the denigration of their own sex. Such women can be easily seen anywhere in life.

Mammachi, Ammu's mother, is also a victim of this very social system. After Pappachi's retirement, she starts making pickles and jams commercially, in Ayemenem. Pappachi is jealous and resents her independence. He begins to beat her even more frequently. In addition to this, "In the evenings, he would sit on the verandah and sew buttons that were not missing onto his shirts, to create the impression that Mammachi neglected him" (p.48). Thus, to some extent, he succeeds in "corroding Ayemenem's view of working wives" (p.48).

Ironically enough, Mammachi, who is, on the one hand, a victim of her husband's male chauvinism, becomes, on the other hand, instrumental in inflicting suffering on her daughter Ammu because Mammachi is, like Baby Kochamma, unconsciously rooted in the patriarchal phallogocentric ideology. She has very concessional standards when it comes to her own son and Ammu's brother Chacko, who after having been divorced by his English wife, Margaret, has come back to Ayemenem. Mammachi dismisses Chacko's sexual adventures with female factory workers as 'man's needs. She has a separate door installed so that he can pursue his needs unhindered. But when it comes to dealing with her daughter's affair with Velutha, her fury is unmanageable and hell breaks loose because she thinks Ammu "had defiled generations of breeding" (p.258). Her standards for judging this act of Ammu are altogether different and she contributes her share in the perpetuation of a social system of which she herself is a victim.

Heidi Hartmann and Christine Delphy, noted American Marxist-Feminists, argue that "patriarchy exists as a distinct system of inequality alongside capitalism, and that patriarchy is founded upon male control of women's labour" (Jackson Stevi 1998 : 17-18). Thus, even when Ammu does as much work in the factory as Chacko, he refers to it as "my factory, my pineapples, my pickles" and tells Ammu, "What's yours is mine and what's mine is also mine" (p.57). She has no say in the decision-making affairs of the factory. For that matter, even Mammachi, who started the factory, takes a back seat once Chacko returns to

Ayemenem. The supervision of the factory is taken over by him. He gets the factory "registered as a partnership and informed Mammachi, that she was the sleeping partner " (p.57)

After Ammu's affair with Velutha is discovered by Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, she is locked up in her room: "Ammu was innocent with rage and disbelief at what was happening to her, at being locked away like the family lunatic in a medieval household" (p.252). The motif of a raging lunatic locked up in a medieval household is significant and brings to mind the book *A Madwoman in the Attic* by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. This motif symbolizes the piled up frustration, anger and agony of the female sex for centuries.

When Velutha dies in the police lock-up, Ammu revolts with the "reckless rage of a suicide bomber," is scandalized, humiliated and alienated. Chacko shouts at her to get out of his house. She is forced to return Estha to his father. Rahel is sent to a boarding school in Delhi. Ammu has to pack her bags and leave. She drifts from place to place, from job to job, dreaming to be on her own one day, to start a school with proper teachers, proper classrooms and *proper punishments*. Then she would be able to keep her children with her, she thinks. But tragically, that is never to be. Suffering from acute asthma, solitary, desolate, broken, Ammu dies alone in a dingy room in a cheap lodge with no one to lie at her back. The sweeper finds her dead body in the morning: "A platoon of ants carried a dead cockroach sedately through the door, demonstrating what would be done to corpses" (p.162). The cockroach motif very symbolically points out the insignificance of creatures like Ammu.

As a consequence of the traumatic circumstances, Estha withdraws into silence and quietness. Rahel grows up, financially provided for but without any love or care or guidance. She has an emptiness that haunts her eyes. She marries Larry McCaslin, is divorced, and after Estha is re-returned, comes back to Ayemenem. Rahel, having no space of her own, having nowhere to go, dreams of living in the

dish-antennae of the Ayemenem house, which is symbolic indeed. In this situation, the following remark of Stevi Jackson and Jackie Jones appears very pertinent: "We continue to live in a world where large-scale inequalities still have a profound impact on women's lives and the ways in which social structures are both constraining and enabling cannot be ignored". (Jackson and Jones 1998 : 7).

Rahel's response to the death of Ammu reminds one of these observations of the noted American feminist critic, Elaine Showalter: "As the death of the father has always been an archetypal rite of passage for the western hero, now the death of the mother as witnessed and transcended by the daughter has become one of the most profound occasions of female literature" (Green and Lebihan 1996 : 239).

The death of Ammu, narrated from Rahel's point of view, is indeed one of the profound occasions in the novel and also in Rahel's emotional life. For Rahel and Estha, Ammu was not just their mother. "She was their Ammu and their Baba and she had loved them double" (p.163). At the electric crematorium where Ammu's body is cremated, Rahel's grief, too deep for tears, is described thus :

"The steel door of the incinerator went up.... Then Rahel's Ammu was fed to it. Her hair, her skin, her smile, her voice.... Her good night kiss.... The pink receipt would enable them to collect her remains. Her ashes. The grit from her bones. The teeth from her smile" (p.163).

Velutha, though a male character in the novel, is also a marginalised creature in society. In terms of Kristevan theory of marginality, he can be viewed as a feminine; socially castrated creature. His predicament is similar to that of Ammu because if Ammu is marginalized by virtue of her gender, Velutha's marginality is due to his caste and economic class both. He is described as "The God of Loss. The God of Small Things" (p.330). In order to break the shackles that tie him down, he seeks refuge in Marxism and becomes a card-holding member of the Communist party. Here, it would not be out of place to observe that Marxists and Feminists both aim at cultural transformation and struggle to end oppression on the basis of gender or economic

class. But Velutha is betrayed by the new God, Marx, whose high-priest K.N.M. Pillai, the local communist leader, has his own political axe to grind, because for him, Velutha's death is more profitable than his life.

