

## Colonising the Mind : Civilisational Imperialism in *The Glass Palace*

–Jagroop Singh

Colonialism as a policy of appropriating other territories and countries was vindicated by the political, economic and epistemological underpinnings of determinate ideological imperative by the West. Ashis Nandy in *The Intimate Enemy* (1983) categorizes colonialism into two distinct modes : militaristic imperialism and civilisational imperialism. The former is obviously premised on the appropriation of ruthless force for the physical usurpation of territories whereas the later is the construct of Eurocentric projections of rationalists and modernists who apotheosized imperialism as a harbinger of civilisation to the uncivilised world. The later mode “colonises minds” and “helps to generalise the concept of the modern west from a geographical and temporal entity to a psychological category” (Nandy 1983 : xi). Militaristic imperialism underpinned by repression and coercion is the most determinate mode for its expansionist designs. It is sometimes seen as the only mode for colonial domination in which the consent of the people is not required. However, Gramsci’s concept of hegemony (1971) is helpful in understanding the process of colonialism. For Gramsci hegemonic power is predicated on the use of coercion and consent. He argued that the success of hegemonising process is coextensive with both the material and ideological instruments through which the dominant classes maintain their power. D. Arnold in his article “Public Health and Public Power : Medicine and Hegemony in Colonial India” also believes that in colonial societies, harsh coercion worked in coordination with a consent that was part voluntary, part contrived (1994 : 133).

As a postcolonial novelist Ghosh’s thrust in *The Glass Palace*

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and also *The Shadow Lines* is on the families which he says is “a way of displacing the ‘nation’ ...In other words, I’d like to suggest that writing about families is one way of not writing about the nation” (quoted in Bose 2003 : 29). Rakhee Moral in her brilliant essay, “In Time of the Breaking of Nations’ : The Glass Palace as Postcolonial Narrative”, also corroborates this statement by commenting on Dinu’s love for Alison which “defies the equations that history makes out of divergent geographies and races” and which is “symbolic of exiles coming together, as it were, of families meeting out of a shared compulsion across disputed and dispossessed territories” (2003 : 150). Many of Ghosh’s characters occupy transnational space linking communities across borders that live on the margins of the two cultures. Ghosh is aware of the interstitial nature of culture resulting in the production of a condition of hybridity, an in-betweenness that debunks the hierarchical or binary structures.

The multivalent readings of *The Glass Palace* is coextensive with its polysemous nature. If, on the one hand, there is talk of the thinning or blurring of borders to shadow lines then, on the other hand, there is an undercurrent of “national identity”, which in its bid to recover and reclaim the past (Vinoda 2004 : 7) dismantles and disrupts the Eurocentric projections of the colonial history and culture. Further, Ghosh’s characterization of the epistemological assumptions of civilisational imperialism vis-a-vis beleaguered subjects is a figuration of its debilitating effects on the colonized psyche concomitant with the validation of Eurocentric binary structures.

*The Glass Palace* is a probing critique of the civilisational imperialism of the British rulers, which colonised the native mind by reframing the existing structures of human knowledge into East-West binaries of Orientalism. Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1983) has articulated the western representation of the Orient. For Said Orientalism is an “imperial institution”(1978 : 95) for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient where “the actual Orient never got represented” (Mohanty 2005:27).

Thematically Said's argument is premised on Michael Foucault's notion of knowledge as inextricably tied up with power. Said maintains that the knowledge of the Orient gathered by the Orientalists was not an innocent one for it was complicit with political agenda of colonialism. The Orient was represented as Europe's binary opposite. If a European was National, wise, active, masculine, continent and powerful then the other was epistemologically represented as irrational, barbaric, passive, effeminate, over-sexed and weakling. Even the ideological function of all colonialist literature, as Abdul R. Jammohamed points out, was to "articulate and justify the moral superiority of the coloniser" and "the inferiority of the native as a metaphysical fact" (1985 : 23). *The Glass Palace* counters the epistemological assumptions of the Orientalists posited on the 'Manichean' allegory in which a binary opposition between the Occident and the Orient is coterminous with the native's construction as backward and inferior. Ghosh's critique of the Orientalist discourse becomes discernible in his letter to Sandra Vince, the Manager of the Commonwealth Literature Prize for the year 2001. His novel *The Glass Palace* was nominated for the award but he withdrew from the competition on the ground that his novel is not a 'nostalgic return' to the past but rather "a critical revisiting of the past, a reinterpretation of the past" (Vinoda : 8). The revisiting of the past, Ghosh writes in the letter, lies at the heart of *The Glass Palace* and "I feel I would be betraying the spirit of my book if I were to allow it to be incorporated within that particular memorialization of Empire that passes under the rubric of 'the Commonwealth'. *The Glass Palace* is the narrativisation of the colonising process of discontent, resistance, displacement and exile in India, Burma and Malaya of the Asian continent. The militaristic imperial strategy of "aggression, capture and colonization" (Tiwari 2003 : 104) is employed to colonise Burma. The pretext for attack on Burma by the British forces is a frivolous one of tax levied for logs on the British timber merchants. The Burmese king Thebaw and Queen Supayalat are exiled to India under a well thought out strategy of their erasure from the public memory. The conquerors masquerading as 'civilised' provide them with an escort of advisors and attendants

and, ironically, the deposed and captive king is presented a guard of honour. However, heavily armed soldiers, amidst rumours of large scale riots and demonstrations, of desperate attempts to free the Royal family, accompanied the Royal couple with its entourage to counter any such attempt. Ghosh analogized here the exile of the last Mughal King, Bahadur Shah Zafar, to Rangoon and the killing of his two sons in front of the public to scare away the agitated Indian mob.

Albert Memmi's representation of colonialism and its subsequent effect on both the colonised and the coloniser in his canonical study 'The Coloniser and the Colonised' acquires significance in the context of appropriation of Burma by the Empire. Memmi believes that colonialism is "one variety of fascism" (1965 : 63) based on exploitation of economic resources of a colony and the coloniser's professed mission of moral and cultural reformation is mere ostentation and tenuous pretence for the ulterior motives. After quickly integrating Burma into the Empire and forcibly converting it into a province of British India the rapacity of the Colonialists manifests itself in the exploitations of its natural resources like the teak forests, ivory, and oil. They exploited these resources "with an energy and efficiency hitherto undreamt of" (88). The Queen bewails that under the pretext of so called development they would rob her country of "all the gems, the timber and oil" (88).

Among the studies on the psychological processes of colonisation Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban : The Psychology of Colonisation* (1956), which has become notorious for its concept of "dependency complex", is one of the earliest attempts in this field. Some people suffer from the inherent quality of dependence. They may depend on their ancestors at one time and may transfer that dependence to their colonial masters at the other. The colonisation, he writes, has always required "the existence of the need for dependence. Not all the peoples can be colonised : only those who experience this need" (1956 : 56). However, the Martiniquan psychoanalyst Franz Fanon reinscribes the dependency complex as not the 'cause' but the 'effect' of colonialism. It brings discomfiting changes in the native's culture which affect his

psyche. He is painted by the settler as a quintessence of evil, insensible to ethics, a negation of values. He is often referred in zoological terms and is represented as a savage, as something less than human. This kind of dehumanisation leads him to admit in unequivocal terms the supremacy of the white man's values. The white man represents an object to be desired and feared and becomes "not only the Other but also the master, real or imaginary" (Fanon 1967 : 138). The native imitates the white master by putting on white masks but the fact of his blackness never vanishes. Thus "black skin/white masks reflects the miserable schizophrenia of the colonised identity" (Loomba 1998 : 145).

Civilisational imperialism is premised on the ideological state apparatuses used to indoctrinate the colonised subject. The supremacy and superiority of the coloniser get so much ingrained in the native's psyche that he becomes thoroughly subservient to the master and the valorisation of constructions like nation, national identity and nationalism becomes a tangential concern. Raj Kumar, Beni Prasad and Arjun have implacable belief in the superiority of the colonisers. Raj Kumar's unequivocal advocacy for the imperial dispensation has the underpinnings of his meteoric rise from an orphan boy to a successful timber merchant. As a 'kala' orphan boy he has nothing to lose. His success story in the colonial space under the tutelage of Saya John is a fabulous one indeed. However, his blind pursuit for wealth, his trading in indentured labour and sexual exploitation of a woman labourer are symptomatic of his dehumanisation. He believes that the Burmese economy would collapse without the patronage of the Britishers. Actually, during the process of exploitation of natural resources of the colony by the colonisers, he along with some sectors of the colony has been benefited whereas, to use Fanon's words, "the rest of the colony follows its path of underdevelopment and poverty" (Fanon : 127-8). He has no sense of rootedness anywhere and once the Burmese economy collapses as an aftermath of IInd World War, he, as a destitute, takes refuge in India where "the Ganges could never be the same as the

Irawaddy" (544). He can no longer see himself' as an Indian or Burmese, as his is a fractured or fragmented consciousness" (Kadam 2004 : 43).

The hegemonic process through the militaristic strategies for colonialist subjectification achieved enduring stability with the help of civilisational imperialism that worked mainly under the rubric of western education. Ashcroft et al. maintain that education is "the foundation of colonialist power and consolidates this power through legal and administrative apparatuses" (1995 : 425). Though the institutionalisation of all English education played a vital role in the politics of colonial rule facilitating the construction of a subjectified colonial, the valency of literary education is to be particularly underscored. Gauri Viswanathan in her learned essay, "The Beginnings of English Literary Study in British India," comments that the English literary text functioned as a surrogate Englishman in his highest and most perfect state. She quotes from C.E. Trevelyan's book, *On the Education of the People of India*, published in 1838 : "[The Indians] daily converse with the best and wisest Englishmen through the medium of their works, and form ideas perhaps higher ideas of our nation than if their intercourse with it were of more personal kind" (1987 : 437). Thus the English Studies was instrumental in confirming the 'hegemony' or 'rule by consent' of imperialist forces as the natives came to "internalize the ideological procedures of the colonial civilising mission" (Gandhi 1998 : 145). In *The Glass Palace* Beni Prasad, who is educated at Cambridge, is a typical representative of that class of people that the British rulers wanted to create in the colonies. In his aping of the British ways he comes closer to Macaulay's model of a class of people, "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (1935 : 430). The hegemonisation of the Empire in the Indian colony was facilitated with the help of such agents because much of the power on the colonised people was wielded through these agents. The minds of the people like Beni Prasad were so much colonized by the Orientalist knowledge that they became the willing and submissive agents of the Empire believing in 'the white

man's burden' and progressive policies of the Empire. Beni Prasad wielded immense power as a District Collector, yet paradoxically, as Uma comments "the position had brought him nothing but unease and uncertainty" (186). The white man for him is an object not only to be 'desired' but 'feared' also. Uma recalls the nervous ironic ways in which he behaved at dinner parties in presence of the Whites. His sense of inferiority is so deeply ingrained in his personality that "there seemed never to be a moment when he was not haunted by the fear of being thought lacking by his British Colleagues" (186).

The emergence of English as an academic discipline proved to be an ally for the British colonialists, which supported them "in maintaining control of the natives under the guise of liberal education" (Viswanathan: 434) and in "the naturalizing of the constructed values (e.g. civilization, humanity, etc.) which, conversely, established 'savagery', 'native', 'primitive', as their antithesis and as the object of a reforming zeal" (Ashcroft et al. 1989 : 3). The impact of western academic disciplines is easily discernible on Arjun in whom the hierarchical constructions of inferiority and superiority, native and 'angrez' are so deeply ingrained that all his effort is to be like an Englishman. He, as a young army officer in the colonial army, is puffed with pride that he belongs to a battalion which was honoured with a special title : 'The Royal Battalion'. Ironically, it is a battalion which remained loyal to the Empire during the First War of Independence in 1857 and was instrumental in capturing the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, at Humayun's tomb. It was a battalion that played a lead role in making Burma a part of the Empire. He considers himself lucky that Hardy and he "are going to be the first Indian officers in 1/1 Jats : it seems like such a huge responsibility- as though we're representing the whole of the country !" (262). His obtrusive acknowledgement of superiority of the colonial masters, his awe and respect for them orients him to internalize the European morals, manners, dress code and eating habits by aping them. His resorting to western food in the army officer's mess is an act of bravado to qualify

as member of an elite class of officers where chewing upon a piece of beef he has to struggle "to keep the morsels down ; fighting (his) revulsion" (279). It is by virtue of the colonisation of the minds of men like Arjun that hegemonizing process was carried forward by the British colonisers as the Indian soldiers became active collaborators in the perpetration of expansionist designs of the imperial forces. Arjun is blatantly indoctrinated by the colonialist education strategies to repose full faith in the civilising mission of the Empire. On the occasion of his sister's marriage some Burmese student activists and Congress Party workers berate him for serving in an army of occupation. On this auspicious occasion he manages to keep his temper and replies, "We aren't occupying the country. We are here to defend you." The rejoinder of the activists is quick : "From whom are you defending us ? From ourselves ? From other Indians ? It's your masters from whom the country needs to be defended" (287-8). One of the Burmese students labels the Indian soldiers as "the army of slaves - marching off to catch some more slaves for their masters" (288). Later, when he complains to Uma, he finds her wholly unsympathetic. However, he is not shaken from his stand by such argumentation. One of the demonstrators of the anti-war march drops a pamphlet through the car window. Arjun reads some quotations from Mahatma Gandhi and a passage that said : "Why should India, in the name of freedom, come to the defence of this Satanic empire which is itself the greatest menace to liberty that the world had ever known?" (292). Arjun is extremely irritated by this time and cannot control his anger : "Idiots, I wish I could stuff this down their throats. You'd think they'd have better things to do than march about in the hot sun....."(292).

Dinu is another product of western education who comes in support of Arjun in calling the Indians nationalists as idiots. His argument revolves round Fascism spearheaded by Hitler and Mussolini. He calls these leaders as imperialists and racialists of the worst order. Uma argues that the Fascists do not deserve any sympathy for the perpetration of monstrous and grotesque deeds. However, the dilemma,

she avers, is that “we are caught between two scourges : two scourges of absolute evil. The question for us is, why should we pick one over the other ?” (293). Both the Fascists and British colonialists, she says, are guilty of rule through aggression and conquest. So there is no justification in supporting the Empire at the crisscross of history. As a nationalist and a colonial subject one must be sagacious enough to take a pragmatic decision. Dinu supports the Empire whereas Indian public, knowing fully well that imperialism and Fascism were twin evils, one being a derivative of the other, welcomed “the defeated prisoners of the Indian National Army” as “heroes - not the returning victors” (49). Dinu believes in the white man’s burden of civilising the world. It is as if to rid the Indian society of all the social evils that the British colonialists came over to India. He decries Uma for always talking about the evils of Empire and instead brings out a list of social evils like the caste system, untouchability, widow burning, etc. which were prevalent in India even before the colonialists came. Uma counters his argument by quoting Mahatma Gandhi that “our struggle for independence cannot be separated from our struggle for reform.” She further adds : “We must not be deceived by the idea that imperialism is an enterprise of reforms. Colonialists would like us to believe this, but there is a simple and clear refutation” (294). She gives the example of Burma. The Burmese suffered from no such attenuating evils as caste system or untouchability and were rather very egalitarian with high respect for women. But Burma was also conquered and subjugated. People like Beni Parsad, Arjun and Dinu, under the impact of Western education, become easy pawns in the hands of the colonialists to implement their expansionist strategies masqueraded as reforms. Uma believes it to be a mistake to imagine that “colonialists sit down and ponder the rights and wrongs of the societies they want to conquer : that is not why the empires are built” (295).

