

Lives of Loss : Travails of Diaspora Journey and Existence in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

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Whether literature is a whole mirror reflecting reality or a “broken mirror” “refracting reality”; whether the author is dead in a literary text or is communicating personal experiences or those of others but what is certain is that a fictional text is a product of contemporary socio-economic, historico-political and cultural reality, structured in a well thought-out pattern in which characters are shown undergoing different experiences in situations grappling with themselves or the surroundings. The text created is before the reader to know and interpret the experiences of the characters, situations and the issues taken up by the writer and fill the gaps wherever there are silences.

The text in view in this paper is Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) set in the New York city of contemporary America, full of innumerable legal and illegal immigrants from many third world countries, and in Kalimpong, a small town in India at the foothills of Mount Kanchenjunga in the Himalayas which is passing through a political turmoil in 1980s in the wake of the Liberation Movement launched by the Indian- Nepalis under the banner of GNLF, Gorkha National Liberation Front, claiming their right on the state as their homeland because of getting “fed up with being treated like the minority in a place where they were the majority. They wanted their own country, or at least their own state, in which to manage their own affairs”(Desai 90) in their own language. In fact, people from other countries, states, regions and communities have bought land here, built their huge establishments and have been enjoying a luxurious life employing the local people for their services and treating them “like slaves” (Desai 189) and calling them “illiterate bastards”, who have been feeling displaced, exiled and marginalized in the land of their ancestors, though even being larger in number. They felt cheated by the political leaders of India when as one of the activists of GNLF while making a speech before the huge gathering of nepalis, states “in April of 1947, the communist party of India demanded a Gorakhsathan but the request was ignored...” (Desai158). In order to portray and

highlight the travails of these diaspora people and communities “uprooted from their homeland” in transnational as well as national lands, Desai “deftly shuttles between first and third worlds, illuminating the pain of exile, the ambiguities of post colonialism and the blinding desire for a better life” (Desai, blurb).

She here gives us the glimpses of the craze and compulsions-economic, academic, professional and political- of the people belonging to the third world to go to developed countries by any means, to settle there and live a comfortable life, which for them and their parents are lands of plenty. In his introduction to Narratives For a New Belonging: Diasporic Cultural Fictions, Roger Bromley calls migration the “quintessential experience” of the twentieth century (Bromley 4) as during this period more people moved to other countries than ever in the world history resulting in the formation of a great number of diasporic communities having their own distinct characteristics. Desai has shown in her novel materially well- settled legalized foreigners who were either sponsored by their relatives or got settled here legally through negotiating commercial marriages with green card holders and also a hoard of illegals having entered America on tourist visa or on other grounds, continuing staying here for a longer period finding ways to grab green card which eludes their grasp, but living constantly in the fear of the police and the immigration authorities which makes their survival “doubly vulnerable” in “alien places” as remarks Iqbal Ramoowalia in his interview with T.S. Anand on the lives of diasporas abroad.(Anand 13).

Desai has also presented how the parents of those who have managed to reach the land of many jobs consider their wards and themselves to be the luckiest, constantly goading them to stay there, make money, asking them not to come back and themselves dreaming to settle there and boasting of their children's success stories. Those, who have not been able to manage for their children the entry, are approaching these parents for help and recommendations for their wards. The narrative details of various situations pertaining to the journey and existence of these immigrants portray the plight and travails suffered by the prospective immigrants at the hands of the visa agencies, their cheating by travel agents, various hassles they have to undergo, the forging of fake documents, the approval of fake accounts which are legalized with official stamps on the payment of underhand money and as Desai says

“it was a fact accepted by all that Indians were willing to undergo any kind of humiliation to get into the states” (Desai 184).

Desai also gives us a peep into the existential reality of the illegals like Biju who was first time cheated of money by the travel agent and was able to enter America only second time on a tourist visa. He had been shifting from one menial job to another in different restaurants, living in the basements of kitchens with many illegal migrants from many countries where it appeared “there was a whole world in the basement kitchens of New York” (Desai, 22) and on being dispatched by the restaurant owners in the apprehension of the expected raid by IMA, with his “folded home under his arms” he had joined “a shifting population of men camping out near the fuse box, behind the boiler, in the cubby holes and in the odd-shaped corners that once were pantries, maids’ rooms, laundry rooms and storage rooms at the bottom of what had been a single family home, the entrance still adorned with a scrap of colored mosaic in the shape of a star. The men shared a yellow toilet: the sink was a tin laundry trough. There was one fuse box for the whole building, and if anyone turned on too many appliances or lights, PHUT, the entire electricity went, and the residents screamed to nobody, since there was nobody, of course to hear them” (Desai 51-52).