Some critics of the novel are of the view that the novel is a seathing satire on Marxism. But instead of being an attack on the philosophy of Marxism, the novel appears to be more an attack on the selfish practitioners of this ideology who pervert it and adopt it to suit their selfish ends as these remarks of the narrator reflect :

"Communism crept into Kerala insidiously. As a reformist movement that never questioned the traditional values of a caste-ridden, extremely traditional community. The Marxists worked from within the communal divides, never challenging them. They offered a cocktail revolution, a heady mix of Eastern Marxism and orthodox Hinduism spiked with a shot of democracy" (pp.66-67).

The novel can be seen as a saga of revolt against tyrannical and outmoded social laws and taboos and the tragic suffering ensuing from them. Ammu and Velutha are 'history's offenders' and history squares its books and "collect (s) the dues from those who broke its laws" (p-308). It has its own ways of "inoculating a community against an outbreak" (p.309). Unfortunately, Rahel and Estha keep the receipt of the dues paid by Ammu and Velutha.

In an age which upholds the notions of women's equality and empowerment and of abolition of caste consideration, economic disparities and evils like untouchability, the tale of the disastrous ruin of a woman just because she has no *locus standi* and a man's ruthless annihilation just because he is a down-trodden and an untouchable by caste raises many perturbing questions. Implicitly, the novel makes a very urgent case for the abolition of such horrendous social systems like untouchability and strengthens the notion of women's self-reliance and empowerment, though the message is by indirection and does not detract from the artistic richness of the work in any way. The novel is extremely thought-provoking. It very realistically depicts the culture

and society we live in with all its constrictive aspects. And as is the hallmark of any great work of art, the novel raises more questions, issues and concerns than provides solutions to them.

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Gender at Strife : Bharati Mukherjee's *A Father*

–*Neeraj P. Sharma*

By the end of the millennium, Diasporas, the once credibly considered "lonely gatherings of the scattered people" (Bhaba 1994 : 139) have gained a lot of ground. In this era of fusion, when women/men are jostling around the globe; the music world is busy experimenting with notes; the world of brush and canvas is up ahead mixing shades and hues convulging all schools of art, it is impossible and incredible for the world of literature to remain aloof. In this context, Diaspora writing, with all its varedity and complexities, has come up as a substantial literature drawing attention of the reading public all across the world. In fact, it is a social predicament, a manifesto of the present day world wherein the key feature is change, and change in a different mode. It is not that a wall has broken down, it's not that some armies have clashed and won or lost. It is not that some tyrannical ruler has been dethroned or any of the historical or political reasons of this kind. No, it is not a change bespeaking the aftermath of a bloody revolution. Yet, the diaspora writing portrays a change which is more profound, more global, more psychological and at various levels. This paper is an endeavour to probe one of the many areas that Diaspora writing has portrayed and come up with and that is the placing of gender roles in its fiction. This (Diaspora) writing, in a way, gives voice to a growing social problem which has found space in the September 1996 issue of *The Economist* entitled "Men : Tomorrow's Second Sex" wherein it says "The future for men looks bleaker" (The Economist). There seems to be a tug of war between "Feminism", "the liberation movement of women" (Andrea Dworkin 1998 : 116) and

"antifeminism", "the politics of contempt for women" (Andrea Dworkin 1998 : 117). The story, "A Father" (Mukherji, Bharati 1990) from *Darkness* by Bharati Mukherjee is a telling example of this, so we shall focus on this only.

"A Father" is set in the locale of Detroit, America in the house of Mr. Bhowmick, an emigrant from Ranchi, India who moves to America for the realization of his dreams for success. Now success is a very vague and subjective notion and dreams are but dreams which may turn out to be illusions unless they are surrogated by vision. Mr. Bhowmick makes several compromises to get the goose called success. Instead of making a choice, he lets himself marry a woman who is not whom he inwardly looks for, that is a real feminine pure beauty. He settles down for a "barrister's daughter, a plain girl with a wide flat plank of a body and myopic eyes" (Mukherjee 1990 : 60). Rather than being a marriage which is the union of two souls, it is a deal sweetened with an all expense paid two years study at America. This two year excursion for the Bhowmicks brings a complete transformation in the outlook of not Mr. but Mrs. Bhowmick. Once the window towards the outer world is opened for the woman, there is no turning back for her. This exposure to the American (outer) world transforms Mrs. Bhowmick "from a plain girl to an ambitious woman. She wanted America, nothing less" (p.60). Here, woman has made the assertion. It is something known to a lesser degree in the Indian social context. Thus in compliance to his wife's wishes, Mr. Bhowmick makes a move to America finally, after undergoing a tedious process of immigration formalities for a year or so. Again, it is not his prime, personal and independent choice. It is a compromise for an uncertain, undefined and unknown world. However, he settles down in Detroit with his wife and daughter Babli who had born to them in Bombay during their stay before coming to America.