The decolonisation of the mind of Arjun becomes discernible with the onset of IIInd World War, which witnessed several hundred Indian troops of the British army changing their loyalty and enrolling

themselves as fighters of Indian National Army - Ghosh has convincingly articulated the psychological crisis and traced the change in the mind of Arjun, a man who was called ‘angrez’ by his colleagues. Hardy, his friend and colleague, reminds him of the inscription of Military Academy in Dehra Dun which said, “The safety, or honour and welfare of your country come first, always and every time. The honour, welfare and comfort of the men you command come next .....” And he wonders : “Where is this country ?” (330). He knows that such a country does not exist for them. At this stage Arjun is still bothered about his career. Further, Arjun is made witness to an incident of racial discrimination when he along with his Indian friends jumps into a swimming pool in Singapore during the wartime where many Europeans are taking a dip. They leave as soon as they see the Indians entering the pool. His friend Kumar cannot restrain himself from commenting, “We’re meant to die for this colony - but we can’t use the pools” (383). While in Malaya Arjun is shocked to see the rubber plantation labourers, mostly Indians, living in abject, grinding poverty. In civilian clothes he is mistaken for a coolie and is called a ‘Klang’ which is derogatory reference for the sound of chains worn by the earliest indentured Indian workers who were forcibly brought to Malaya. ‘Mercenary’ is another tag used for Indian soldiers when they reach Malaya because the local Indians believe that they were “not real soldiers, they were just hired killers, mercenaries” (347).

While taking position in the trenches at Jitra in Malaya Hardy understands that they, the Indian soldiers, are risking their lives for a cause which is not theirs and that they are being used as ‘a tool, an instrument’. He shares all this with Arjun. For the first time Arjun does self-introspection. He vaguely feels that perhaps he was a tool in someone else’s hands for he remembers Alison also had charged him with the same allegation. The formation of Indian National Army under the command of Captain Mohun Singh led to large-scale desertions in the Indian army of the Empire. Arjun does not like the idea of Indian National Army fighting on the Japanese side for he believes that

Britishers are better colonial masters than Japanese would be. To this Hardy retorts that better the master, the worst the condition of the slave will be because it makes him forget what he is. For Arjun changing sides is a very difficult question. He asks Hardy “When we joined up we didn't have India in our minds : we wanted to be sahibs and that's what we've become. Do you think we can undo all that just by putting up a new flag ?” (439).

However, for Hardy it is a question of right and wrong, that is, what is worth fighting for and what is not. Arjun’s disquieting insight into the question of loyalty bothers him much. Arjun actually is conceived as the White man’s double. And this “act of doubling the White man’s image,” Bhaba comments, “in effect displaced the representation of authority” (quoted in Vinoda : 23). The loyalties towards India of pre-colonial days have been destroyed long ago because the Empire was built by effacing them. However, he feels, “The Empire was dead now - he knew this because he had felt it die within himself.” (41). Colonel Buckland is shocked by Arjun’s decision of deserting the army : “You, I never took you for a turncoat,” and “You don’t have the look of a traitor” (448). Arjun reminds him of General Munro’s observation which he quoted during the teaching sessions at the academy : “The spirit of independence will spring up in this army long before it is even thought of among the people ..... “(449). Colonel Buckland is steadfast in declaring him a traitor and a disgrace to the regiment and to the country. He warns him that if the time comes he would be court-martialed and “I’ll see you hang, Roy, I will. You should have not moment’s doubt of that” (450).

The role of Colonel Buckland, albeit brief, is significant of the normative values and monolithic paradigms of the Empire. His calling Arjun as “a disgrace to the country immediately brings to one’s mind an earlier comment of Hardy about the safety and welfare of the country : “Where is this country ?” The process of decolonisation of Arjun’s mind initiated under the changing geopolitical reality is antithetical to the empirical project avidly defended by Colonel

Buckland. The Colonel’s ideological predilections for right or wrong “have long found expression in colonialist writers like Macaulay, Kipling, Edward Thomson, etc. in whom imperial notions such as mission, purpose, loyalty, modernization, racial superiority, solidarity, etc. were the cornerstones of faith” (Vinoda : 23), The imperial project, as Ghosh believes, was basically underpinned by “an enormously energetic apparatus of persuasion, which included educational institutions, workshops, media outlets, printing houses, and so on” (Ghosh, “The Anglophone Empire”) and it was simply not left to he militaristic strategies. In, *The Glass Palace*, he feels that the reinscription of the past history of the colonial era is valorizable because “the ways in which we remember the past are not determined solely by the brute facts of time they are open to choice, reflection and judgement” (Ghosh, “Letter to Administrators of Commonwealth Writers Prize”). Consequently, the unobtrusive articulation of the so called civilising mission and the ideological, epistemological and ontological assumptions of binary constructs of the imperial powers informed by the psychological domination and subjectification of the colonised in *The Glass Palace* are genuine attempts by Ghosh to revisit and reframe the colonial past that may be, in a way, prefigurative of the discomfiting and deleterious ramifications of neocolonialism.

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## The Pain of Unacknowledged Legislation in Shelley : A Revisiting of *Prometheus Unbound*

–Kulwaran Singh

Shelley wants human life to be full of happiness for everyone. Deep in his heart, there is a yearning to find all human beings living at peace with one another. He, however, knows that the world is not what he wishes it to be. He is at heart painfully aware of what is wrong with this world and that in what he hopes for he is at fault. Wishfully, however, he sets out to set the things right. Being a poet he visualises what a poet can do to give order to the sorry state of affairs in this world. In this paper I am trying to sum-up what Shelley in his “A Defence of Poetry” imagines for a poet to reform society. And in the light of Shelley’s idea of poetry I would try to assess, in brief, what he himself seeks to do through his *Prometheus Unbound* to justify his role as a poet. And in this exercise, Shelley’s idea of what is wrong with this world would also become clear to us.

“A Defence of Poetry” was published in 1821 and the *Prometheus Unbound*, a lyrical drama, was published in 1820. From these dates of publication it seems reasonable to suppose that both of these works may have some common ideas in them and that a study of these two may give us an insight into Shelley’s thinking during this period. “Of few writers more than Shelley can it be said that his works are the man himself” (White 1947 : 111).

Incidentally, “A Defence of Poetry” was written as an answer to Peacock’s attack on poetry through his pamphlet. ‘The Four Ages of Poetry’ in which he (Peacock) calls poet “a semi-barbarian in a civilized community” (King-Hele 1971 : 287). The result of this answer to Peacock is, however, that in this work we find “the best statement in English of the early Romantic theory of poetry” (Hough 1953 : 151).

According to Shelley the poet has on his shoulders a gigantic responsibility. He has a great role to perform in society to show people what they ought to do. He has to act as a redeemer, saviour, prophet and legislator. He has to institute laws and found civil society. He has to invent the arts of life and also has to act as a teacher. In him the prophet and the legislator co-exist. Only he is able to see what the present actually is. He finds out the laws to give order to the present and his ideas are the latest in time. Shelley concludes his defence of poetry with the remark that the poets are “the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present.” They are “the unacknowledged legislators of the world”. (Poetry in Shelley thus comes to be regarded as unacknowledged legislation for this world).

Shelley’s definition of poetry seems highly comprehensive and even farfetched. He says that poetry in its universal sense includes language itself and (even) language is primarily poetry. Tracing the origin of poetry, he remarks that “poetry is connate with the origin of man” (225). At the beginning of society every writer is a poet by necessity. The poet apprehends the truth and beauty in life and also the good which relates the two (227). Thus Bacon and Plato are poets. Through poetry the poet gives expression to his imagination and the imagination offers his vision to people.

In the formation of his theory of poetry, Shelley was influenced by Plato. Plato takes two apparently contradictory stands about poetry. In *The Republic* he condemns poets because they imitate life which is only a shadow of the divine world of ideas. But in his dialogues regarding poetic inspiration, specially in the *Ion* and the *Phaedrus* (which Shelley read in 1820) Plato states that a divine madness possesses poets and through their inspiration they become interpreters of the gods. “Shelley takes over this latter argument” (King-Hele 287-88).

The poets, then, are the inspired persons. There is some “invisible influence” to guide them and “this power arises from within” (250). The poets are the best and the happiest minds. A diviner nature penetrates through the poets (251).

The poet is a person with enlarged imagination. The divine inspiration acts through imagination. As a result, the poet makes the pains and pleasure of others his own. "The great instrument of moral good is the imagination" (233-34). Poetry which is the product of imagination in the poet stirs the imagination in others and makes them moral, peaceful, happy and progressive. Poetry makes human beings morally strong (234). Poetry thus can be of the greatest help to mankind. By now, we have in brief, analysed the thrust in Shelley's "A Defence of Poetry". King-Hele calls 'Defence' Shelley's best work and remarks that "its place as a classic statement on the subject is probably secure" (295).

From our discussion so far Shelley's sympathy for the suffering humanity has become self-evident. It can be easily inferred how earnestly he wishes to be helpful to mankind. Behind all affirmations about the poet's role in society, however, a painful realisation on the part of Shelley can be readily seen to suggest that much has already gone wrong with mankind despite the presence of so many poets of great repute in the past. Shelley's allotment of a wide-ranging role to the poet makes it amply clear how painfully he is aware of the wrong that has to be corrected and that has persisted to exist.

A careful study of *Prometheus Unbound*, too, can reveal this painful awareness in Shelley. *Prometheus Unbound* is the story of Prometheus, a mythical character, who defies Jupiter, the tyrant, and helps mankind suffering under Jupiter's tyranny by giving it love, fire, science, speech, etc.—all that is denied to it. For doing this Jupiter punishes him by chaining him to a rock to suffer pain eternally. Jupiter punishes Prometheus also for his withholding of a secret that the child of Jupiter and Thetis (his wife) would overthrow his father. Jupiter is ultimately dethroned by his child Demogorgon and Prometheus is set free. With the liberation of Prometheus and the downfall of Jupiter, a complete change of scene occurs in the play. This change is described thus by the Spirit of the Hour, a character in the play.

There was change : the impalpable thin air  
And all circling sun light were transformed  
As if the sense of love dissolved in them  
Had folded itself round the sphered world. (251)

Incidentally, in this imaginary overthrow of the tyrant is hidden the real pain of Shelley felt by him at the suffering of mankind. Hence the need to kill the enemy in imagination as it happens in dreams or films. This is the overthrow of evil, a psychological defence mechanism, occurring despite full knowledge of the subject about the impossibility of such a happening.

The changes that take place in the play as a result of the overthrow of evil would throw further light on Shelley's painful awareness of what is seriously wrong with mankind. The Spirit of the Hour, a character in the play, is shown as surveying the change "among the haunts and dwellings of mankind." The thrones are now kingless. Men walk with one another like spirits (the story we remember is a myth dramatised). None fawns now and none tramples. Hate, disdain or fear, self-love or self-contempt are no longer visible on human faces. None loses temper, none tramples and none looks fearfully on another's angry face (252). Human behaviour has undergone a tremendous change. None talks now "that common, false, cold, hollow talk/Which makes the heart deny the yes it breathes". The women have undergone a change, too. They are now kind, beautiful and frank. Their forms are gentle and radiant. Custom does not enslave them now. They speak the wisdom which once they were not even capable of thinking. They express the emotion which they once did not have courage to feel. Love is now no longer spoilt by jealousy, envy or infamy. Thus mankind has got completely transformed (252-253).

This transformation occurring in the world of imagination inversely shows how deeply Shelley desires such a thing to happen. It also shows how poignantly he feels that it has not happened in reality. Some critics, however, look at this transformation from the angle of its unreality in a literal sense. Graham Hough believes that the overthrow

of Jupiter occurs too simplistically that “from being an all powerful ruler, Jupiter, just disappears: his hour is come, and that is all.’ Hough is of the view that the sudden overthrow of the tyrant points to “an actual gap in Shelley’s thinking” (137). This, however, is to ignore the emotional need of Shelley which we are trying here to pinpoint.

There is, however, a hidden symbolism, too, in the overthrow of evil symbolised by Jupiter. The Spirit of Life defeats evil. The allegory of the dethronement of Jupiter by Demogorgon refers to the human mind where love defeats hatred or evil. “The idea is developed with elaborate poetry and is responsible for much that is most attractive in the poem” (Bowra 1973 : 112). According to Baker the real meaning of the regeneration of man depicted in *Prometheus Unbound* is quite simple. If we remove the repressive force which suppresses human mind, the power of love would be reborn in that mind and man would become aware of his intellectual and spiritual capabilities which have for a long time been crushed by hate, fear, despair and selfishness. Shelley does not suggest that such things have happened “but only that they ought to happen” (112-13).

Shelley was a moralist. He wanted to reform society. He wanted to “teach his fellows a better way of life” (Solve xi). In this spirit of reform he may not have displayed maturity by recognizing the limitations of mankind but still we can value his “childlike intransigence”, his “unwillingness to settle quickly for less than what men really want” (Ridenour 1965 : 3).

To conclude, Shelley feels very deeply for his fellow human beings. His theory of poetry as given in his “A Defence of Poetry” shows him as extremely anxious to help mankind out of its troubles. The pain he feels at his heart can be sensed from his desire to make the poet a prophet and a redeemer, an unacknowledged legislator for mankind to teach it how to behave to attain happiness for all. What he wants a poet to do for mankind is what he himself tries to do through his *Prometheus Unbound*. In this exercise of giving unacknowledged legislation to mankind, however, the great pain lying at his heart becomes quite obvious.

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### INVITATION

Poems/Critical articles on Indian-English poetry  
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(Editor)

## **Raising Issues Related to Caste–Defined Samskaras– A Study of U. R. Anantha Murthy’s *Samskara***

–*Tejinder Kaur*

The novel *Samskara* was originally published in Kannada in 1965 by a prominent Kannada novelist, short story writer, poet and essayist U.R. Anantha Murthy, a recipient of Jnanapeeth Award in 1995, Padma Bhushna in 1998, Ganakrishti award for literary distinction, Kolkata for the year 2002 along with a number of awards both from the Government and academies for his invaluable contributions in many fields. Since its publication this controversial novel has received wide acclaim in the literary circles and from the readers and has been translated into many languages in India and abroad. It was filmed by Girish Karnad in 1970 and was translated into English by A. K. Ramanujan in 1976 and was published by Oxford University Press in 1978. In this novel sub-titled “A Rite for a Dead Man” Anantha Murthy has portrayed a decaying South Indian Brahmin colony in a village in Karnataka and has dealt with very serious issues related to orthodox Madhva Brahmin caste order, its following the ages old traditions of the rigid caste-defined value system, its inherent contradictions and deviations due to human weaknesses, challenge to the oppressive rigidity of the system by new ideas and hypocrisy of high caste brahmins, slow shift in the ethics, exploitation of the low caste women and harlots, the value judgements on a person as per the caste in place of one’s humane intentions and actions. While handling these issues in the narrative along with many others the basic questions raised in the novel are :

(i) what is actual samskara? (this Sanskrit word is very important in this novel and has multiple layers of meanings); (ii) is it achieved

by blindly following rules and traditions or it gets lost when they are not kept? ; (iii) are the good and the bad caste– defined? Such caste and religion based themes and issues in almost every cultural community have been interrogated, challenged and pondered over in literature all over the world and in many Indian literary texts written in regional languages and English also with a plea to transform the social orders to make them humane. But the way Anantha Murthy has grappled with these issues(in an ironical, satirical and humorous way) which are being debated even now as ever, in this complex, thought-provoking open discourse, make it a unique narrative in many ways.

