Dialectics of Freedom and Choice : The Case of Chaucer's Wife of Bath

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The contentious issue whether women had been enthroned or dethroned in Chaucer's writings by giving them a central or a peripheral position did not really surface till late. If at all it was taken up, it was to appreciate Chaucer's wonderful understanding in delineating women characters. But this issue is more visible and open to investigation especially now when Chaucer's work has been analysed from a variety of post-structuralist theoretical, interdisciplinary and feminist perspectives. Leicester[1] was the first one to touch upon the gender issues in Chaucer's work though the main focus remained on the depiction and deciphering of the nature of the subject. It was left to critics like Dinshaw[2] and Hansen[3] to give a different and revised analysis of Chaucer's texts by stressing on the fact that Chaucer too dealt with women as a marginal and peripheral category. Some feminists like Mann[4] and Martin[5] still continue to believe in Chaucer's sympathetic understanding and portrayal of women.

Whether Chaucer, the tolerant and wise father was fair to fair sex or not cannot be settled – the debate has the potential to go on. But this is quite clear whether women in his works are in limelight or in the shade, the captivating glow is there – a glow that soon turns into dazzling brightness. Alison, the Wife of Bath is one such character whose personality glitters when the light is focused on her and even when the focus is shifted, it continues to glow like radium.

Like the various images of the Kaleidosocope whenever one turns and looks at her she acquires a new pose, a new dimension. Chaucer introduces Wife as a 'worthy woman', by profession a weaver. She is

an expert in her trade, a representative of the cloth workers, a leader of that age :

> In all the parish not a dame dared stir
> Towards the altar steps in front of her…[6]

A born leader, she forgets the place where she is trying to assert herself and be the master. Even if these be 'altar steps', where there is a question of precedence, she must not let others usurp the place that she claims for herself. Her aggressive behaviour must draw our attention to some sort of suppression of women in general in that age. As E.T. Hansen departing from the majority view states, "I read this self differently…in a way that emphasizes its powerlessness, self-destructiveness, and silencing, and I argue that the wife's discourse in the *Prologue* and *Tale* belies her apparent garrulity, autonomy, and dominance."[7]

Alison is aware of the fact, that even if she is the best, she'll not get her due in this male–dominated world, she'll always have to snatch it. The altar of the church provides a pedestal for her to address the society. She doesn't bother if others label her as haughty, proud, egoistic or vain. Rather these are the feathers which beautify her attractive hat which is described by Chaucer: "As broad as is a buckler or a shield…" (p. 34). Yet this woman, the leader, the master, the authority is quiet when she has to wait for the turn of the women, thus accepting the tradition which gives precedence to men.

Then comes the more slippery zone, when there is a reference to her marital status :

> A worthy woman all her life, what's more.
> She'd five husbands, all at the church door,
> Apart from other company in youth… (p. 34)

It is slippery because mostly she is analysed on this matrimonial plane only. This certainly is very significant and important, yet not the only plane that can help us in unravelling, the mystery of this woman. Marriage may be another name of 'misery and woe', yet she must embrace it time and again. What is it that she looks for in these men, in

these husbands - wealth, security or love? Perhaps it is her realisation that only marriage can give woman a respectable status that she opts for it again and again though she knows she is seeking something, striving for something unimaginable in life. It seems as if she herself is unsure of what is it that she needs. She is in fact in search of herself. There is a strong desire in her to realize her being whether it is the world outside or the world at home.

In her own *Prologue* the bold and the beautiful woman reports about her married life in a very candid manner. Here she emerges as a very open, free, frank, assertive, outspoken and dominating personality. Her voice is effective but one mustn't forget the place where she is expressing her opinions freely, it's amidst a group of men and women whom she doesn't know.

Strangers all - neither she knows them nor do they know her. They are wearing the mask of the pilgrim that hides the real self and allows them to interact freely. Here one may cite Bakhtinian concept of *Carnivalesque*, which celebrates "…temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed."[8] So the pilgrimage is like the *Carnivalesque,* it's a different social context, in which she suddenly starts unveiling her past, giving justifications of her conduct to the company and more perhaps to her own self. No one has asked her about her relations with her husbands and she goes on explaining, why she did not prefer virginity or continence? Why she married old men and why she married so many times? She has answers to all these questions. She can dig up mythology, astrology and even religion whenever there is need for illustrations to prove herself right. Interestingly the next moment she can defy religion, church, scriptures when they stand contradictory to her opinions, interests and actions. She knows how to use these to the best of her advantage. As she says :

> Christ was a virgin, fashioned as a man
> And many of his saints since time began
> Were ever perfect in their Chastity.
> I'll have no quarrel with virginity.

> Let them us wives be known for barley-bread;
> Yet Mark can tell that barley-bread sufficed
> To freshen many at the hand of Christ. (p. 220)

The most dominating woman – is she really happy and satisfied to serve as 'barley-bread' in 'wooden platter'?

How can she reconcile with it? Turn and look at it from another angle – 'barley-bread', 'wooden platter' are not inferior here to pure wheat bread or gold platter rather more useful, satisfying, attractive and lustrous in the context. So she chooses to be as she wants to be. Thus go her justifications, why she did what she did in the past. In the core of her heart she knows her behaviour is a deviant behaviour, a questionable behaviour, behaviour that is disapproved by the society. This group whom she is addressing is a representative of the same society against which she is rebelling. It's here that she can give a vent to her uncontrollable, overflowing, flood tide of suppressed emotions. These feelings are let loose in her discourse earning for her yet another epithet - garrulous. In fact she is engaging herself in a continuous dialogue at various levels, a dialogue with herself, a dialogue with the company and in reality a dialogue with the larger, ambiguous social authority. E.T. Hansen describes it beautifully in *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender,* "The authority against which she rebels is not of any single person…The wife is defending herself against a much vaguer and more obscured force of social disapproval, powerfully unnamed and unnameable…"[9]

What we need to know is why she talks so much? What is her relation as a speaker to the actual listener (i.e. the group on pilgrimage) or anticipated listener (i.e. the social authority), the relation of her utterance to the prior utterances to which it is a response, as well as the special situation in which it is both spoken and interpreted.

The pivotal role in her life had been the role of her husbands. What had been the most significant experience of her life is her relationship with her husbands – men that affected her most – men who are responsible to quite some extent in shaping her personality as she stands before us now. The fear of subjugation and condemnation with which she was obsessed right from the beginning definitely is not baseless. The woman knows that she is unacceptable to all men whether

they are there as her husbands or as listeners. They have always censured her behaviour. As Hansen says, "…no one told her, and everyone told her" that her "behaviour was immoral."[10] That is why perhaps she is always being very defensive.

When she first married that was at the age of twelve. Her husband was an old but a rich man and financial considerations determined this bond. This loveless marriage without any fulfilment brought her financial security but it didn't make her secure as far as her position as a woman was concerned. The fear of being subjugated by the husband motivated her to subjugate her husband first. This went on with the other two husbands as well who were again as old and rich as the first one. In fact they were no match for her, she could outwit them by saying first things that they wanted to say against her, thus proving them always at fault. Apparently it seems she had an upper hand in these three marriages. But is it not again her insecurity lest she be governed by men that she tried to govern them and dominate them? These marriages were characterized by inherent paradox of financial security and emotional insecurity. She tried to compensate her emotional insecurities by dominating these husbands. She knew the power, the power of these men that was and that is ever ready to overpower her, defeat her and engulf her.

Well this method was not applicable to the fourth husband who was 'reveller' and kept a 'paramour'. Alison tried to avenge his unfaithfulness in various ways : How many were the ways. I tortured him (p. 228). We cannot be sure whether the 'reveller' felt tortured or not but of this we are sure that she could not put an end to his amorous relationship with his mistress. That's why perhaps she fell in love with Jenkyn and married the fifth time – but first time for love as she confesses : My fifth and last – God keep his soul in health! The one I took for love and not for wealth…(p. 229)

Here she wanted to surrender completely before her love :

I handed him the money, lands and all
That ever had been given me before… (p. 231)

For love she is ready to pay any price except her freedom and supremacy. But Jankyn is a fit match who won't easily give reins in her hands. Alison soon realises her mistake that it's not possible to buy

power and love with material wealth. He immediately starts curbing her freedom, clipping her wings to check her flight as she says:

None of my pleasures would he let me seek. (p. 231)

And this is not the way Alison could have been controlled. She deliberately reacts and asserts more strongly because her very existence is threatened:

Stubborn I was, just like a lioness;
As to my tongue, a very wrangleress.
I went off gadding as I had before
From house to house, however much he swore. (p. 231)

Here in the relationship with Jankyn we realise that Alison's fears, lest her husbands attacked her with anti-feminist doctrines were not baseless. What she had always been anticipating from her partners, comes true. Her wish is ironically fulfilled by Jankyn. When he loudly reads out the stories that denounce women for their fickleness and treachery. The monarchical behaviour of Jankyn makes Alison very uncomfortable.

Strangely her last card works, makes the man kneel down and ask for her forgiveness. What her earlier assertions with loud speeches, with her physical assault, couldn't achieve, is achieved within seconds when she submits for a while. She knows no other method will work here. Her calculated enactment of mock murder and submission helps her in achieving her goal.

I made him burn that upon the spot.
And when I'd mastered him, and out of deadlock
Secured myself and sovereignty in wedlock… (p. 236)

She regains the strength again holding on tightly to the reins in her hands, ready to reign supreme. Her claim that she has achieved sovereignty is to be doubted when her husband says :

My own and truest wife,
Do as you please for all the rest of life,
But guard your honour and my good estate… (p. 237)

One wonders what kind of sovereignty is this? What kind of freedom is this? This is freedom on certain terms and conditions, it's a binding. It's basically Jankyn's honour not her own honour that she

must protect. This is his 'estate'. The use of the very word 'estate' suggests as if she is a commodity.

The tale too reinforces what she had been saying and what the forces opposite her had been asserting. The rapist hero saves himself from death penalty by finding the answer to the riddle – "What is the thing that women most desire? (p. 240), with the help of an old ugly hag :

> …sovereignty
> Over her husband as over the lover,
> And master him… (p. 244)

The newly learnt wisdom is put to practical use when the knight gives freedom and sovereignty to the hag to do as she wishes. Lo and behold the hag turns into a young, beautiful and virtuous woman. She submits because the knight had submitted before her giving her freedom and sovereignty. The knight is not only expiated of his crime but is also rewarded with a beautiful and chaste woman, a reward that he never deserves. But is this not a clever trick on the part of the knight – a trick that reminds of the clever ways, used by the society to treat woman as the 'other' and subjugate her one or the other way?

Interestingly, the conclusions of both the *Prologue* and the *Tale* reflect the failure of Wife of Bath. Her high sounding speeches throughout prove ineffective and carry no meaning. Griselda's (*Clerk's Tale*) silence is thousand times more powerful than the speeches of Wife of Bath. In fact, the authority she is trying to defy doesn't recognize her. The neglect is deliberate on their part as they regard her "…a scourge and a blight"[11] that must be avoided lest it infects others. So her dialogic monologue never reaches the addressee that she has in mind rather it is redirected to her and her alone. She herself becomes the battleground where the polyphonic voices clash and struggle to seek clarifications. The so-called seeming right given to her to represent herself, proves to be no right at all. The only language at her disposal is *the oppressor's language* which fails to convey thus rendering her languageless. As Carolyn Burke says, "…the very forms of the dominant mode of discourse show the mark of the dominant masculine ideology. Hence when a woman…speaks herself into existence, she is forced to speak in something like a foreign tongue, as language with which she

may be ucomfortable."[12] The right to search for the appropriate language and to represent herself is denied to Wife of Bath. The reins remain in the hands of the representative of the patriarchal society and the woman despite her speech and authority is gagged forever and lost in the dialectics of freedom and choice.

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Female Bonding in Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine*

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There is a strong undercurrent of feminist thoughts in Shashi Deshpande's novels. Her heroines are bold and courageous who rebel against the existing patriarchal ideology impinging upon their individuality. Almost all the novels ranging from *Roots and Shadows, The Dark holds no Terror, That Long Silence, The Binding Vine* to *The Moving On* have female protagonists passing through a psychological struggle and invariably they emerge stronger and bolder than before to meet the challenges of life. Shashi Deshpande, unlike her contemporary novelist Anita Desai, never pushes her heroines towards extreme paranoid conditions while fighting against the tradition but attempts at building up their inner strength through negotiation with the dangers from within and without.

The novel *The Binding Vine*, 'the boldest statement of a woman's 'sexuality' (Indra Mohan 2004:151) deals with the sexual wrongs done to women in male-dominated society. It takes up the issue of rape within and without marriage. It is the story of young aspiring lower middle class rape-victim Kalpana lying in a state of comatose in the hospital and the long-dead Mira whose death in the child- birth is the manifestation of death-in-life she had been experiencing while living with her inconsiderate, over passionate husband .The traumatic experiences of these women are shared by the fellow women in the novel so that a pattern of female bonding in the thematic structure of the novel appears.

Female bonding or sisterhood is an important aspect of feminism. Women unite not only to fight against the atrocities of male but also to

share each other's experiences. This unique sharing helps them through hard and difficult days and accentuates their individual growth. This theme of woman partnership –of friends, sisters-in-law, mother and daughter etc. can be traced in the novel. Along with the mental closeness of women, their physical proximity can also be observed reflecting a deep bond of their selves. The story begins with Urmi trying to come to terms with her infant daughter Anu's death. She emerges from her intense personal grief as she encounters Mira, her dead mother-in-law through her diaries and poems and meets Shakutai, the mother of rape victim Kalpana. The story moves back and forth in time and space as Urmi, the narrator pours out her psyche and acts as a medium joining different strands into a unified whole.

It is Akka, Urmi's step mother-in-law who hands over Mira's diaries and books to Urmi. This was the moment when Vanaa, Urmi's childhood friend and sister-in law, Akka and Urmi all come together to share Mira's life through her writings. Akka, introduced them to Mira through a photograph supposedly taken just before Mira's marriage showing a melancholy look on Mira's face : "From the formality of the picture I imagine it was taken to mark an occasion-Mira's wedding perhaps-a parting of ways for a group of friends, the end of a chapter" (43).

Mira's marriage like a typical Hindu marriage was an end of her aspirations to educate and flourish as a poet. In fact, it was the beginning of an era of endless suffering for the young woman, ill-prepared to face an onslaught on her body. Akka's cry after reading them is indicative of the horror she experienced as Kishore's father's wife which she shares with Mira-the joint sufferer in marriage. But there was the difference. If Kishore's father was obsessed with Mira's body, he was indifferent to Akka's. In both the cases, the man exercised his power ignoring the woman's emotions : "But tell me, friend' did Laxmi too, Twist brocade tassel round her fingers and tremble, fearing the coming of the dark-clouded, engulfing night?" (56) Mira wrote. The well-balanced Akka broke down on reading this establishing thus a link with herself and the long dead Mira. The link between the women is

further developed when Akka provides the custody of Mira's trunk containing books and diaries to Urmi :

> She gave it to me with the same formality with which she gave me the little bits of Mira's jewellery. Only then she hadn't said 'Mira'. They are Kishore's mother's she had said, 'I kept them for his wife'. But this time she said, 'Take this, it is Mira's. She did not mention Kishore at all, as if she was directly linking me with Mira (48).

The obliteration of the male from the hierarchical relationship between mother-in law and daughter-in-law provides the direct tie of woman with another woman. The onus is on Urmi now to understand Mira and generalize the condition of an average Indian woman.

A close friendship between Urmila and Vanaa is hinted at quite in the beginning of the novel. Vanaa had always made Urmi feel privileged for her qualities of boldness and independence. During the time when Urmi is passing through traumatic condition due to the death of her daughter, Vanaa stands by her to provide her with a moral support. Urmi's misery is unbearable for her. A conversation between Harish, Vanaa's doctor husband and Urmi, during this time, reveals an intimate relationship between the two women.

The thickening of relationship between Urmi and Vanaa right since their childhood has made them look like sisters. ''Are you sisters they asked Vanaa and me in school." (79).After she marries Kishore, Vanaa's step brother, Urmi becomes sister surrogate for Vanaa, according to Akka. 'I sometimes think … that you married Kishore so that you could be related to Vanaa', Inni once remarked (79). But Urmi knows that their relationship is much more refined than between sisters :

> 'But there is greater ease between us than there is between sisters or cousins. I have noticed a kind of tension between sisters, a straining at the bonds, a shame at being too close, too much alike. There is none of that between us' (79).

Vanaa's place in Urmila's heart is temporarily displaced by another woman, Shakutai whom Urmi meets at the hospital where she had gone

to see Vanaa in her medical social welfare office. Shakutai's daughter, Kalpana has been brought as an accident victim and is now in a state of comatose.When Shakutai hears the doctor telling that it is a rape case; she immediately starts worrying about her daughter's reputation. She asks the doctor not to reveal it to any one. Her reasoning is typical of a Hindu woman whom society has trained to consider honour as the most precious possession :

> If a girl's honour is lost, what is left? The girl does not have to do anything wrong, people will always point a finger at her. I have another daughter, what will become of her …? (59)

When Urmi goes to drop Shakutai at her home in the ram shackled building, she does not let her go. 'No, don't. She holds my hand tightly in her hard calloused hand until we go to her room'(61).The physical contact between the two depicts Shakutai's sense of gratitude and Urmi has already realized the common bond between them as women. On reaching home, the thoughts of the lost Anu get coincided with Shakutai's cries about her 'half- dead half- alive' daughter Kalpana. 'My daughter … my daughter … Shakutai's cry eddies around me' 63). At this point of intermingling of present and past in the consciousness of Urmi, the rape- victim Kalpana finds her identification with the long dead Mira. 'I have suddenly realized – what has happened to Kalpana happened to Mira too.'

Like other female protagonists of Shashi Deshpande, Urmi is also set on a journey of awareness of her self and the world. By tracing a common bond between the women of different backgrounds, she traces the violent structure of the patriarchal system that suppresses and silences women.