After having been settled in America, the role of Mrs. Bhowmick, Babli and Mr. Bhowmick is noteworthy from the gender point of view. The immigration to America has had an altogether different impact separately on these characters. Mrs. Bhowmick works as a claims

investigator for an insurance company. She lives with an air of complete self-dependency. She does not depend upon her husband for her day to day needs. She is led to the office by a female driver. She has her own Master Card to fulfill her any range of requirements from a lingerie to anything else. She has a better competence for adaptability and normalcy of behaviour than Mr. Bhowmick. Similarly, their daughter Babli is brighter than any other sons and daughters of Bengalis over there. She had been the only female student in her class. She is quite professional and rather Amazonian. Not only is she self dependent, she is in a position to assist her father financially in any may be chance of adversity—an area which has hitherto been the sole hierarchy of male, the bread winner of the family. Yet all her accomplishments do not make her the child of Mr. Bhowmick's choice. She is not womanly, tender, and is devoid of any sex appeal—simply unfit for love. Mr. Bhowmick finds himself in a world where women are not feminine. She has brain, brawn, beauty all in one.

On the other hand, the character of Mr. Bhowmick has been developed in a totally different mould. The description of Mr. Bhowmick's morning schedule is not a mere situational portrayal. It significantly points to the psychic make up of man in a given context and the design of the author. The way he brushed his teeth, gurgled noisily and recited prayers to Kali, the patron goddess in a very mechanical way; the activities of Mr. Bhowmick, having lost their meaning, have a sense of absurdity around them. Leaving behind the patriarchal dictations and commandments, whilst woman has marched ahead exploring and establishing new vistas, new grounds and new skies, man is countinuing with his age old feckled out cliches. Man like Mr. Bhowmick has to wait for a sneeze to be undone to step out of house. He is nagged by his wife. In response, he sticks to his father's way of threatening his female counterpart showing her his shoe to beat her with. Of course, in his heart of hearts he knows well that he cannot do so. His wife is "bigger" than he was. His behaviour is hypocritical, sans sensibility, sans faith, sans belief, a mere carrier of old absurd habits and customs. He suffers from nightmares, paranoia. He

remembers his mother and whilst drawing comparisons with his wife, he has a corner of appreciation, preference and sympathy for his mother. He dreams of vacations. He doesn't love his wife nor does he love his daughter. He has not reproduced her. The right of reproduction lies with the female sex granted to her biologically by nature. So, he has no claim over it. The supremacy he enjoyed on the basis of money power has been snatched away from him. The women of the family have a complete economic independence. Rather they are in a position to help him if his finances dry up at any point of time. The writer, thus throws a glimpse of various situations that paint man (in the caricature of Mr. Bhowmick) in a very subdued, helpless, timid, frustrated and pathetic a plight. He admits at one point, "Women in his family were smarter than him. They were cheerful, outgoing, more American somehow." (p.61). Thus, away from his home of origin, away from the cozy culture that nurtured him with a gift of supremacy, away from the land of patriarchy that established his authority unquestioningly; poor Mr. Bhowmick is an isolated being in an alien world who simmers and suffers inwardly. Man could not be reduced and subjugated to a more pitiable situation. The fair sex has become the bolder sex. The stronger one has become a good for nothing self. Surely, a revolution has taken place. The figure of an egoist master has been cut down to show him his worth which is no more than a mere tool in the genetic process. Is there going to be a reversal of roles?

The problem with Mr. Bhowmick is that he does not read the writing on the wall. There is a wave of change against the gender construct. Man has to pave way for the women power. She is no more a synonym for his footwear. Instead, he sticks to his age old standpoints and hence suffers from a conflict and inner turmoil.

The story does not end here only depicting just the marginalisation of the Diaspora men. The writer throws a challenge before the society, rather she mocks at, on the issue of identity, existence and meaningfulness of the male sex. It is done through the master stroke of an incident regarding the pregnancy of Babli. Had it been an illicit affair, Mr. Bhowmick could have tolerated that as it would have given

him a chance to let his ego inflate flaunting his magnanimity and modernity. But then, fear breeds violence. We annihilate what we are afraid of. Woman cherished and swaggered about her ability to reproduce—man accepted it as a biological norm. Woman seized her share of economic independence—man left his stake. She yelled for equality on socio-political-economic grounds—he spared the space. But how could he allow and accept the total annihilation of the self through the question put in the mouth of the daughter "who needs a man?" (p.72). How could a father accept the annihilation of the concept of father which gives man a licence of being called the provider and generator of his kind. Hence, as a befitting reply to the challenge posed by his daughter, Mr. Bhowmick gruesomely attacks the belly of his daughter with the rolling pin which ironically symbolizes the women power. It is a bold question answered in an equally intense force.

Thus, to conclude we may say, like a camera with multiple visions, Diaspora literature gives a glimpse of various aspects of the immigrants' experiences and the transformations that they undergo. The transformational impact on the male and female genders separately is a relevant subject for discussion.

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A Conversation with Kulbhushan Kushal

—N.K. Neb

NKN : What do you consider to be the major concerns of your poetry?

Kulbhushan Kushal : My poems broadly mirror psychic concerns that are explorations of different aspects of human consciousness. They profile a psychic quest for integrated meaning of flight of imagination and try to understand the fabric of response and the texture of questions. They also have an assumption that poetry is not for definitive answers but a statement of definitive probing.

NKN : Many of your poems refer to language its complexity and limitations. Would you like to say something about your understanding of language?

Kulbhushan Kushal : Language for me is a melting structure and a mystery. Meanings are transformations of our transactions in communication — transitory terminations celebrating creative recreations of combinations of words rearranged to explore horizons of meta communications. Therefore several of my poems come back to language like the paintings of a painter coming back to colors and configurations and like music of musician coming back to the magic notes and the grammar of sounds. And like the dancer coming back to the rhythm of gesture and the poetry of the movement

NKN : What do you consider to be more important in poetry out of philosophy and experience?

Kulbhushan Kushal : I do not perceive a divide between experience and philosophy. For me, philosophy enriches experience and experience

clarifies thought process, which may be called philosophy. I strongly feel that poetry is philosophy demystified.