When the novel was published in 1965 it was criticized for assailing the traditions but Anantha Murthy as “a critical insider” boldly portrayed the realities of his own oppressive Madhva Brahmin past in a remote Karnataka village “ when its orthodoxies were being questioned in the reformist climate of the 1930s and 40s,” the slow shift in the ethics was taking place and the agrahara system was disintegrating. The novelist here has captured the spirit of the times by raising live questions without giving conclusive answers. There is a continuous deferment of the questions and their suggestive answers, producing new meanings during and after every reading which make this text a “ writerly” one in Roland Barthes’s term. The title and the sub title of the text give us the impression of its being a narrative pertaining to the samskar, the last rite of a dead man. The central focus of the narrative is the dead body of a heretic, Naranappa - belonging to Madhva brahmin caste- lying waiting in the agrahara - a brahmin colony- of a Karnataka village named Durvasapuram, to be cremated. Since he was an orphan and also had no child to perform his last rites, put the brahmins into religious controversy that who should do this task without risking his brahminhood, and whether his samskara should be performed as per the prescribed norms for his high caste in the holy texts as he had been following anti-brahminic ways. The plot of the narrative is woven around this problematic to dwell and debate on so many issues in multiple voices which keep on mounting and conflicting

as the action moves and even after the narrative ends but does not conclude in the text. In this polyphonic novel, to borrow Bakhtin's words, "everything is still in the future and will always be in the future"(Bakhtin 1984:166).

Another problematic of this text is the multiple meanings of the Sanskrit word 'samskara' "which refers to the concept central to Hinduism" e.g. forming well, making perfect, refining, refinement, making sacred, conception in the mind, preparation and making ready, realizing of past perceptions, making pure, purification, purity, a sanctifying or purificatory rite or essential ceremony (enjoined on all the first three classes or castes), any rite or ceremony, funeral obsequies (Epigraph, *Samskara* ) which invite us to explicate the text and analyse the intentions and conduct of its characters from various angles. "Though the word 'samskara' does not occur obtrusively or too frequently in the narrative, its meanings implicitly inform the action. ...the action depends on the several meanings being at loggerheads with each other" comments A. K. Ramanujan (Afterword, *Samskara*). In Derrida's words we can say, "The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely" (Derrida : 110).

There are two male protagonists in the novel, both belonging to the upper Madhva brahmin caste—Naranappa, who has recently died of plague when the novel opens and the other is Praneshacharaya , the guru of this agrahara. Both these characters represent two different ideologies, which clash with each other. Naranappa, a product of the changing times, embodied the revolutionary spirit under the impact of western culture and new emerging ideas. He endeavoured to abolish many social evils like untouchability and rigid caste barriers and worked to spread education for the development of one's personality and advocated the life of pleasure and fulfillment. In his life time he had openly flouted, mocked at and questioned the prescribed ideology and code of conduct for his caste, and had exposed the hypocritical and sinful living of the narrow-minded, selfish, greedy, jealous fellow

Brahmins whose brahminhood consisted only of following ages old rules and rituals without caring to understand them, and living in the fear that disasters would fall them if these rules and rituals were not observed. For their living they depended only on the alms, charity donations and meals on various occasions and anniversaries for the performance of various rites and rituals- samskaras. Instead of having holy thoughts, spiritual experiences and doing virtuous deeds as laid down, they disliked one another and made nasty comments and their wives mainly indulged in idle gossip. Defying all the caste-defined samskaras on finding them meaningless, repressive and non-progressive, Naranappa had been living a life of his own desire without bothering about the good or bad opinions of his fellow agraharians. He had deserted his non- pleasure-giving wife and had lived happily for the last ten years with a beautiful concubine Chandri, considered to be low caste. He had also been eating food cooked by her, eating meat and catching fish from the temple pond with his Muslim friends, making friends with the low caste brahmins of other agraharas, helping people in need, forming drama and dance troupes and goading the brahmin youth of his own and nearby agraharas to give up the orthodox and redundant thinking and way of life and join different professions. All these things had agitated his fellow brahmins who used to blame him for misleading and corrupting their children.

He had openly challenged the virtues and idealism of the most virtuous brahmin of that agrahara, Praneshacharaya who had earned the title "the Crest jewel of Vedic learning." because of his learning, scholarship and ability to argue in religious matters. The people of this and nearby agraharas respected him for his knowledge of the religious texts and ritualistic samskaras for every occasion and for his moral and austere living, compassionate attitude towards all irrespective of their caste, his devoted and ungrudging service of his ailing and invalid wife. Above all, he believed "in typical brahminhood which he imbibed through great learning"( Bhat : 5) and tried all his efforts to maintain its observance in this agrahara. Even when Naranappa would mock at

his perpetuating the rotten samskaras among these sinful brahmins and hold him responsible for their decadence and corruption since he provided the protective umbrella of the ancient books over their sins , insult him many a time by offering him liquor, argue with him asserting his anti-brahminic viewpoints and threaten him that he would roll up his “brahmin respectability and throw it away for a little bit of pleasure with one female,” Praneshacharaya never shouted back. Rather out of compassion to reform him, he would observe fast for two days a week to bring the lamb going astray back to the fold of the unprotesting ritualistic brahminic order which alone could redeem him. Praneshacharaya’s commitment to conform to the old order which alone was held right and pure and Naranappa’s challenging it, demanding a change in it as per the changing times and on humanitarian ground, rising above the caste defined values of samskaras had been the focus of Naranappa’s arguments which Praneshacharaya used to listen patiently rather pitying the offender.

Naranappa was condemned during his life time for his unsamskari views and ways, had died unredeemed in spite of Praneshacharaya’s efforts and now even his dead body has created a problem for the samskari brahmins leaving them hungry and angry because they can not eat and perform the daily rituals till a brahmin's corpse is cremated. Though Naranappa had given up brahminhood yet the brahminhood had not left him.

By presenting the humane attitude, good intentions and acts of compassion of Naranappa’s concubine Chandri in various situations, who is considered un-samskari, impure, unrefined, uncultured because of her birth from a prostitute’s womb Murthy has exposed foolish adherence to caste prescribed rituals. Caste, social-status and profession wise Chandri is a whore, an outcaste and is dubbed by brahmins and their wives as “Mari,” the dark goddess of death , plague, “a seducing witch” whose face should be branded since she had ruined Naranappa’s married life and was mainly interested in his property and gold, and his corpse was lying “around like this without even the benefit of a rite”

only because of her having distracted him from the path of righteousness. These comments of the samskari men and women place Chandri in her defined caste and social order because of which she has to bear their wrath. But if we analyze her role, conduct, intentions, attitudes and actions and her impressions on a few characters in the novel, these reveal her to be a grateful , kind, compassionate, humane, refined, cultured woman, in other words a samskari human being as compared to the male and female brahmin characters in the novel, who boast of their high birth and samskars but actually are the persistent committers of seven deadly sins.

Being a prostitute by class and caste, she is treated as the ‘other’ among the community of upper caste Brahmins. She holds a marginalized status in that society but Naranappa had never ill-treated her. He had rather defended his living with her and deserting his wife saying “who would live with a woman who can’t give you pleasure?” He had justified his relations with her in the light of such relations of the Hindu sages mentioned in the Puranas and other holy texts from which Praneshacharaya himself used to illuminate and explicate the passages describing the beauty of the female body which had made many a sage like Parashara, Vishvamisra, Shankara have illicit sexual union in whom the fellow brahmins took much pride clamouring themselves to be their proud descendents. Durgabhatta, a brahmin from the smarta brahmin sect considered somewhat lower to Madhva brahmin caste, too approved of Naranappa -Chandri relationship in the light of the conduct of their sages, not to favour Chandri but only to check and measure “ the rival sect’s orthodoxy with a questioning eye” whose many members visited the prostitutes quite often. Though the samskari Brahmins used to loathe and denounce Naranappa in public for his immoral living but like many other's the middle aged and young brahmins of this and other agarharas envied him for possessing such a beauty like Chandri and secretly desired her. Durgabhatta even ogled at her when after Narayana’s death she was standing in a corner, aloof and isolated with her head covered and who had seldom moved out of

the house when Narayana was alive. Shripati, Lakshamana's son-in-law, whose wife Lilavati denied him physical pleasure as a punishment on her mother's advice, the formula she had applied on her husband also, secretly satisfied his lust with the low caste sweeper girl Belli off and on, talks very high of Chandri's humane qualities and proves her more cultured and refined than the wives of brahmins in many respects.

Chandri used to dissuade Naranappa from eating the food cooked by her, eating fish and meat as it was not allowed in his dharma but he had never bothered about these prohibitions calling these "sheer pigheadedness" and shared his food and joy with her. She also used to advise Naranappa to be respectful towards the Acharaya and behave properly with him. Though Chandri's relationship with Narayana was not socially approved yet both of them had lived happily for ten years as if made for each other. She had neither demanded anything from Naranappa nor had she meddled with his other affairs. She had never tried to transgress her caste limits as she was aware of his and her own caste status. Though she had behaved like a cultured woman Narayana did not marry her and visited other prostitutes also.

Through Chandri's reveries and day-dreaming we are also made aware of the fate and plight of women of her class "ever auspicious, daily-wedded, the one without widowhood" who could not marry in the caste-defined set up and whose survival depended only on their remaining ever beautiful. She, like every woman, desires to be a mother. The only regret she has from this relationship is that in spite of her stay with Naranappa for ten long years "she still hadn't had a child" and feels, "She had got everything, yet had nothing" (*Samskara*;54). She thinks, "If she had borne a son, he could have become a great musician: if a daughter, she could have taught her to dance, classical style" (*Samskara*: 54). What is important here is that in spite of her having been born in a low caste family she has progressive thinking of educating her children without any discrimination. Though not a legally wedded wife, she is not a money minting prostitute as declared by the

brahmin women in the agrahara but a sincere human being. Whereas other samskari brahmins are unwilling to perform Naranappa's samskar because of many religious and property related reasons, it is Chandri only who is anxious and worried about the plague-hit corpse of her paramour and wants it to be cremated as per the proper rites to help his salvation. No fellow brahmin is bothered about this thing for Naranappa. What they are worried about is the urgency of food, their loss of brahminhood and excommunication by their Guru if they perform the rites unless clarified by Praneshacharaya after consulting the Books.

Even when the question of meeting the expenses of the funeral obsequies of Naranappa is raised, it is she who comes forward, removes all her gold and offers it to Praneshacharaya to meet the total expenses for the proper rites of the man who had given her all the comforts and joys. The hypocrisy, greed, hatred, selfishness and jealousies of these samskari brahmins who are expected to be above these base feelings are exposed when instead of appreciating her act of offering her gold, Durgabhatta and Lakshamana and their wives, Sitadevi and Anasuya respectively (mythical names ironically used) stare at the heap of gold worth two thousand rupees and quarrel over the possession of this gold. These two brahmin wives who had earlier warned their husbands, "the Guru will excommunicate you," now have persuaded them individually to claim before Praneshacharaya their rights as kins to cremate the dead body of Naranappa so that Chandri's gold could come to them. It is also interesting to observe that now instead of blaming Chandri for Naranappa's pollution, they start accusing each other for the nefarious practices and intentions with regard to Naranappa to claim his property. Praneshacharaya grows anxious: "Why did Chandri spoil everything with her good intentions?" (*Samskara*:10) and he also starts realizing the sins of his fellow Brahmins. We see that this first act of Chandri of "compassion" which is called "human gold" has "exposed the vacuity of the order" (Sundari : 68). Praneshacharaya moved by this act of hers appreciates it before his invalid wife, Bhagirathi : "...how pure Chandri's heart was, how she laid down all her gold and what new

complications arose from that generous act” (*Samskara*:20). He also becomes aware of the greed of the fellow brahmins. This lust for money becomes apparent in the Guru of Madhvas also whom the brahmins ultimately visit to settle the issue of Naranappa’s cremation. He wants the entire property of Naranappa to be attached to the monastery and threatens the brahmins of their excommunication if the money was donated somewhere else. After Naranappa’s death and the new problem generated due to the greed of the brahmins, it is Praneshacharaya alone who is compassionate towards Chandri in her distress and returns her gold saying, “Naranappa is dead. But you’ve your life to live” (*Samskara* : 49).

In this scenario, no brahmin is bothered about Naranappa’s corpse or his entry to heaven or about the dilemma of Praneshacharaya who has been struggling hard to find the right defined answer from the Books of Law. Their concern is only food and to get rid of the dead body at the earliest. Here too Chandri is shown full of pity and compassion for the man who has been suffering for others. When he has gone to the Maruti temple to seek the answer from the god Maruti so that the brahmins could cremate the body and take food, she carries plantains in the corner of her sari and waits for him under a tree. She remembers the words of her mother who used to say “prostitutes should get pregnant by such holy men” and she realizes, “Such a man was Acharaya, he had such virtues; he glowed. But one had to be lucky to be blessed by such people” (*Samskara*: 46), though she has no intention of entrapping him. On Acharaya’s coming back from the temple without finding any answer, she follows him in the darkness and falls at his feet for seeking his blessings. While lifting her up, he feels the warmth of her body and full breasts. Chandri holds him down, gives him plantains to eat and caresses him. This tender love leads them to have sexual union. On waking up, he feels himself fallen but does not “scold” or “despise” her for this. Rather he tells her that now he had lost the authority to decide for the agrahara and this act must be confessed before the agrahara gathering. He even says, “If I don’t have the courage

to speak, tomorrow you must speak out. I’m ready to do the funeral rites myself.” She lets him go ahead and on reaching the agrahara goes to the room where Naranappa’s rotting, stinking body is lying and considers it her duty to cremate it.