Through the presentation of the miserable living of these migrants like “fugitives on the run-no papers” who had come here with a dream of a better life, Desai also reveals their pains, anguishes, loss of dignity and self respect, humiliations and displacements and their desires for the green card by marrying even “the mentally retarded and invalid” green card holders but the picture of reality sent back home by them is the contrary one, as Biju writes to his father “Angrezi khana, no Indian food, and the owner is not from India. He is from America itself”(Desai 14). His father, who is a cook with a retired judge in India, considers the status of his son to be superior who is cooking for the Americans whereas he for the Indians. He also boasts before others of the big names of restaurants his son has written in he letters, which he does not even know how to pronounce. Now since he thinks that his son is very well placed, he wishes to marry him to a rich shopman’s beautiful daughter living in Kalimpong. Another resident of Kalimpong, Mrs. Lola too speaks very high of her daughter living in England and working as a news reporter for BBC, as if she were the Prime Minister of England. She constantly nags with and frowns at her neighbour Mrs. Sen whose

daughter is living in the States as she considers England to be culturally superior to America. Infact, it was Lola who had forced her daughter to go away from India as she believes that India is sinking and it is better to leave India soon. She herself has a craze for foreign dresses, lavender, creams, shampoos, perfumes, undergarments and her cupboard always remains full of these items.

How these illegal immigrants whose flow to America has multiplied during the past two decades suffer constant insults at the hands not only of the natives but also from the comparatively better placed legalized people from their own country has also been presented through Biju’s worst work experience in Harish- Harry’s Gandhi café which not only makes him nostalgic for home but also lays bare his inevitable lot and of those like him from the third world countries to be away from their home-place, as the narrator says “Biju couldn’t help but feel a flash of anger at his father for sending him alone to this country, but he knew he wouldn’t have forgiven his father for not trying to send him either”(Desai 81). These illegals who are managing their own lives with difficulty, behave rudely and even refuse to see the people sent by their parents with recommendations for their help as they know that these new entrants will bother them and would “stick on.” All this is presented very pathetically and ironically through Nandu’s behavior with Biju on whose reference as a relative he had landed in America on tourist visa (but he had not been able to visit any tourist spot during his stay in America) and that of Saeed Saeed, a fellow worker with Biju in a bakery, from Zanzibaar who refuses to see the tribals from his native place sent by his mother to seek his help. Desai shows not only these illegals and the new entrants desperate, pulling on with their lives of pains and humiliations, even the financially well settled owners of restaurants and travel agents from India too are shown to be leading fake lives and feeling anguished at their children’s especially their teenaged daughters’ adopting the American ways, though outwardly they are making all out efforts to make the best of opportunity for which they have come to America and stay in competition with others.

Referring to the complex formation of diaspora psyche and reactionary streak of diasporic communities, Vijay Mishra remarks that diasporas connect themselves with the idea of the homeland or ‘*desh*’ against which other lands are foreign or ‘*videsh*’ and carry their homelands in the form of a series of objects and fragments of narratives

and memories in their heads or in their suitcases(Mishra 67-68). Some of the characters in the novel are constantly feeling nostalgic about “home” and “homeland” because as Mike Featherstone in the article “Localism, Globalism and Cultural Identity” observes that “the difficulty of handling increasing levels of cultural complexity and the doubts and anxieties” often engender “localism” or “the desire to return home, becomes an important theme” “in their psyche” regardless of whether “the home is real or imaginary, temporary, syncretized or stimulated, or whether it is manifest in a fascination with the sense of belonging, affiliation and community attributed to the homes of others”(Featherstone 47).