The institution of marriage often receives scathing attack by the author throughout the novel. In India where most marriages are arranged by parents or elders, the marriage becomes a mere formality. It is seen as 'necessary for the creation of progeny and perpetuation of one's line'(Nabar 107). Woman as an individual having desires of her own is totally ignored She is treated solely as an object of sacrifice for the

fulfillment of the male- ego. Recalling the marriage of her grandmother's niece at Ranidurg, Urmi ponders about the bride:

> I could not see the girl's face, for she looked steadily down throughout, but I could see that her hands were trembling uncontrollably. And the back of her neck, I can remember that, looked like a lamb's, waiting for the butcher's knife to come upon it (63).

Urmi meets Shakutai almost every day in the hospital and listens patiently to her talking about Kalpana, her sister Sulu, son Prakash and daughter, Sandhya. According to Shakutai, Kalpana was a proud and 'stubborn' girl who was not happy with her present circumstances. She had picked up English and had started working in a shop. She never wanted to lead her mother's kind of life, chained by economic and social constraints. Mira too, in her diary, reflects her unwillingness to follow her mother's life. "Will I become that way too, indifferent to my own life, thinking it nothing? I don't want to. I won't" (101).

Shakutai's concept of well-being for her daughter Kalpana is unacceptable to her. She wanted Kalpana to be brought up by her sister, Sulu and her husband, Prabhakar and even consented to Kalpana's stay in their house as Prabhakar's wife. Mira's mother too wanted her to get married and join the category of the standard women. An average woman would be satisfied with this, but Mira wasn't. She hated the man she married : 'Mother', I always wanted to ask, "Why do you want me to repeat your history when you so despair of your own:" Mira writes in her diary (126). Reacting against Shakutai's anxiety about the prospects of her daughter's marriage after Kalpana's rape, Dr. Bhaskar had also pointed out: "What has she got out of marriage-except for the children, of course? And yet, she is longing for her daughters' marriages" (87).

As Urmi goes through Mira's writings, Mira becomes suddenly alive to her. There develops a relationship between the two. Like Mira Urmi too has the desire to find emotional fulfillment in her relationship with Kishore who has always approached her through physical proximity. The desire for love is inescapable in human beings. It is this

cord 'the binding vine' that joins one human being with another. Mira hoped to survive through her unborn child but died during child-birth. Urmi also hopes to reach Kishore someday as she believes 'Each relation, always imperfect, survives on hope' (141).

Through her stream of consciousness Urmi joins herself to the dead Mira and half-dead Kalpana when she recalls Shakutai telling her that Kalpana invited rape because of her fearless demeanor, something not permitted in the lower strata to which she belonged. Urmi knows that the apparent fearlessness in an Indian woman irrespective of her class is a mere façade or an act of 'bravado'. For women across India, fear is a constant companion and rape is the stranger they may have to confront at every corner on any road in any public place at any hour (India Today p. 60).

Urmi recalls how as a child she was accosted by an adolescent youth on a lonely path in Ranidurg. Perhaps that's why mothers don't want to give birth to daughters. 'Why does God give us daughters?' Urmi recalls Shakutai's query. Mira must also have been afraid of giving birth to a daughter explicit in the following lines of her poems when she was expecting her baby :

> I feel the quickening in my womb He moves – why do
> I call the child he? (149).

Urmi helps Shakutai in not getting Kalpana's bed shifted from the hospital. When she learns about Sulumavshi's death, she goes to her house and spends the night there. Shakutai tells her about Prabhakar's involvement in Kalpana's rape and Sulu killing her self out of guilt for her husband's doing. There is a beautiful moment captured by the novelist depicting Shakutai's strengthening her bond with Urmi. Urmi is sleeping in the chair in Shakutai's room and wakes up to find herself covered by Shakutai's sari.

> I wince with pain as I try to move, my neck is stiff. Someone, Shakutai of course, has covered me during the night with a soft, soap-smelling cotton sari, my hands are entangled in it (196).

Another example of female bonding emerges in the relationship of Urmi and her mother Inni. In Deshpande's other novels such as *Roots and Shadows, The Dark holds no Terror* and *That Long Sile*nce the tension between mother and daughter remains unsolved till the end .However, in *The Binding Vine*, the relationship between mother and daughter beginning with bitterness ends with resolution. This is a part of the novelist's scheme of bringing about reconciliation or greater awareness in the protagonist. Urmi had always thought that Inni was responsible for sending her to her grandparents at Ranidurg. But towards the end of the novel, the knowledge dawns upon her that Inni herself was the victim of her husband's dominance and had never wanted to separate Urmi from her. At this point, Inni had expected an understanding from her daughter – something she could never find in her husband. Urmi responds to her mother with great love :

> I put my arms around her. I tell her I believe her, that she never wanted me to be sent away. I say these words over and over again until she is calmer (200).

Towards the end of the novel, tension builds up between Urmi and Vanaa. Like Shakutai, Vanaa too believes that the exposure of Kalpana's rape before the public through press is not going to solve any purpose other than tarnishing the image of the family. Though Urmi has no direct hand in this, yet she holds her responsible and compares her to Priti' a 'do gooder' who needs victims to prove herself. She dislikes Urmi raking up Mira's issue as Mira's husband was her father and she does not want her mother to face any embarrassment. Yet the break up between the two is temporary. The last part of the novel shows Urmi recalling the picture of Vanaa holding her hand when she was undergoing the labour pains before Kartik was born. Such pictures generate hope in Urmi at the time when she is exhausted by the tragedy of Mira, Kalpana and Sulu. Urmi realizes that this is the 'spring of life' that keeps a person going on in life. The gap created by Vanaa not coming forward to support Urmi in Kalpana's case gets patched up by Amrut announcing that Radha, his fiancé is solidly behind her in her

views about the society that holds the victim not the victimizer responsible for rape.

The closeness between Shakutai and her sister Sulumavashi is worth mentioning. Shakutai always addresses her as 'my Sulu'. When Shakutai's husband deserts her for another woman, Sulu provides every kind of help to bring up her children.When Kalapana's rape gets exposed in the newspaper, and people talk all filthy things about Kalpana and Shakutai, it is Sulu who stands by her sister.

Hence, throughout the novel, women are seen helping and sharing with each their intimate experiences. Their companionship not only offers comfort to their lives but also assists them in better understanding of life in general. From feminist view point, female friendship is much safer than the male-female friendship as there is less danger of power inequity. A man socialized to flaunt his masculinity or chauvinism is likely to do great harm to a woman's individuality. Shashi Deshpande in presenting the positive side of female friendship has taken another step ahead in her feminist presentation of the novel.

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The Erosion of the American Family : Sam Shepard's *Buried Child*

Monika Sethi

The family has been called by Freud as the 'germ cell' of civilization. It is the cornerstone of the socialization process of the individual. In fact, family confers status on the individual, that is, it gives him a certain identity. This search for identity is the most extensively explored theme in contemporary American drama. Related to this, is the obsession of the modern American playwrights for the failure of family harmony and its disintegration. Sam Shepard is no exception in this regard.

The American family gives the quintessential picture of the whole American culture today. The recurring theme in the drama of Shepard is the decay of the American family, which can readily be seen as a synonym for the non-viability of today's American society. The playwright sounded the theme very early in his career in the one-act play *Rock Garden.* He treats the theme more fully in *Curse of the Starving Class,* which marks the next stage of development that culminates in Shepard's definitive treatment of the American family in *Buried Child,* the play that brought him the 1979 Pulitzer Prize for drama. Couching the problems of America in the metaphor of the breakdown of the American family, *Buried Child* makes them more accessible and understandable to the audience.

Depicting the search for home within contemporary American culture, Shepard is no more optimistic about what this culture has to offer. Nevertheless, the plays assert that retracing roots is necessary no matter what the cost of outcome. Concurrent with this interest in home is a shift from the lone individual to people in relationships as a way of

exploring possible reintegration and the forging of a community. This task of reshaping the cultural debris is hindered by many forces– internal and external to the individual. The inner conflicting desires of the characters or what maybe called the 'obsessional behaviour' of the characters, builds the psychological barrier. The social barrier includes the bankruptcy of the past passed on from father to son, the surrounding social or political environment, the alienation of man from land, the apparent vacuum created by the scraping of old values and the essential claustrophobic nature of the American family. Shepard brings into focus the interplay of all these forces and the subsequent plight of American family life.

Buried Child, like majority of Shepard's plays, takes place in the most ordinary of the backgrounds, a shabby rural living-room. The family is made up of three generations– Dodge and Halie– the grandparents; Tilden and Bradley– the sons; and Vince and Shelley– the grandson and his girlfriend. The atmosphere in the family is stifling, repressive, sterile and non-caring for the essential element of love is missing.

Dodge, the father who has always 'dodged' responsibility for his sons, is the archetypal threatening father whose infanticidal impulse still haunts his subconscious. He is a cynical, cantankerous old man who spends his days riveted to a blank television screen gazing numbly from his confined space on the living-room sofa where he surreptitiously sips from a whiskey bottle concealed beneath the cushions from the watchful eyes of his nagging wife. The love-denying father projects his violence to the mother: "You think just because people propagate they have to love their offspring. You never saw a bitch eat her puppies?" (112). The only parental attitude Dodge exults in is the macho one of potency: "You know how many kids I've pawned?" (112).

Ironically, the sons of Dodge are portrayed as impotent against him, and the only child that one of them could beget has been murdered by Dodge. Dodge's three sons are a mockery. Tilden, the elder son, is slow-witted and spends most of his time in kitchen. Bradley, the second

son, has a wooden leg that is taken from him by Vince and Shelly, making his helplessness a symbol of impotence. He carries the instrument of his castration, the scissors, in his hands and threatens and terrorizes Dodge with it. The impotent son is unable to replace his father; able only to make the father as impotent as he is by cutting off his hair, which leaves the old man bloody. Bradley's sterility is further highlighted by the ultimate act of violent and cruel powerlessness– his fellatio rape of Shelly at the end of the second act. The third son, Ansel, to whom Halie often refers, was found dead after his marriage to a catholic woman. Halie says of Ansel, " He was a hero! A Man! A whole man!" (124). Thus, the whole family presents a picture of a caravan of mutilated men. The decay in the social and moral life of the family is reflected is the physical decay of its members. Halie, on her part, mostly lives upstairs. When she comes down she hardly takes care of Dodge but has a relation with father Dewis.

The family in *Buried Child* suffers from the tyranny of the past; an action performed decades ago, a truth half-told that threatens to explode their slender hold on normality, turning their tedious day-to-day existence into a nightmare. The fatal secret deeply hidden beneath the surface of a mundane domestic scene is gradually revealed through dialogue and action. The hideous truth is the incestuous relationship between Halie and her son, Tilden. The problem of incest between Halie and Tilden is further compounded by the murder of the child born out of this unholy union by Dodge. Thus, the family of Dodge is cursed by the combined acts of "over-rating and under-rating of blood relations" (Levi-Strauss 105). This act has been explained by Nash thus, "[…] the family's dark secret reveals an over-rating of blood relations: Tilden's incest and the subsequent birth of the unwanted child. The secret also reveals the under-rating of blood ties: the infanticide that Dodge later confesses" (205).

Dodge knows that the emptiness of his present and the disasters that befell his three sons, are connected to the child he had killed: " My flesh and blood is buried in the backyard" (125). Yet he continues to

try to convince Tilden into believing that it all happened before he was born. Tilden, confused and burned out as he may be, will not forget: "I had a son once but we buried him" (92). The memory of his child may have burned him out, but it still enables him to be the only one who sees the possibility of the land. Tilden, however, could not protect the child from Dodge. He continues to mourn the child: "He [Dodge] is the only one who knows where it's buried. […] Like a secret treasure. Won't tell any of us. Won't tell me or mother […]" (104).

This is the only time in the play that Tilden refers to Halie as mother– his mother and also the mother of his child. Halie bore the child in pain. Dodge lays bare his mind before Shelly describing the psychological dread that led to the killing of the child. Dodge commits infanticide because his patriarchal power was threatened. The catastrophe has led to the permanent disruption of the normality and tranquility of the domestic life of the family. As Dodge admits, "[…] It made everything we'd accomplished look like it was nothing. Everything was cancelled out by this one mistake. This one weakness" (124). This reveals the genealogical dread and disgust in the family. This family mocks at the idea that marriage is a sacrament and the production of children a divine obligation. This American family fails in its function as a biological and as a religious unit.

In the play we note broken relationship between the members of the family. What the play depicts is that the domestic relationships and social norms are battered, bruised and disgraced in the society at large. Dodge admits having committed infanticide: " I killed it. I drowned it. Just like the runt of a litter. Just drowned it" (124). Firstly, the sinful act of Tilden makes him a moral coward and he always hides himself in the kitchen. Secondly, the inhuman act of Dodge of child-murder, due to jealousy, makes him devilish losing all his relationships in the family. There is the terrible sense of insecurity and an acute perception of alienation from society among the characters of *Buried Child,* all stemming from an unsatisfactory filial relationship. As a result none could identify Vince who happens to be the family inheritor after the

death of Dodge. In Act II Dodge gets angry with Vince for being called grandpa. Dodge yells at Vince: “Stop calling me Grandpa will ya. It’s sickening. ‘Grandpa’. I’m nobody’s Grandpa” (90). This denial does not represent the old man’s forgetfulness but rather his conscious rejection of family ties.

It seems the hierarchical pattern of the family has been injured and no one is sure of his place in the family. The family has just become a loosely held group of diseased individuals without a sense of community. The members have become psychological patients and the society one big sick unit. In *Buried Child* we note the decomposition of man to be conspicuous and complete. It is epitomized in the apparent physical decay of the characters. In a family where the central figure, the image of perfection and love, the mother, becomes incestuous, it invites only disaster to the family. So Dodge has lost all hope for the family- integrity and in despair seeks the bottle: “Where’s my bottle?”(91).

Vince is a man in search of his lost identity. He arrives at his grandparents’ house in an attempt to revisit his childhood and “to pick up from where he left off”(188). He is on a journey to re-establish his roots, to find his past and his place in the life of the family. Contrary to what Vince expects, nobody in the family recognizes him. Even Tilden, his supposed father, remarks: “ I had a son once but we buried him” (92). This remark has a double meaning: it refers metaphorically to Vince’s position in the family and literally to another child, born to Halie but killed by Dodge and buried in the field behind the house. This is a conscious rejection of family ties. But for Vince there is no going back now. He wants to refresh his relations with his family. Shelly, the outsider, expected “Norman Rockwell”, “Dick and Jane” (83), “turkey dinners and apple pie” (91). Instead, she walks into a frightening battleground where women are violated or ignored, turned vengeful or banished. She realizes that the family members have become strangers in their own house.

Vince, unable to get acceptance, leaves to buy a bottle of whiskey for Dodge, forcing Shelly to remain behind and deal with the situation

as best as she can. When he returns next morning he is drunk and, like Weston in *Curse of the Starving Class,* enters violently, smashing bottles on the porch of the house. Ironically, this kind of behaviour brings recognition. Halie instantly knows who he is and Dodge, in a verbal will names his “Grandson Vincent” (129), as his heir. Though Vince wins recognition, he takes on all the characteristics of alienation that were initially seen in Dodge. Vince readily accepts the responsibility to carry on the family name and tradition as he takes command of the living space. Vince usurps Bradley and Tilden, chases Halie upstairs, and ignores Shelly who no longer recognizes him. His last act is to bury his grandfather’s corpse (whose death has come completely unnoticed) with an old blanket placing Halie’s roses on his chest and positioning himself on the sofa in Dodge’s place, arms folded behind his head, his body symmetrically mimicking the position of Dodge’s corpse. This scene perfectly parallels the first as Halie’s voice is heard calling down the stairs, “Dodge? Is that you Dodge?” (132). The drama appears to have come full circle, the buried child emerging to replace the father who murdered him.

While Shepard’s drama deals with the fundamental problems confronting the American culture in the modern times, Christian symbolism and the development of Christian themes is an aspect of the plays that profoundly describes the context of Shepard’s output. In *Buried Child* the focus is on the allusion to the return of the prodigal son, the spiritual stagnation and the vegetation myth. Critics like Marranca interpret the character of Vince in terms of the parable of the prodigal son (36). At the same time, Thomas Nash views the plot of *Buried Child* as “a modern version of the central theme of Western mythology, the death and rebirth of Corn King” (203).

The spiritual stagnation is highlighted through the character of Father Dewis. The minister is drunken, slyly lecherous, profoundly cynical and completely bankrupt spiritually. Dewis’s Christianity is one of meaningless platitudes that instead of facing up and resolving problems, covers them up. The other characters, too, exhibit this lack

of faith and spiritual impotence. The emptiness of this kind of religion is echoed by the meaninglessness of the American culture. This is always in front of the audience's eyes in the form of the large T.V. set which never transmits a picture. The sound is never on, and no one ever seems to watch it but Dodge, who stares at its visionless screen. The setting of the play itself is suggestive of decay in society :

> Scene : *Day. Old wooden staircase down left with pale, frayed carpet laid on the steps. The stairs lead offstage left up into the wings with no landing. Up right is an old, dark green sofa with the stuffing coming out in spots. Stage right of the sofa is an upright lamp with a faded yellow* shade [...]. A *clinkering blue light comes from the screen, but no image, no sound.* (63)

The above description of the scenic design, made by the dramatist, gives ample proof regarding the disillusionment of the age. The life-style of the society has become pale; and adding to the misfortune, ambition has been lost in the darkness. That is why the "lamp with a faded yellow shade," has been provided to signify the loss of confidence and vitality in man.

In the final scene, the metaphor of the buried child begins to shift its meaning. From a representation of all that is dark and devouring in the family, it takes on the significance of hope. It is only at the end of the play that Halie sees the corn growing. While Halie marvels over the rich crop, Tilden carries in his final arm-load from the garden, the skeleton of an infant wrapped in a muddy, rotten cloth. Tilden delivers the child, he has unearthed, to its mother as she continues to rhapsodize about the paradise outside in words that metaphorically allude to the resurrected child.