Through Chandri’s reflections here Anantha Murthy digs at the frivolity of the rigid religion and caste based structures built and fussed about. On seeing Naranappa’s decaying corpse she ruminates, “That’s not her lover Naranappa. It’s neither brahmin nor shudra. A carcass. A stinking rotting carcass.” (*Samskara*; 70) over which so much furore was being created. Gathering courage, she goes alone in the night to the cart-man Sheshappa’s house and on his refusal to meddle with “a brahmin corpse” she seeks the help of a Muslim fish merchant Ahmad Bari (an outcaste for brahmins), a friend of Naranappa whom he had helped with a small loan to buy oxen when he was bankrupt, to cremate the dead body in the dark of night with the firewood lying in her house. No brahmin knows about this fact and the samskari brahmins including Praneshacharaya keep on wriggling over the ritual sanctities- samskaras- foolishly. Through, this, another humane act, she breaks the tradition and caste barriers like Naranappa and even “gets the better of Praneshacharaya” and “exposes the inhumanity of orthodox Brahmanism that permitted itself to be trapped in ritual hairsplitting when faced with life-and-death issues” (Parthasarthy :195-96). After cremation, she weeps to her heart’s desire for Naranappa, collects her clothes, money and gold and leaves in the dark to travel by road to catch a bus in the morning for Kundapura without informing Praneshacharaya about the cremation and her plan to depart. Instead of taking advantage of the situation to blackmail Praneshacharaya and see Praneshacharaya’s humiliation in front of others if he spoke about the last night’s act, her decision to leave the place quietly speaks of her good samskaras as compared to those of Praneshacharaya’s samskari fellow brahmins who would have left no stone unturned to downgrade him on knowing his inadvertent act. Her decision of even not meeting him before her leaving as it would make such a noble man feel small

before her, too is an indicator of her greatness as a human being and regard for the genuine goodness of the Acharaya and his kindness towards her throughout. Thus we see that Chandri's and Ahmad Beri's belonging to a lower caste in no way make them base and lower human beings which they are in the eyes of high caste brahmins. Rather they possess the basic human quality. "Compassion, the right way of dharma, being human- Brahmin hood"(Samskara:48) which the other samskari brahmins except Praneshacharaya lack in this text.

Though Chandri leaves the stage at this point right in the middle of the text and we are not told of her whereabouts afterwards but she leaves a great impact on the mind of Praneshacharaya, after exposing him to the world of flesh. His encounter with Chandri proves a turning point in his life. After cremating his wife who had died of plague, he leaves the agrahara as he cannot face people who had revered him as the most virtuous person. Though he flees from the surroundings, he cannot flee from himself. Through a peep into his mind we are shown the fraud of asceticism practised by him. He had made a choiced marriage with an invalid woman as it would keep him away from the lust and his asceticism and service of her would surely guarantee him a passport to heaven and a seat there. Now his irresistible desire for touching Chandri's full breasts or even of the lowcaste Belli and other young women, and his fear of being discovered for his sexual act with Chandri and roaming around aimlessly bring a moral crisis for him putting him in further dilemmas, conflicts and turmoil which have been shown through a series of interior monologues and self introspections of the Acharaya. He starts realizing the duplicity in his life, his dwindling between "asceticism and eroticism," "dharma and kama" and he feels himself "Hung- suspended under two truths like ' Trishanku'" (Samskara:92). His contact with Chandri makes him aware of the difference between the world of beauty which he now starts admiring and desiring and that of ugliness which he despises now. He starts understanding the willing submission of the ancient sages of the

Hindu mythology and that of his studious ashram friend Mahabala and of Naranappa to the female beauty. He also finds Naranappa having victory over him who had earlier challenged him and wanted Praneshacharaya to listen to others' experiences and viewpoints also. His strenuous struggle with himself while passing through the world of real life's ordinary experiences in the company of Putta in their beauty, ugliness and ruthlessness, which he had not desired or experienced earlier living in his samskara embowered ivory tower and his resolution to own the responsibility of his action boldly and his reaching the decision of living with Chandri openly like Naranappa as this way he will "remake" himself as a human being shows him now a reborn person " a trija, thrice born." This transformation (samskara) of Praneshacharaya as a human being is a positive step towards correcting the falling human standards in that agrahara. He gets disillusioned "regarding the ethics he had strongly favored and preached till then. The shift of ethics from the socialistic and religious to existential is quite prominent from this stage" ( Bhat : 7). Now he starts thinking in terms of the existence of the individual as a free and responsible person.

Thus we see that through the good intentioned humane acts of the subaltern Chandri, Anantha Murthy brings forth the hypocrisy and shams of the decadent brahminic order. By showing the transformation of Praneshacharaya he also floats his reformative vision of rising above the caste barriers, developing humane approach, of the rehabilitation of the prostitutes like Chandri. If the learned and virtuous religious men take lead in this connection, the victimization of the women of this class will surely end. But whether Praneshacharaya will have the courage to go to Kundapura by breaking the tight shackles of the samskaras of his caste, own Chandri and her child socially and legally or he will just keep her as a keep like Naranappa or Mahabala, is a question mark because in the end of the narrative he is shown still grappling with himself "How can I face all those brahmins alone?"

(*Samskara*: 137). The “anxious, expectant” Praneshacharaya sits in the lorry going to Durvasapuram, and the narrative ends with a question mark: “He will travel, for another four or five hours. Then, after that, what?” In fact, this is the dilemma of everyman of Praneshacharaya’s mental make up and social status in the given socio cultural milieu. Without answering them, the text like, Praneshacharaya, leaves us with two other questions : (i) what will be the fate of Praneshacharaya if he confesses his act and announces his decision ? and (ii) what should brahmins do when confronted with the confession of Praneshacharaya?

Thus we find that “ While narrating this tale, the author raises several questions and highlights various conflicts and contrasts in society, but it ends without offering any specific solution. Indeed, it confirms that there is no specific solution” (*Samskara*, a Book Review, Meghdutam.com) because it was very difficult to break the established caste and social orders and live in total defiance in the times when the novel was written. Still we can say that though Anantha Murthy has not given any overt solutions to the questions raised in the text or provided a set of alternative order but by showing the sowing of seeds of transformation in the religious leader of a rigid caste order and thus preparing him for bringing a change in the sick social system , the writer has conveyed his message. Moreover, even if he has succeeded in raising questions in the readers’ minds regarding the caste based rotting orders which need to make collective introspections , re-examine and re-define their caste ordained value system , the task of the literary text as means of social change gets well performed. Though the text does not lay down the defined answers about samskaras but to the two questions (i) who is a true samskari? and (ii) does your birth or caste determine your samskaras or your humane attitudes and actions? there can not be two answers. The latter question implies the most probable answer to the problematic of samskara dealt with in this text.

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## Four Poems

*Kulbhushan Kushal*

### The Hand

I am looking  
For a hand  
Tampered in fire  
Graduated to fly  
On high altitudes  
Of raw passions  
A hand that weaves  
Rainbow for nights

I look for a hand  
With a touch  
To transform  
My agonies  
To bleeding metaphors  
Sobbing images

I look for a hand  
With experience of writing  
Poems on the waves  
Carving paintings  
On the mountains  
Launching birds  
In the dreaded storms

A hand that holds tight  
My nerves  
Languishing  
Affectionately exiled  
In dark dungeons

The crimson fragments  
Of my nightmares  
Insist not to kiss  
Cajole me not  
Out of stupor  
My thoughts rush  
To deserts  
My eyes dance  
On the burning rocks

My heart often  
Misses throbs  
The unsteady lines  
On the E.C. G.  
Are indicators  
Of the ecstasy  
Of a broken heart  
Sighing deep  
Looking at blooming dawns  
And aimlessly scattering  
Multi colored hues

In the evenings  
On the lonely seashore  
The old sun  
Is now tired  
Who will leap for him  
In the ferocious waves  
Ready to swallow  
My smiling moods

Friends since long  
Have crossed my name  
From their list  
Of active contacts  
They have thrown away  
All my letters  
In the sulky archives

And reluctantly pay homage  
To my passion  
Telling stories  
Of my wanton acts  
Editing all details  
To their wives  
In their vacant evenings  
They hate me for my guts

I look for a hand  
That may just reign  
My horses  
Restless to fly  
On the metallic roads  
Leading to bloody markets  
No different than  
Red-light areas  
With yellow faces  
And blue eyes

The sin is sacred  
Treasure it please  
This alone shall open  
For you the windows  
To heaven  
And then you will be launched  
To the worlds  
Of untainted bliss

You will discover then  
How discourteous are  
Our courtesies  
How hollow  
Our gratitude  
The smile of a cobra  
Is better  
Than your contrived thank you

And all those foolish gifts  
You exchange  
In the marriage parties  
Are hackneyed tricks  
To register your presence  
A cheap gimmick it is

Better you look straight  
Cleanse your heart  
Out of jealousy  
Transfuse your blood  
And detoxify  
The bastard lust  
Running in your veins

It's time  
Stop looking for hands  
Mere puppets hands are  
Dictated by the clever thoughts  
And schematic minds

Look into the eyes  
Better listen to the ears  
Witnesses to the murky games  
And loving shames  
The insults, which you cherish  
In your heart  
Vomit them out  
Roar like a lion  
In the busy marts  
And announce

I am here  
To hold your hand

## Darkness

The darkness  
In the house of lights  
Is no stranger

For years  
I have seen her face  
Her tender smile  
Gentle gestures  
Bright shining eyes

Her dazzling songs  
I have often heard  
In those pensive  
Rainy seasons  
When frogs prefer  
To jump out of pounds  
And hop on  
The banks of rivulets

She shrinks  
In my cupboards  
She stretches  
On my beds  
Her crimson skin  
Her crimson color  
Are too inviting

This darkness resembles  
The miniature paintings  
Carved in some distant caves  
In the snow clad Himalayas

Carved on the walls  
On the relics of temples  
Of Harapa and Mohanjodaro

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Are her varied moods  
She invades my being  
Splashing laughter  
Sprinkling smiles  
The fragrant tresses of her hair  
Swing in my mind

In some stormy nights  
When the trees dance wild  
And the birds  
After a few initial flutters  
Stay put in their nests  
And the wind shrieks  
Like a witch  
Inviting demons  
To the festival of death  
I have often met her  
In those serpentine domes  
Echoing the silences  
Of mute metaphors

The other day  
I met her  
On the malls of Simla  
Buying toiletries  
And perfumes

I have met her  
In the serpentine narratives  
Nibbling interlinkages  
Of episodes  
Shadowing the archtonic structures  
And the minds of the characters

At nights  
Darkness is hyperactive  
Like a seasoned witch  
She prepares her potions

And lotions  
Mixing history and fantasy  
Fantastic structures  
She weaves  
To engage the readers  
Her charms lure us  
To labyrinthine of romances  
Pictorially depicting  
The shades of shadows  
And the color of the rain

She escorts us  
To the dancing bars  
To the sea of  
Thrills and frills  
Her presence is dear to me  
Her symphonies sooth my nerves  
Her melancholic symphonies  
Add brilliance to the songs  
I will not exile her  
To the lovely woods

Nor shall I  
Throw her out  
From the house of lights  
She plays with me  
In vacant afternoons  
A game of love

She always wins  
And I always lose  
The darkness  
In the house of light  
Is dear to me

## The Perils Ahead

You thought  
I am a parrot  
Eager to fly  
Across heavens

You divined  
My lusty thirsts  
To mingle  
With tribal folks  
And the clan  
Of shepherds  
In the far off valleys

You fathomed my dreams  
To sleep in relics  
Pining to see  
The fabulous fairies  
Dancing  
In the secluded spots  
In far off jungles  
Haunted by spirits

You perhaps knew  
My wild thirst  
Clamoring to be quenched  
In the whirlpool of knowledge

You also could see  
A bright brilliant snake  
Dancing in my mind  
With a ferocious tongue  
To lick the flesh  
Of wanton bodies  
And to kiss  
The lips of the glowing damsels

You rightly quizzed my feelings  
To embrace  
The naked dreams  
And scatter the seeds in  
Barren deserts

You could imagine  
All the dangers  
Perils unknown  
The contagious diseases  
I will contract  
With the vulnerable contact of flesh

You could see  
The tombs in the wombs  
Your innocent mind was  
Too strange  
For you to understand  
The varieties of stratagems  
The grammar of deceptions  
And the sham of receptions

How well you could see  
The limits of my intelligence  
And the fertility  
Of their resourcefulness  
To net me  
In their wily plots

You could perceive with ease  
How I shall be robbed  
In the day night  
How the sirens will suck my blood  
And friends will say  
A hurried goodbye  
When the pleasantries are over

The measured exchanges  
Of incremental doses of love

You knew I hate

You thought  
I am a parrot  
And tender are my wings

You thought my color is my enemy  
And the red beak is no good  
For the iron nets  
And the golden locks

You endlessly repeated  
The lullabies intelligently scripting  
The message  
In the nonsensical verses I heard  
But cared not

Now in deep trouble I am  
Lost in the maze of meanings  
And the shower of petals  
Honors make me restless  
I read traps  
In their maps  
And designs in their desires

You rightly thought  
I am a parrot  
Destined to peck  
The slices of honors  
And the golden locks

Now I often hear those lullabies  
I care for them  
But dare I understand  
The perils ahead?

## Missed Calls

Whose missed calls are these

I often look at the missed calls and  
Wonder whose missed calls are these  
May be the missed calls from friends  
Swimming across the rivers deep  
Confronting whales and sharks

Perhaps they wish to share  
The thrills of swim  
Perhaps the metallic tiredness in their arms  
They wish to talk about  
Perhaps the knocking dreams  
At the doors of their minds  
They wish to share  
A dream to fly beyond the rocks  
Beyond the clouds  
Beyond the deserts  
And beyond the howling sky strippers

May be they wish to share their fright  
Confronting a whale  
Looking temptingly in their eyes  
Before a leap to swallow their bodies  
Or perhaps they wish to talk about  
The noisy sharks just arrived  
To take them deeper into the sea  
To romantic chambers of sirens  
For the dance of death

Or perhaps they wish to share  
Simmering agony in their hearts  
For nursing the deep wounds in their soul  
Perhaps they wish to talk about  
Their foolish negotiations and stupid deals  
They finalized last month  
For mortgaging their conscience

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For a few dollars and shining pounds  
Perhaps they wish to betray a secret  
Carved deep in their hearts  
A secret chasing them like a shadow  
In the dazzling days

May be the missed calls from my enemies  
Who wish to challenge me  
To a fight in an arena  
Again boasting of their power and guile

May be the missed calls from the parrots  
Who have lost their way to nests  
In the stormy summers  
Since many days I have not checked  
These missed calls

I let you know more details  
After checking tomorrow morning  
Meanwhile let's miss  
These missed calls.

And grim dark nights

A secret of crimson adultery  
And their attempts to molest  
The raw green beauty of flowers  
In far off jungles  
Perhaps they simply wish to say hello  
To know about my thinking graph  
To have a peep into my dreams  
And my plans for years ahead

These may be the missed calls  
From my departed uncle and dear aunts  
Sitting in heaven or perhaps in hell  
Regretting their loveless embraces  
And subtle design to trap me  
In their cunning craft

## **Kulbhushan Kushal's *Rainbow on Rocks* : A Study**

–*Rishi Kumar Nagar*

The anthology, *Rainbow on Rocks* by Kulbhushan Kushal is a fabulous specimen of craftsmanship and a variety of themes. It does have the rainbow colours of rich imagination in it as well as the rock of harsh realities on which the happiness of mankind bases itself. The poet has befittingly touched new horizons embedded with new meanings through his poems.

The poet openly declares that he wants to "whip the words, to confess their crimes." His mission is, indeed, "exploring types and puncturing archetypes." It seems, poetry for him is the lava of imagination whose eruption prevents an earthquake as exemplified in one of his poems, "**Poetry**" : "Poetry is the song of thisty oceans dancing on silent rocks." He is, no doubt, a great optimist when he finds poetry singing on the rocks.