Some of them are also creating ‘home’ in their living and psychic space with religious “icons” such as “a chunky Ganesh brought all the way from home despite its weight, for decoration plus luck in money and exams”(Desai 49). Some of them want to visit their homeland, meet their relatives, take rest and return with fresh memories, but some of them especially the illegals are not able to return and have to die on the alien land only with the fading memories of home and parents lurking in their minds. For some of them like Mr. Makkar, the travel agent, “home” is not “a mythical place of desire” using Avtar Brah’s phrase (Brah, 192), because his father has been asking him to “stay away” “not to come back to India” “a shitty place.” Makkar even advises Biju not to go back to India permanently but return to America after a short while as there is no future in India. Hinting at the increasing neo-colonialism of America, Makkar warns him saying that America is not going to leave people in their homelands even as they would have to work there also for one or the other American company which would pay them less there as compared to their working for these companies in America.

Some of them like Saeed Saeed do not lament or feel the pangs of loss of the homeland. Rather they adapt themselves to the American system and requirements by marrying the green card holder girls one after the other but in their heart of hearts they retain the religious identity of their clan and community and also nourish a feeling of hatred and revenge for the land of adoption. Some of them, more sensitive like Biju, unable to cope with the existential reality of America, refuse to lead fake versions of life and on feeling homesick and concerned about their filial responsibility return home with a dream and

desire to lead a peaceful and comfortable life with the money saved but their “displaced homeward journey,” using Stuart Hall’s words (Hall 399) proves very hazardous for them when their own homeland is passing through a turmoil and their parents themselves are feeling displaced in their own country as is shown happening in Kalimpong in India and through the fate met by Biju and his father. Thus we find almost all the immigrants, legal and illegal, feeling disturbed and uprooted in one way or the other due to the lack of respect and dignity and loss of pride in foreign lands, thus living “lives of loss”.

As in the post-colonial scenario, in the colonial period too, persons going abroad from the colonized countries, even on prestigious academic assignments were treated as “others” and how this led to the formation of subversive subjectivities is shown through a peep into the psychic space of Jhemu Bai Patel, who in 1939 had gone to Liverpool, the land of hope and glory for higher studies but the insulting remarks for his smell of curry and faulty accent and the hateful treatment by the locals had made him an introvert, feeling himself inferior and indulging in subversive activities. In England, he continued living a life of mimicry with an outward show of manners as a civilized man. This loss of self esteem and pride eventually made him more or less eccentric and even on his return to India, though holding the position of a judge, he lived throughout a subverted life, marring his healthy relationship with others and especially with his wife. Later in his post retirement phase, he preferred to live as a recluse in a big house in Kalimpong as a foreigner in his own house, where he felt slightly at ease, as this time he would not have to learn a new language and live a life of pretensions.

Thus we see how the life of insult and injury faced by the third world diasporas in the lands of the first world dismantles their selves both in the colonial and post-colonial situations. But in this text Desai has also shown the shifting positions of the diaspora with shifts in locations and political situations both in home and abroad. Through the multiple experiences and situations she has evidently projected that the diasporic experience is not linked only with the transnational lands, across political borders, rather it is more a matter of what Jan Mohammad in his interview with S. X. Goudie calls, “the positionality of the subject”(Goudie 8) or what Avtar Brah believes that the “power position” assumed or granted to the subject can be within the national boundaries too, and with whose shifts the categories of diasporas too

change. In the parallel scenario created in the post-independent India in Kalimpong, Desai has shown how in the wake of the activities of GNLF's demand for Gorkhaland, the homes of the people belonging to other states of India and especially from West Bengal and Bihar who are considered outsiders here are being raided and ransacked by the GNLF activists. The big orchard belonging to the two Bengali sisters Noni and Lola is illegally encroached and when Lola goes to complain the Pradhan against this act she is insulted with lewd remarks and after coming back to her home she laments and cries over the decision of her dead husband Joyley who had sold his entire property in Calcutta to build a home here "with such false ideas of retirement, sweet peas and mist, eat and books" where now she does not even have her decency. Father Booty, a Swiss man, who had been living in Kalimpong for the past forty five years and had constructed his home here naming it "Sukhtara" and had established a dairy, is found by the activists living illegally without his papers, but who actually had never felt the need to apply for papers, as he always considered this place his home. On being ordered to leave for his country, he feels the pain of exile, cries bitterly while leaving his cows and buffaloes, his place and his friends. Even Biju's father, who is an Indian, and has lived half of his life in Kalimpong starts feeling displaced and realizes that "he wasn't wanted in Kalimpong and he didn't belong" when after the protest rally of GNLF, violence breaks out and non-Nepalis are being chased to be killed. In this atmosphere, Nepalis, who earlier felt like diaspora on this land on being side-tracked, have now risen to the subject position. They start hating, ignoring and passing sultry remarks at all the outsiders who had left their homes in the other states and regions of India to settle here and it is they who are now made to feel diasporic(especially the Bengalis and Biharis). Tibetans, Lepchas and Sikkimese have recently joined the Nepalis in this hate wave to be on the safe side, whereas earlier they used to project themselves different from them.