After forty years of lying dormant in the barren field, the crop planted by Dodge has suddenly burst from the ground, transforming the garden into a new Eden. Doris Anerback points out that *Buried Child* ends " like a miracle play with the symbol of resurrection," and because Tilden carries the child upstairs to its mother, rather than to the dead patriarchal figure on stage, the play "leaves the audience with hope for a revitalized America, for one that nourishes its children and holds the promise of the American Dream once again"(61).

But the American Dream of bountiful Eden, the poetic image of the land, seems no longer fulfillable in an industrial, mechanized, computerized and dehumanizing society. For years now the farmlands, like those of Thebes in *Oedipus Rex,* have lain fallow, and the family has lived a monotonous still life from which there seems to be no escape. Shepard suggests the possibility of returning to an America that was once strong, held promises and nourished its people. This return, however, is possible only when America's reality is confronted squarely, when the crimes of the past are acknowledged and atoned for and the young can be enlisted to accept their responsibility for the recreation of the Dream. From that point *Buried Child* is the perfect post-Vietnam play, which exhorts the young to turn away from the dropout world of drugs and cults and the narcissistic concern with the self.

As long as the family exists with love, with its ideals and morals, it continues to be a training ground for the young mind. When indifference and personal selfishness sets in, it destroys family life. Parental indifference towards their children results in the disintegration of the family. The above analysis of the play indicates that the American family, today, is in a serious sociological plight. Shepard, however, refuses to mourn at the condition America has come to. Even if one feels he is mourning, more than mourning, he is fighting against this degeneration in the American family life.

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Diasporic Trajectory in Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Black Bird* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*

Rohit Phutela

Diaspora and diasporic experiences have attracted attention all over the world. The word diaspora refers to the displaced communities of the people who have been uprooted from their natural place to other worlds which can't be termed as their own. The movements in the diaspora are not always involuntary i.e. forced exile or exodus. It can be of the migrant's own accord shepherded by the lure of better openings than in their own world. Whatever the case may be, certainly there is a deracination and displacement. The topsy-turvy adventurous lives of this *Trishanku*[1] community have been underscored by many litterateurs capturing their yearnings, anxieties, enigmas, aspirations and never ending quests which lead to new subjectivities or "hybridization".

The present paper attempts at highlighting the anguish and dilemmas of the expatriates via two literary masterpieces penned in two different time spaces. One of them Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird*[2] was written in 1971 and the other one Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*[3] was authored in 2003. The analysis of both the novels reveals the fact that both have one common core i.e. the diasporic experiences of Indians uprooted from their hinterland and cluttered into alien fields. But the difference in the treatment in these novels lies in the perspectives, the negotiations and the solutions of their writers' creative adroitness. Thus, the object of this paper is finding out this essential difference and also celebrate the analogy between these two highly critically acclaimed literary masterpieces.

The story of *Bye-Bye Blackbird* is set in the 60's when brain drain suddenly became talk of the town and many Indians migrated

to Western countries for greener pastures. What happens when persons belonging to totally different cultures try to infiltrate in the Western life stream? Are they really welcomed there? Can the Orient and the Occident live in accord? The answer is a shaky one. But the flow continues. Anita Desai's subtle penetration into the recesses of her migrant characters, their anguish, frequent affronts at the hands of the indigenous population and their yearning has been brought out in a splendid narrative which Anita Desai is illustrious for.

Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird(1971)* is a novel about the cultural dilemmas and displacements of the immigrants in England and the disappointments and agonies that ensue. The novel essays the tale of an Indian immigrant, Adit Sen, working as a small clerk in a tourist agency in London. He lives in Laurel Lane, Clapham with his English wife Sarah. Despondent due to his inability in finding a suitable job in India despite obtaining a degree from a British University, he returns to England and settles down there. Like his other Indian immigrant chums he also learns to pocket indignations and affronts which an expatriate is subjected to. Fed on English literature and education in school back in India and fully *au fait* with the English manners and life style he feels a kinship with England but hankers after a reunion with his relatives in India, Indian food, music, customs and friends.

This longing goes more intense with the advent of Dev from India. Dev, his college time pal, has come for higher studies in England and stays with Adit and Sarah. Unlike Adit, he can't stand the humiliations and indignations at the hands of the home-grown population directed against the Asians. It is Dev, who time and again makes caustic remarks to arouse Adit from his complacency. Dev's rebelliousness is one of the most important features of the novel. But Adit's mental turmoil reaches its culmination when he visits Sarah's parents along with Sarah and Dev. From that visit onwards Adit feels stifled and clipped and sees the basic disharmony. His nostalgia grows and the memories

of the hinterland start tormenting him. The only remedy he feels is suitable for him is the return. Ironically, Dev stays back with a conflict raging in his mind.

The indifference towards the people who have migrated from their homelands to another country sometimes foment them to resort to unceremonious treatment towards these people. And this undignified treatment, or the racial slur becomes one of the aspects of the immigrant life. The home acquires the shape of a mythic place of desire[4], as in Avtar Brah's perspective, where return is not an option. A self-destroying smugness creeps in which prevents them from asserting their identity in the country of the colonists.

Adit and party are also made to realise that they are parasites and don't belong to the 'white man's land'. Adit and Dev are addressed as "wogs" by an English schoolboy and are treated as a piece of garbage in the public place. Dev also notices a separate lavatory for the Asians. Such incidents reveal the dark side of the immigrant existence.

Adit's inaction can be studied best in his relation to the motto he has and the plans he had made for himself in England. He is an "every Indian" bewitched by the seductions of the *vilaayat* and is under the spell of this promised land which could fructify all he had dreamt and pined for in his life. The paltry racial attacks are first ignored by him as small drawbacks and this is what he feels about these minor shortcomings of the English life when provoked by Dev who forces him again and again to spring into action at such instances, "I love it here. I'm so happy here, I hardly notice the few draw-backs" (18). Here he declares that he loves England when Dev pokes him.

This infatuation with the English prosperity can be attributed to 'the lure of the *Other*' as enunciated by Rama Kundu. She postulates that it is the inveterate dissatisfaction with the possession which propels a man on to a journey and quest. It is this

preoccupation with 'the Other' which characterises a diasporic reality. It is this quest for the goal of material prosperity which drives Adit to England and will drive other youths too from India forever.

When Adit says that he likes England, Dev's knee-jerk reaction bowls Adit over:

> Like being at the bottom of the ladder in your office. Like knowing you can never get to the top because there'll always be an Englishman there.(p.18)

His own longings and nostalgic stances epitomise the situation of an uprooted individual trying to maintain a link with his homeland mentally although if not geographically.

It is Dev who is partly responsible for facilitating Adit in knowing himself and admitting his hidden desires of unification with his country. Dev's arrival and his vitriolic remarks at Adit's smugness act as a catalyst. Adit's feigned happiness gives up before Dev's rebelliousness and his frustrating outbursts. Dev's words ring like a bell in his ears. But it was not the occasional slights and insults that had brought about a transformation in Adit, it was not the aggression of the English that chivvied him to return to India but the enchantment and the placidity of England which he experienced during his visit to Sarah's parents' home. This placidity and composure suddenly remind him of the tranquility of his own country's charm.

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake(2003)* is a narrative about the assimilation of an Indian Bengali from Calcutta, the Gangulis, into America, over thirty years (from 1968-2000). She has juxtaposed the conflicts of the two generations in the diasporic identities and tried to fathom the anxiety and dilemmas faced by each generation. The novel opens with Ashima, the wife of Ashoke Ganguli who has migrated to America pursuing higher studies in the field of "fibre optics". Being pregnant, she is trying to make *jhaal moorie*, the spicy Indian snack sold in the streets of Calcutta, a humble

effort to relive her Indian reminiscences. This is first of her strenuous efforts to recapture the memories and the experiences of her world which she has left behind and yearns for that world to the extent of madness. Soon, she gives birth to her baby boy whom she pities for not being surrounded by his numerous uncles and aunts, grand-parents and other kins. She complains and urges her husband to return to India but he won't listen. She weeps and grumbles and finally resigns to her fate or what is termed as "refashioning of the self"[5] in Bharati Mukherjee's terminology . Rest of the novel deals with similar situations with the Ganguli family trying to strike a fine balance between their Indian nativity and the newly found American cult

The critical situation in the novel comes when Gogol, the son of the Gangulis grows up and is exposed to the dilemmas of the culture which his parents had been facing ever since they set their foot in America. While his parents had to wrestle with the memories and the distance of and from the motherland, Gogol has to grapple with both – the culture and traditions in the roots and the culture and tradition which now he is a part of. The plight of the second generation has been rendered in the novel in a most exquisite style which at once propels us to identify with the characters.

The novel hinges around these two cardinal characters-Ashima and Gogol which sum up the dilemmas and predicaments of two different perspectives in a diasporic existence. The first and second generation immigrants have different woes to relate to and Ashima and Gogol embody those ordeals to perfection.

At the very outset we have Ashima Ganguli preparing something for herself in the kitchen in their house in Cambridge. She tastes it with a cupped palm to relive her days in Calcutta where this snack is the delight of everyone passing by. But the aroma, she feels, is different, "*as usual, there's something missing.*"(p. 1). Thus, as a first generation immigrant whose roots

are rigid in her homeland she is given to constant longings and nostalgic acts. All the people suddenly come alive and she forgets her pains and the weight of the baby she is carrying.

Ashima resorts to memories and recapitulations to dispel the gloom which has emanated from her constant feeling of being a creature alone on a blighted planet.

One of the most significant traits of the immigrant existence is the striking of balance between the two worlds – the homeland and the adopted one. The love and reverence for one's culture and roots is never out of mind and the first generation migrant always expects his / her children also to revere the same roots and culture which he / she is an offshoot of. For that reason, the child is made familiar with the cultural products of his country by the parents – the myths, stories, literature, etc. But the importance of the cultural shades of the adopted land can't be negated. The future of the second generation lies there and he must be made to learn the peculiarities of that culture too.

Ashima teaches her son to memorize a four line children's poem by Tagore, and the names of the deities adorning the ten-handed goddess Durga during pujo: Saraswati with her swan and Kartik with peacock to her left, Lakshmi with her owl and Ganesh with his mouse to her right. Every afternoon Ashima sleeps, but before nodding off she switches the television to channel 2, and tells Gogol to watch *Sesame Street* and *The Electric Company*, in order to keep up with the English he uses at nursery school.(p.54)

Also, the Gangulis befriend many Indian-Americans around them which is done to relive their past history and traditions-to simulate the home-country which is far. Robert Cohen says:

> A member's adherence to a diasporic community is demonstrated by an acceptance of an escapable link with their past migration history and a sense of co-ethnicity with others of a similar background.[6]

They get together at all religious festivals and ceremonies at each other's houses only to procure a "little India" which they all cherish.

As Gogol grows up, the seeds of American sedition germinate in him. His natural predilection with the American ambience propels him to loosen all his ties with his native culture which are kept as luggage by his parents on their heads. This is a pointer to the disgust of the second generation diasporic identity towards its hyphenated existence like Indian-American or Indian-Canadian. He wants to live life by the American way and moves from one disillusioned relationship to another. From Ruth to Maxine to Moushumi-all his efforts towards a settled placid life are doomed. Maxine feels ignored by Gogol's decision to be with his mother for emotional support after his father's demise. She rues the fact that she can't provide any solace to Gogol owing to her being a representative of a "different" world than Gogol's. The cultural differences between Gogol's and Maxine's worlds end up their relationship.

Lahiri's all inclusive approach in capturing the dilemmas of the displaced human beings doesn't ignore the dilemmas of the other cultural subjectivities. The people from other nationalities too possess this sensibility and realization of being a fish out of water when they come to terms with another culture whom they had been unfamiliar with. Graham, Moushumi's fiancé, feels repressed and writhes under the dominant Indian culture in one of his visits to Calcutta. The Indian culture debars him from boozing frequently and he couldn't hold the hand of his love Moushumi openly. The cultural disparities compel him to part ways with Moushumi. Similarly, Maxine also wonders why she is being excluded from Gogol's family and their rituals when Gogol has such an attachment with her. Thus, we see cultural disparities engendering an equal discomfiture for all.

The novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird (1971)* was penned in the decade of 70's when the brain drain phenomenon was at its

culmination in India and had uprooted many young minds because of the lure of the West. Movements had been there earlier too, but this self imposed sort of exile for economic gains was something new and Desai could not hold to express the urgency and anxiety which such an exile entails. *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri starts with the same note of self imposed exile through migration but Lahiri is more broad in her conception and negotiation of the diasporic experiences. While Anita Desai confined herself to the dislocation and displacement woes of the earliest economic migrants to the Western harbours, Lahiri, owing to her own diasporic writer status, has taken into account the consequences of such migrations and self-imposed exiles. Anguish and nostalgia give way to creations of identities and transformations. Lahiri seems to thrive on the post-structuralist notion that identity is a discursive formation and undergoes numerous mutations. The contamination of cultures leads to new subjectivities.

Ashoke Ganguli comes to America under the same brain- rain syndrome of the 6o's with his wife who is the greatest casualty of this migration. She rues the distance from her home country and the people therein but in the end familiarizes herself to the new life-stream and gets fitted herself into new roles but not before deluges of longings and nostalgias for her country. It is this transition which characterises a diasporic existence-formation of new identities, subjectivities and personalities. Not only such personalities lead to evolution of their own existence but also their conjunction in the form of marriages and alliances with other nationalities, whether of dominant culture or of other diasporic communities leads to formation of new identities or "hybridity". Ashima metamorphoses into a new existence as that of an Indian-American. Thus, she grows confident of charting a new course, a "route" of her own – the "route" of bicultural identity which is a transition from her "roots".

Gogol's plight is every second generation immigrant's heartrending saga. The lure of the no-holds-barred life of the west is fetish for every young Gogol. But the disillusionment arises from a sort of inability-the inability to un-equate oneself with one's western counterparts. The second generation forgets that the American or the English enjoy contentment in their existence only by virtue of their continuity of relationship with their land, the sense of belonging which an immigrant can't achieve.

To sum up, Adit in *Bye-Bye Blackbird* flounders in this transition from "roots" to "routes" and fails in the fruition of the "hybridity" and the contestations of the "in-between space"[17]. While the nomenclature of *Trishanku* eats into him and the nostalgia overawes him he returns while Dev, Ashima and Gogol decide to play with their newly found existence. Ashima, Gogol and Dev gain where Adit loses. Ashima succeeds in the reconstruction of all that was deconstructed by the displacement and dislocation of her world. Gogol and Dev also embark upon the phase of reconstruction after the cultural shock and identity crisis when the novels end. It is only Adit for whom even the reconstruction gets deconstructed. He picks up the pieces of his shattered hopes and aspirations and returns.

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1. Sura P. Rath. *Home(s) Abroad: Diasporic Identities in Third Spaces*. http:// social.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v4i3/rahtl.com (Trishanku was a character from Ramayana who went 'embodied' to heaven but had to settle at a place midway between the earth and the paradise.)
2. Anita Desai, *Bye-Bye Blackbird*(New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1971). All the further references to the novel given in the parentheses are from this edition.

3. Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake* (New York: Mariner Books, 2003). All the further references to the novel given in parentheses are from this edition.
4. Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London: Routledge, 1997). 192
5. Nagendra Kumar, " Refashioning of the Self in Bharati Mukherjee", *Indian Novelists in English.* ed. Amar Nath Prasad (New Delhi : Sarup and Sons, 2000)184.
6. Robert Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (UCL Press, 1997), IX.
7. Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture* (London : Routledge, 1994).

Position of Women in Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*

Manisha

Nathaniel Hawthorne began *The Blithedale Romance* after the family had moved from Lenox to West Newton, Massachusetts, and settled into the home of Horace and Mary Mann (Sophia's sister). The satire of social reformers is a central focus in *The Blithedale Romance*, and it is not resulting that Hawthorne wrote the work while present in the Mann household. Horace and Mary Mann worked long and hard both while Mann was a Whig member of Congress, and throughout their lives, they effected many of the reforms which Hawthorne satirizes in the novel: "temperance, the treatment of the insane, prison conditions, anti-slavery, and the movement for women's rights."[1] Hawthorne drew heavily upon his personal experience as a member of the Brook Farm Community at West Roxbury and his notebook became a source while he wrote the novel.

Feminism was still a new concept in the nineteenth century, and only a handful of women dared cause an uproar. Most women were content with the status quo, including Hawthorne's own wife, Sophia. Hawthorne, like many others, naively believed that a few hours of work a day would suffice to run a farm; the reality of the backbreaking nature of manual labour came as a shock. He wrote to Sophia, "a man's soul may be buried and perish under a dung-heap, or in a furrow of the field."[2] *The Blithedale Romance* is Hawthorne's only full-length work employing a first person narrator. But because very soon into the narrative, Coverdale exposes his fantasy system as being complicated hostile towards women and persecutory of them, for the feminist reader the experience of reading *The Blithedale Romance* is terrifying because the psychopathology of the

narrator's misogyny becomes the "normal" way of viewing women within the novel. On the eve of his departure for Blithedale, Coverdale attends "the wonderful exhibition of the Veiled Lady"[3], "enshrouded within the misty drapery of a veil" (p. 5) insulating "her from the material world", (p. 5) who is "in the management of a male medium or clairvoyant" (p. 6). Coverdale is enthralled by the spectacle, but he does not realize that the Veiled Lady's fate is a metaphor for the condition of women in nineteenth-century American society, entrapped within a definition of femininity controlled by men, which American feminists were challenging with ever-increasing action and vigour.