Kushal has effectively drawn imagery from different branches of Science, such as physics, mathematics, chemistry, astronomy and geography etc. "Geometry...loaded with prepositions...triangles never staying contended, ever dreaming of being rectangles (**Raw Deals**), "refracts flimsy smiles...on the boiling sands", "...a black cobra...rocketing its hood" (**Mysterious Designs**) are a few examples. The poet has a knack of creating a microcosm out of a macrocosm. At times, he talks of the degenrated state of human predicament, "for honey you need not practice hard brahmcharya...we fish status through strategies...they are injected in our veins" (**Strange Times**). It is true of man of the day who preoccupies himself in mammon worship.

Kushal does not make promise to bring about an overnight transformation or a revolution in society. He envisages to complete his mission of changing the society slowly but steadily as he says in "**Barren Successes**" : "This is not a season for commitments, it is not time to imagine that deliverance is guaranteed, Louder the chant, fainter, the knock for salvation." Indeed, in modern times, the Kalayuga, "Angad is now in the archives" and there is "not a single follower after him." This shows how deep the poet has delved to concretise his viewpoint. Angad is not only a mythological character but a resolute who knows his duty and does perform it. Here the poet seems standing with a Punjabi poet who says, *Meri eh ardass hai Nanak, is dharti te aayeen na Baba, tere kahe kise nahi lagna, aiven na kand luayeen Baba*. It is not pessimism but a distant ray of hope that sustains life in the poems of Kulbhushan Kushal.

The poet is duly concerned with the basic problems and difficulties like hunger faced by the common man. He talks of it in "**Strange Times**", and says "think hunger/hunger we receive/hunger we are/and to hunger we returnest." Here the poet seems to reflect rich Indian religious culture. His words echo Tulsidas's views expressed in his immortal epic, the *Ramacharitmanas*, in which he says "*Jhoothahe lena jhoothahe dena, jhoothahe bhojan jhooth chabena*" : one is surrounded by lies and one tells a lie to kill one's physical, emotional, social and of course, economic hunger. When he says *Three tulsī leaves with a mantra (Mysterious Designs)* can cure a coughing child, he is back again, deeply rooted in his culture rich of folk wisdom and it brings his firm faith in Indian traditional culture. It also speaks of a natural and innocent relationship, an undemanding and uncompromising love of a mother for her child often found in Indian philosophical thought.

Kushal's poems express his deep understanding of Indian mythology. He talks of Neelkantha, Shiva, Buddha, Pooran, Manthan, Maya, Chanakya, Angad, Kauravas, Pandavas, Raja Harishchandra,

Prithvi Raj Chauhan, Padmini, Madhubala, Roop Basant etc., with such an ease that one gets at once transported to those magical times. The poet is again found deeply rooted in the culture and traditions and is seen seeking refuge under the Pipal and Banyan signifying rich Indian traditions. He uses images from common human experience. For example, "Grandfather fiddling with his hooka" in **Dark Rainbow**, "song of beggars" in **Reluctant Autumns** and "pitchers on their heads... the caravan singing melodies" in **Mysterious Designs** and in one of his poems he refers to the impact of art on tender minds in traditional rural India.

Kushal is an exponent of symbolism for whom to suggest is to create and to name is to destroy. He has emphatically used animal and bird symbols throughout his poems, cobra, glowworms, fish swarm, green parrots, sirens-nymphs, termites, donkeys, phoenix, cuckoo, nightingales etc. are the images that have the quality to resonate forever in the minds and hearts of the readers like the music of the morning starts. The poet has also kept pace with the latest developments around him when he talks of the modern newspapers and points of view. In **Invocation** he says, "I presume the stories are for the idle folks... their textures stay active in our minds but they constrict our vision."

The poet in "**Tender Hell**" talks about a lot of things of the past and today. Sometimes one finds it difficult to agree with his ideas literally. For example, he says, 'fatherhood is no achievement and so is true of son-hood.' But it is a divine message which has been accepted by mankind since its inception-bearing a child is not merely an earthly affair but the handing over of duties, samskaras to the next generation. Even 'the damsels of Vrindavan', that the poet refers to, were not 'lost' in any 'dark ecstasy' only. Their love for the Lord was not carnal desire of flesh but soul stirring platonic love. The very opening lines of this poem do not seem to stand with the poet. He says, "Perhaps never before the words have suffered meaning haemorrhage and nerve fracture." On the other hand, the poet, throughout his poems has linked

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himself with his rich and glorious past. Even the past has witnessed and suffered the meaning haemorrhage and nerve fracture. In the Mahabharata (Lord Krishna and Arjuna have references in the subsequent stanzas of the poem), the meaning of Ashwatthama was chewed before Dronacharya to win the battle. Again, the poet says strange are the 'colours and designs of perversity'. It is not in modern times only that perversity changes its colours. Since ages it has been changing its face; secondly, perversity in itself has always been an unacceptable phenomenon, a subtle design of relationships. Though perversity in itself seems to have maintained the same nature the poet seems to find it more damaging in present times.

The poet has successfully woven in the warp and woof the beautiful network of suggestive words, using the renowned Shakespearean and Marlowian style of poetry that is Blank Verse, in most of his poems. Dr. Raghubir Singh in his translation (**Ambient Leaves**) of famous Punjabi poet Prof. Mohan Singh's poetry, is found standing with Kushal who has juxtaposed fancy, imagination and reality in the fabric of his poems.

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## **The Serpent or the Rope (A Short Story)**

*–N. K. Neb*

“In the chequered darkness of the room I could not ascertain the authenticity of my vision. My blurred vision and the snake fear making my legs tremble exhorted me to recognize the limply lying object as a snake. The moment did not allow me to get hold of my own reasoning or the advice of well wishers. The earlier stories about snake bites killing people haunted my mind. The confusion, ridden with fear, spurred me to shun my fear with violence unprecedented.”

The diary entry compelled me to analyse its contents and I was led to the network of the memory lanes that took me years back to the times haunted by terror, mistrust, disloyalty and lovelessness. Now I recollect the incidents to make some sense of the awe-inspiring happening for which I have been finding various explanations since then.

People sitting in the pyol talked of incessant rains. The crops drowned and destroyed, cattle famished and thinned, people sympathetic and helping but helpless, shared not only grief but food and the useful things to keep one another alive. Rajeshwar comes to call me to go out to kill time with some pleasant pastime. The practice being a leisurely stroll along the canal was to be postponed due to the paths covered with flood water, the remains of trees and carcasses of birds and animals. Deciding to change the route we move towards the old temple beside the mosque. The temple priest smiles, hands over the consecrated food and showers blessings on us both. The muezin, free after the mid-day call to the pious ones to offer the namaz, uttering the words wishing

the well being of all, comments "Sons true to your fathers, move together like them. May Allah keep you in the same spirit for the times immemorial : joys and sorrows you share of others too as your elders have been doing. Bade Khan Sahib and Maheshwar Partap have just gone. They were sitting here talking of you, their sons, and about the joint efforts they tend to make for both of your families in this time of crisis. Jealous people fail to realize the blessings of the Almighty favouring the ones who care for others."

After spending about two hours in the pious company of these religious heads we thought it fit to return home. After a few steps we were surprised to see Julekhan running towards us, breathless gesticulating to make us run and reach her immediately, "Uncle Abid, ..... attacked .... father ..... blames-stealing fire wood ..... and handing over to uncle Maheshwar nobody dares ..... stop him. He has gone to bring a stick and may unleash violence with his deadly stick." We ran to the street and saw Abid furious, abusing loudly and brandishing the heavy stick. Uncle Maheshwar was seen standing with my father in the open space in front of the street. Awe stricken people watched, tied lips, words lost, courage frozen. My father was trying to reason with him. But suddenly Abid raised his stick to deliver a blow to uncle. Father, moved by the selfless love of a friend, covered uncle Maheshwar and put himself over uncle covering his body. Blinded by anger and jealousy for the duo's love Abid did not hesitate. The blow landed on father's back. A cry of pain rent the sky. Abid realizing the result of the blow got frightened as he thought that he might have killed my father. We could see this from the distance we were yet to cover. Abid turned back and took to his heels still simmering with rage. Uncle Maheshwar, pulling himself out from under the flat lying body of my father, coaxed him for taking the blow in his place and horrified at the fear that the unexpected may not have happened started weeping bitterly pulling his hair in frenzy, cursing Abid, his own self and lamenting. Fortunately,

the groans of my father confirmed his being alive. Maheshwar uncle carried my father on his back and took him to our home. The village quack arrived, administered self-made potions. Expressed his worried opinion and advised to take father to the city hospital.

Everybody in the village was stunned over the developments. Some came to our house to express their concern. Some talked about Abid's ruthlessness in a subdued tone. Others uttered invocation to God to save the pious man. All of them were quite impressed and were appreciative of my father's concern for his friend. Uncle Maheshwar was almost uncontrollable with his tears and the whole of uncle's family had taken over the responsibility of looking after my father. Aunt Sumitra was sitting huddled with my mother and my two sisters, continuously praying through their tears for the safety of my father. Rajeshwar and I were busy attending to the people who come to ask after my father's health. After half an hour uncle Maheshwar asked us to bring a sturdy cot and we put father on it. Accompanied by our neighbours, we carried the cot and moved out of the village. Plodding through water we reached the Grand Trunk Road, five k.m., away, and hired a taxi to take him to the nearby town in a small hospital.

Uncle Maheshwar, his son Rajeshwar and I kept watch and stayed in the hospital for six days. During our stay aunt Sumitra accompanied by my mother would come daily to bring food and other necessary things. The day father was allowed to talk to us he embraced Maheshwar uncle and was still worried if some harm had come to his dear friend. Their friendly concern moved all the people around to tears. Father wanted his friend always to sit beside him. Now sometimes their other common friends taunted them by calling them a 'well adjusted couple' or joked saying, 'made for each other'. On the seventh day we came home. Father and uncle Maheshwar visited the twin religious places in the village to express their thanks. Abid was called in the village assembly and asked to seek apology and bear the medical expenses and pay a penalty of Rs. 500 to be equally shared by the two religious places.

After about two months of this incident and the evaporation of water from all around the village a strange kind of change was felt not only in the atmosphere but also in the people of the village. Duni Chand was one of the sources that informed about the unbelievable but painful and seemingly possible developments that were supposed to be in the offing. Duni Chand was usually mocked at by the people for spreading rumours. Whenever someone asked about his whereabouts the others would amusingly say, "He is manufacturing news for us." He was in the habit of continuously moving the switch of the radio in search of news-broadcasting stations. Most of his time in the village was spent in the company of this talking machine - as most of the people called it - or serving 'manufactured' news to the people collected under the banyan tree at noon. It was more a source of entertainment for the people than the source of authentic news. In spite of their casual attitude towards 'Duni Chand news' people often consulted him in different matters. He was, in a way, considered to be cut above others for his daily visits to the nearby villages that he had to undertake in order to supply tea leaves at small tea stalls and grocery shops. He had seen and observed different types of people and had known more of life all around than any other villager. Earlier he used to bring news related to different quarrels, land transactions, animal fairs and the new things he had seen in different villages. Now all of a sudden, there was something sinister in his conversation and the way he disclosed some unseen, impending doom sometimes made him look forlorn and lost.

One day, he suddenly started cursing the English Government and different leaders of the country who were generally praised by him earlier. It was something strange and confusing to all the people assembled there. He was a known sympathiser of the Congress and a staunch supporter of the Freedom Movement and had a great respect for the national leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, and Mohammad Ali Jinnah. His outburst against the national leaders struck a note of discord and

hinted at something ominous. When the people probed further, he went away avoiding their questioning looks. Day by day the atmosphere grew grim and almost all the people in the village were aware of the coming independence with the gloom of partition. People's attitude, as the news of the impending catastrophe spread, witnessed an unprecedented sense of suspicion. Men women and children wore a dazed look. Men discussing 'something' looked strange to the children. They did not know what their parents had suddenly started planning. Perhaps there was some invisible supernatural calamity to befall or the satygrahis were to visit their place or some illegal practice was going to be initiated. Children could not remain oblivious to this. Now they were asked to play with their 'own brethren'.

Now Chacha Duni Chand no longer addressed the common audience. His news had acquired specific significance for a particular group in the village. It was for the first time that people seemed to have started thinking in terms of 'groups' instead of the village as a complete and indivisible unit. One day, when Rajeshwar and I were on our usual stroll, we saw Maula Baksh, Sheikh Abu, Ahmad, Dhsotam Sai and Hanif sitting huddled in the room adjoining the mosque discussing something serious with the muazin. Sitting together of Sheikh Abu and Maula Baksh was beyond my understanding. They had been deadly enemies and had not shared a word for the last six years. Now all of them seemed to be planning for some common cause. The way they were sitting made it convenient for them to keep watch while they discussed their 'urgent' matter. As soon as they saw us approaching they became silent. When Rajeshwar was sent away to draw a bucket of water out of the well for the temple priest, all of them came to me. The only thing they said in my presence was, "We will approach Bade Khan Sahib and Abid also. After all blood is thicker than water. We live or perish together." I was puzzled over their obscure references and subtle suggestions of some crisis that may befall in the near future.

When Rjaeshwar joined us, their response to his greetings lacked the earlier warmth. Instead of sharing any common matter or usual small talk they dispersed in haste.

Rajeshwar and I had noticed the change in their behaviour. But for some unknown, unpleasant feeling we did not talk about it. It was for the first time that we kept walking back home without talking about anything. Our silence seemed roaring and unusually ominous. We departed with a feeling of unusual void. I came home. My father was lying on a cot and my mother was sitting beside him. The unease was quite visible from their faces. After a few moments of overwhelming silence my mother gesticulated to call me to the other room, closed the door carefully and said, "Times have changed my son. Your father is quite upset. He has come to learn about something terrible. If it is true, we all are doomed. People say all of us, the Muslims, will have to leave this place and go. There will be a separate nation for us. They call it Pakistan. Nobody is yet sure when this cursed thing is going to take place. They do not even know the exact location and the boundary of this place. But everybody is in a fix. Your father is not ready to believe it. He says, 'How can they ask us to go from our own homes to an unknown place. We have been living here since ages, there has been no trouble at all. All are living like brothers. Then what is the need or logic of this new country. Even if they want to make a separate country for us we are not to go there at any cost. But I have been told by our 'own' people that such a thing is likely to happen. My son, you too should realize the danger involved in the things going to take place and desist from roaming with your friend. 'Our people' too have expressed their displeasure over it and even warned us if anything goes amiss." She peeped through the door to see outside and started again, "I know your love for your friend and the association of our families, yet I advise you to avoid going out with him. Now we are looked upon with suspicion due to our intimacy with Rajeshwar and his family. Your father is not

ready to listen to my entreaties. My son, please think about it and ask your father also to exercise restraint on his activities." Mother wanted to go on talking about it, to make me realize the horror of the expected doom but I did not even want to talk about this unpalatable thing. I nodded just to assure her that I will follow her advice though I did not talk about it to my father.