Thus we see that the text of the novel through these situations and experiences of different characters portrays the "tense," "chaotic," "antagonistic" and "shifting" locations of the diaspora both in the lands of the first and third worlds. But the subtext of the novel raises many questions before the reader not only about the precarious, disgraced and displaced lives and existence and shifting positions and identities of the diasporas but also about the shifting concepts of "home" and "homeland".

1. If "home" is a place" where we gather grace" as Nissim Ezekiel says in his poem "Enterprise" then where are the homes of Lola, Noni, Mrs. Sen and of others which they had built in Kalimpong and where they are now being disgraced?
2. If violence, arson, insult leashed by the Gorkhas on the non-Nepalis in their demand for their own homeland seem to us fundamentalist activities then how far is the hateful attitude of other people living in Kalimpong towards Nepalis justified, especially that of Lola, who always talked of we "bongs" and they "neps" "all budhoos" "no brains"?
3. Is the Nepali youths' struggle for liberation and possession of their homeland motivated by their patriotic feelings or for making money only by looting the outsiders which disillusions Gyan, a Nepali Maths tutor and lover of Sai (Jhemu Bhai Patel's granddaughter) who confesses before her his desire to leave this place (his proposed homeland) and go with her to Australia, away from history and family liabilities and make there a home, afresh?
4. Is there any relationship between diaspora's acquiring citizenship of the adopted country and the sense of belongingness with that country, the issue which has been explored at length by May Joseph in the book *Nomadic Identities: the Performance of Citizenship?* If Saeed Saeed, who has married a girl from a family of long-haired Vermont hippies for getting the green card, does it ensure that he would be loyal to America because though he has made himself feel at home in America after having made a place for himself among the Americans and the outsiders yet he calls himself first a Muslim, then an American and even the family he has got connected to after his marriage gives assurance about him welcoming him through a letter to the INS but they also clarify to Saeed that for " any subversion against the U.S government- they would be happy to help"? On the other hand is the example of Father Booty who is turned out from India on the ground of his illegal stay here, who though never bothered to apply for citizenship in India but still created a real home here for himself and others around, in other words who related to India through heart.

5. If diaspora theorists and writers speak of the displaced, homeless and precarious existence of diasporas in the adopted lands because of their non-adoption by heart by the host country, do diasporas too not go and live there only for material gains? Moreover, in the times of crises for those countries, do the diasporas feel concerned for them or their loyalties always remain basically with their home countries, the question which has been very pertinently raised by Jarnail Singh, a Punjabi writer, in his short story "TOWERS."? (Singh)
6. If "Home is where I began, and where I shall return" as Sura P. Rath says (Rath 8), is Biju's unannounced and emptyhanded journey back home going to be welcomed by his father, who himself is passing through a phase of imminent helplessness? Does Biju's unbecoming treatment by his own countrymen who rob him naked which makes him reflect over the foolishness of his decision to come back to his home and homeland whose imaginary ideal images he had been constructing in his thoughts not make the readers side with his reflections?
7. The questions whether he should go back or he will have to go back as his father would neither desire nor would he be able to set a new home for him here in the prevailing scenario have been left open ended by the novelist. Will his compulsion to go back not make him pass through the same degrading process of humiliation and disgraceful existence in foreign lands is also a question mark left before the readers to ponder over.

To sum up, it can be said that by portraying the craze and compulsions of diasporic journey from one region to another within the nation itself and across the nations which entails various travails associated with it, Desai has not only shown her characters leading the lives of loss both in the homelands and the alien lands, rather through their existential miseries she has also raised questions about what and where is 'home' and 'homeland'- a geographical space, a psychic space or work space? All the characters – both home and abroad- appear to be hanging like Trishankus in this fluid space suffering the pangs of migrancy- which for Desai seems to be "a universal experience."