NKN : Do you consider any of the earlier poets to be your model or the ideal whose works or ideas may have influenced your poetry?

Kulbhushan Kushal : Poetry as an art can not be free from influences, as its creation is an extension of selective influences, recasted in new contexts and invested with new meaning energies. For example, in one of my poems I say 'nightingales are too much with us' obviously it is reaction to Wordsworth's poem the world is too much with us and Keats's Nightingale. But there the element of displacement provides a new dimension, as it is not the world now but the Nightingales causing monotony and dullness. And of course Keats's Nightingale, which promises amusement is an irritating presence here, a distracting influence.

NKN : There is abundance of the use of myth in your poems. Doesn't it tend to make your poetry past oriented?

Kulbhushan Kushal : Myths I think have been wrongly perceived as distant and static. They are not so. Essentially they are pervasive and strikingly vibrant. Therefore, the use of myth in my poetry is neither a surprise nor an accident. As poet is a mythmaker he some times uses myth to recreate new myths, of course these myths will be evaluated to establish the relevance and a context diagnosis. In my poems therefore, the use of myth is a poetic strategy to appreciate the power of the myth.

NKN : In contemporary times it is a general perception that fiction has become the dominant literary genre and poetry is not treated to be a very popular form of literary expression. Do you agree with this view?

Kulbhushan Kushal : I do not agree with the statement that poetry is not a popular genre. On the contrary, poetry continues to be the most

celebrated genre. The impression of its non popularity is because of its imposed restricted territory orientation. I think that the text of songs and the texture of sounds are essentially poetic forms and it cannot be denied that millions of people sing songs and listen to songs and music. This obviously reflects the power and popularity of poetry.

NKN : The recurring presence of rocks can be easily observed in your poetry. Is there any special reason of the use of rocks as images and symbols in your poetry?

Kulbhushan Kushal : Rocks have always fascinated me for their static disposition and structure. Their imposing presence in environmental landscape corresponds with my psychic scape, where they provide a magnificent and meaningful backdrop for the enactment of my experiences. Their barren faces remind me of the inherent barrenness of the modern urbanized way of life which paradoxically, in spite of high tech movement nod mechanical movements continue to reflect rock like static presence - sound and fury signifying nothing.

NKN : Although human relationships form a major concern of your poetry the presentation of man - woman relationship seem to be conspicuously absent. Are there any particular reasons for this?

Kulbhushan Kushal : In relationship dynamics I do not perceive man and woman as separate entities . they both are human beings caught up in the whirlpool of relationships. Though initially it begins with physical reactions to social relationships but soon in my poems they transcend the infatuations, romance, love consummation and confront a cosmos to relate with. Therefore, instead of entity-based relationships often my poems speak of generational unions and confrontations with the moon, the sun, flowers, birds, fish, serpents, cats and rats and also the elements like air, fire, water, and ether and provide more comprehensive dimension and diverse relation patterns.

NKN : The ideas related to existential crisis in human life form the thematic texture of number of your poems. What, according to you, Dr. Kushal, can be considered the major elements that pose threat to human existence?

Kulbhushan Kushal : I perceive death and extinction as the ultimate reference and challenge. Therefore, virtual or natural death continues to be a recurring theme probing the nuances of existence and by extension existential predicament. Moreover, man's scheme of things centers around 'I' centredness.

NKN : There is the use of clusters of images in your poems. Doesn't it bring your poetry close to the imagistic poetry of the earlier poets?

Kulbhushan Kushal : I am preoccupied with exploring new formats, as I believe that each poetic experience craves for new poetic formats. As no two persons are alike so no two poems are alike. Though sometimes there may be similar poetic formats say-ode, sonnet, elegy, ballad, but the content formats make the difference. In spite of Shakespeare and Milton's sonnets having the similar structure formats the content variations immediately reflect content texture differences. Moreover, as a poet, as I said earlier, my quest is for holistic formats.

Poems

–Kulbhushan Kushal

Time To Celebrate

These are the times
To celebrate
The soft betrayals
And hard promises

These are the times
To celebrate
Simmering smiles
And boiling loneliness

These are the times
To celebrate
Burning springs
Melancholy winters

These are the times
To celebrate
Cursed blessings
And disguised curses

These are the times
To celebrate
Lingering sweet regrets
And stretching blanks

These are the times
To celebrate
Dreams of rocks
Faces of masks

These are the times
 To celebrate
 Hooking of whales
 Carrying rainbow crosses
 On our stony backs

These are the times
 To celebrate
 Negative affirmations
 And positive denials

These are the times
 To celebrate
 Love turned hatred
 And hatred turned love

These are the times
 To throw
 Stones on the moon
 And to leave alone
 The glorious sun

These are the times
 To invite
 Waves to our homes
 To release the frogs
 To their favorite ponds

These are the times
 To bait sparrows
 With grains
 To release parrots from the nets

These are the times
 To measure
 The potency quotient of our trusts

These are the times
 To stitch the world

With needles
 To unweave the dense designs

These are the times
 To celebrate the music of the spheres
 Deafness of the earth

These are the times
 To bring restless echoes home
 To walk alone on the banks of Sangarma
 And to invite ghosts for lunch

These are the times
 To dance around the burning pyres
 And to learn
 Terminology of genetic engineering

These are the times
 To invoke the spirits
 Sleeping quiet
 And to conjure fairies
 For the festival of lights

These are the times
 To sing songs of despair
 And to say goodbye to hopes

These are the times
 To parade failures
 And to repent for successes

These are the times
 To celebrate
 Union with our relatives
 And weep for their favors