Coverdale interprets virtually all of the events which he witnesses through the lenses of his own set of assumptions about the world, and most particularly, about the relationship of women and men. According to Coverdale, women are condemned to falling in love with men who will either reject them or abuse them, because men are brutes and women are victims, and he needs to see women either as saint-like, madonna-like, and passive, or as sinners and whores. He is incapable of believing that women need not fit into his category system. One of Zenobia's aims for Blithedale is that "we will be brethren and sisters (p. 15). Fieldwork will be designated to the strongest, regardless of sex; housework, to the weakest: "to bake, to boil, to roast, ... to wash, and iron, and scrub, and sweep, and, ... to repose ourselves on knitting and sewing—these . . . must be feminine occupations for the present" (p. 16), but later, says Zenobia, "some of us, who wear the petticoat, will go afield, and leave the weaker brethren to take our places in the kitchen" (p. 16). But these are his fantasies, and not accurate representations of her life. The great debate on the issue of women's rights is taken up in the novel again and again. Although Zenobia articulates the feminist position on the limitations imposed on women, as for example when she says, "thus far, no woman in the world has ever once spoken out her

whole heart and her whole mind" (p. 120). But because no man in *The Blithedale Romance* is either generous or wise, it does not take very long to conclude that, according to Coverdale's schema, women will have no power at all.

This puts Coverdale in the position of being able to sound as if he is arguing in favour of women, while, in fact, he continues to deny her power of her own. Nathaniel Hawthorne struggled in his entire life against the Puritan heritage left to him. Ashamed of his ancestor's actions during the Salem Witchtrials, he publicly criticized the severe Puritan ethic system. While Priscilla shall prove a highly elusive subject, one increasingly identified with fate, it is rather in the portrait of Zenobia that the reader may observe the most immediate effect of Coverdale's dissembling yet essentially accurate text. In particular, it is in the narrator's description of her at their first meeting where we find the most profound and unnecessary confusion arising. Her hand, though very soft, was larger than most women would like to have--or than they could afford to have-though not a whit too large in proportion with the spacious plan of Zenobia's entire development. Whether or not the qualities of modesty and shyness would have accurately applied to Eve any more than they did to Zenobia, it is clear that the author is at far greater pains to establish the basis of Zenobia's alleged beauty than he is to establish the basis of her unmistakable physical shortcomings. And yet, what are all such rhetorical flourishes when set beside more basic facts of the world of the novel and its inhabitants which lie beyond the ability of any mere re-creator of that world, however gifted, to fundamentally alter.

Despite Coverdale's attempt to disdain masculine superiority, and scorn the conventional female archetype, he repeatedly compares Zenobia and Priscilla to it. For instance,

Zenobia's horrid cooking is mentioned frequently in the novel, almost as if Coverdale sees it as a personal affront. While sick, he suspects he is beginning to fall in love with Zenobia. The feminist Nina Baym in "The Significance of Plot in Hawthorne's Romances" reads *The Blithedale Romance* as a novel which exposes the ostensible beliefs of each of the central characters as shams: "Hollingsworth is no philanthropist, Zenobia no feminist, and Blithedale Farm is not a socialist community....Zenobia's behaviour toward Priscilla shows no feelings of sisterhood, while her behaviour towards Hollingsworth" indicates that she wishes to "be owned by a powerful, patriarchal male". Thus, she is "only a pretender to feminism."[4] While many women were trying to turn away from subservience, pedestal worship was not the respect they were looking for. Coverdale's words are still placed squarely in the values of the cult of true womanhood. Priscilla is the very antithesis of a feminist, and the embodiment of a lady faithful to the cult of true womanhood. She often fades into the background, like the pale flower she has habitually portrayed as "Poor Priscilla"(as everyone frequently refers to her). She is the subject of Coverdale's attempted poetry pastoral, romantic prose. She is a cross between girl and woman fascinating both Coverdale and Hollingsworth. She presents a sharp contrast to the exotic Zenobia and the two are complete opposites.

The cult of true womanhood consisted of four virtues a woman must contain: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity, and "with them she was promised happiness and power" (p. 52). Hollingsworth's position on woman harmonized with this philosophy completely, and Coverdale himself mirrored many aspects of it. Zenobia, as previously stated, was the antithesis to this cult. As religion was the one thing women were allowed, and one of the most important facets of character, Zenobia was decidedly "evil" by nineteenth century standards. A 1849 article titled "Woman as She Was, Is, and Should Be" stated "god increased the cares and sorrows of woman, that she might be sooner constrained to accept the terms of salvation."[5] Zenobia herself appears to wish for

personal happiness, no matter the cost (financial or emotional). Throughout the novel she does not give the impression of a woman jumping to receive woman's obligatory sorrows. Her powerful speech confesses her imperfections, and then totally destroys the principles condemning them. Ultimately, she is saying, no matter how 'bad' she is in his eyes, he cannot take her womanhood from her. Her speech, nevertheless, is practically worthless after her later actions. Though she herself bomb lasted him, calling him a "monster", she defends him to Coverdale. She declares that his betrayal was her fault. Robert Weldon, in her "Tyrant King and Accused King: Father and Daughter in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*" explores Zenobia's defense of Hollingsworth: "But in her final conversation with Coverdale, trapped between submission and assertion, she is again overwhelmed by self-hatred and hatred of her sex. She accepts total blame for the failure of her relationship with Hollingsworth and believes she deserves punishment."[6]

Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* presents the story of Miles Coverdale, Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla. Throughout the novel Coverdale narrates his obsession with these characters. Through his observations and thoughts, feminist ideals and philosophies are clearly evident, demonstrating Hawthorne's own beliefs, as well as oppositions to the theory. Feminism is "the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes."[7] Zenobia and Priscilla are the embodiment and antithesis (respectively) of the feminist model. Hawthorne based Coverdale on himself, expressing his own views on feminist philosophy through Coverdale. Coverdale's views and actions conflict throughout the novel, as does Zenobia's. Zenobia, though described as a feminist, wavers in her beliefs under Hollingsworth's persuasion. The cult of true womanhood was a prevalent belief in the nineteenth century, and its principles are the underlying current cutting through the entire work. The popular theory that feminist Margaret Fuller was a model for Zenobia impacts the entire story. Zenobia as a possible literary reincarnation of Fuller says much about the storyline and Hawthorne's views. Hawthorne's

possible use of feminist Margaret Fuller as a role model for Zenobia has been argued since the novel has been published. Though Hawthorne denies the charge, the theory holds much weight. Fuller was often publicized as behaving in a queenly manner; one biography of her "points out that the manners Fuller adopted as a child can only be described as regal."[8] Hope Stoddard declared that she had a "predetermination to eat this big universe as her oyster. . . and to be absolute empress". These are the very ideals Zenobia preaches in the novel. And like Fuller, she finds herself to not be able to fully shake off traditional notions of womanhood. Perhaps this is the reason Stoddard questioned "Was she happy in anything I wonder; she told me she never was."[9]

The name Zenobia stems from the Queen Zenobia who defied the Roman Empire. The character Zenobia is described frequently, by Coverdale, as being regal, asserting nothing could detract from the "queenliest of her presence" (p. 41). Both Fuller and Zenobia were, obviously, feminists with literary pursuits. Both women's intellect was alternately praised and condemned. Other noticeable similarities between Margaret Fuller and Zenobia were their bodies and the way they dressed. Both women were considered full-bodied. Fuller was never seen as beautiful, a sharp difference from Zenobia, but instead focused on her intelligence to garner attention. Both women also wore a flower in their hair. Fuller taught for a short time at Louisa May Alcott's school, and there "many of her female students formed almost feverish attachments to"[10], her- as Priscilla clung to Zenobia through most of the novel. Zenobia herself pondered over this, asking Coverdale if he had ever "see[n] a happy woman" (p. 55). Hawthorne did not particularly care for Margaret Fuller, saying she had "not the charm of womanhood". Like Zenobia, she compromised her public avowals (primarily of chastity) for love. Though it is believed her and her lover did marry after the birth of their child, Fuller was a disgrace in the eyes of nineteenth century society. Her death, by drowning (like Zenobia's) caused him no sorrow. Instead he felt "providence was, after all, king in putting her and her clownish husband

and their child on board that fated ship". Perchance Hawthorne's view on Fuller and women in general can be summed up by his own journal entry: "I like her the better for it [Fuller's 'fall']; because she proved herself a very woman after all, and fell as the weakest of her sisters might."[11]

Though Zenobia is shown as tragic figure, the real tragedy (for Hawthorne) was that she never accepted her role in society. Her feminist beliefs destroyed her soul and spirit, leaving her with nothing when the man she loved deceived her. Priscilla, the weak sister through the novel, emerges as the winner. Priscilla has been transformed into a being with an overbearing, powerful identity. In the end she is not only physically strong, but has both men within her power. Hollingsworth depends on her for care, and Coverdale declares himself in love with her. In spite of the feminist overtones in the novel, the underlying message promotes the cult of true womanhood over feminist canon.

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Use of Spectacle in Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine The Great*

Rashmi Sharma

Spectacle, in the sense of what is seen on the stage at any given moment during the performance of a play, provides a visual dimension to drama and thereby plays an important role in supplementing and enriching both stage-action and rhetoric. As Nevill Coghill succinctly remarks,

The art of the theatre is unique in its power to convey meaning in two simultaneous and confluent streams, through eye and ear: and although the ear is the more important of the two, . . . yet the eye has a great qualifying authority . . . Hamlet in his inky cloak, standing sadly aloof from the gaudy court of Claudius, brings something to our sense of his isolation that no dialogue can so finely disclose; the visual image offers meaningfulness beyond what can be said.[1]

Professor Coghill, however, suggests but just one way in which a dramatist may employ stage-spectacle and thereby enrich the meaning of the aural and temporal structure of his play. But it would be worthwhile to point out that, consciously or unconsciously, a dramatist may use spectacle in three other ways. One way is to use stage-spectacle consciously to let it contrast ironically with stage-action and rhetoric. For example, this is the way in which stage-spectacle is used by Sophocles in the episode of confrontation between Tieresias and Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex.* Particularly worthy of mention is the visual contrast between the weak and blind Tieresias on the one hand and, on the other, the strong and seeing Oedipus, who ultimately turns out to be both weaker and blinder than Tieresias. Marlowe's own *Doctor Faustus* provides another fine example of this ironical use of stage-

spectacle in the scene of conjuration (Act I, Scene 3): Standing at the centre of the magical circle that he has drawn on the front stage, Faustus boasts of having anagrammatized God's name, abbreviated the names of His saints and pushed them all to a peripheral place. Simultaneously, however, the devils, who are present in the "balcony" above (though they are unseen by Faustus), silently preside over his blasphemy and thereby indicate, through their gestures, that rather than becoming the new Centre of his brave new world and usurping God's central place in the universe, Faustus is on his way to become the Devil's slave!

Another possible use of stage-spectacle may be linked with a character who himself relies on spectacle to make his ideas clear. In *Tamburlaine* I, for example, Marlowe lets Tamburlaine, his hero, use stage spectacle as a kind of visual symbolism to express his intentions. Tamburlaine's use of the white, red and black tents, which symbolize, respectively, peace, war, and total annihilation of the opponents, is an example of this visual symbolism. Still another use of stage-spectacle may be unconscious and unpremeditated, and it may inadvertently clash with rhetoric and stage-action and thereby make the audience wonder how to interpret the mutually disturbing and disrupting relationship between these two.

In *Tamburlaine,* Part I, the issue becomes doubly complicated because not only is rhetoric engaged in a conscious or unconscious self-deconstruction but also stage-spectacle, especially from Act II onwards, directly questions what the rhetoric tries so eloquently to affirm. In fact, Marlowe has at times used stage-spectacle in *Tamburlaine I* in such a way that it becomes incongruous with the spoken word and the stage-action and, consequently, leaves the reader and the audience baffled and bewildered about its real significance. This becomes all the more glaring because at the beginning of this play Marlowe has successfully coordinated rhetoric and spectacle to enrich the significance of stage-action.

Let us begin at the beginning and first point out some instances where rhetoric and spectacle have been used in one or another successful

way. The opening scene of the play shows a clear incongruity between the incompetent Persian ruler, Mycetes, and his boastful claims about himself as well as his denigration of Tamburlaine as a Scythian thief. Taunted and insulted by his own brother, Cosroe, Mycetes looks every inch the picture of a ridiculous and helpless ruler. Not only is he incapable of a "great and thundring speech" (I.i.3)[2] , which the occasion demands, but he is also mocked publicly to his face by his brother. Yet he can do no more than simply complain, "I am abused, Meander." He is a man whose rhetoric, as much as his comic appearance, betrays his naïveté. When he asks Theridamas, to go and capture

> . . . that *Tamburlaine,*
> That like a Foxe in midst of harvest time,
> Dooth prey uppon my flockes of passengers,
> And as I heare, doth meane to pull my plumes
> (*I Tamburlaine*, I. I. 30-33),

he inadvertently compares himself and his own subjects to geese and Tamburlaine to a fox! Later, he shows a similar vacuity of mind when he asks Theridamas to

> Go frowning foorth, but come thou smyling home,
> As did Sir Paris with the Grecian Dame. (I.e. 65-66)

The very incongruity of the image that Mycetes uses (after all Helen's elopement with Paris brought defeat and destruction, not victory, to Paris and his people) foredooms with unconscious, self-recoiling irony, his own fate. In a play where, according to Mycetes himself, "words are swords" (I.i.75) and language is power, his fate in his confrontation with Tamburlaine is not difficult to foresee. The episode thus shows rhetoric and spectacle enriching each other ironically by letting Mycetes, with "such conceits as clownage keeps in pay," masquerade as king. His clownish behaviour in Act II, when he tries to hide his crown from Tamburlaine, visually demonstrates what he really is: a weak, cowardly and foolish man, totally unfit to hold the high office of the King of Persia. It is no wonder, then, that as soon as he

leaves the stage, Cosroe announces his rebellion against him. The crowning of Cosroe on the stage provides a direct visual dimension to the imperial theme of the play in which crowns will be seized from unworthy heads and tossed about freely until they go to the right man, Tamburlaine!

Such a successful blending of rhetoric and stage-spectacle continues in the next scene in which Tamburlaine makes his first appearance on the stage. Tamburlaine enters the stage, "leading Zenocrate, Techelles, Usumcasane, other Lords and soldiers, laden with treasure "(s. d. I. ii.). Tamburlaine is still wearing the "shepherd's clothes," though he has taken Zenocrate, the daughter of the Soldan of Egypt, captive along with the lords escorting her. Looking at his appearance, Zenocrate addresses him as a "shepherd" and requests him to pity her "distressed plight." As he appears to them a highway robber, Tamburlaine takes off his outer clothes, reveals his armour beneath them, and announces his decision to marry Zenocrate and make her the empress of the East. This action visually supplements what Tamburlaine says about his future plans. There is, at this point, no incongruity between rhetoric and stage spectacle. Nor is there any incongruity in the next section of this scene when Tamburlaine wins over Theridamas by his words and looks. After seeing Tamburlaine and listening to his persuasive oratory, Theridamas himself admits,

> Won with thy words and conquered with thy looks,
> I yeeld my selfe, my men, and horse to thee,
> To be partaker of thy good or ill,
> As long as life maintaines *Theridamas*.
> (*1 Tamburlaine*, I.ii.227-30)

The best example of stage-spectacle supplementing speech and even silence, comes in III. iii. Agydas, one of the lords escorting Zenocrate, tries to dissuade her from her developing any inclination of marrying Tamburlaine. Tamburlaine overhears Agydas and Zenocrate, "*goes to her, and takes her away lovingly by the hand, looking wrathfully*

on Agydas, and saying nothing" (s.d. III. iii). A moment later Techelles enters and hands over the daggers sent by Tamburlaine. Agydas makes no mistake about the visual message thus received and commits suicide.

But such combination of stage-action, rhetoric and stage-tableau is rare after II. vi. As soon as Tamburlaine has defeated and mortally wounded Cosroe, he justifies his fight against this former ally by saying that he has been driven by the same "thirst of reign and sweetness of a crown" (II. vii. 12) that had made Zeus depose his own father, Saturn. Then Tamburlaine utters his much-quoted and commented-upon speech to justify his betrayal of Cosroe. This speech is regarded by many critics as not only the manifesto of Tamburlaine's infinite aspiration and of his programme of world-conquest but, more significantly, the expression of a dominant Renaissance idea about the infinite potentialities of man for greatness and his capacity for transcending his inherent limitations:

> Nature, that fram'd us of foure Elements
> Warring within our breasts for regiment,
> Doth teach us all to have aspyring minds.
> Our soules, whose faculties can comprehend
> The wondrous Architecture of the world
> . . . .
> Wills us to wear ourselves and never rest,
> Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,
> That perfect bliss and sole felicities,
> The sweet fruition of an earthly crowne.   (II. vii. 18-29)

But there is a double deconstruction at work in this speech. If we take the rhetoric first, the reference to the "elements warring within our breast for regiment" clearly questions the concept of unified identity and individualism that is so much valorized by Renaissance humanists. Tamburlaine emphasizes conflict rather than harmony, not only in nature but also inside man himself. The presence of the four elements within every human body—fire and water, earth and air—makes man's mind a battlefield for the fight of these mutually hostile elements. So the

question of the unified identity of man is undercut by the division existing inside him. Indeed, as T. McAlindon has pointed out,

> The idea of the universe as a dynamic system of opposites speaks to the imagination not only of order but also of the fragile and impermanent nature of life's harmonious patterns. And, since subject and object are held to be duplex and always liable to change, it speaks too of a radical uncertainty in every attempt to interpret and evaluate man's nature and experience.[3]

Secondly, there are the climactic—or some would say the anti-climactic—lines that conclude this long speech: "the perfect bliss and sole felicitie/ The sweet fruition of an earthly crowne."[4] Paul H. Kocher quotes John Calvin to argue that Marlowe's description of the human soul in these lines is "well within the Christian tradition until the sudden crescendo of blasphemy at the close."[5] But as in any allusion the original context comes to resurface, its traces mock Tamburlaine's "infinite aspiration" for something so limited as the "early crown," especially when the human soul can "comprehend the wondrous architecture of this universe." Tamburlaine's aspiration for the "earthly crown" thus sets a limit on what is first thought of as infinite. This is a clear case of Tamburlaine's rhetoric deconstructing itself; for even as it liberates man from all restrictions and convinces him of the possibility to have the whole universe at his disposal, the "earthly crowne" tends to tie him down to the earth once again.