After two days Sheikh Abu, who had gone to a nearby village to buy seed, was surrounded by men and he looked dazed while telling the gathering what he had learnt. People listened with horrified expressions on their faces when he told with recurrent pauses, "They have ... started packing and collecting valuable things .. our people are getting ready to leave.... They have told me, we are to leave this place... and go across Dera Baba Nanak. It is the nearest place to cross over.... Pakistan starts from that place.... We will have to go to that side. Most of 'our people' live there. If we do not leave this place, we may be killed or robbed by others. This village now falls in India ... only Hindus and Sikhs are to live here. And their people .... living across Dera Baba Nanak are not to come to this side." All of a sudden panic struck the crowd. All of them started consulting one another. There were whispered consultations. The people working in the fields were hurriedly sent for. Instantly, the urgency of the situation gripped the people. Children were taken away mid-way their small games. The marriages of toy dolls with the toy she dolls being arranged by children were left half way. The sweet puddings cooking on the ovens were left unattended. Some people armed themselves with traditional weapons. The horses were harnessed, cattle untied from wooden stakes and yoked together. Crying and sobbing, women started collecting the valuables. The young girls were asked to dress in dirty clothes and cover themselves with doubled cloaks. All the people of our community gathered in the open place in the centre of the village. The plans were being discussed—How to travel safely and how to cross the canal in flood ? Who will

lead the people and how to ensure the safety of men, women and children? It was decided that the young men will lead the way. The elder ones will form a circle to surround the women and children. I saw a few women handing something secretly over to their young daughters and asking them to keep it with them. They were sobbing and expressing their deep love for their daughters by embracing them or kissing them and placing their hands over their heads. My mother handed over a small pack to my elder sister and wept bitterly. I was puzzled to see this. I reached my mother through the crowd and wanted to know what it was. To my horror, I came to know that it was poison. These young girls were being advised to take it and end their lives to avoid falling in the hands of unruly people. I was simply shocked. But I was helpless. The sense of the impending doom paralysed my senses. I could not even weep.

Diverting our attention from the preparations were the entreaties of our Hindu and Sikh villagers. Maheshwar Partap uncle, Dasonda Singh, Surinder Sharma and many others, asked us not to go away. My father and uncle Maheshwar were so emotional that all the people gathered there started weeping on watching them. Friends, neighbours and colleagues were embracing one another with tearful eyes praying for our safe journey. All seemed to have accepted their fate with pain and sorrow writ large on their faces. Suddenly, a man was seen riding a horse at full speed. All of us were frightened. But we heaved a sigh of relief when we recognised him from a distance. He was the son of the Alambardar of the village. He got down and addressing all of us said, "No need to go anywhere. I have come from the city. Nobody is certain yet. Perhaps this village will fall in Pakistan. You should not decide in haste. These are just rumours. Moreover, we all are united. Nobody is a stranger. We will face the situation together. Why cannot we live together as we have been. Don't run after people like Duni Chand, they are in every village." This eased the tension a bit. But it was not readily

responded to. Gradually, after long consultations amongst the people of our community it was decided to turn back. All seemed to be relieved. The horror of the possible departure still made us shudder. People came back to their homes, friends, neighbours and children turned alive again. Something still made us desist from unpacking the luggage. Everybody was still confused. The very air seemed numb.

In the evening everybody seemed to be getting normal. People started their daily chores. Fodder was put before cattle. Buffalos were milked. The people gathered, as usual, after the day's work, most of them discussing the happening that had made all of us shudder in the morning. Food for the night was being cooked. The temple and the mosque were full of people praying for peace. People were assuring one another of unity and age long love for each other. The friendships and joint ventures of the two communities were being highlighted to inspire faith and trust amongst people. Nobody had even an iota of doubt that this joy was temporary. Another man on a horse appeared. He was carrying a flag in his hand. As he approached the village it created another confusing situation. He jumped off the horse, raising the flag. He simply went to the Banyan tree climbed very high and fixed the flag atop. As soon as he climbed down he called the Alambardar. He took the Alambardar aside. The changing expression on the Alambardar's face got twisted as if he had tasted something bitter. He came and said sobbing, "We are doomed. The message has come from the government. This village now falls in India. And the muslims have to leave for Pakistan. The arrangement for their safe journey will be made in the morning as there are rumours that Hindus and Sikhs fleeing Pakistan have been attacked and the same may happen to the muslims here. The flag on the banyan tree is a symbol of the message sent by the government." No sooner did he finish his speech the people gathered there again dispersed and a meeting of the people of our community was arranged. About twenty families decided to leave

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the place in the darkness of the night. The luggage packed in the morning was put on carts and horse back, some carried small bundles on their heads and the caravan left amidst the scenes enacted in the morning.

My father was also requested by our people to join them. But the frightening possibilities, the isolation to be experienced and insecurity in the atmosphere did not have any impact on him. He was not ready to leave his dear friend and the village he had lived in for long. The changing situation further helped him resolve to stay back— Another horse rider might come and declare that this village falls in Pakistan was another possibility. In spite of the repeated requests of my mother, my father decided to stay there for ever.

The next day, the absence of the most of 'our' people from the village made it look a haunted place. Consoled by our nears and dears we strengthened ourselves, talked avoiding the mention of the people who had left. We did not want even to think about them as their very thought choked our throat. Uncle Maheshwar and father too kept sitting together not uttering even a single word. The household work remained unattended as if some calamity had befallen, food was cooked but not a morsel was taken. This was the case with every house in the village irrespective of communities.

The hours dragged by. The age long day ended and the long, unending, sleepless night started. The images of different faces, the memories of various incidents, the panic stricken scene in the morning and the touching departure of the people haunted our mind. Everyone of us could sense the plight of the other. Silence became louder and louder. The day dawned as if after an era. The very existence seemed unbearable. The only consolation was that we were not heading for an alien place, an unknown fate. The possibility that something dreadful might have happened to the people who had gone consoled us for being safe in this village.

In the morning we gathered courage and inspired by Rameshwar

uncle to shun gloom, gradually involved ourselves in day's work. Rajeshwar was with his another friend who had come from the neighbouring village. I was having my breakfast when both of them came. He was sad. It was natural in such a situation, I thought. He came and sat beside my father. His father was already there. Rajeshwar started saying something in a low voice. His father wore an alarmed expression. My father also raised his head and became more attentive. I finished my breakfast hurriedly and without washing my hands moved towards them. Rajeshwar was telling how a caravan of Sikh and Hindu people coming from Pakistan was attacked. Women were raped, children and men killed and their belongings looted. Someone from the village they were fleeing had informed the violent mob about their departure. The people who were left behind in the village were also dragged out of their houses and killed. Their houses were put on fire. Rajeshwar's friend informed that some of the relatives of Maheshwar uncle had also met the same fate at Narowal. Now uncle Maheshwar became thoughtful. After a few moments he took my father aside. My mother was also asked to accompany them. They continued talking for some time and ultimately decided that our family too should leave the village that very night. We started making preparations. In the evening another man came. He informed father that Hindu and Sikh violent groups were also attacking the muslims leaving this place or secretly living with the support and sympathy of the villagers. Nobody was safe. Even close friends and neighbours had turned informers. They were getting the people killed to loot their property and avenge the killings of the people of their community and their own nears and dears at the hands of the muslims. This made my father uneasy and he was quite upset. His first expression was, "No one can be trusted now. No one is safe anywhere!" This made him resolve to leave the village.

As the darkness descended, uncle Maheshwar came to our place. He and Rjaeshwar helped us pack our luggage. He advised my mother

to keep the valuables in a separate box. He brought a sharp sword and asked my father to keep it in case of emergency. At the time of our departure we were too dazed to express any emotions. Ultimately, we set off. Uncle Maheshwar, in spite of my father's repeated requests, insisted on accompanying us to a safe distance. We reached the canal. Across the canal my father looked at Maheshwar Uncle. I noticed a change in my father's looks. I thought it was due to his overwhelming grief at the separation from his friend. Uncle Maheshwar said, "You are going through a safe passage. Moreover, only I know this route. Though this route is long but it is safe. Nobody will be able to know that you left by this route even if the mob comes." My father embraced uncle, my mother expressed gratitude, my sisters, carefully handling the poison packs, too bade him good bye. I touched his feet and he was about to leave. As he turned his back he came back and advised my father, "Do not change your route at any cost." Father nodded his head. I could notice a sinister smile on my father's face. When uncle Maheshwar turned his back again my father pulled out the sword and beheaded uncle Maheshwar. His body jerked and became lifeless. All of us were shocked. We looked at father. He had thrown the sword aside and was weeping bitterly. He seemed to have gone insane for some time. All of us were too shocked to raise any voice or weep. My father in his delirious state of mind said, "My friend, only you knew the route."

## Symbols and Imagery in Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse and The Waves*

–*Rekha Bhardwaj*

There is no denying the fact that symbols and images function as a prominent technique in Virginia Woolf's novels. As technique has the "primary operation" in modern psychological novel, it can be said about Virginia Woolf's fiction that all the important features of her novels, i.e. theme, characterization and philosophy can be comprehended through the interpretation of symbols and images. With these devices, her novels have become presentable, readable and understandable.

*To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* are unique and experimental novels. These novels do not project any conventional themes. *To the Lighthouse* is about the family of Ramsays and their guests. It is the only novel of Virginia Woolf which has a tripartite structure. The first part is 'The Window'; the second 'Time Passes'; and the third is 'The Lighthouse'. The first part of the novel acquaints us with the personality of Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Ramsay through the eyes of James, Lily Briscoe, Charles Tansley and the rest of the guests. In the second part, Mrs. McNab, the charwoman reflects about Mrs. Ramsay and other characters. In the last section, Mrs. Ramsay is seen through the memory of Lily Briscoe. Apparently, the story is simple. It is centred around Mrs. Ramsay, her husband and guests. There is no sensational incident of murder, bloodshed, fights and none of the conventional plot. It is a "stream of consciousness" novel but with a difference. The novelist has freely exploited the "interior monologues" of the different characters. Each of the important characters is viewed through his or her own thoughts and actions as well as through the consciousness of other characters. In other words, each character is presented through

the use of "the multiple point of view" technique. The consciousness of one or more characters is focussed on other characters, we get their reflections and reactions. In this way, the novelist has created strangely living, rich, complex and fascinating personalities.

*The waves* is Mrs. Woolf's last novel in which the "stream of consciousness" method is employed in an artistic manner. No attempt has been made by the novelist to include any plot or external description or direct narration. Virginia Woolf's six characters, with the names of Bernard, Louis, Neville, Rhoda, Jinny and Susan are "incarnations" of a reality that transcends time and space. They are, so to speak, six waves in the ocean of Being whose movements are traced till they break upon the shore. The novel is written in interludes and these interludes reveal the progress of the sun - a measure of the time from dawn to dusk of a natural day. This progress symbolizes the different stages of a man's life. As the sun rises higher and higher in the sky, the personalities develop to the heights of their powers and then follow the inevitable decline. The novel is symbolic in each aspect and has exquisite poetic qualities.

In *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, we observe that most of her symbols have been selected from nature and from the objects of daily life such as the tree, flower, sun, sky, moon, clouds, window, door, lighthouse, sea, wave etc. The images are very striking and are used according to the temperament of a particular character. In *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs. Ramsay "grew like a tree" and "she is like a sponge full of emotions" are apt images for this female character. Mrs. Ramsay's gaze is compared to "lizard's gaze." The other scientific images such as "A to Z", "scrubbed table" and "subject, object and nature of reality" are images which connote Mr. Ramsay's scientific attitude towards life. Similarly, in *The Waves*, different symbols and images are used according to different characters, revealing their visions. Most of Bernard's images are associated with 'white' colour, signifying his celestial feelings. Rhoda is "on the verge of grey desert" and her inward fear is explicit by this image. Neville's vision is centred around the globe as he is a man of intellect. Louis, a commercial man, finds "women going with attache cases down the strand as they went once with pitchers

to the Nile.” After gaining success in business, Louis’s images do not remain sculptural but become commercial. For Jinny, life is “red”, “gold” and “fire” because she finds fulfilment of life only in “body”. Susan’s colour images are colourful as well as sullen because she is well aware of sunshine and shadow, night and day and these country images form the rhythm of her life. There is hardly any other twentieth century novelist who could build up his characters with the help of such symbols and images as Virginia Woolf does.

Mrs. Woolf’s characters are more symbolic than ordinary human beings. In *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs. Woolf deals with the theme of human relationships. She attempts to bring closer the male world that represents philosophy, history, science and materialism to the female world that characterizes sensibility, intuition, beauty and domesticity. Since her characters suffer from inner psychological complexities she nowhere treats them as “people” but as “sensibilities”. In *To The Lighthouse*, Mrs. Ramsay stands for “emotions, Mr. Ramsay for reality” and Lily Briscoe for “art”.

In *The Waves*, the employment of images also indicates a semblance of communication among the characters. Six characters have been explored like the six selves of a personality. The first self is self-contained Susan who is a country bred woman. The second self is that of Jinny, who, with an inarticulate cry of “Look” signifies body. Louis, the man of business is the “commercial” self. Rhoda, the most ethereal of the characters, is the fourth self for whom life is “the merging monster.” The fifth self is of the poet, Neville whose need is to master and to articulate. Bernard is the sixth self, the invertebrate phrase maker who co-ordinates the other six selves and sums up everything. In both her novels, Mrs. Woolf rightly sees the universal and the eternal in the particular. By showing men and women in all sorts of combinations, she portrays various facets of reality and explores the truth about life.

Woolf’s novels are concerned with certain metaphysical issues like what is life ? What is real ? What is death ? What is love ? Is truth one or various ? Am I one or many? etc. In order to get answers to these questions, she explores the inner recesses of her characters. Each

character is associated with such an object or image as indicates the meaning of real life. This may be Mrs. Ramsay’s “lighthouse”, Lily Briscoe’s “Tree”, Mr. Ramsay’s quest for “Z” or Bernard’s longingness to know “who” am I?” and so on. Again, symbolically we get the impression that only philanthropic attributes may lead a person toward the meaning of real life. Mr. Ramsay fails in his endeavour of reaching “Z” due to his non-compromising attitudes. Louis is frustrated towards the end despite the attainment of his materialistic goal.

In contrast to it, the meaning of real life is clear only after shedding out egocentric temperament. In *To the Lighthouse*, Mr. Ramsay, James and Cam enable themselves to reach the Lighthouse after surrendering their respective egos and clashes. Lily Briscoe can get her “vision” after journey from “ego to impersonality.” Similarly, Bernard, in *The Waves*, gets cosmic vision as he assimilates all other personalities within him and becomes “one”.

Hence, Virginia Woolf has evolved a new method of writing, discarding the conventional one. Her deep appreciation of Joycean method reveals that she never wanted to touch or see whatever seems adventitious, whether it be probability, or coherence, or any other of these signposts which for generations have seemed to support the imagination of a reader. But this does not mean that her novels are without form or coherence. Her subject is what the mind receives on an ordinary day. She does not give us what passes outside the mind. She conveys a sense of the strangeness of life, of its truth and beauty and of its wonder.

Hence, the use of experimental and new technique (to explore her novels through symbols and imagery) has been successful in her novels. These tools organize the writer’s material which is very important for every writing. With these devices, the novelist integrates her thoughts and assigns them a new value. The readers can explore the characters from the inside and can understand the intense reality of life with its chaotic aspects. Hence with the help of symbols and images, Virginia Woolf has given coherence to incoherent thoughts, consistency to “flickering” reality and form to shapeless mass of feelings and ideas.