These are the times
 To celebrate
 The death of our friends
 And to drink the poison
 For their delight

Dance of Masks

In the dance of masks
Faces are intimate strangers
Their smiles
Charm us not
Their lips
Kiss us not

Barking metaphors
Remind us
Of thundering clouds
In strange summers

The laughing masks
Again play
Hide and seek

Hot is the game

There beyond
The palm leaves
Dances a face
And here
Sunk in rose petals
Smiles
A tender
Tattered mask

The invitation of masks
Is hard to resist
Faces are paupers
Begging
In the lonely streets
Alms to feed
The hungers deep

Shut not doors
On the faces
Escort them with courtesy
Tomorrow again
They will dance
On our television screens

For flirting remotes
Difficult it is
To sift the face
From the mask
And that dangling smile
Flying in the air
Is dear to me

Better to launch the masks
To the skies
There let them dance
In the dreary nights
There let them read
Poems with passion
Let them display
Their skills
In rhetoric

Let's join
The dance of the masks
Let's join
The dance of the masks

I Feel Sad

So many autumns
So many stumbling springs
So many warm winters
Grammar of love
Still a hard nut to crack

The barometer of truth
Is lovingly engaged
Measuring
The intensity of false promises
Delicate dreams

The interventions
Of the old grandfather
Are unwelcome symphonies
In this season

And the dancing bangles
In the rotating prism
And the crammed equations
Of chemistry
Reluctantly yielding
To the lab tests
The formulae explained
By the teacher
With elaborate workings
On the blackboard
Are no good
In this season
Of murky dealings
And ruthless trade
Of elusive transactions
Where our net gains
Are in fact
Our invisible losses
Posted in the balance sheets

I am sad
To read the letters

Overflowing with blessings
And prayers to God
For my well being

Long prefaces
Preceding
Relevant statements
Crisp demands
Shamelessly dressed
In the rainbow
Of sentiments

Fish has known now
The colored hooks
Spread your nets
With care

The birds
May conspire
To fly across the heaven
Holding the gentle net
In their beaks
And those often quoted
Recipes of success
Are stale mantras
Ineffective
Promising no instant solutions

Better we check back
With the fundamentals
The basics of hatred
Before championing
The cause of love
Not always
The doors shall be opened
With your gusty knocks
They may shut the doors
Right on your face
And say goodnight
Even when
You are not
Ready to sleep

ENOUGH OF IT....

Endless reviews of the songs of nightingale
Twittering of linnets
And musical imitations of parrots
Shall not lead
To an illumination of the dark planets
Blessed to revolve
In their orbits
Cursed not to walk out
On the foamy skies

Have you ever seen
The dance of planets
In the dark nights
The shooting stars pierce the milky ways
Beyond the twinkling of the stars
And the smiles of the moon

There is a concern
Concern for the dead
For they shall never ever
Visit the human habitation
Polluted beyond repair
Hedged by dreadful nightmares

Where innovations are lost in imitations
And the phenomenal super technologies
Are just the advanced versions
Of a harpoon or a wheel
Like a movement in the motion picture
When sequenced fast
Appear to be a mighty race

What we hold today in our hand
And purchase our bonafides
Shall determine for inheriting
The objects of desire
Are the rewards stolen
From those who sweated hard

34

We all have become petty traders
No wonder, we talk
Of negotiations and strategies
Counts and discounts
Treats and retreats
Guarantees and warranties
And after-service agreements

No wonder-
With trade barometers in our hands
We measure the beat of relation pulse
Swing of status sensex
Truth is abominable
Not acceptable
In times out of joint

And the dance of planets
In the dark nights
Reminds us of the music of Spheres
Where brands are debranded
And you are not permitted
To meddle with
The sanctity of flowers

With a devilish shine of jewellery
The embellishments of a prostitute
Are no substitute
For simple, chaste intimations of love

And with the music of Spheres in your ears
And the dance of planets before your eyes
You may shout at the top of your voice
Enough of this rattle of words
Enough of the slogans sweet
Enough of this shock talk
Enough of these conveniences and comforts

Soul yearns for stretches sublime
Craves intensely for a touch benign
Liberating from the relation nets
And all other internets!!

DREAMS ARE....

Dreams are realities
Hampered while chasing
The rainbows across the Heaven

Dreams are the songs
Of the birds when captived
In the golden cages

Dreams are mute tribulations
Visual feast
Of sulking desires

Dreams are the fragments
Of promises unkept
And hopes betrayed

Dreams are the splinters
Of a volcano
Emerging out of oceans
Magically transformed to water
Shaking hands with boys and girls

Dreams are an unfinished story
Of a man and a woman
Rebuked to stay
Away from the garden
Cursed to eat apples
And to eternally
Experience the sting of cobras

Dreams are reminders
From the distant worlds
They are the wake-up calls
To get, set and go

Dreams are always wrongly famed
To be beautiful and lovely
Often dreams hurt more
Than innocent realities

Dreams are unfinished poems
Carrying in their wombs
Mysterious metaphors
Encoded by ghosts

Dreams are technology debunked
Leading us straight
To the primitive days
And sometimes to the ultimate days
Making us see
Technology paralysis
Mock action drills
For fighting real disasters

Dreams are our friends
Sleeping in our minds
Plotting against us
Praying for themselves

The Fury

–Seema Jain

I'am the girdle
 Round the earth's shores
 Emblems of man's pride and power–
 The ships, the vessels
 And the marines–
 Sail on my bosom,
 Furling the flag of
 Human supremacy.