Even more important in this case, however, is the incongruity between the rhetoric and the stage-spectacle. When we listen to Tamburlaine's rhapsody on man's capacity to comprehend the "wonderful architecture of this universe" and on his infinite potentialities, we tend to forget the fact that the speech is literally uttered over, and framed by, the body of the dying Cosroe still lying on the stage. Indeed the scene (II. vii) in which this speech occurs, begins with the wounded Cosroe, who addresses Tamburlaine as "Barbarous and bloody" (l.1) and accuses him of treachery and betrayal. Tamburlaine's speech is in a way an apologia for his "thirst for reign."

Then Cosroe's last speech (II.vii.45-52, uttered barely ten lines after Tamburlaine's panegyric on man, shows him in agonizing death-pangs. The stage-spectacle thus questions the importance of aspiration for the "earthly crowne" in two different ways. First, it was Cosroe's own aspiration for the Persian crown that made him rebel against his own brother and seize the crown from him with the help of Tamburlaine. The consequences of his ambition are there for the audience to *see* even though Tamburlaine waxes eloquent in singing praises of such an aspiration. Secondly, the sad spectacle of a dying man on the stage questions the very glory and dignity of man that Tamburlaine's speech seems so forcefully to affirm. In other words, is the spectator to believe in the apotheosis of man and his longing for the infinite that Tamburlaine's speech so much valorizes or in the mortality of man and the futility of human aspiration? The spectator sees the victor and the victim simultaneously on the stage and is left to wonder what to think of Tamburlaine's speech with all the ambiguities it contains. Thus, apart from being a manifesto of the creed of conquest, Tamburlaine's rhetoric is deconstructed both by itself and by the stage-spectacle. The romantic dream of dominion over the whole world is accompanied by the ugly reality of horror, bloodshed and destruction that the pursuit of such a dream brings in its train. The romantic hero, whether of romance or real history, has of necessity to have in him streaks of cruelty and inhumanity. This is evident from the subsequent episodes of *Tamburlaine* as the atrocities of its protagonist rise in direct proportion to the difficulties he encounters in the pursuit of his dream.

Tamburlaine's conflict with his next adversary, Bajazeth of Turkey, is also characterized by a similar conflict between rhetoric and stage-spectacle, though initially it has a grotesque aspect. As the two mighty opposites meet before their fight, they engage each other in a slanging match that Marlowe might have designed as a substitute for the real fight which could not otherwise be presented on the stage. Each of these two worthies out-Herods and threatens the other as to how he will treat him after his victory. The scene shows the level of abuse to

which these two mighty adversaries can stoop before they actually fight each other offstage. And not to be left behind, the "divine" Zenocrate, Tamburlaine's would-be queen, and Zabina, the Queen of Bajazeth, try to belittle and demean each other in the vein of their spouses. Ironically, though, as these two queens call each other names, what they reveal about themselves is not their innate or status-borne greatness but the baser instincts that they share with common humanity. Surely there are better ways to suggest hostility between two adversaries than by letting them threaten each other and call names as street bullies or quarrelsome charwomen do. In any case, whatever Marlowe might have planned, the royal rhetoric, whether of the Persian or of the Turkish royal couple, brings no honour to anyone of them; it simply renders both stage-action and spectacle ridiculous. After Tamburlaine has defeated and captured Bajazeth and his Queen, Zabina, the slanging-match is replaced by an exchange of boasts and taunts on the part of Tamburlaine's party and curses by the Turkish King and Queen.

The conflict within rhetoric itself and between rhetoric and stage-spectacle reaches its climax in the last two acts. As Tamburlaine prepares for the conquest of Egypt, which is ruled by the Soldan, Zenocrate's father, he orders Bajazeth to be taken out of the cage in which he has been kept since his defeat so that Tamburlaine can use him as a footstool to climb to his throne. Rising to his throne on Bajazeth's back, Tamburlaine utters what, in a tragic context, could be a hubristic speech:

> Now cleare the triple region of the aire,
> And let the majestie of heaven beholde
> Their Scourge and Terrour treade on Emperours.
> Smile Stars that raign'd at my nativity,
> And dim the brightnesse of their neighbor Lamps:
> Disdain to borrow light of *Cynthia,*
> For I the chiefest Lamp of all the earth,
> First rising in the East with milde aspect,
> But fixed now in the Meridian line,

Will send up fire to our turning Spheares,

And cause the Sun to borrow light of you. (*1 Tamburlaine*, IV. ii. 30-40)

Even as Tamburlaine speaks rhapsodically of his glory and announces his self-appointed role of God's scourge, his own rhetoric betrays him. In the opening lines of this speech the metaphors of the sun, the moon and the stars, which are associated with the celestial flight of his imagination, are undercut by metaphors of domesticity: neighbour and lamp. Secondly, the star of the opening lines (in this case, Tamburlaine himself) from whom the sun may borrow light becomes the charioteer of the sun towards the end of the speech: Phaeton, the son of Apollo and Clymene, who drove the chariot of his father but was unable to control the horses. Despite the lavish praise bestowed upon Tamburlaine's rhetoric by many critics like Donald Peet and David Daiches, one really wonders whether the confusion underlying this rhetoric belongs to Marlowe or is meant to be associated with Tamburlaine.[6]

Let us now turn to the stage-spectacle that this scene presents. Tamburlaine's use of Bajazeth as a footstool must have evoked a complicated response from an Elizabethan audience. Being an enemy and tormentor of Christians, Bajazeth was considered an anti-Christ. So in one sense, his use as a footstool by Tamburlaine would evoke a feeling of admiration for the Scythian conqueror whom they would compare with King Henry VIII (Queen Elizabeth I's father), who was shown in a woodcut treating the Pope in the same way.[7] Simultaneously, however, those who had not seen the woodcut of Henry VIII and who were not necessarily so hostile to Bajazeth, would have a different view. But the audience familiar with the "mirror literature" of the period and believing in the *de casibus* theory of tragedy, would certainly look at this stage-spectacle in a different way. They would see in Tamburlaine's act clear signs of megalomania, view it as clearly inhuman and hubristic, and sympathize with his victims. In any case, by humiliating and dehumanizing his fallen enemy, putting him in an

iron cage and parading this cage around as a war trophy, and then using him as a footstool—all make Tamburlaine appear *less* and *not more* than human. Seen in the light of the last lines of this speech, the picture of Tamburlaine indeed reveals a brutality that matches the one imputed to him by his enemies and also recorded by historians. It is difficult to say, however, how it adds to the stature of Tamburlaine as the hero of the play.

IV. ii also introduces for the first time the colour symbolism that Tamburlaine employs to warn his future victims. As Tamburlaine's army is outside the gates of Damascus, Theridamas refers to the white tents that Tamburlaine has pitched to ask the governor to surrender without any conflict and thus save his own life and his people's lives. Tamburlaine then himself mentions his practice in some detail. The white colour of the tents on the first day of the siege means offer of peace if the surrender is made unconditionally. The red colour of the tents on the second day of the siege means the death of the ruler and all those who can offer resistance. But if this warning is again ignored, the colour of the tents changes to black on the third day of the siege. This means total annihilation of the population and the destruction of the city. And this self-made and brutally enforced law is such that Tamburlaine will not allow for any leniency in the enforcement of it. Even when Zenocrate requests him to spare Damascus because it is after all a part of her father's territory, his answer is unambiguous: "Not for the world, Zenocrate, if I have sworn" (IV.ii.125).

As the Soldan of Egypt and the King of Arabia, who are allies against Tamburlaine, refuse to surrender Damascus on the first day of the siege, the colour of Tamburlaine's tents changes to red on the second day. The scene (IV. iv) begins with the spectacle of a banquet. Tamburlaine is dressed all in "scarlet" to match the red colour of the tents, which form the background. In the foreground there is the further baiting and humiliation of Bajazeth. But unlike the earlier victims of Tamburlaine, both Bajazeth and Zabina refuse to accept their humiliation. Their refusal to eat the crumbs thrown at them suggests

that things are not as Tamburlaine or his generals would like to have them. On the contrary, it indicates that though Tamburlaine can massacre men he cannot conquer the spirit of everyone. Secondly, there is a visible tension between Tamburlaine and Zenocrate. She pleads with him once again to spare her father and her countrymen. But Tamburlaine remains adamant: "*Zenocrate*, were *Egypt Jove's* own land, /Yet would I with my sword make *Jove* to stoop." (IV. ii. 71-72). He promises to spare the life of her father life, but that too on the condition that he must accept Tamburlaine's sovereignty over Egypt.

G. I. Duthie makes much of this concession and argues that this scene shows genuine signs of internal conflict in the mind of Tamburlaine, a conflict between his love for Zenocrate and his self-proclaimed military code which does not allow any deviation or leniency. But as Duthie himself recognizes, this is but a "grudging concession"[8] What is more, even as Tamburlaine grants this concession, a second "course of crowns" is brought and he symbolically swallows the kingdoms of Egypt and Arabia, and the principality of Damascus. The eating of the crowns or tossing them about devalues what was at one stage the highest goal of Tamburlaine's own ambition: "the sweet fruition of an earthly crown." Secondly, the baiting of the captive Bajazeth borders on the absurd and presents Tamburlaine not as a superhuman Herculean hero, but as a man with base, sadistic instincts. In any case, the plight of the deposed Turk and his Queen would naturally arouse pity for them and contempt for their tormentor.

This incongruity between rhetoric and the stage-spectacle increases still more in V. i., the last scene of the play. It begins on the third day of the siege of Damascus. Tamburlaine is dressed all in black and appears very melancholy. Understandably, his black dress foretells the destruction of Damascus and of all of its inhabitants. But black is also, traditionally, a colour that symbolizes evil. The appearance of Tamburlaine in the light of his subsequent action signifies both, though he means only one of them. This becomes clear when the first victims of his destruction are innocent virgins who are sent by the Governor of

Damascus as suppliants for his mercy. The spectacle of innocent girls, all dressed in white, kneeling before Tamburlaine, who is dressed in black, and entreating him with "Pitie, O pitie, (sacred emperor) / The prostrate service of this wretched towne" (V.i.99-100) would move any human heart but not Tamburlaine's. Instead of showing any mercy to them, he orders his horsemen to trample them to death.

As soon as Tamburlaine has ordered the burning of Damascus and the death of all Damascans, he utters his much quoted and commented-upon ode to beauty (V. i. 135-45). But soon he realizes that his praise of beauty does not go well with his own character and military mission. It is really "unseemly" with his sex and his mission of "arms and chivalry, / My nature and the terrour of my name" to "harbour thoughts effeminate and faint" (ll. 174-77). Although he "must have beauty beat on his conceites" (182) his real aim is to "conceive" and "subdue" it (l. 183). Zenocrate, who seems to him to be an earthly embodiment of his highest conception of beauty, is now treated as one of the several possessions of a warrior, others being fame, valour and victory; for

> . . . Vertue solely is the sum of glories,
> And fashions men with true nobility. (ll.189-90)

Tamburlaine's rhetoric in praise of infinite beauty thus ends by deconstructing itself. Even more than that, the audience cannot forget what is going on off the stage. And if some in the audience have been carried away by Tamburlaine's rhetoric,[9] Tamburlaine's last line shows a prosaic lapse into bathos: ". . . let us know if the towne be ransackt" (191-94). To put it crudely, it is clear that Tamburlaine has not forgotten his bloody business of conquest and that his ode to beauty was a mere "filler" to keep the stage occupied while the off-stage destruction of Damascus was going on.[10] And what comes as on-stage action presents a no-less shocking spectacle. As Tamburlaine and his generals leave to engage the Soldan of Egypt and the King of Arabia in the battle, Bajzaeth and Zabina are left behind on the stage. Horror is piled on horror's head when Bajazeth, unable to bear his daily humiliation and torture

any more, dashes his head against the iron bars of his cage. Zabina follows his example, but not before she has been driven to madness.

With the main bloody business over, Tamburlaine enters the stage with the Soldan of Egypt, whom he has just defeated. Tamburlaine assures him that he should not be disappointed by his overthrow because all that he possessed will be restored to him and much more will be added to it. Then using "apocalyptic imagery"[11] to describe himself, he claims that "the god of war" has resigned his office to him, and that Jove, "viewing me in armes, looks pale and wan/ Fearing my power should pull him from his throne" (V. ii. 387, 389-90). And when the Soldan asks him whether he has "with honour used Zenocrate," he assures him that Zenocrate's chastity has suffered no harm and that he means to make her his queen. The Soldan expresses his gratitude and protestations of endless honour to him for her sake, and Zenocrate gives her willing consent (l. 437). With all the known adversaries defeated or killed and all the barriers to the "earthly crown" removed, Tamburlaine crowns his three followers even as they together crown Zenocrate. The play thus ends happily for Tamburlaine and Zenocrate, as well as for the Soldan, who is reconciled to Zenocrate's acceptance of her proposed marriage with Tamburlaine. T. McAlindon thinks that this complex ritual expresses "in bold imaginative form the resolution of strife into peace, of wrath into love" and that "it is a dialectic which properly comprehends irony, but this is the irony of life itself, not a criticism of Tamburlaine."[12]

Nevertheless, the sight of the dead bodies of three princes—Bajazeth, Zabina, and the King of Arabia—on the stage counter-balances both the stage-action and the high-flown rhetoric. To put it somewhat crudely, Tamburlaine crowns and promises to solemnize his marriage with Zenocrate literally over the dead bodies of Bajazeth and Zabina, and of the King of Arabia, Zenocrate's former suitor and lover. The audience and the readers wonder how they should react to this mirth in funeral. It is not that Marlowe is not aware of what is happening on the stage; he has, in fact, already made Tamburlaine comment on

and justify his involvement in the deaths of these three princes thus:

> The Turk and his great Empresse, as it seems,
> Left to themselves while we were at the fight,
> Have desperately dispatcht their slavish lives,
> With them *Arabia* too hath left his life:
> All sights of power to grace my victory.
> And such are objects fit for Tamburlaine,
> Wherein, as in a *mirrour*, may be seene,
> His honor, that consists in shedding blood
> When men presume to manage arms with him.
>
> (406-14, *emphasis added*)

Perhaps only Tamburlaine knows what kind of "mirror" he wants to hold before the audience; for the baffled and bewildered audience cannot but wonder what this mirror exactly is. And this is not the only place where the word "mirror" is used. In fact, the word "glass" occurs first of all in the Prologue where Marlowe himself urges the audience to view Tamburlaine's picture in "this tragic glass" (Pro.l.7). For Marlowe's immediate audiences, the term "mirror" had a special significance because they were familiar with the popular mirror literature, which narrated the tragic stories of the fall of the mighty kings and princes from high places. This literature had an overt didactic purpose, namely to show the causes behind historical events and exemplify God's justice. As Frank B. Fieler has noted, "It was conventional for the writer of the separate tragedies to close his narration with a lament for the fall of the subject and to exhort the readers to take warning from this example of the consequences of sin lest the same happen to them."[13] One such "mirror" was George Whetstone's *The English Mirror*, which Marlowe seems to have used as his source for *Tamburlaine* In this book, even as Whetstone narrates the story of Tamburlaine's success and rise to power with a certain admiration and describes him as one of the most illustrious commanders, he also laments, in a typical *de casibus* fashion, the fall of the mighty Bajazeth.[14]

Marlowe's references to the "tragic glass," his treatment of Tamburlaine's rise to power, and his attitude towards the hero are characterized by a similar ambivalence. To the extent that Marlowe presents the story of Tamburlaine's uninterrupted success, his victory over all the known adversaries and his plan to solemnize his marriage with Zenocrate, the play appears to be a challenge to and inversion of the traditional mirror literature. Simultaneously, however, the fate of Tamburlaine's enemies like Corsoe, Bajazeth and the King of Arabia provides suitable material for a typical mirror story with its *de casibus* moralizing. For, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Tamburlaine's famous speech valorizing human glory is uttered over the dead body of Cosroe, while his crowning of Zenocrate takes place literally over the dead bodies of three mighty princes. Worse still, the vivid descriptions of the way the King of Arabia dies at the feet of Zenocrate and of the suicides of Bajazeth and Zabina are clearly in the vein of the ending of a typical fall-of-the-mighty story.

This makes one really wonder whether the play valorizes Tamburlaine's creed of conquest, earthly glory and quest for self-sufficiency, or focuses on man's mutability and mortality and, more significantly, on the fickleness of fortune. To put it differently, does not the spectacle of the suffering and death of mighty princes affirm the relevance of the traditional "tragic glass" and deconstruct the conscious or unconscious inversion of it, if that is what the play is supposed to be? It is true that Christian historians had blackened the character of the historical Bajazeth by presenting him as a tormentor of Christians and described his humiliation and torture by Tamburlaine as a just punishment for his evil actions.[15] But there is nothing in the sources that presents the other victims of Tamburlaine in a similar light. It is possible that Marlowe may have had different things in mind when he dramatized the conquests of Tamburlaine. It is tempting to think that Marlowe may have tried to warn his contemporaries of the cruelty, barbarity and ruthlessness that their dreams of colonizing the world involved. But if that is the covert warning that Marlowe wanted the

play to present, the overt glorification of Tamburlaine clearly deconstructs it.

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1. Nevill Coghill, *Shakespeare's Professional Skills* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 1.

2. All quotations from Tamburlaine the Great, Part I are from *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe*, I (Camb. England: Cambridge University Press, 1973). Act, scene and line enumerations are given in parentheses after each quotation in the text.

3. T. McAlindon, *English Renaissance Tragedy* (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Press, 1986), p. 6.

4. A. H. Bullen labelled the last line as an anti-climax while Havelock Ellis called it "Scythian bathos." See Harry Levin, *Christopher Marlowe: the Overreacher* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), p. 57, who quotes them both.