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Postcolonial Consciousness in Mulk Raj Anand's Autobiographical Novels

Binod Mishra

Mulk Raj Anand belongs to such a generation of Indian novelists in English that witnessed both the phases of Indian life—a life lived as a colonial and a life experienced as a postcolonial. His sympathy with the victims of British alien rule and its sequel in the form of silent revolution getting voices under the leadership of Gandhi and his likes is a testimony of the fact that his fiction is suffused with the dual consciousness. His understanding of the deep-rooted agony of the underprivileged in his earlier novels prepares his readers to expand their thought processes as individuals in a post colonial world of conflicting loyalties, criss-crossing cultures and threatening ethnocentric ideologies.

Anand demonstrates his postcolonial consciousness in a number of ways. As a writer of sociological novels in his early phase he shows his rebellion in the form of Bakha, Munoo and Lalu who carry volcano in their physical frames and tame the feeling of otherness in their own country ruled by alien forces. Unable though to wage a war with their rulers, these protagonists are shown communicating in their own language full of slangs and abuses. What tempts us to trace the vestiges of postcolonial challenges in his work is Anand's attempts to accommodate his protagonist in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual flexible world. The burden of colonial anguish gets a subtle release in his later novels. His double consciousness prepares him to answer the metaphysical questions of space and time.

Anand is not a slave either of rigid social conventions or false fetishes. His father's subservience to British rule and his mother's blind devotion to worshipping of gods and goddesses suffocate him. His experiences with his schoolmasters are also unpleasant and he considers them stuck in the old notion of sparing the rod and spoiling the child. He foresees the future generation of his nation becoming the puppets responding and restricting themselves to instructions of poor masters. The contractors of knowledge were bent on confining the minds of a new generation who would disseminate nothing but fear and anxiety. The stunted growth of human personality caused by the fear instilled in young amateur minds would rewrite the history of India, agitated the mind of Anand. He makes the protagonists of his later novels question

all sorts of issues and enables them to explore alternatives that could help them earmark their space and realize their roles.

Seven Summers (1951), the first in the series of Anand's autobiographical novels, opens on a note of symbolic cheer and joy: Sunshine scatters like gold dust. (Anand, 1970). Anand employs the old myth in the context of new India to perpetuate the rhythms and flow of Krishan's personality. He does not repudiate the old myth in a categorical manner rather he retains part of it to renovate the decaying social and cultural life of India. Saros Cowasjee's remark in the introduction of the novel *Seven Summers* adds to the glory of the novel:

It is the product of an epic intention to absorb,
transform and reveal the whole heritage of India.
(Cowasjee, 1951)

The world, which offers Krishan attractions and distractions and puts numerous challenges help in broadening his vision of life. The road dominates the first part of the novel whereas the river symbolizing flow and mobility renders a postcolonial hue to the second part of the novel. Anand is not a captive of nostalgic feelings and his desire to establish rapport with the outside world enables him to demolish the old barriers. His aversion to his father's patched up compromise world indicates his revolutionary nature. The army life of his father had bred in him gruffness and seemed to have stunted his sensitivity. The uproar for expansion and his desire to mend fences even with foes amply demonstrates Anand's craving for life and more life. We can find a representation of Anand's ideology in the dream world of Krishan. What Krishan says is not devoid of postcolonial preoccupation:

The fervours of these early desire sank into the labyrinths of the mind, soaked me in the colours of this fantasy. (Anand, 1970:99)

Many of Anand's critics find him stuck in sociological and documentary significance of his fiction. What they see is only half-truth and the other half is left unplugged.. Such critics forget the relationship of the author with their surroundings. Fiction for Anand is not an escape but an alternative to enlighten the minds gone astray. He represents Indian fiction in English as an innovation, a new kind of creative expression. He advises these critics to shed their frozen evaluation and comprehend the internal evidences before jumping to hasty conclusions. Serious readers and critics of Anand's novels may find a

fountain of the collective unconscious of India. In a mood of confession, Anand says:

The connection between my life and my writing is more intimate than in other novelists. I write as I live. My life is my message.⁶

The advocate of the lowly who pleads for removing 'otherness' of his characters unlocks the secrets of his heart not in a mood of withdrawal but in a spirit of go forward. The fight against otherness gets a new intensity and awareness when Anand's protagonist, Krishan readies himself for the various selves of man and woman. All his conflicts and contortions, which cause anguish, double with his experience of European life. His contradiction reaches a point of resolution in his autobiographical novels. The miscellaneous philosophy of the human person evolves in these novels. He shows in these novels that we are part of the whole world and our doubts, questioning and contradictions lead us to a more comprehensive vision of life. The multifarious impulses and imperceptible feelings of his protagonist procreate a subtle dimension. What makes Anand a post colonial is the fact that his inherited culture and acquired vision does not result in any ambivalence or distortion?