I smile, I laugh.
 Sometimes I roar and growl,
 Leap up and devour,
 Like a giant, gone berserk,
 I sweep, I sway
 Over coast and bay
 Submerging villages, cities.
 People, vehicles, buildings, trees.

Hopless men and women,
 Animals, children,
 Buses, bodies, corpses, carcasses–
 My tiny playthings–
 Roll into my gushing waters.
 I trample over man's pride
 I humble him
 Through my might and glory
 Through my wrath and fury.

J.S. Anand's *The Other Passion* : An Ode to Dichotomies of Human Existence

–Swaraj Raj

In our age characterized by retreat of knowledge people from wider social responsibilities (Zygmunt Bauman) and immersion in the virtual world of multi-media glare and glitz, writing poems is a supremely courageous act of faith - for two reasons in the main : First, the poet's engagement with life is an act that obviously militates against the culture of immersion; and second, the poet's awareness of near absence of the implied reader – readers of poetry are really a vanishing tribe - leaves the poet in a state of intellectual vacuum. If poetry is a message, then for whom is it intended ? The situation gets even more irredeemable if the poet happens to be a Punjabi aiming to find a reading public for his English poems from amongst the Punjabis. Dr. J.S.Anand, the author of *The Other Passion* , currently Principal of D.A.V. College, Bathinda happens to be just such an individual who is endowed with the courage to write English poetry, fully aware though, I am sure of the challenges that confront him as a writer.

The Other Passion is Dr. J.S.Anand's third collection of English poems; the other two being *Spare Me O Lucifer* and *Beyond Life ! Beyond Death !* Reading these books in their chronological order, one gets the unmistakable impression of evolution of Anand's mind, and of a greater sophistication and felicity he brings to his craft as a poet as he evolves. In *Spare Me O Lucifer* he seems to be grappling with themes which are, more or less, *this* worldly; themes of dehumanization of life, urbanization, globalization and alienation. But the very title of his second book, *Beyond Life ! Beyond Death !* provides a clue to his moving

beyond the quotidian towards some kind of transcendent reality. *The Other Passion* foregrounds the desire to soar higher, to explore regions of higher consciousness, to look beyond the empirical, to set forth on a spiritual voyage and to step across the boundaries of this worldly passion for the other passion. In the poem "Beyond Repair" in *Spare Me O Lucifer* Anand writes :

I am fire
Not allowed to burn,
But burried alive,
Trapped in an urn

In *The Other Passion* , he seems to have broken out of all such— one could say, self-imposed - traps and confines, and many of his poems in this collection are aglow with the fire divine which appears to have kept him simmering before bringing him to a boil. The evolution of his craft as a poet is also visible. The poems in his first book, to use the ironic expression Nisim Ezekiel has used for some of his own poems, are 'very Indian (or Punjabi, in this case ?) poems in very Indian English'. These are the poems in which Anand seems to be trying to come to grips with the medium he has adopted, that is, the English language, which as Raja Rao would put it, is the language of Anand's intellectual make-up and not of his emotional make-up. However, moving ahead of the earlier stage of adoption, Anand sure has become adept at employing this medium to his advantage. It is now no more an alien language and Anand is fully comfortable with it.

Anand's dissatisfaction with the present human condition makes him yearn for a higher reality. The opening poem 'Bliss' in *The Other Passion* propounds this idea :

Give me a mind
bereft of IDEAS
a brain
bereft of KNOWLEDGE
Let me return to
that primitive ignorance

that knowledge of DIVINE
OF NOTHIG ELSE
BUT PRESENCE THINE !!

In these lines we can discern insistent yearning for attaining Buddhistic Not-Self state, *anatta*. The same desire for cognitive void, *shunayata*, makes itself felt with equal intensity in 'Peace O Peace'.

Burning hearts, listen O listen !
Racing feet, come to a halt
Hands, move not,
Roll not Eyes,
Think not thoughts O Mind,
Halt this weird GRIND
Let Peace enter my blood.
We won't stop forever
We shall move on
But in a course aloof
On a road not taken.

The related Buddhist idea of inter-connected origination appears in 'The Vision' :

Man is different from Man
But one remains the human clan
Earth's one, one the sky
One the world of beast and bird
One are oceans, one the mountain ranges
One islands, one continents

It is as if Anand is yearning for a vision of the Undivided Unity, a pre-phenomenal Gestalt without any polarities, binaries and contradictions. However, he is not a traditional mystic, in at least two ways: he does not make use of any religious framework whereas mystic poets like Gurudev Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Prof. Puran Singh operate within certain well-established religious frameworks; Anand's desire to be a renunciant, to annihilate or transcend the 'self-creature' (his own coinage) runs parallel to an equally strong desire to celebrate the body.

His is a mysticism of a different kind, prophets such as Guru Nanak, Mohammad, Lord Rama, Lord Krishna and Lord Buddha enter his verses like fugitives of history but are gone soon, leaving behind them a fleeting trail of their respective spiritual traditions. Infused with this spirituality, but perhaps a little short of actual awakening. Anand comes back to his self, to celebrate the self and the body :

How sweet is the body !
 however bitter its wages !!
 (The Crown Prince)

Alongside aspiring for stepping out of the mind and self, Anand also sings :

And Me ? Am a chip of light
 off the lightful fire
 A proud son
 off a powerful sire,
 Heir to the wealth
 of earth and sky.
 Crown prince
 of universe entire.
 (The Crown Prince)