5. Paul H. Kocher, *Christopher Marlowe: A Study of His Thought, Learning and Character* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), p. 71-72.

6. See Donald Peet, "The Rhetoric of Tamburlaine," *ELH,* 26 (1959), 137-55

7. See M. C. Bradbrook, "The Inheritance of Christopher Marlowe," in her *English Dramatic Form* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965), p. 49.

8. G. I. Duthie, "The Dramatic Structure of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great*, Parts I and II," *English Studies*, New Ser, 1 (1948), 217ff.

9. M. M. Mahood, "Marlowe's Heroes," in *Elizabethan Drama: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. R. J. Kauffman (New York:

Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 99-100, however, finds no inconsistency in Tamburlaine's rhapsody and the off-stage massacre of Damascans.

10. Robert E. Knoll, *Christopher Marlowe* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1969), pp. 52-53, considers the speech a dramatic necessity because it keeps the stage occupied during the sacking of Damascus.
11. ibid., p. 55.
12. T. McAlindon, p. 95.
13. Frank B. Fieler, *Tamburlaine, Part I and Its Audience*, University of Florida Monographs, No. 8 (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1961), p. 78.
14. See "Appendix 1" in Roy Clifton Moose's Ph. D. Dissertation, "A Study of Marlowe's Dramaturgy, with Special Reference to the Structure of *Tamburlaine,*" The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1965 (University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan), pp. 255-56.
15. See, for example, "Marlowe's Debasement of Bajazet: Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* and *Tamburlaine,* Part I," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 24 (1971), p. 41.

Existence as Dialogue : A Study of Anita Desai's *Journey to Ithaca* and Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*

Manpreet Punia

All Bakhtin's writings are animated and controlled by the principle of dialogue. No comprehensive term can encompass Bakhtin's important contributions to several different areas of thought. It is evident from what Bakhtin writes :

> Our analysis must be called philosophical mainly because of what it is not : it is not a linguistic; philosophical, literary or any other particular kind of analysis... On the other hand, a positive feature of our study is this : [it moves] in spheres that are liminal, i.e., on the borders of all the aforementioned disciplines, at their junctures and points of intersection (Holquist, 2002 : 14).

Keeping this in mind, Bakhtin's concept of 'dialogism' has been utilized "as one means of challenging the oppositional presumptions of border, division, exclusionary thought and absolute difference." (Bromley, 2000 : 2). An attempt has been made to understand Bakhtin's concept of 'dialogics' in a larger sense, to mean the dialogical encounter between different cultures, and how this encounter leads to the problematics of female identity.

The dialogic concept of Bakhtin is evident in Anita Desai's *Journey to Ithaca* and Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* in the form of 'inherent addressivity' and 'speaking across' of the displaced subjects. Through these fictional works an attempt has been made to interpret Bakhtin's notion of multiple voices (heteroglossia), in the novel and relate it to the many centres and many peripheries (multiple border discourse) in

the diasporic arena. By incorporating Bakhtin's principle in the lived experiences of displaced women in these works, their journey through multiple national and cultural borders is viewed as a many voiced narrative because of the simultaneous presence of two or more languages interacting within a composite cultural system. According to Bakhtin, many-voiced characteristic of the novel implies the 'never finalized interactivity' of dialogism. Similarly, border crossing leads to the negotiation between multiple voices (the displaced voice and the voice of the adopted culture) resulting in the constant adaptation and re-adaptation of the diasporic identity.

Desai's *Journey to Ithaca* is a narrative that portrays the cross-cultural complexities of belonging and identity. Through the diasporic experiences of Laila (later called Mother) and Sophie, Desai depicts the subordinate cultural identities conferring their difference with the dominant cultural identities at the cultural border zone. Laila's and Sophie's journey through Egypt, Paris, Venice, New York and India gives rise to the multiplicity of voices arising out of the mixture of cultures (i.e. many centres and many peripheries) and the displaced voice trying to locate its centre through a never ending dialogue of 'self' with 'other'. This constant dialogue justifies Bakhtin's notion that nothing exists independently and we all live lives of 'simultaneity' i.e. there can be no 'self' without the 'other'.

Desai interweaves the two parallel stories of Laila and Sophie, and through their characters displays the impact of cultural interaction on the displaced subjects, which in Bakhtinian terms is "a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed : it is continually built, created and builds and creates another body. Moreover, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world..." (Bakhtin, 1984 : 317).

Sophie and her husband, Matteo's, journey to the East (India) begins in 1975, when they leave Italy (their homeland) "to find India, to understand India and the mystery that is at the heart of India." (JtI : 57). This dialogical encounter with the alien culture has varying impacts

on them. Matteo is able to re-configure his identity and develop a sense of belonging, as he once says, "The past is over, Sophie, over, over, over- not to be repeated. Don't repeat it." (JtI : 43). Sophie, on the other hand, starts her journey to India like any other Western adventurer to enjoy the exotic East. But her curiosity is soon marred by the compulsion with which she has to follow Matteo from one *ashram* to another. She fails to converse with the voices of the adopted culture and is unable to locate a centre or re-root herself in the real India, which is so different from the imaginary land of myths, mountains and saints that she had always wanted to explore.

For Sophie "Matteo had vanished into the heart of the world that remained shut to her. She had not thought she wished to enter it, but Matteo's disappearance was so profound that her uneasiness grew." (JtI : 126). Sophie's dire need to break Matteo out of the spell of Mother (originally Laila), forces her into ceaseless efforts to discover the past of Mother. In doing so, Sophie visits a number of places, beginning with Egypt, Venice, New York and finally India – which have been the abode of Mother at various points of her life. This crossing of multiple boundaries giving rise to dialogization, is a cultural connotation of the Bakhtinian principle of multiple voices in a novel.

Sophie's search introduces us to the multi-faceted character of Laila (the Mother), born in Egypt. Her continuous journey through Paris, Venice and New York metamorphoses her into Lila-Rani-Lila Devi. By culminating her journey in India, she finally adopts the role of Mother. This transition of Laila into Mother showcases the 'open', 'unfinished' and 'dialogic' nature of the 'self'. The transcontinental journey of Laila, giving rise to many centres and many peripheries, emphasizes the 'never finalized interactivity' of dialogism. The various metamorphic identities of Laila portray her existence as a dialogic event, which is the result of 'addressivity' and 'speaking across'. While justifying 'existence as an event', Holquist writes :

> Sharing existence as an event means among other things that we are – we cannot choose not to be - in

dialogue, not only with other human beings, but also with the natural and cultural configurations we lump together as 'the world'. The world addresses us and we are alive and human to the degree that we can respond to addressivity (Holquist, 2002 : 30).

This addressivity implies that I/self (in this case, Laila) has to constantly respond to the utterances from the various worlds (the other) that I/self passes through. This addressivity then culminates in a hybrid identity, that remains suspended between the 'I' – 'other' and occupies this hyphenated space.

Laila, an Egyptian, Muslim girl, is lured into the new direction of spiritualism, in her early youth, after her encounter with the hagdah in Cairo, who prophesies her future "eastwards to find a temple,... the temple of Mother Goddess of the world." (JtI : 176-177). These words continue to haunt her subconscious throughout her odyssey till she finally reaches India, re-indentifies herself as Mother and finds her true, eternal home. The multi-cultural experiences of Laila introduce her to various social and religious cultures (Egyptian, European, American and Indian). But one that has a lasting impact on her mind and soul is the Oriental (more specifically – Indian) culture that she first comes across through heaps of books all with titles referring to 1'Orient or 1'Inde." (JtI : 195). By joining Krishna Ji's dancing troupe, she paves a way for herself to come to India and achieve her spiritual emancipation. Thus, Laila (Mother) being a fluid identity is able to develop a relation of 'simultaneity' with the 'other'; and 'simultaneity', as defined in dialogism, is not a relation of identity or equality. She is able to re-build her 'self' in the maze of cultural dialogics. It is evident from the aforementioned diasporic experiences of Laila that the shift in time/sapce always leads to the transformation of 'self' into 'other'.

Besides assimilation, the shift in identity due to the cross-border discourse also involves nostalgic longing. Laila "stubbornly sticking to those bits and pieces she had brought from Egypt... as if they were the insignia of a separate existence and her allegiance to another land." (JtI : 186-187), and Sophie having "only one tape to listen to on her

cassette player of the Brandenburg Concertos. She would sit on the floor with it beside her, playing it over and over,... as if she were wrapping herself in it, winding herself into a world separate from his [Matteo's]." (JtI : 126) are some evidences which depict the plight of the culturally displaced subjects. Bakhtin's example of a 'two-faced Janus' vividly portrays the hyphenated identities of Sophie and Laila, that continue to hinge between their earlier and latter selves : "An act of our actual experiencing is like a two-faced Janus. It looks in two opposite directions : it looks at the objective unity of a domain of culture and at the never-repeatable uniqueness of actual lived and experienced life..." (Bakhtin, 1993 : 2).

The constant mutations in the identity of Laila and Sophie help us to recognize the cultural interpretation of Bakhtin's principle of dialogics/heteroglossia which emphasizes that "dialogue requires the pre-existence of differences, which are then connected by an act of communication to generate new ideas and positions" (Pearce, 2006 : 226).

Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* is a narrative that concentrates on the 'diasporic space', which can also be identified as a 'no-man's land'. It is like a 'bridge' thrown between the 'earlier self', when the character (or the author) has not crossed the boundaries, and the 'latter self', when the person has left home and has transplanted herself/himself to a new place and environment. The word 'bridge' is used by Bakhtin as a metaphor for the operation of dialogism : "A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end of the bridge belongs to me, then the other depends on my addressee. A word is a territory shared by both addresser and addressee, by the speaker and his interlocutor" (Voloshinov, 1986 : 86). Jasmine, the protagonist of this fiction, seems to be standing on one such 'bridge' during her journey from Punjab to California, via Florida, New York and Iowa leading her through various transformations – Jyoti, Jasmine, Jazzy, Jase and Jane. This re-identification, resulting from the cross-cultural exchange or the 'dialogization' of the First World and the Third World voices, presents the problematics of belonging.

Jyoti, an innocent girl of Village Hasnapur in Punjab, marries Prakash Vijh and commences the ceaseless journey, which begins with her transformation into Jasmine. Prakash secures admission in some American Institute of Technology. Unfortunately, on the eve of his departure, he is killed by the Khalsa Lions (rebels demanding a separate land for the Sikhs – called Khalistan). After his death, Jasmine smuggles herself into America with the strong urge of burning herself a 'Sati' on the campus of that very engineering college in which Prakash has taken admission.

Her encounter with Half-Face and her consequent killing of him instills a new faith and courage in her - a desire to live. Samir Dayal writes : "In killing Half Face, she experiences an epistemic violence that is also a life-affirming transofrmation" (Dayal, 1993 : 71). After this ordeal, continues Jasmine's incessant journey through a series of reincarnations – as 'Jazzy' in Lillian Gordon's house in Florida, 'Jasmine' in the house of Devinder Vadhera (her husband, Prakash's, former teacher) in New York, 'Jase' in Taylor and Wylie Hayes' house in Manhattan, as 'Jane' in Bud's house in Iowa and finally as 'Jase' again when she decides to marry Taylor in the end of the novel and comes back to Manhattan. At one point, Jasmine says, "How many more shapes are in me, how many more selves, how many more husbands ?" (J : 215). This continuous process of transculturation that Jasmine undergoes can be viewed as an abysmal interaction with which dialogic experience is usually associated.

Due to the change in time/space "the subject operates as if its environment were open, unfinished" (Holquist, 2002 : 168). This leads to the constant alteration in the identity of the diasporic subject. The cross-cultural experience of Jasmine, in which she forgets her past in order to assimilate or hybridize herself to the mainstream culture of the adopted land, is quite palpable in her outcry : "There are no harmless, compassionate ways to remake oneself. We murder who we were so we can rebirth ourselves in the images of dreams." (J : 29). Jasmine, having a flexible identity, recreates the 'self' during the process of dislocation by repositioning herself in varied temporal/spatial, cultural/ multi-cultural situations.

The memory of dead dog in the water continues to haunt Jasmine throughout the narrative : "the moment I touched it, the body broke in two, as though the water had been its glue." (J : 5). This dismembered body broken by her touch predicts the dangers to her own body shuttling between differing identities. Adaptation is the 'glue' that holds her body together throughout her journey and helps her survive in the maze of cultural plurality.

The 'addressivity' and 'speaking across' of central and peripheral cultural voices, leads to transplantation and metamorphosis of the displaced subject, which if viewed from diasporic angle is never final but always in the process of endless search for location. This possible condition of belonging simultaneously, mentally, psychologically and experientially to a diversity of cultures is visible in the character of Jasmine.

Both the works of Desai and Mukherjee exhibit the cultural dialogics leading to hybrid identities of Sophie, Mother and Jasmine. Such identities, as defined by Stuart Hall, are "a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being'." This statement of Hall depicts the 'unfinalized' nature of 'self' discussed by Bakhtin in the context of language.

Dialogism, according to Lynne Pearce :

> ....has infiltrated Western intellectual thought at many different levels. Not only is it an area of literary theory and textual practice which cuts across other approaches and positionings (structuralism / post structuralism / marxism / feminism / psychoanalysis) but it has also been espoused as a new model of academic debate and, in its most grandoise aspect, presented itself as a new epistemology (Pearce, 1994 : 6).

Keeping this observation in mind, it may be concluded that, in this study Bakhtin's concept of 'dialogics' is appropriated to refer to the negotiation between cultures leading to 'diaspora-ization' (a term used by Stuart Hall), which further culminates in hyphenation and hybridization.

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Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby :* Through the Prism of Narrative

Surekha

Published in 1925 , Fitzerald's The Great Gatsby has been much acclaimed by critics. It has indeed attained the status of a classic. "For a long time, *The Great Gatsby* was classified as a 'book about the Roaring Twenties'," notes Matthew J. Bruccoli. "It is one of those novels that so richly evoke the texture of their time that they become, in the fullness of time, more than literary classics; they become as supplementary or even substitute from history.[1] There have been many explications of the novel. Besides full length studies of the book, such as Longs's *The Achieving of The Great Gatsby*[2] and J.S.F. Whitley's *Scott Fitzgerald : The Great Gatsby*[3], there are collections of essays which have specifically focussed on the novel. Frederick Hoffman[4], Ernest Lockridge[5] and Henry Dan Piper[6] have brought out interesting anthologies which explore the text from varied perspectives ranging from historical studies to psychological analyses.

No doubt, there have been nemerous analyses of the novel from various angles, the book still merits another exploration, especially from the angle of narratology. An attempt has been made in this paper to analyse Fitzgerald's famous novel *The Great Gatsby* from the perspective of narratology.

At this stage, it is worthwhile to distinguish the sequence of the events in *The Great Gatsby* in the temporal succession from its spatial distribution in the textual transmission. Whereas temporal order of the events abstracted from their actual rendition in the book constitutes story, their planned distribution in the actual discourse of the novel falls in the domain of the plot.

To faciliate a better understanding of the narrative, we may construct a broad narrative model moving from the top level constituents to the events down in the hierarchy. The basic structure of *The Great Gatsby* may be appreciated through its segmentation into kernels, the core narrative events and the satellites which, as Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires observe, provide the flesh to the skeleton of the story. The former events are the obligatory material and the later deletable texture.[7]

Here we may exercise our own narrative skill to chart the narrative trajectory of the main narrative components and subsidiary story units. If we include the early efforts of James Gatz in realizing his cultural dream, then the following kernel events fabricate the basic units of the story of the protagonist :

(1) James Gatz's elimination of the model of Benjamin Franklin. (2) James Gatz's meeting with Dan Cody and his assumption of a new identity. (3) Jay Gatsby's initial romance with Daisy Fay. (4) Jay Gatsby's separation from Daisy due to his posting abroad. (5) Jay Gatsby's return from the war front. (6) Jay Gatsby's accumulation of his fabulous wealth. (7) Jay Gatsby's narcissistic efforts to rew now married Daisy Fay. (8) Jay Gatsby's failure and subsequent assassination.

Analogously, we can chart the kernel events of Tom Buchanan and his married life :

(1) Tom Buchanan's affluence. (2) His marriage with Daisy Fay. (3) His relations with Myrtle Wilson. (4) His efforts in keeping his marriage intact. (5) His role in the assassination of Jay Gatsby.
The same template may be used to describe the stories of Nick Carraway, Myrtle Wilson, Jordan Baker, Meyer Wolfshiem Dan Cody and the overarching mythical story of Columbus and his anonymous sailors epitomized in the last pages of the novel.

The events of these stories can be further grouped into different sequences on the basis of different yardsticks. Events can be brought together on the basis of the characters as we have done in this paper so far. They can also be grouped together on the basis of the nature of the

role played by a character as that of the hero and the helper. In that case, Gatsby's chance relations with Jordan Baker and Nick Carraway would also be considered significant as they facilitate Gatsby's reunion with Daisy Fay to a great extent. If we apply the yardstick of the novel being, a sociosemiotic picture of the age, then Gatsby's fabulous parties and casual "moths" which attend those parties would be considered representative participants of that period. Likewise, the events grouped together on the basis of the ideological terrain would bunch the chunks of discourse dealing with the waste land or the East egg or New York or the West egg together and cause the elimination of others.