## Modern English Drama : A Historical Study

–S.K. Arora

Historical development of different art forms including literary genres marks the intervention of different internal and external factors. Socio-political and cultural factors influence the nature of art forms. Similarly, the internal contradictions informing the complex nature of form content compatibility result in a change in the nature of literary forms. Therefore, historical study of the development of an art form cannot be restricted to fixed temporal movement. However, one can trace the emergence of different trends at different historical periods to order the study of the development of different art forms.

A Nicoll, a renowned historian of English drama, recognises four movements in Modern English Drama. According to him, *The First Movement* was born in 1890 and ended in 1900. The chief dramatists of this movement were Pinero, Jones and Wilde. English drama during the Romantic and Victorian ages (i.e. from 1798 to 1890) had consisted of foolish melodramas, romances, extravaganzas and sentimental plays. But the dramatic works produced during the First Movement by the above mentioned playwrights showed significant advances. For example, plots and characters in their plays were no longer artificial and unreal as before. They also discovered a lively and emphatic stage dialogue. Stories were well and effectively told. In short, the trend was towards realism. A real masterpiece of the First Movement is Wilde's delightful and fantastic comedy– *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Indeed, the foundations laid by Pinero, Jones and Wilde in terms of plot, character and story were absolutely essential as without these drama could not have made its further advances.

The Second Movement, according to Nicoll, spans a period of 30 years i.e. from 1901 to 1930. Major playwrights of the period were G.B. Shaw and Galsworthy in England and Synge and Yeats in Ireland. Both Shaw and Galsworthy were burning humanitarians and a deep social purpose pervaded their plays. Though condemned by T.S. Eliot and others as an inferior playwright, Shaw's plays even today fill the shelves in homes, libraries and book-shops for their serious, sociological and philosophic thoughts. Many social malpractices are revealed through his 'comedy of ideas' type of plays like *Arms and the Man*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Pygmalion* etc. Synge and Yeats also produced a great many masterpieces, though not on the lines of social purpose. They were pure artists and the best products of the Irish Dramatic Movement launched in Dublin at the Abbey Theatre in 1898. Synge wrote in a strange Anglo-Irish prose whose essence was poetry and music. His *The Playboy of the Western World* and *Deirdre of the Sorrows* and Yeats' *The Countess Cathleen* and *The Land of Heart's Desire* are superb pieces of dramatic art. Yet, it is the red-bearded, witty, flamboyant G.B. Shaw who overshadows all other playwrights of the Second Movement. Undoubtedly, he remains the unbeaten commander of the Second Movement of English Drama with his massive contribution of around 40 plays.

*The Third Movement* begins to take shape around 1930 and lasts upto 1955. Poetic Drama of T.S. Eliot and Christopher Fry is the chief triumph of this period. But the verse drama, despite occasional successes, failed in the long run to find many supporters. "How could it in a prosaic age like ours when the power of poetry has departed from us!" observes Nicoll. The argument of verse-dramatists like Eliot and Fry was that poetry alone was the suitable language of drama—it is not possible to express full human experience by the use of prose conversation. Only a fine, imaginative, poetic language can do that. But poetic language went off quite well in plays like *Murder in the Cathedral* where Eliot had Church, its rituals and formal language to

justify it. The trouble arose when he turned to contemporary action as in *The Family Reunion* and *The Elder Statesman*. It proved almost impossible to write dramatic verse for an actor while he is answering the telephone, returning an umbrella or pouring drinks. By 1950, the verse-drama of Eliot and Fry had disappeared from the stage into broadcasting. But as long as it lasted, it was regarded as the most suitable vehicle of religious and semi-religious themes. Other important dramatists of the Third Movement are Bridie and Priestly. The Early Fifties : 1950 to the first quarter of 1956, theatrical scene of England was dim and grim. Hardly any new plays were being written. Some veteran playwrights like Eliot, Fry, Coward and Whiting were there. But all of them were out of form and their stuff was dull and colourless. The few plays that were being staged were of foreign origin – Russian, American, Irish, French. A few old hits of Elizabethan drama were also revived. It appeared that the dramatic revival of the last decade of the 19th century was dying. Theatres were fast closing down in view of the cold reception of all new plays which were pale, disgusting drawing-room stuff. And there appeared to be no dramatist who could just keep up, leave alone enhance, the reputation of the British Drama.

There was hardly a straw in the wind when in April 1956, the famous Royal Court Theatre of London was taken over by a new group The English Stage Company. The new management of the theatre decided to save the face of English drama by staging new plays by new dramatists. But everyone was hopeless. Where were the new plays or new dramatists to be found? And if at all found, how would they be received? The experience of the past five years was anything but encouraging. And then suddenly on the night of 8th May 1956 came the revolution !!

The New Wave English Drama was born with the premiere of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* on 8th May 1956 at the Royal Court Theatre in London. The play was and is still considered a turning point in the history of English drama. It was said to have ushered in the

Renaissance of English drama parallel to the Elizabethan drama in the 16th century. The New Dramatists broke down the walls of apathy and disinterest towards drama—they were able to win overwhelming response to their plays. The theatre-going public stood transfixed with their charm, power and novelty. Apart from John Osborne whose *Look Back in Anger* became the biggest box-office of the decade, the other front-line dramatists of the time were Arnold Wesker, Harold Pinter, John Arden etc.

The New Dramatists were not a group with any common method or aim. Each was innovating and experimenting in style, motive and subject-matter. So, though such labels as kitchen-sink drama, absurd drama, neo-realist drama, dark comedy, drama of cruelty etc. were used for the new plays, no title fitted for more than a year or two and not more than one or two plays.

However, New English Drama and New Dramatists had quite a few common features. For example, the new dramatists were (i) all young—none had crossed 30 by 1960. They all started writing at a very young age, in fact they had written their first play before their 24th or 25th year. Also, almost each one of them was an actor before he started writing for the theatre. (ii) Most of them were from the working class. As such their plays carried the protest and anger of the working class people against the upper classes. Hence the New Drama is often referred to as 'working class drama'. Also, because it excluded the well-off middle classes and moved from their cosy elegant drawing-rooms towards the one-room flats and unclean kitchens of working class people, their New Drama was said to produce 'kitchen-sink plays'. While launching a sort of class-war, the New Dramatists worked against the background of Leftwing politics, what we call communism or Marxism. (iii) Being the products of post World War II England, they shared many social, political and psychological effects of the period. England had been reduced from an Empire to an island. With the emergence of America and Russia as super powers, her position in world affairs was as good as nothing. On the domestic front, the Labour and Conservative

governments had totally failed to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the younger generation which felt cheated, frustrated and angry. These young people felt rootless in the past and had no hope for the future. The New Dramatists shared this restlessness, purposelessness, hopelessness of Post-War youth of England and they depicted these in their plays in different ways.

One of the striking features of the New Wave drama was its *new content* and *form*. All earlier concepts were overthrown—plot, character, language, acting in the traditional sense were regarded as old fashioned and inappropriate for the new situations and ideas. The New Dramatists argued that the speech and action of the old drama were miles away from the contemporary life. Hence, a new style of acting was brought which was less skilled and polished but more direct and related to the behaviour of ordinary people outside the theatre.

As with form, so with content. In this, the New Dramatists liked to be sensational, to shock, to be fantastic, unlikely and even outrageous. For example, in one of the 'Contemporary' plays, a character is announced as Uncle Ted, but when he enters he is a tall, dark attractive woman. In Pinter's *The Room*, a woman goes suddenly blind while talking to a Negro. In Wesker's *Four Seasons*, a play with only two characters, the man spends about ten minutes carefully and silently peeling apples. Similarly, impotence, homosexuality, lesbianism, prostitution, promiscuity, violence are common features of New Drama. Thus, one play shows a youth who comes to a house seeking shelter. The brother and the sister who own the place find him sexually attractive—so when he accidentally kills their father, they don't call the police but decide to conceal the murder so that they can blackmail him into sharing his favours with them—six months for the brother and six months for the sister. In another play, the central character is a bank robber who conceals his booty in his mother's coffin. *Everything in the Garden*, a 'new' play, shows outwardly respectable households turned into brothels, the husbands willingly, even anxiously, encouraging their

wives into prostitution. Apart from such themes, the 'new' dramatists also chose popular, up-to-date, very obvious subjects such as fashion clothes, antique collections, new housing projects, street gangs, slum clearance, and army and factory workers. Because of these, their works are often referred to as 'pop' art.

On the whole, the life that came through in the new plays was that of people disorganised and drifting. Youth and poverty were factors in this. But it was not a new area of life as a new wave of feeling that got expressed. In Eliot and Fry also, the themes had been restlessness and loss of direction. But the 'new plays' had a new edge, a new sound—ordinary human voices trying to live through despair and bitterness at the general condition around them.

To express this state of mind of the post-war generation, the New Dramatists found *a new language* too. Osborne and others have a genuine gift for writing contemporary speech. Half-finished sentences, abrupt transitions, grunts and groans have taken the place of traditional, lengthy dialogues. Sometimes a whole scene passes without a single dialogue. Vocabulary is trivial, violent and abrupt. Here is a specimen from Pinter's *Collection* :

Bill : What time did you get in?

Harry: Four

Bill : Good party?

Pause

Harry: You didn't make any toast this morning.

Bill : I can if you like. [There are 227 'pauses' in the play]

Harry: It's all right. Don't bother.

Pause

Such dialogues were something new and fresh to the English stage. Characters saying like 'I feel good..... I feel bloody good .... I feel bloody wonderful' and using words like 'damn', 'bastard' seemed so much near the day-today speech of the day. In place of the weak, bloodless and artificial speeches of drawing-room plays of early fifties,

there was more fizz, more punch, more thunder in the 'new' dialogues. Quite often, action replaces, speech. So many new plays earned the title of 'theatre of silence'. The new playwrights believed that silence and gestures can be as eloquent as words because 'there is a poetry of the senses as there is a poetry of language. Indeed, the use of physical language is truly dramatic when the thoughts expressed through it are beyond the reach of the spoken language. Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is a supreme example of 'theatre of silence and gesture'.

*Look Back in Anger* was given a thunderous applause because it touched the psyche of the post-War youth of England. It was the symbol of the life and style and language of a new generation.

However, critics came down heavily on the New-Drama and New Dramatists. They called the plays too shocking and immoral and lacking in any deep thought. They regarded the playwrights as immature, sensational, transient and stagey. These learned critics regretted the absence of kindness, gentle emotions, the scenes full of romance and sentiments, the beauty of language and dramatic, suspenseful situations. Another objection of these critics was that the new playwrights have no social, moral or political purpose and so their characters never debate on the nature of existence or society as they do in Jonson, Eliot etc. Even 'fools' in Shakespeare speak more wisdom than the heroes of new plays. If at all a situation is presented, it is presented from several viewpoints and none stands for the author's opinion. For example, in writing a scene in which someone starts making love to a woman whose husband is also present, the modern playwright does not make the husband react in old, traditional, conventional way—he does not hit the intruder or become embarrassed or storm out of the room. For the new playwright, these responses are tined and obvious. So *No Reaction* is the new response. Hence the charge on dramatists of new wave is that they have no moral stand.

What the critics of New Drama forget is that if this drama is 'pop' and sensational, so was the Elizabethan drama. Marlowe, Greene, Peele,

Beaumont and Fletcher were young too. They all wrote on shocking subjects too—rape, incest, homosexuality (Marlowe's *Edward II*) etc. cruelty and violence filled the 16th century drama. Gouging out of eyes, chopping off different parts of body, sword killings were so common on Elizabethan stage. In Shakespeare's play *Titus Andronicus*, Titus serves up to a mother her own two sons baked in a pie. And if Elizabethan dramatists could write masterpieces in spite of being young, shocking and sensational, why condemn the New Dramatists on these grounds?

As regards the absence of tearful and sentimental scenes and beautiful dialogues, the modern playwrights find them repellent because such things do not correspond with reality. And as far as the lack of morality and philosophy, the modern playwrights have shown tremendous insight into the workings of the society in which they live. They have shown every sign of intellectual and responsible involvement. Hence, new drama cannot be dismissed as casual or trivial. The New Dramatists are important and promising. They believe that the principal function of the theatre is to give pleasure and show reality. It is not the prime duty of the theatre to strengthen peace, improve morality or the social system. Churches, international associations and political parties already exist for these purposes.

#### NOTES & REFERENCES

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## Emerging Tendencies in Contemporary Punjabi Short-story

–*Rajnish Bahadur Singh*

Short-story is a form of fiction that captures the contemporary and long standing human problems in their continuity. The signs of difference emerge out of this continuity. This difference sometimes proves to be a decisive turn. Or literature takes a new direction as a result of some historical or political incident. Such an incident or incidents sometimes give birth to a specific literary tendency. In the last decade of the twentieth century such an incident may not have taken place yet the political scenario in Punjab creates a new situation. If this situation is considered a significant turning point the symptoms of difference can be traced in this continuity. My purpose in this paper is to point out unique features of this period rather than to probe their reasons.

During this period the democratic institutions become active and the process of violence comes to an end. The Punjabi consciousness is freed from the atmosphere of terror. Consequently, Punjabi literature informs a sense of stability instead of emotionality. The concerns which were relegated to a secondary position due to the Punjab crisis come to the forefront. The literature produced during this time is different from the literature related to the earlier movement. This difference may not be noticed in a casual reading but the exploration of the literary metaphors unfolds hidden layers and the change can be easily understood. Due to its formal features the short-story quickly absorbs this change in its thematic patterns. However, its idiom undergoes a change with changing times and situations

Most of the stories about the Punjab problem were related to an emotional reaction to the crisis. The major concerns of these stories

were state terrorism, terrorism, blames and counter blames, the identification of the section responsible for it and a feeling of pity. In the next decade a sense of reconsideration emerges. A casual glance may mark the expression of an emotional response to situations but the thematic concerns present a natural response. The stories of this period tend to understand social relationship and the grammar of violence. Some of the story writers have tried to grasp the cracks emerging in social relationships and the changing cultural dimensions.

The stories by the writers like Wariam Sandhu *Parchaven*. Guljar Sandhu *Rudan Billian Da*, Dr. S. Tarsem *Jindagi*, raise some new questions. The changing dimension of cultural relationship and the pattern of violence come out in the stories of some of the writers whose isolated stories bring out this theme with greater intensity while their collections as a whole may not concentrate on it. Prem Parkash's story 'Eh Oh Jasbir Nahin' and Wariam Sandhu's story 'Chauthi Koot' can be placed in this category. The story 'Eh Oh Jasbir Nahin' expresses the conflict in social relations as a result of situational compulsions. This changed pattern of relationship is causing a disintegration of man from within. The stability of human relationships becomes vulnerable. The story writer presents the changed pattern of human relationship but does not give his own comments. Another aspect of the story is related to the perennial sense of violence in human nature. Prem Parkash relates this form of violence from Naxalite movement to the Punjab crisis. Another dimension of this theme comes out in Wariam Sandhu's story 'Chauthi Koot'. This story presents an unexpressed sigh resulting from the changed form of the traditional cultural myth due to the changing situations. The mentality resulting from cultural crisis has been minutely analyzed by Wariam Sandhu. In this story Raj Kumar moves towards the forbidden territory created by the terror ridden circumstances. The atmosphere of the earlier normal circumstances emerges in his unconscious mind. The incident related to his visit to his inlaws and the cultural myth about security come to his mind. While getting down at Amritsar this myth undergoes a change in the present circumstances. The changed understanding of this myth naturally emerges in the present

situation. The impact of this situational change overwhelms the whole atmosphere. In the same way, Wariam Sandhu, in his story 'Parchaven', presents the pattern of violence in the context of the changing form of the violence unleashed at the time of the partition of the country. The sections responsible for violence at the time of the partition are clearly indentified whereas the benefit of doubt is given to the sections responsible for violence in Punjab. A number of such stories can be found in Punjabi literature. Manmohan Bawa's story 'Bhikhu and Surabi' depicts the violence, resulting from the suppression of the minorities as an expression of the idea of revenge culture. Baljit Balli's 'Adam Buo Te Kali Hawa' explores the Punjab crisis from a different perspective.