It is significant that *The Other Passion* opens with 'Bliss', a poem preoccupied with the idea of annihilation of self and ends with 'The Crown Prince', which celebrates selfhood. Anand is a poet of contradictions and dichotomies, like Whitman, a poet of the body and the soul, acutely aware of his multiphrenic, fluid identity :

I am an amalgam of what has been,
 From Christ to Cannibalists
 From Mohammad to Mujahideen,
 From Gurbani to 'manmani'
 From Ram to Ravana
 From Krishna to Kans (Triveni)

The will to renounce remains just that, a will, a very strong potentiality, but how can he, for whom the body with its myriad pleasures is an orchard and who finds its :

curves
 rounds
 pastures
 ridges
 deeps
 peaks

ENCHANTING

(The Orchard)

be a renunciant ? Anand's return to the body is reminiscent of Georges Bataille's transgressive sexuality. Bataille looks towards transcendence through transgressive sexuality, in Anand's case, to me at least, it appears as if it is the body that holds him back:

Full of pain and sorrows it was
 Yet I loved this orchard as it was
 I ran around like a river
 carrying its dirt and dust
 But whenever I tried to look beyond
 It prohibited me.

(The Orchard)

Such tensions resulting from contradictory pulls of the Immanent and the Transcendent inform Anand's poetry. It is his position of in-betweenness, a Kierkegaardian either/or state of mind, his seeking after reconciliation of two apparently irreconcilable elements of human experience, that lends a special charm to his verses. In his restless wrestling to reconcile the opposites lies the promise of Anand's fruition as a poet. I wonder if we can look forward to an epiphany of the third term where the conflict of opposites is resolved and validated (?)

Here I would also like to comment on Anand's use of language. When language confronts its other, the ineffable of passion and will, the frame of rational discourse is unable to accommodate the felt experience language needs to be regenerated and Anand's coinage of new words and expressions such as 'selfocrate', 'un-you', 'balanceless gait', 'insectile', 'lifeberg', 'bodysome' and the like is symptomatic of the inability of the rational discourse to accommodate the unsaid and

the unsayable. In fact, it is left to the poets to regenerate language, to lift it above the trite and the clichéd in order to make it accommodate the tortuousness of their vision. Besides this, Anand's mellifluous ear and his instinct for rhythm add music to his verses.

Anand's poetry reverberates with existential themes such as a poignant consciousness of existential finitude, futility of existence, essential absurdity of human condition, the anguish of making a choice, devitalization and dehumanization of life, fragmentation of society, anomic normlessness and alienation, ennui and angst which are wages of being human and the devastating impact of newer technologies on both human condition and nature. In 'The Breach' he writes.

Too deep for tears is human sorrow
Too complex for flowers to console

And in 'Pain' this is what he says.

Life is nothing but an unending ode to PAIN
PANGS at birth
PAIN at DEPARTURE

The idea of life being a compromise and adjustment is summed up in these lines in 'Home'.

In the home are cast
alien walls together
to build a roof from a woof
of adjustment and compromise.

The repetitive, cyclical, monotonous and Sisyphus like quality of human existence is interwoven with the notion of endless repetition and rebirths in 'Bliss';

Born a man
and torn from Thy train,
I'm moving adrift
On a mission INSANE,
turning and returning
to the earth, to the hearth
again and again.

His subsequent seeking of solace in the Karmic philosophy in 'The Vision'

From cycle to cycle thrown
Souls which don't disown their own,
So long as impurities stay
Man remains returning to clay

and his moralistic exhortations in 'Self and Non-Self'

Nothing belongs to YOU my dear !
Illusion ! Illusion !! Get it clear.
Life is a property of the earth
Be a worthy element of this universe.
Give away and gain emancipation
Or in cycles turn and return
until you realize the DIVINE dispensation.

don't sound very convincing, coming as they do after an acceptance of the absurdity of life. After all, to quote T.S. Eliot, 'after such knowledge, what forgiveness.' To me such acquiescence and Anand's adopting the tone of a preacher conducting, as if, a mass from the pulpit, though not in the strictest sense constituting acts of bad faith, do tend to dilute the metaphysical rebelliousness with which his verse bristle. The pontiff in Anand who recommends acceptance and resignation is strongly contradicted by the recalcitrance of his verses which voice his strong dissatisfaction with the present state of affairs - both the human destiny and the current socio-economic reality. Without any recourse to such Karmic metaphysics, and left to existential-ontological devices, the rebel in Anand, I believe, would like to rewrite the human history anew.

Let's change the future
of humanity,
and rewrite history
sans Aurangzeb
sans Gazanavi.
(Triveni)

However, his didacticism whose roots lie in forced acquiescence to the Karmic metaphysics does tend to divest his poems of the

poignancy of their rebellious subtext. Dilution of their political content depoliticizes and decontextualizes his poems which no longer appear to be the utterances of an individual who is trying to negotiate some vital political issues. His poems appear to be feeble and enervated attempts of an intellectual who, from a distance, passes comments on political realities surrounding him but shies away from affirmative action. His religious didacticism, hence, tends to occlude his revolutionary vision with easy way outs.

All said and done, as an ode to dichotomies of human existence J.S.Anand's *The Other Passion* is a powerful voice which holds the promise of being read, heard and discussed for a long time in future.

Rainbow on Rocks

–*Kulbhusan Kushal*

‘A Review’

After having published ‘*Shrinking Horizons*’ (1990) and ‘*Philhaal*’ (translation of his Hindi Poems), Kulbhusan Kushal has come up with another collection of 37 poems titled ‘*Rainbow On Rocks*’. The poet, with his maturity, his sensitivity, his imaginative and non-stereotypical approach to things has torched upon various facets of human life. His poetic experiences are indeed like rainbows pitted against the rocks of reality. In Kushal's own words–

Poety is
A journey
Beyond meanings
....
Poetry is echo
Of the restless spirits
Trapped in tunnels.