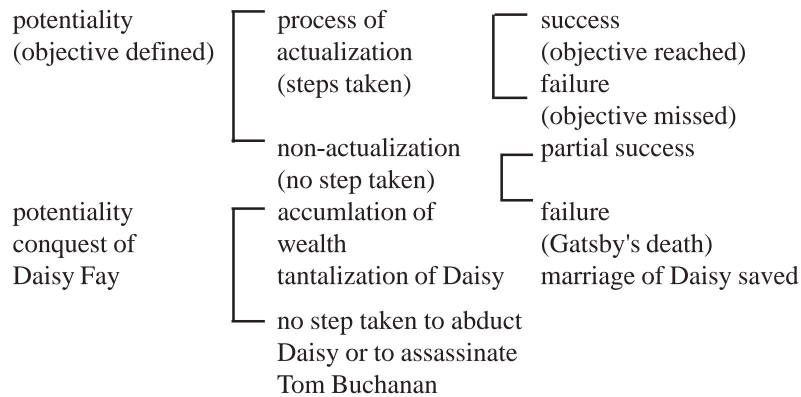
Seen in this context, the hierarchical order of the story lines is not absolute. It varies from critic to critic depending upon his aesthetic and thematic requirements. Rimmon-Kenen observes "Once a succession of the events involving the same individuals establishes itself they as the predominant story element of a text (and, unfortunately, there are no clear cut criteria for predominance), it becomes the main story line. A succession of events which involves another set of individuals is a subsidiary story line."[8] No doubt, in our analysis, Gatsby's story is the most dominant one, but a feminist may reverse the order by focussing on the aspirations of Daisy Fay, Myrtle Wilson and other casually mentioned women and justify their conduct. She/he may find nothing wrong in Daisy's desertion of Jay Gatsby in his hour of crisis.

Anyway, the story of *The Great Gatsby* is multilinear rather than unilinear. This brings to the fore the question of the organization of the story. "The two main principles of combination are temporal succession and causality."[9] This is how Gerald Prince defines a minimal story : ‘‘A mnimal story consists of three conjoined events. The first and the third events are static, the second is active. Furthermore, the third event is the inverse of the first. Finally the three events are conjoined by conjunctive features in such a way that (a) the first event precedes the second in time and the second precedes the third, and (b) the second causes the third."[10] Applying to *The Great Gatsby* these three principles of organization, temporal succession, causality and inversion, we may have minimal stories of all the characters in the book. Let us take the

case of Gatsby First. 1. Gatsby internalizes the cultural American dream in his boyhood. 2. Gatsby amasses fortune to win the symbol of his dream Daisy Fay. 3. Gatsby is destroyed in the process.

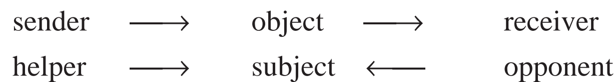
Analogously we can chart the narrative trajectory of Nick Carraway's romance with Jordan Baker. 1. Nick Carraway's arrival from Midwest 2. His romance with Jordan Baker 3. The failure of romance and his return to Midwest. His return to his roots in Midwest is characterized by an inversion in his cognitive and existential status. His discourse reveals his better understanding of the Jazz Age but also foregrounds his existential choice of regression, which his return to a provinical town definitely marks.

The stories of these characters can also be schematized, as Bremond suggests, in the form of a horizontal tree :[11]



The same chart can be used to graphically represent the stories of other characters in *The Great Gatsby.*

At this stage, we may apply Julien Greimas's following neat model which distinguishes six basic actants from numerous acteurs to an explication of the characters of *The Great Gatsby.*



Explicated in the light of this template, we find Gatsby the acteur playing the role of the different actants at different stages in the novel. He plays the role of the subject while pursuing his beloved who is his

object in the novel. As a young boy, he himself plays the role of an object who is the receiver of the cultural American Dream as transmitted by such figures as Benjamin Franklin among others. Likewise he becomes an object in the hands of his opponent Tom Buchanan who plays the role of the sender in sending George Wilson on the trail of Jay Gatsby. Thus we see the same actant can be manifested in the story syntagm by more than one acteur and some acteur can be assigned to more than one actant.

In addition, we may apply the tree like hierarchical structure as expounded by Seymour Chatman to reconstruct various characters from the text. According to him, character is a paradigm of traits, "trait" being defined as "a relatively stable or abiding personal quality and paradigm implying that the set of traits can be seen metaphorically, as a vertical assemblage interesecting the syntagmatic chain of events that comprise the plot."[12] The traits of all the characters of *The Great Gatsby* can be studied thus both paradigmatically and syntagmatically. Let us study the character of Nick Carraway in this light. There is, however, always a scope of flux within the character-constructs. It may be seen in the reversal of attributes in Gatsby's character. As a boy, Gatsby whose name was James Gatz, believed in the traditional value of hard work and discipline, as is evinced in his schedule of September 12, 1906 written on the flyleaf of *Hopalong Cassidy.* His list of general resolves, which include abstinence and self restraint along with other cultural values, show no inkling of his later fascination with Dam Cody, "the pioneer debauchee, who during the one phase of American life brought back to the Eastern seaboard the savage violence of the frontier brothel and saloon" (98). Howsoever hard Nick Carraway may exalt Gatsby, through his juxtaposition with other characters, he cannot nullify the meretricious nature of his later dreams.

Significantly, Nick Caraway is also aware of the problematics of his rendition of other characters. That is why he makes a skillful use of story time and text time. Whereas the former follows a temporal succession of events, the later has a "spatial not a temporal dimension.""The disposition of elements in the text, conventionally

called text-time, is bound to be one-directional and irreversible, because language prescribes a linear figuration of signs and hence a linear presentation of information about things. We read letter, word after word, sentence after sentence and chapter after chapter, and so on."[13] This deviation from the chronological succession of events generates various kinds of discrepancies between story time and text time.

"The main types of discrepancy between story order and text order (anachronies' in Genette's terms) are traditionally known as 'flash back' or 'retrospection' on the one hand and 'foreshadowing' or 'anticipation' on another."[14] Kenan follows Genetee in rechristening them as "analepsis" and "proleapsis" respectively. An analepsis records, the event after it has happened and a prolespsis envisages future. Analepsis is further divided into two ategories. Homodiegetic analepsis is about the "character, event, or story line mentioned at that point in the text."[15] In this light, Gatsby's own narration of his legacy from Dan Cody is a chunk of homodiegetic analepsis. "And it was from Cody that he inherted money-a legacy of twenty five thousand dollars. He didn't get it. He never understood the legal device that was used against him, but what remained of the millions went intact to Ella Kaye. He was left with his signally appropriate education; the vague contour of Jay Gatsby had filled out to the substantiality of a man" (98). An interesting example of internal homodiegetic analepsis and projected prolepsis may be seen in the imaginary discourse of Gatsby in which he cherishes the fantasy of Daisy's negation of her matrimony and their commencement of their matrimonial bliss from the same spatial locale. This is how Nick Carraway summarizes Gatsby inner thoughts : "He wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say : 'I never loved you.' After she had obliterated four years with that sentence they could decide upon the more practical measures to be taken. One of them was that, after she was free, they were to go back to Lauisvilles, and be married from her house – just as it were five years ago" (106).

Compared with homodiegetic analepsis, heterodiegetic analepsis refers to another character, even, or stor line.[16] The mythical saga of Columbus and his sailors may be cited as an example of heterodiegetic

analepsis, presented in evocative terms by the homodiegetic narrator who moves from the mundane present to the petic past "And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailor's eyes–a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all dreams, for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder" (163). This genesis of the American Dream has thus been analeptically and heterodiegetically vivified in the text. What makes it significant from the perspective of narrative order is its ending in the fusion of both homodiegetic analepsis and heterodiegetic analepsis and heterodiegetic prolepsis, moving back to the past. This is now Nick Carraway sums up Gatsby's idealistic journey and projects the inevitable collision of imaginary discourse and symbolic discourse in future : "Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter–tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther... And one fine morning–

So we beat on, boats against the current, born back ceaselessly into the past" (162-163).

The textual syntagm of Columbus and his sailors, and its application to the romantic saga of Gatsby with proleptic reference to the future generations, raises the question of the temporal/spatial relationship between chronological transmission of the events in the story and their spatial disposition in the text. Taking the constant pace in narrative, as the unchanged ratio between story-duration and textual length as norm, we note two forms of modification in the text : "acceleration and deceleration." "The effect of acceleration is produced by devoting a short segment of the text to a long period of the story, relative to the 'norm' established for this text. The effect of deceleration is produced by the opposite procedure, namely devoting a long segment

of the text to a short period of the story."[17] The optimum mode of acceleration is ellipsis, where zero textual space covers some story duration. In *The Great Gatsby*, the activities of jay Gatsby, between his meeting of Dan Cody and becoming an army officer who fell in love with Daisy Fay, are glossed over. Likewise, there is a marked ellipsis between Gatsby's death in 1922 and Nick Carraway's rendition of his story in 1925.

Compared with the maximum speed of ellipsis, the minimum speed in the story span is achieved through descriptive pauses. They occur, as Cohan and Shires note, "at any point in the text when the time of the narration countinues and that of the story ceases, for instance in character description, commentary, exposition, and direct addresses to a reader."[19] This zero story duration may be witnessed in the opening textual segment of the *The Great Gatsby*, where Nick Carraway establishes his credentials as narrator in such generic formulations : "Reserving judgement is a matter of infinite hope. I am still a little afraid of missing something if I forget that, as my father snobbishly sugested, and I snobbishly repeat, a sense of the fundamental decenciesis paracelled out unequally at birth" (19). Here the narration continues, but the story comes to standstill.

The device of slow down has also been employed by the narrator to extend narrating duration. The process of slow down may be witnessed in the narrative account of Rosy Rosenthal's murder which declerates the main story line of Gatsby's quest for Daisy Fay. In contrast with ellipses, pause and slow down, the narrator has resorted to the method of summary to accelerate the speed of the narrative. Daisy Fay's marriage with Tom Buchanan has been more or less condensed in two pages in the novel. Furthermore, the narrator often resorts to scenic descriptions, where story duration and text duration appear to be in co-ordination. In the following textual component, Nick Carraway exalts Gatsby and condemns Daisy and her husband "They're a rotten crowd, 'I shouted a cross the lawn, You're worth the whole damn bunch put together' " (141).

In addition to order and duration, frequency of an event also highlights discordances between story time and narrational times. Frequency signifies the number of times a particular event takes place in the story in relation to the numbers of times it is described in the text. "Strictly speaking, "observes Rimmon-Kenan, "no event is repeatable in all respects, nor is a repeated segment of the text quite the same, since its new location puts it in a different context which necessarily changes it meanings."[18] Nonetheless, there are three basic types of temporal relations between story and narration. The singulative event tells us once what happened once as when Gatsby tactlessly offers help to Nick Carraway in his bond business (83-84). Opposed to this singulative frequency is the repeated event which takes place once but is repeated more than once. In this slot falls Gatsby's murder which is recounted directly and indirectly more than once in the book. And finally there is the iterative event which occurs more than once but is recounted only once such as Tom Buchanan's visits to his mistress Myrtle Wilson in his New York apartment which are described in detail only once in the second chapter.

The process of narration, with its varied devices of discourse, such as direct speech, indirect speech, direct thought, free indirect thought among others, raises the interesting question of who speaks and who thinks. There are many segments of direct speech which purport to be a faithful transmission of a character's actual words. Even minor characters like Wolsheim are accorded components of direct speech to create an impression of realism. When Wolfsheim calls Gatsby an "Oggsford man" and his cuff buttons finest "specimens of human molars," (75) he seems to be the master of his own idiolect. Yet this is a ruse. All the characters remain under the control of the narrator. He decides what to mention and what to omit.

Nonetheless, the narator's narratorial control is at its weakest during syntagms of direct speech and maximum during his intrusion into the minds of the characters and during the record of their respective discourses through such devices as Narrative Report of Thought and Narrative Report of Action.

Significantly speech and thought presentation raises the question of focalization. The narrative discourse of *The Great Gatsby* is no doubt, rendered by Nick Carraway. But, in between, different segments have been accorded to different characters because of spatiotemporal, psychological and ideological reasons. Spatiotemporal factors, for example, propel Nick Carraway to use Nick's father to foreground James Gatz's cognitive and ideological orientations during his boyhood. This device also facilitates the juxtaposition between the ideology of the pastoral America and the materialistic urban America of the twenties where the boundaries between spirituaism materialism and idealism are blurred. Significantly, there are various narrative levels in the story. "In this hierarchical structure", according to Kenan "the highest level is the one immediately superior to the first narrative and concerned ith its narration." It is at this level Nick Carraway presents the story of Jay Gatsby, Myrtle Wilson and his own self. "Immediately subordinate to the extradiegetic level is the diegetic level narrated by it, that is the events themselves."[19] Gatsby's romance with Daisy Fay, Myrtle Wilson's adulterous relations with Tom Buchanan, Jordan Baker's flirtation with Nick Carraway, Dan Cody's fixing of the world series of 1917 and car accidents are among others. The stories transmitted by fictional characters, such as Jordan Baker's account of Daisy Fay's romance with Gatsby, Gatsby's own version of his obsessive love affair, constitute a second degree narrative. This level is called hypodiegetic level.

At this stage, we may note that there are various narrative levels in the story. On the top is intradiegetic and homodiegetic narrator Nick Carraway and below him are the narrators of a third degree (hypodiegetic), fourth degree (hypo-hypodiegetic), etc. In this sense even a very minor character Lucille, who recounts the story of her tom gown at one of the parties of Jay Gatsby, may be put in a hypo-hypo-hypo diegetic level performing a thematic and explicative function. Nowwithstanding this segmentation of narration into various levels, we may conclude this discussion of the typology of narrators by focussing on the main narrator, Nick Carraway. His overt perceptibility can be seen in his description of settings such as the East Egg and the

West Egg, and the identification of various characters. It is discrened also in his temporal summary of how the murder of Jay Gatsby was reported in the newspapers. "Most of those reports were a nightmare-grotesque, circumstantial, eager, and untrue...So Wilson was reduced to a man 'deranged by grief' in order that the case might remain in its simplest form. And it rested there" (149). In addition, his authoritative stance may be seen in his definitive account of various characters through generalizations and evaluative comments.

There are, however, critics who question the authority of the main narratory, Nick Carraway on the ground of his involvement and problematic value scheme. Nonetheless the narrator, in our opinion, should be allowed to evaluate characters on the basis of their analogous relationship with the textual discourse. Here Nick Carraway's evaluations of other characters, from Daisy Fay to Meyer Wolfshiem and their distorted visions, motivate us to exempt Jay Gatsby from outright condemnation. His idealism may have been punctured by crass materialism and opportunism, but his steadfast romanticism definitely wins our accolades. His murder, at the hands of George Wilson and Wilson's own suicide, however, make a political statement. They negate the possibility of the transformation of society through questionable methods. Neither dubious materialism nor violence is condoned in the text. Nick Carraway's return to Midwest, after the murder of Gatsby, should not be construed as a signifier of his retreat into the vortex of narcissistic symbiosis. Instead, it should be interpreted as a retreat to a different ideological terrain to assimilate and evaluate the events which transpired in the summer of 1922. Read in this light, his tapestry of Gatsby's life woven through the voices of different characters, presented both directly and obliquely, in engrossing narrative segments, capping it with his own evaluations, becomes an absorbing study of narrative poetics.

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'Our Looking-Glass Border' : A Critique Of Partition Theme In *The Shadow Lines*

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The Shadow Lines falls under the category of Partition novels which recount the partition of British India into India and Pakistan in 1947. However, the narrative of the novel does not follow that usual story line of Partition novels predicated on the events and incidents of communal frenzy that engulfed the region during the Partition. In the prominent Partition novels viz. Khuswant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), Raj Gill's *The Rape* and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975), the major characters undergo the turmoil of communal frenzy whereas *The Shadow Lines*, by foregrounding the debilitating monolithic prescriptions of an insular nationalist ethos, challenges the validity of borderlines which actually for him are just shadow lines. The minor riots of 1964 are centrestaged to show that the Partition has not solved the communal problem and thus reject the very concept of Partition. Ghosh was highly perturbed at the massacre of thousands of Sikhs after the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Ghosh's concern at the contingencies of this fissiparous and disruptive breach in the history and culture of postcolonial nation-state troubled his sensibilities for a long time. The most unpalatable aspect of this breach was the connivance of the state machinery in the pogrom of a particular minority community. In "The Ghosts of Mrs.Gandhi" he makes a confession that within few months of the catastrophe he started working on *The Shadow Lines* and he was taken backward in time to earlier memories of riots which he witnessed in childhood. And the novel ultimately became "a book not about any one event but about the meaning of such events and their effects on the individuals who live through them" (60).

The freedom of India was coterminous with the Partition, a major cataclysmic event of the subcontinent resulting in the unpalatable partition of the families and cohesive interdependent communities, the spate of people leaving their ancestral homes, fields and fortunes to be labelled as refugees, the disruption of cultural continuities and the massacre of millions of people apart from heart-rending atrocities on women and children. The term Partition has often been described as holocaust because it somewhat insinuates the gravity of violence perpetrated in the name of 'religion'. The appropriation of religion for purposes other than faith and way of life can be a "source of terrifying violence" (Rao: 77). The communal politics played by the Congress Party and the Muslim League resulted in the Partition. However, "Communal politics, which was meant to be buried by the partition, has assumed even more menacing proportions in all three countries [India, Pakistan and Bangladesh]" (Puniyani : 87). Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* captures the enormity and complexity of Partition by unobtrusively insinuating that it failed to resolve the tangle of communal politics in the subcontinent.

In *The Shadow Lines* Ghosh foregrounds minor riots of 1964 in contradistinction to 1947 riots to implicitly suggest the contemporaneous significance of Partition. The minor riots allegorize the interconnectedness of communities and continuity of social relations on both sides of the boundary which the narrator-hero terms as "our looking-glass border"(233). The identical temporality of communal violence emblematizes "common histories and shared identities" (Daiya : 52) of both the nation-states. The obviously irreversible event of Partition was not a moment of disjuncture; rather continuing inter-affectability of communities challenges the very concept of Partition/ two-nation theory. Ghosh uncovers the deliberate attempt at the erasure of minor riots remindful of the holocaust of 1947 from the national memory. Such an elision may be useful for inscribing neat accounts for dominant historiography but it does not allow the Partitioned subjects to "confront the reality of their multi-layered present identity which is

created as much by the continuities as by the disruptions between the past and the present" (Chandra : 68). The outright disorientation of Partition imbroglio concomitant with the collapse of moral order resulted in an aporetic situation. However, as Gyanendra Pandey comments, there is need "to look at Partition not simply as a happening, but as a category of understanding a happening" (Pandey : 66). The novel assumes importance in the wake of frequent recurrence of communal frenzy and acerbity manifested in the Delhi massacre of Sikhs in 1984, the destruction of Babri Masjid, the Bombay bomb blasts, the Godara carnage, etc. The nationalist struggle against the colonial rule won freedom for the country, albeit at the heavy cost of Partition leading to concomitant communal riots of the worst kind in the history of the subcontinent. In the novel the narrator-hero debunks the primordial form of nationalism represented by dominant nationalist historiography which got independence for India at the price of Partition. The narrative transcends the nationalist projections of selfhood and otherness and ushers into transnational spaces of global culture.