Morning Face (1968) is Anand's second autobiographical novel. It exhibits the protagonist's growth of self-awareness in a more definite shape. Krishan enacts the drama of existence in its love-hate relationship in the phenomenal world. The panoramic background of struggling India adds a new dimension with the focus on Krishan's evolution to higher consciousness. The tension caused by conflicting political loyalty in the protagonist's homeland adds to his fury. He breaks the curfew and is also punished. The Jallianwallah Bagh massacre has a very severe impact on his mind and he feels a sense of alienation. The description of the protagonist's anguish not only expresses the postcolonial anxiety but also the clash between tradition and change. The encounter of the protagonist with irrevocable reality presents a postcolonial problem:

I now began to realize actually the nature of difference between the two worlds in which I lived, the world of the compromise of my father and the world of the principles of the nationalist.(Anand,1968:438).

His grief and joy have a larger context and not mere private indulgences. His desire to learn the distance through which personal experience can be transformed to another plane of understanding is burning example of postcolonial struggle.

Anand answers most of the queries of his half-hearted critics in his most artistic and relenting manner in his internationally acclaimed novel, *The Bubble*(1984).The novel shows not only Krishan's transcendence but Anand's penetrative and panoplied confidence,. His stay in England enabled him to enlighten himself and it helped him understand the problem of a postcolonial world. His agonizing awareness of insufficiency in the stagnant climate of India is given a sharp expression in the following lines:

And each of us has the ghosts of the dead past in us,
the enemies who deny the poetry of life, the demons
who have to be exercised.(Anand:1984:12)

Krishan is not the fiery and flamboyant Indian who loves his nation just for the sake of loving it. He can reject all that is dross in any culture. He has to grow by absorbing everything and by becoming more than anything. The problem of knowledge and experience is more important to him. He is unsettled at Prof. Dicks remark about Indian students sticking to old jargons. His Indian root does not seem as an appendage to him though he wants to develop a universal outlook. The world is for him an image of harmony and space - time continuum is for him the poetry of life.Krishan faces dread and despair because of his split existence in England. He has to restore the vitality of the old myths because it is 'shrouded in the rituals'. His determination to gather new sensations in England for his self-discovery shows his awareness. He prefers the ideologies of Iqbal to Hume and finds delight:

So to exist is to be. And to be is to become
aware. Matter cannot become. Every new
experience makes me. I can choose to be.
Nature cannot. I have the freedom of choice.
I can create myself through my consciousness.
(The Bubble, p.72)

The Bubble is a quintessence of innocence and experience. It extends beyond time and space and the novel is more expansive because

it shows Anand's penchant for absorbing everything in a fast changing postcolonial world. More of an autobiography, the novel comprises letters, diary entries and has many beautiful titles. Spread in nine parts, the novel breaks barriers of all kinds both thematically and structurally. The first part depicts Krishan's stay under Prof. Dicks who unravels many mysteries and makes him aware of the various threads of philosophy and shreds of human existence. The second part acquaints Krishan with the landscapes of London and creates in him nostalgia for his homeland. The second part also has a mention of Krishan's meeting with Lucy, who is a bundle of repressed emotions. The third part which brings Krishan to the top of his consciousness as a fuller being is his contact with Irene. It is Irene who acts as a catalyst in Krishan's search for an authentic existence. Krishan's journey to Paris in the fourth part, his interaction with literary giants in the fifth and his journey to Ireland brings a transformation in him. Krishan's letters to Irene in seventh and his father's letter in the eighth part pave the way to his self-discovery. The last and ninth part of the novel is Krishan's reply to his father's letter. Krishan is a changed person and a fuller being. He argues his own case and like an adroit advocate he clears all charges. What Krishan says is free from all inhibitions and honest appraisal of his personality:

I don't want to pose as a saint or a hero, though I confess I often feel glow of that ambition and must extirpate it. I just want to be a human and recreate tragic lives of our dumb people.(The Bubble,p.12)

The various phases of the novel show Krishan's transcendence towards a better life, a life of consciousness, and a life of ability to accommodate the oddities of life. What makes Anand's autobiographical novels postcolonial is the spark of existential awareness present in the protagonist, Krishan.