This volume of poems is an attempt to travel beyond the meaning of words, an endeavour of the restless spirit to come out of the captivity of tunnels of our own making.

The dominant and recurrent themes in this collection of poems are the harsh and pungent realities of life contrasted with dreams or the pure and innocent perspective of childhood as in poems like ‘Raw Deals’ and ‘Transition’. This stony reality juxtaposed against dreams, fragile like rainbows or the twittering of sparrows are always in danger of being destroyed by the laughing sharks :

Deep into the sea of eyes
Whirlpool of dreams
The sharks laugh.

The poem 'Ineffective Nightmares' portrays nightmares as less banal and horrid than the reality surrounding us :

I am no more afraid of nightmares
 Their dreaded content
 Is losing its shine
 ...
 Let mothers turn into monsters
 Sons to demons
 And sisters to sirens
 Let nothing stay in order
 Let anarchy rule the world.

The illusions and romance of life and their evanescence is beautifully captured in 'Epicentre' especially through the images of 'wild eyes' and 'flowers' giving way to 'The Cobra with the venom/Raising its Hood'. 'Disorder' talks about the times being out of joints in so many ways :

These are not the times
 For prayers
 For the lost
 In the whirlpool of goods.

'Dark Rainbows' talks of man-made boundaries/partition through the innocent viewpoint of a child who hears a tale from his grandfather about-

The slaughter of a damsel
 And the melting of silver
 Kept in folded velvet
 Before he was declared an alien
 In his own land.

The increasing dependence on technology and comforts, taking us away from nature, birds, songs, romance, tradition and culture is delineated in 'Reluctant Autumns' and 'Mysterious Designs'. 'Divine Brands' portrays how the ads and commercial world makes use of mythological and cultural elements for their brands :

It's the festival of brands
 Dronacharya is back in our studios
 With all his archery stunts
 And Krishna is there
 On our pastes and pan masalas
 Goddesses are guarding
 The commodities cheap.

'Strange times' emphasises the growing consumer culture and the utilitarian outlook towards things in our times :

Use and throw
 Throw and use
 Recycle bits
 Recycle wits
 And recycle relations

Show-casing everything, even emotions and sacred relationships and, utter disregard for genuine feelings is taken up in the poem 'Sanitized Mother' :

I am not asking for
 The real mothers
 Caressing and screaming
 Lost in affection
 ...
 I want a mother
 With a smile pasted on her face
 ...
 We are customer centred
 We'll deliver
 Customized mother
 A sanitized mother

Some other recurring themes are the poet's pre-occupation with masks that present the conflict between authenticity of self and multiple role-playing or masks that the humans are forced to put on.

Interacting with ghosts, witches is a more cherishable experience in the arid-wasteland of reality as in poems like 'Lajjo', 'Ghosts We

Are', 'Invocation' etc.

In poems like 'Pooran', the poet in Kushal handles with sensitivity and empathy the portrayal of a drunkard, a 'tamasha' for the world, and unveils the human face behind the usual worldly perception.

'Lajjo' evokes an aura of mystery, horror, romance and reality somewhat in the style of Walter de La Mare's 'The Listeners'. It depicts a woman, who died young and was supposed to be a witch haunting the house. The popular viewpoint about a woman condemned as a witch by people is juxtaposed against a child's perspective who tries to comprehend the whole phenomenon rationally. Quest for truth, preference for poison to embrace truth as against half-truths is brought forth through reference to Socrates and Aristophanes.

'Read not my Poems' and 'Poetry' put across the poet's own observations about his subject matter and creativity.

Some poems are remarkable for their clarity of vision and expression such as 'Crafty Craft', 'Face of the Mask', 'Vengeance', 'Floods are Here Again', 'Neck to Neck' etc.

'Fragrance of Tree' creates a soft feeling in a free-flowing, lyrical style.

A glaring hinderance in some of the poems like 'Girls and Demons', 'Grammar of Peace' etc. is too much elusiveness, a fragmented portrayal. There is a tendency to sidetrack and digress from an emotion hitherto captured. At times the sentence constructions are too involved leading to obscurity, and the meaning getting out of focus.

The canvas of the poet is vast, multi-dimensional, painting varied experiences and emotions. The readers of English poetry would be looking forward to more poetry from this poet with a lot of potential.

PRAGATI'S ENGLISH JOURNAL

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EDITORIAL

A marked trend in contemporary culture is to view everything, including art forms, in terms of use value. It has given an unprecedented importance to technological, scientific and commercial studies. Consequently, the creation and study of art and humanities have been relegated to a secondary position. This speaks of a scenario that tends to ignore finer human sensibilities and promote the culture based on utilitarian ethics. These developments have adversely affected human growth. Instead of creating circumstances and atmosphere for the holistic development of personality the present day system is directed to produce technocrats sans the values of humanism. Instead of producing good citizens it tends to produce many making machines instead of human beings it gives impetus to the emergence of human bombs.

This trend, if continued, will lead to the extinction of not only finer human values but also the forms of art promoting aesthetic sensibilities. Therefore, the need of the hour is to co-ordinate and combine technological and commercial studies with the literary and the artistic. It demands a concentrated effort to highlight the significance of literary, ethical philosophical and religious studies for the holistic development of human personality. It requires an active role of the writers, thinkers and social workers to further the humane and aesthetic values.

-N.K. Neb

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