One of the central concerns of the novel is the examination of Tha'mma's brand of nationalism seeking political freedom vis-à-vis the Partition of the country. The political freedom eventuated into drawing of borderlines between the newly formed nation states on the one hand, and, on the other, unleashing of violence that ruptured the communal harmony and blurred the common historical memory. Nationalism, for Tha'mma, posits a doctrine of popular freedom and sovereignty. Seema Bhaduri in her article "Of Shadows, Lines and Freedom: A Historical Reading of *The Shadow Lines*" observes: "Tha'mma essentializes the spirit of European nationalism. She is a typical neo-Victorian figure in her progressive view of the future and her Puritan sense of work and discipline" (Bhaduri : 225). In her youth Tha'mma's protestation of nationalist spirit is propped up by her yearning for freedom from the colonial rule. Tha'mma had grown up with the police raids in the colleges and university of Dhaka in search of the militant nationalists. She sympathized with the terrorist movement

amongst nationalists in Bengal. She would intently listen to the dare devil deeds of the terrorists and had wanted to do any kind of job within her reach such as running errands, cooking food, washing clothes, etc. for them. With unflinching courage she would have even killed the English magistrate herself because "it was for our freedom: I would have done anything to be free" (39). The ideological underpinnings of her position are premised on the strong sense of belonging to a space. She believes that Ila has no right to live in England because she does not belong there. It takes years of "war and bloodshed" (77-8) to make a country. Thus, for Tha'mma, the history of the coming into being of a nation is informed by nationalist wars of independence. Through Tha'mma Ghosh characterizes the canonical perspectives on the formation of a nation defined by its distinct national and cultural identity; and geo-politically etched out borderline.

However, much awaited independence of India concomitant with Partition and the resultant displacements and disjunctures could not crystallize into national citizenship and unity. Tha'mma was "uprooted by violent ruptures and dislocations caused by historical accidents along with the indefinitely great number of individuals" (Veerappa : 166). The Partition resulted in irreparable loss of literal and emotional spaces in her life. She was born and brought up in Dhaka. Though she was fortunate that she had not to undergo the turmoil of migration as she had moved to Calcutta as a teacher long before Partition, the event itself left a deep scar in her heart. Many years later when she plans to visit Dhaka she visibly gets nervous at her son's remark that she would have to fill her nationality, her place of birth in the disembarkation card. She would have to fill in 'Dhaka' as her place of birth in that form. She fails to understand how her place of birth has come to be "so messily at odds with her nationality"(152).

So long as she was in service, the memories of her colourful days spent in Dhaka somehow remain suppressed but once she retires, the nostalgia of good old days of childhood comes back with a force. Earlier, she had considered nostalgia a weakness and believed that "it is

everyone's duty to forget the past and look ahead" (208). However, with the passage of time she realizes that India remains her invented country and emotionally she belongs to Dhaka. She shares her memories with her grandson, the narrator, so often that he could see "that house and that lane" himself :

> I could see Kana-babu's sweet shop at the end of their lane with absolute clarity. I could even see the pink cham-chams stacked in their trays, the freshly pressed shandesh heaped in orderly mounds beneath the cracked, discoloured glass of the counter (194).

The narrator observes that the dislocated people like her grandmother who have "no home but in memory, learn to be very skilled in the art of recollection "(194). The large house to which she shifts after the promotion of her son reminds her of big home she grew up as a child. The image of the old house and Dhaka is so much ingrained in her mind that she could not imagine any other kind of Dhaka - an entirely changed Dhaka after Partition. Her first reaction on reaching Dhaka is: "Where's Dhaka? I can't see Dhaka" (193). She has spent major period of her life in Calcutta yet the Dhaka of her childhood remains as real and fresh as ever. Though she goes to Dhaka with the professed mission of bringing her uncle back from the so called 'Other' country yet there is an intense feeling in her heart to go back to her 'home', a primordial feeling to go back to the roots, the space to which she actually belonged. She is "really excited" at the very thought of going back to Dhaka. The narrator finds her "pacing around her room, her face flushed, her eyes shining" (150). While getting ready for a visit to the ancestral house she, in her state of excitement, changes her sari from a "plain but crisp white" to " a white sari with a green border" and finally getting herself dressed in "a white sari with a red border" (205). And when her sister Mayadevi teases her with being as anxious as a " bride" going home for the first time she smiles back and retorts: "You've got it wrong - I'm going home as a widow for the first time" (205). While passing through the familiar streets of Dhaka after a gap

of decades she and her sister "laughing and brushing away tears" pour forth to May Price and others the intimate knowledge of the various places:

> She twisted and turned in her seat pointing at everything: that's where the boys used to play football, that's where Shyam met her the other day in the park, that's where Naresh-babu used to sit behind the bars in that jewellery shop, sweeping up the gold dust with the hem of his dhoti …(206).

Fissures in Tha'mma's sense of national belonging get more conspicuous when she realizes that "borders have a tenuous existence, and that not even a history of bloodshed can make them real and impermeable" (Kaul : 279). In her state of curiosity and excitement at the thought of flying to Dhaka she inquires from her son if she would be able to see the border between India and East Pakistan from the plane. Her son makes fun of her question by asking whether she really thought that "border was a long black line with green on one side and scarlet on the other, like it was in a school atlas" (151). She still persists that there might be "something- trenches perhaps, or soldiers, or guns pointing at each other" (151). Her son laughingly tells that she should expect nothing of the sort; she could at the most see some green fields. Tha'mma ponders over for a moment and then gravely questions the very concept of Partition of the country:

> But if there aren't any trenches or anything, how are people to know? And if ther's no difference both sides will be the same: it'll be just like it used to before, when we used to catch a train to Dhaka and get off in Calcutta the next day without anybody opposing us. What was it all for then - partition and all the killing and everything - if there isn't something in between?

In this context, Rahul Sapra in his essay, " *The Shadow Lines* and the Questioning of Nationalism" aptly remarks: "By highlighting the fact that even after partition there might not be any 'difference' between the two regions across the border, the novel questions the ideology of

nationalism" (Sapra : 60). The 'shadow lines' drawn on the maps by the administrators may represent the will of the state but not of the people on both sides of the borderline with enduring linguistic and cultural ties. The irony is that "sensible people" believed in the enchantment of lines, "hoping perhaps that once they had etched their borders upon the map, the two bits of land would sail away from each other like the shifting tectonic plates of the prehistoric Gondwanaland" (233). On the other hand, there are people like the old man in Sa'adat Hassan Manto's "Toba Tek Singh" and Jethamosai, the grandmother's uncle who do not believe in the veracity of the borderlines. This resistance though born of insanity or senility, is a satire on those administrators who believe in the existence of another kind of reality across the border. The Partition of India in 1947 was prefigurative of exclusive subject positions in the newly formed nation-states by inherent logic of separateness. However, the outbreak of communal riots both in Dhaka and Calcutta in 1964 exposes the fragility of the political frontiers on the one hand, and, on the other, the inevitability of the cultural interface. The disappearance of the sacred relic known as the Mu-i-Mubarak from the Hazratbal mosque in Srinagar triggered off communal violence in and around Dhaka in the erstwhile East Pakistan, the impact of which was simultaneously felt in Calcutta in the retaliatory killing of Muslims. The breaking out of riots in perverse mutuality of response "makes nonsense of any claims of a singular, exclusive national identity, of any belief that Srinagar exists in a different relationship to Calcutta than it does to Dhaka" (Kaul : 281). The narrator points out that ironically riots highlighted the basic identity of the people on both sides of the borderline. Through the metaphor of looking glass the narrator tries to understand the bond between India and Pakistan :

> What had they felt, I wondered, when they discovered that they had created not a separation . . . the simple fact that there had never been a moment in the four-thousand-year-old history of that map, when the places we know as Dhaka and Calcutta were more closely bound to each other than after they had drawn lines - so closely that I, in Calcutta,

> had only to look into the mirror to be in Dhaka, a moment when each city was the inverted image of the other, locked into an irreversible symmetry by the line that was to set us free - our looking-glass border (233).

The border etched out in maps by the administrators, ironically, reflects likeness and similitude rather than difference. Even in the times of communal frenzy there is that "indivisible sanity that binds people to each other independently of their governments" (230).

It is humanitarian gestures of people like May Price and the sacrifices of Tridib like men on both sides of the boundary which helped contain the mayhem and restored the faith in multi-layered cultural and historical legacies. Motives of Tridib's death may be complex and for the narrator his death may remain a mystery but the obvious humanitarian stance is intrinsically determinate imperative for the emergence of universal frames or synchronous knowledges. The pangs of Partition holocaust had mitigating effect on the bruised psyche of the innumerable victims who would listen to the dozens of Tridib like stories in circulation during the riots.

In *The Shadow Lines* Ghosh has underscored the importance of rumour in exacerbating or even starting riots. Actually, as Gyanendra Pandey in *Remembering Partition* (2001) confirms, rumours played a vital role in spreading violence in the Partition holocaust. As a mode of transmission, a rumour distorts, exaggerates, exalts to extraordinary status and employs terms lime 'devastation', 'annihilation', etc. to ordinary events or even false reports. Every word falling on the susceptible ears is replete with extraordinary resonance. In rumour the ordinary mode to communication is foreclosed to prefer an imperative condition which may produce "an infectious ambivalence, an 'abyssal overlapping', of too much meaning" (Bhaba : 202). As Pandey points out, "Rumour is marked characteristically not only by indeterminacy, anonymity and contagion, but also by a tendency to excess and 'certainty' - a 'certainty' confirmed when the report moves from a verbal to a graphic or filmic mode" (Pandey : 70). In *The Shadow Lines*

the riots of 1964 were exacerbated by rumours so rife everywhere "especially that familiar old rumour, the harbinger of every serious riot- that the trains from Pakistan were arriving packed with corpses" (228). The main cause of mayhem during the Partition was such a kind of rumour on both sides of the new dividing line. During the minor riots of 1964, the rumour that 'they' had poisoned the water supplies of Calcutta had the immediate effect on all, even the little ones. The school buses on that particular day were almost empty and the little children with biased minds knew that 'they' meant the Muslims who had poisoned the water. Those who had brought water in their bottles and not soda water or something unscrewed the caps to pour the water out. In an atmosphere rife with communal hatred even the narrator, a school going boy sitting in the school bus at that time had to disown his Muslim friend Montu: "I lied, I haven't met Montu for months" (200). The events follow their own 'grotesque logic' during such times. A protest march in Khulna, a small town in East Pakistan turned violent and there were some casualties. But this event was blown out of proportions by the rumour mongers as a result of which the riots spread to Dhaka and then to Calcutta. Fed on hyperbolic accounts of trivial events, rumours create an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion. This pattern can be seen in the Delhi riots of 1984 also. The report of the Citizens' Commission (1985) indicates that the riots "followed a similar pattern, the insidious spread of rumours" (Kapadia : 81).

The riots leave a deep scar in Tha'mma's mind. She is never the same after 'they' killed Tridib. Her newly acquired knowledge of the tenuousness of borders receives a big jolt and as Suvir Kaul puts it, "the crowning irony of *The Shadow Lines* is that almost as soon as Tha'mma realizes that the legacy of her birthplace is not separable from her sense of herself as a citizen of India, her nephew Tridib's death at the hands of a Dhaka mob confirms in her a pathological hatred of 'them'" (283). And in 1965 war with Pakistan her passion acquires all the intensity of a nationalist. She parts with the most precious of ornaments, the gold chain presented to her by her husband as a first

marriage gift: "I gave it away, she screamed. I gave it away to the fund for war" (237). The nationalism of her youth days gets rejuvenated and takes on a more vigorous form as she believes, "We have to kill them before they kill us; we have to wipe them out" (237). She has the satisfaction that the Indian forces are fighting 'them' properly at last, with the modern weapons of war like tanks and guns and bombs. She is eager to donate even her blood for the war fund.

Tha'mma being a typical product of those times when a surge of nationalism against beleaguered colonialism was a worldwide phenomenon, her reassertion of what Michael Billig calls Banal nationalism "of flags; of national anthems; of rousing language - 'our country' or 'our nation' - of processions and celebrations to mark national days or battlefield heroics" (quoted in Sapra : 63) is a signifier of the mindset of the older generation. The younger generation, on the other hand, is represented by Tridib, Robi, May, Ila and the narrator who unequivocally debunk Tha'mma's brand of nationalism to asseverate their faith in the valency of transnational space. Born in post independent India, Robi's critique of minor riots raises some basic issues about the freedom of India. Robi is a witness to the riots in Dhaka in which his elder brother Tridib was killed. The Partition of India gave rise to disquieting insights into Tha'mma's brand of nationalism which failed to usher in true freedom for the country. Sharmila Guha Majumdar's comment is noteworthy: "Nationalism in the Indian context changed its meaning to exclude people on the other side of the border but could not include everybody on this side of paradise" (Majumdar : 180). The disturbances in Punjab, Gujrat, Kashmir and north eastern states like Assam and Tripura are symptomatic of unrest in different parts of India. The monster of communalism was neither contained at the time of freedom of India in 1947 nor in the postcolonial era. Robi strikes a note of despair by his comments that the Partition of India has not solved the problem: "And then I think to myself why don't they draw thousands of lines through

the whole subcontinent and give every little place a new name?" (247). If the whole effort of the Partition of the country was to gain freedom then that effort has gone futile. For Robi freedom is still "a mirage; the whole thing is a mirage" (247).

The redrawing of borders by the political administrators has failed to solve the issue for which the borders were drawn. For Ghosh "all such demarcations are shadow lines, arbitrary and invented divisions" which can lead to terrible consequences as in Dhaka in the last section of the novel (Kaul : 300). However, Ghosh's vision of cosmopolitan culture breaks all such arbitrary barriers. As a postcolonial writer his thrust in *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 : 29). The novel, in fact, is a story that is woven around two families which cut across geo-political boundaries and cultural barriers. The friendship between the Datta-Chaudhris of Bengal and the Princes of London is an enduring one and expands to three successive generations. In the third generation, Tridib's romantic love for May Price allegorizes the coming together of aliens and making an enduring bond which challenges the exclusivity of cultures and the grandnarratives of nationhoods. He wants to meet May in a place "without a past, without history, free, really free, two people coming together with utter freedom of strangers" (144). This meeting of the 'aliens' is one step towards syncretization of cultures and civilizations irrespective of the international boundaries. Prasad in "*The Shadow Lines*: A Quest for 'Indivisible Sanity'" rightly observes: "The experience of aliens and immigrants in postcolonial setting furnishes us with the clue to the novel's larger project of cultural assimilation, friendship across borders and adjustment with the altered face of the world" (Prasad : 91). The narrator-hero with Tridib as mentor grows into a man with Tridib like cosmopolitan outlook and interestingly the novel ends with May and the narrator-hero lying in each other's arms.

The 'displacement' of nation with the unit of a family is very well reaffirmed by Amitav Ghosh in his recent novel *The Glass Palace* (2000) where the inter-relationships of the families of Saya John, Raj Kumar and a Bengali family are recounted across three generations spread over the three interlinked countries of the continent of Asia. The trajectory of Dinu's love for Alison resembles Tridib's for May as in both the affairs the novelist celebrates the coming together of aliens for whom the international boundaries are no more than shadow lines.

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CULTURAL DYNAMICS

N.K. Neb

The foremost feature of contemporary reality is the growth of capital and technology. It has brought immense change in the visible and the invisibly present factors concerning life. The visible changes include the emergence of multi-storey complexes, shopping malls, newly developed townships that have replaced open spaces, cultivated land, large trees and dense forests. The business centres related to trade of goods, ventures related to mass-media and communication in the form of computer centres, cable networks, internet cafes and call centres have introduced a totally new outlook in the business world and have brought a change in our surroundings. Apart from this, the mushroom growth of beauty saloons, beauty clinics and infertility centres includes the factors that mark a change in the landscape and their impact has further brought a decisive shift in the underlying systems including values, ethical norms and thought patterns used to make sense of the human world.

The quick urbanization, the development of fast means of transportation and the unprecedented growth of means of communication have resulted in the emergence of a mixed culture. It has introduced demographic uncertainties and disturbed the social fabric. Unlike the traditional Indian social set up the social groups are not based on particular communities, religions, regions or language. Consequently, the social scene that has emerged includes a vast variety of people mostly having nothing common but business and economic interests or sharing the same apartments without even forming a close knit unit like a caste, class or religion based community that earlier formed a stable unified structure providing a solid basis to human identity. These factors have caused a severe blow to the concept of standardized ethical norms and social systems as something ordained to award meaning to human life and behaviour. Consequently, the established norms stand destabilized resulting in confusion about the code of ethics and moral values.

Similarly, the aspects of technological development, particularly related to the newly developed techniques concerning human biology and genetics have introduced certain elements that have bulldozed the traditional understanding of human relationships. The way surrogate mothers, egg and sperm donors are involved in the process of procreation in infertility clinics has simply demolished even the concepts like father, mother , brother , sister that formed the basis of the institution of family .It has created peculiar situations that earlier seemed a figment of imagination and pure fiction. Consequently, the real and the unreal or the authentic and the constructed have been mixed beyond recognition.

To be continued...

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