Style and language are not neutral in Anand's fiction. They reflect the temperament and the culture of the writer like a true Indian. Anand's fascination for embellished expression shows that Indians are sentimental people. The matter of fact is dull for him. His language conveys adequately what he feels intensely. Imagination and insight acquire substance because of his linguistic energy. It is the language that constructs and interprets reality. Language in a significant way

crystallizes the inner history of a society. Words used by an artist are the units of sensibility. A new style indicates a radical change in the collective psyche of that society. Anand's language does not have a monkish quality about it. His language and style also shows a revolt against his oppressive society. It also indicates his moral and spiritual energy and total being.

Anand as the third world writer is not constrained to perpetuate the colonial heritage. He represents those who at a conscious level attempt to break through the paradigm they have inherited from the colonial past. Anand's fiction is not a 'communication satellite' for the West. The use of postcolonial context helps in determining our response. The cognitive structure does not pose any barrier to the exploration of awareness. We do not share Hasnain's observation:

The result is that an encounter between a post colonialist text and the native reader lapses into a battle in the darkness of alienation in which there are no winners, in which there are only bemused losers. (Hasnain, 1992: 131).

Anand projects in his autobiographical novels the inner reality and his own spiritual perplexities. The dramatizations of his experiences are rooted in concrete situations. He possesses a postcolonial and modern mind in the sense that he has tremendous capacity for self-analysis. The power of self-analysis is the manifestation of growing consciousness. The increase in awareness is possible only when man looks inward and is prepared to confront the mystery of his own self. The Bubble and other autobiographical novels are richly coloured by an awareness of individual identity. The design of The Bubble is inclusive because the awareness of the east-west confrontation prevents any simple resolution. The protagonist is able to reach forward through amaze of contradictions to a positive state. Anand appears quite close to modern writers not only in his fidelity to feeling and thought but also in his organization of cultural and spiritual drama.

Anand's fiction has a sensibility that releases a state of contemplation. His fiction perpetuates an order of existence, which in actual life constantly crumbles. What makes his autobiographical novels more significant is the sensitiveness rather doctrine or belief. It is more

of a cognitive discourse, which asserts a world view. It imposes an order upon ordinary reality and the order can be experienced only by a contemplative mind.

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Kamala Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man*-A Case of Cultural Genocide and Counter-Narratives

Rohit Phutela

As a prolongation of the theme of identity crisis and alienation in the diasporic scenario of the second half of the twentieth century Kamala Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man**is a significant development in the diasporic writings . The novel essays the tale of an Indian immigrant Srinivas, a South Indian Brahmin, who settles in England before the Indian independence, builds a house of his own their, developing a family only to be tagged as an outsider and an outcast and finally rejected by the indigenous population. But what makes the tragedy of Srinivas more tear-jerking and heartrending is the way (racial violence and agitation) he is made to realise the truth about his discontinuity with the British life and the people therein. As a novel of alienation and despair of the diasporic individual beset with argumentative circumstances, it is a remarkable study of human decay and crumbling relationships.

Edward Said in his influential work *Culture and Imperialism* (Said,1994) talks about all kinds of 'crossing overs' or movements from one geographical location to other. This movement is also not geographical alone and it is imaginary too as it leads to new. subjectivities and new definition of identity. While this new experience of the immigrant is painful and fraught with the agonizing narratives of his homeland and history, it is also resisted by the dominant discourse of colonial centre that marginalizes every contamination and reconfiguration which is identified in the politics of every migration and diasporic entity. Such outlook,says Said, prevents an "counternarratives" from emerging. These "counternarratives" are the problematic of the hybridization or the movement of one identity to other which is rejected in the game of the colonial and the colonizer. Said has laid effectual prominence on the notion of centre as something which characterises the power and a sense of belonging. Elaborating the relationship of the imposing centre and its affective narratives he comments on the American context:

The executive presence is central in American culture today,And centrality gives ride to semi-official narratives that authorize and provoke certain sequences of cause and effect, which at the same time prevent counternarratives from emerging (Said, 1994: 393).