The story in this period understands man-woman relationships not only freed from the medieval morality but also explores different dimensions of these relationships. The irony informing the stories written by the new generation of writers is that it has not only overtaken the present day fashion rather it has reached a stage of cloning. Man-woman relationship forms the fictional narrative in the stories by Prem Parkash. His stories, 'Sumro Begam' and 'Bindi' express the conflict between thoughts and behaviour of a woman. Sukhjeet is another story writer who understands the complexities of these relationships. His stories, 'Barf', 'Antra' and 'Ji Bibi Ji' are significant achievements of the Punjabi fiction. Similarly, Talwinder's story 'Andarli Aurat' is worth mention. The stories of Gurbachan Bhullar, 'Agni Kalas' and S. Tarsem's, 'Failde Rishtey' bring out the challenge to the continuation of the traditional value oriented relationships. Bhagwant Rasoolpuri and Des Rja Kali have also explored different dimensions of this relationship. Prem Parkash has exercised a colonial impact on some story writers. These story writers try to clone the language and situations explored by Prem Parkash through their inadequate understanding of Psychology. One of these story tellers is Jinder.

He has not been able to free himself from this influence at conscious or unconscious level. It has come out to be his limitation as an artist. Illegitimate man-woman relationships, caste traits, existential

understanding of consciousness etc. form the thematic dimensions of his fictional narratives.

A variety of thematic aspects of man-woman relationship finds expression in the writings of women story-writers. The women writers in this decade have given a new form to the themes expressed by earlier writers and have also challenged women's model. Earlier, the women story writers presented the themes related to their existence, the pitiable condition of woman and the extramarital relations based on platonic love. In the present times, the stories give expression to women's ability to develop into an autonomous self. Veena Verma's story 'Taiba' and the stories by Nirmal Jaswal express one or the other aspect of this theme. Parvez Sandhu stands altogether different from all these story writers. Her stories, 'Meri Lumbri', 'Kantamanni' and 'Saunkan' highlight the changed contexts of human relationships. In the story 'Meri Lumbri' the relationship between a child educated in the western set up and the mother having eastern consciousness has been presented from a new perspective. In 'Saunkan', the woman suffering because of the homosexual relations of her husband forms the main concern of the fictional discourse.

During the last decade of the 20th century the impoverishment of the farmers resulting from the internal contradictions of the Green Revolution and its resultant crisis provides the thematic basis to the stories. In Punjabi short-story these elements started emerging during 1970s. At this time the themes related to the conversion of farmers into landless labourers, and the conflict between economic crisis and a sense of the caste superiority became the major concern in the stories. The roots of this tendency with all its intensity emerged in the stories of Wariam Sandhu. The next dimension of this tendency is expressed in the stories 'Bangla' and 'Lakshmi' by Prem Parkash. This aspect is related to the sense of caste traits in human behaviour. Ajmer Sandhu's story 'Gaurjan' and Attarjeet's 'Thoohan' grasp the problem from this perspective. The story presenting the disintegration of human relationships as a result of the economic crisis can be found in Jaswinder Singh's 'Khuh Khate.' In this story the pattern of disintegrating human

relationships due to the conflict between the rural middle class people and the urban middle classes comes out in a new form. The stories by Pargat Singh Sidhu also unfold different layers of peasantry in rural social fabric. The stories written by Ram Saroop Ankhil can also be placed in this category.

The thoughts and intense awareness of the people suffering due to social inequality also find expression in this period. Under the impact of the progressive Marxist ideology, this problem was associated with economic inequality. A new middle class came into being among the socially oppressed sections of the society under the policy of reservation resulting from political considerations. It emerged as a part of the state machinery. In spite of economic prosperity and urbanisation this section of society faces social discrimination. This social discrimination made the practical form of the progressive ideology questionable. In this situation, political consciousness resulted in new polarisation. This oppressed consciousness developing at the political level proves very effective in all spheres of life. It also has its impact on literature in general and Punjabi short-story in particular. At the ideological level many questions come forth in the creative field regarding the concept of an author, a work of literature and the experiences based on specific social situation. These questions have acquired the form of a debate in literary theory and practice. In spite of all this, the fundamental question is related to the autonomous status of literature. A literary work is required to be artistic while informing the social experience of the author. Punjabi short-story includes these two types of stories. The stories related to the theme of the oppressed people suffering as a result of caste discrimination have unfolded different dimensions of this life. In the stories 'Thoochan' and 'Anni Theh' by Attarjit, the cultural traits of the caste system and its practical forms become the central theme. Apart from Attarjit, Prem Gorki has expressed different dimensions of this life with great intensity. Lal Singh, Des Raj Kali, Bhagwant Rasoolpuri, Makhan Mann and Gurmeet Kadiyalvi have also made the life of the socially oppressed people a subject of their stories.

A different aspect of the stories in this decade has been related to lesbian relationships. It is a biological as well as psychological problem. The story deals with this theme related to the perversion resulting from abnormal situations. Parvez Sandhu's story 'Sandy Fer Udaas Si' and Ninder Gill's story 'Pachhaan Sankat' are the stories by Punjabi Diasporas. Parvez Sandhu's story presents the behaviour of a woman Sandy against the western background. Ninder Gill's story concentrates on the lesbian women in Swedish society, their organisations and the question of their identity. In the same way, the stories like 'Jalawattan' by Sukeerat and 'Ret Da Rishta' by Nirmal Jaswal also present lesbian relationships. In the story written by Sukeerat the abnormal situations become the basis of such relationships. A similar situation comes out in the story written by Nirmal Jaswal.

The unconscious form of myth, history and cultural heritage has also been the concern of Punjabi short-story in this period. Manmohan Bawa's stories exhibit this tendency. He has given a new direction to the motifs associated with short-story. The stories about science fiction and the problems of the life in the armed forces have been written by Dr. D. P. Singh and Jasbir Bhullar.

The ideas discussed above form a symbolic presentation of the thematic dimensions that facilitate an understanding of different aspects of contemporary Punjabi short-story.

## Book Review

### **Culture in Transition : A Study of Contemporary Indian English Fiction**

*N.K. Neb*

Nirman Publications, Jal. 2004.

In a compact and comprehensive critical survey of the contemporary creations presented in *Culture in Transition :A study of contemporary Indian English fiction*, focus is on the subtleties and complexities of changing human sensitivities. The verve and vigour of this fruitful exercise clearly reflects a strenuous effort of the writer to achieve this goal.

A remarkable feature of this anthology which enhances its significance as a critical work is the inclusion of a number of prominent writers, thereby covering the broadened fictional horizon of Indian English fiction and an update intellectual analysis in relation to global concerns.

Articles on Rohinton Mistry's "Family Matters" and Shashi Tharoor's "Riot" give an in-depth analysis of contrary fictional devices used by both the writers. "Riot" gains significance by its entirely different narrative structure whereas Mistry's artistic skill is exhibited in depicting interesting thematic concerns. In the chapters based upon Amitav Ghosh's "The Glass Palace" V.S.Naipaul's "Half a Life" and Jhumpa Lahiri's "Interpreter of Maladies", thrust is on the changed concept of identity which does not remain confined to specific nation or ethnic group in the changing global patterns .The writer explores the labyrinths caused by the juxtaposition of the variety of culture where eastern has been referred to as a culture of ' accommodations and adjustment and western tending to control the other cultures. However, the writer does not overlook Naipaul's suggestions that an

interaction with new culture makes one aware of the inadequacies of their inactive culture. Jhumpa Lahiri's stress is on the existential dilemma of transition.

The writer seems to recognize consciously or unconsciously the uphold of women novelists on the Indian English fiction by including more articles on the works of women novelists rather than men. Complexities of the women – world, changing perspective of human relationships, shifting of roles and experiences of women in the transitional cultural setup are main concerns delineated by Dr. Neb in the articles based upon Anita Desai's "Fasting Feasting", Manju Kapoor's "Difficult Daughters" and Shobha Dey's "Socialite Evenings". In an intensive study of these works, the author has established that the primary thematic concerns of women's writings are related to dilemmas of the women, education versus marriage and the institution of marriage and familial ties and specific lifestyle of an emerging section of Indian women in the transitional phase of modern Indian society. Though the issue of male-superiority has been exhibited from different perspectives yet focus has been kept on the marginalized existence of women in these novels. A thought-provoking analysis of Namita Gokhale's "God, Graves and Grandmother" is another useful contribution by the writer in which he highlights possible human situation where women can and do something to show their inner strength and social worth.

A condensed and complete introduction forms the most useful part of this anthology for the readers of Indian-English-Fiction as the writer has made a sincere endeavor to trace out the marked shift in the recent Indo-English-Fiction, which is an outcome of an amalgamation of the multi-culture on the global scene. A probe into this cultural-cru in the recent works enhances the utility of this critical work.

No doubt, this book forms a welcome addition to the critical works on contemporary Indian-English Fiction. It can be a useful companion for students to understand the shift informing the nature of Indian-English Fiction.

*Anita Kiran*

Book Review  
*The Sari Shop*

–*Roopa Bajwa*  
 Penguin Books-2004

*The Sari Shop*, Rupa Bajwa first tryst with novel writing has brought her accolades with her name appearing on British Orange Prize Longlist. The very first novel from the pen of this promising novelist unravels the complexities and intricacies of Indian Urbane Circles.

The story is a narrative of Ramchand, a 26 year old shop attendant at Sevak Sari House at Amritsar who, after doing the routine job of unfolding and folding saris for eleven long years, becomes aware of another perspective of the world– an experience quite unnerving and shattering for a commoner. All of a sudden, "Crisp Bangladeshi Cottons, soft Crepes, Benaras Silks, delicate Chiffons and heavily embroidered Kanjeevarams unrolled to the demands of urbane women acquire profound meaning, deeper than mere borders and beautifully woven motifs. He sets out to discover the mystique of the "intoxicating rich life of colour and silk" that "brought in customers and profits" (p.5). He responds to the beckoning of the unrealized past that haunts him off and on through sights, smells and sounds. The discontent brought by the present motivates him to better his prospects through learning English, at the same time fulfilling his dead father's dream. The titles like Radiant Essays, Oxford English Dictionary, the Complete Letter Writing Pocket Science for Children become tools for him to overcome his embarrassment regarding the usage of English words at the same time, familiarizing him with the maxims like "Every coin has two sides" (p. 96), and "Ability is of little account without opportunity" (p. 176). Ram Chand, who has just stepped into the world of this new – found knowledge, can understand the words "Stupid Sariwallah" (p. 81) as

he is called by Rina Kapoor, a young ambitious novelist. But he feels stranded while listening sulkily to her conversation with Mrs. Sandhu, Mrs. Sachdeva, Rina and Tina Kapoor which depicts the whole range of the educated, westernized, hypocritical upper class women through whom the "multi-layered society" (p.23) with its follies and foibles gets exposed.

The world of the rich is dominated by "crystal ornaments", "glass opped tables", "rust-coloured carpet", "pleated curtains" "neatly tucked lipsticks" (p.15) "wind chimes" (p. 16) and above all, Banarsi Zardozis with their heavy dark colours. Contrasted to this is the harsh world of Kamala, the wife of Ram Chand's colleague who is battered and beaten by her husband, raped by policeman and burned to death by anti-social elements for not accepting what is destined for her. Her punishment for not accepting her lot serves as a moral for Ram Chand charged by the "Parking confident dazzle" (p.6) of the opulence who tries to move forward, stumbles, falls and once again tries to get up finally to reconcile to all things inevitably. The folds of saris actually unfold the ironies, tragedies, lessons of life to Ram Chand whose metamorphosed self has encountered "“constant injustices”" of the world and ultimate reconciliation.

Rupa Bajwa's sensitivity and ability to plume the inner recesses have made her successful in her exploration of varied moods of stark insanity, imbalances, love, hope, frustration, rejuvenation and acceptance woven inextricably in the pattern of the novel. Bajwa has made the character of Ram Chand become amazingly alive with details like his mouth open wide, moving about in the streets of Amritsar, dinners at Lakhan's dhaba, stopping for an occasional mausambi juice, mention of Bollywood hits like *Kaho Na Pyaar Hai*, *Gadar* etc.

Her felicitating ease with diction and the ability to get under the skin of her characters is really commendable for a young writer like Rupa Bajwa who at the age of 28 has made her debut presence felt on the literary horizon.

–*Vanila*

# PRAGATI'S ENGLISH JOURNAL

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On the publication of the tenth issue of the PEJ we express our sense of gratitude towards our contributors, subscribers and the readers. Our humble attempt to serve the cause of literature has gained success only because of the co-operation and overwhelming response of our contributors, subscribers and the readers. The contribution of our referees has also been remarkable in helping us select the works for publication in the journal.

We have been bringing out creative and critical works of merit including translated works from regional languages. The people associated with the Journal in different capacities will be pleased to know that we are going to bring out a special issue on Indian-English poetry. You are requested to send your contributions in the form of poems and critical articles on poetry to make the special issue worth preserving.

Suggestions to make the journal more useful and effective are always welcome.

Wishing you more creative times ahead,

–**Editor**

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*Pragati's English Journal* proposes to explore the problems and complexities concerning the study of English language and literature in the emerging scenario of globalisation and extended use of English in Indian homes and workplaces. Contributors are welcome to submit critical articles, reports, reviews, creative writing (including translation) in English highlighting new developments in literature or literary thought or suggesting new orientation towards the use of English as language of communication. The journal also encourages the writings of thinkers and critics who otherwise remain marginalised due to the authoritative attitude of the literary establishment.

The journal follows a blind review policy in general. Articles submitted to the *PEJ* will be reviewed by referees for publication. Articles will be returned only if they are accompanied by a self-addressed envelope with postage.

Contributors are requested to submit two copies of the paper. The paper should not usually exceed ten thousand words. Typescript should be typed on one side of the sheet only with double line spacing and wide left and right margins. The contributors must also attach a brief note about their occupation, academic interests and achievements along with their present address for correspondence.

Explanatory notes, if any, should follow the main text of the paper and should be numbered serially in the sequence in which they are referred to in the text. References should be cited in the paper in parenthesis with only the last name of the author and the year of publication, for example (Fahnestock and Secor, 1985). Proper bibliographical details, with page numbers, about the reference should follow at the end of the paper, for example (Fahnestock, Jeanne and Secor, Marie (1985), *Rhetoric of Arguments*, New York : Random House, 110-112). All references must be arranged alphabetically.

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