To sum up, centre, as per Said procures a powerful sense of “identity” in those who are in power. Rest all others are looked with a jaundiced eye and are played out in terms of racial hatred and violence. It is this politics of power and discrimination which is the kernel of *The Nowhere Man*.

Srinivas’s movement is also precipitated by troubled history of his country India and situations which propel him to impose a sort of exile over himself Srinivas, born and bred in India, is an inveterate Indian deeply entrenched in its culture and traditional voices. Srinivas and his wife had moved to England just after their hasty marriage back in India.

Srinivas’s family in India had been a close knitted unit emblematic of an Indian joint family. Narayan, Srinivas’s father, was a lecturer in the Government college and at the receiving end of all calumnies which could be heaped by the British. All this had always created a furore in his consciousness but he had always remained mum. The family gets embroiled in the Nationalist struggle not by its own volition but due to the association with its neighbour family whose son Vasu is a rebel. Vasantha, the young sister of Vasu takes refuge in Srinivas’s family and the British officers, who come in search of Vasu, try to molest Vasantha. The events fill Srinivas’s heart with disgust for India and the squalor therein. He is betrothed to Vasantha and after his father’s landing in lunatic asylum Srinivas’s antipathy against the Raj escalates. His passage to England is facilitated by an Englishman, the principal of Narayan’s college and Srinivas embarks upon a new journey.

Thus, Srinivas’s landing in England is in alignment with the political exile which had encouraged movements all over the globe. The exilic life seldom predicted the return to the roots and the home receded into oblivion day by day. Salman Rushdie writes about home as an imaginary place which recurs only in the imagination in the far-off distant past which is in disjunction with the present. Talking peculiarly about the Indian immigrants Rushdie writes in *Imaginary Homelands*⁵ revealing with fidelity that:

Our physical alienation with India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that will, in short create fictions, not actual cities and villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind (Rushdie, 1991: 10)

What it leaves is a plethora of longings, desires and a problematised existence dogged due to various socio-political variables and constructs. Srinivas too lands in England with an aspiration to secure a comfort and stability which are the implications of the construct called home.

The urge to have a place of comfort and security in an alien land is beset with anxieties and existential dilemmas. The quest for one’s own house and stability suddenly acquires the connotations of larger questions of identity and history. It transforms itself into a tale of transition from one’s rootlessness to finding new roots. On a larger canvas, it is the assertion of one’s freedom and voice in the repressing socio-political environs. Such ambience is the direct offshoot of the race superiority and jingoistic notions of the native subjects. The quest for one’s identity and a desire to have a house of one’s own is embedded in every immigrant’s consciousness.

Srinivas, after much topsy-turvy acts is able to find a house for himself and his wife and the family names the house as *Chandra prasad* which was a tribute to their ancestral house of the same name back in India. Thus, *Chandra prasad* at No.5, Ashcroft Avenue becomes for them the haunt of those memories and pictures of homeland which they had left behind. It is a migrant’s subterfuge to relive that experience which he had long cherished in his heart and which he is unable to give emission owing to his exilic fragmentary existence. A euphoric Vasantha gushes out with excitement and satisfaction her heartiest desire: “At last we have achieved something. A place of our own where we can live according to our lights although in alien surroundings; and our children after us, and after them theirs”. (p.20) Vasantha’s outburst of ecstasy is a typical Indian attitude to secure a house of one’s own and never to miss the idea of securing a niche for their children who would stay with them as a joint unit. Such an attitude stems from the intrinsic cultural and moral values which are a part of every Indian’s consciousness since his or her birth.

But Vasantha's long term plans of settlement and adaptation to England are noteworthy. Every migrant comes into the adopted land with the bulk of ideas, beliefs, traditions and customs of his native land in a bid to relive the past experience. A diasporic subject is always disillusioned towards creating a "homeland" away from "homeland". The writers of Indian Diaspora (Kamala Markandaya, though loosely qualifies for the soubriquet owing to her migration to England ensuing from an inter-racial marriage) often procure the images of the ordinary culture and geographical paradigms to comment upon the mental frameworks of the old (the indentured labour) as well as the new or modern (the postcolonial critique) diasporas. The diasporic writer is preoccupied with the transformations and transcreations of the metaphors of India in the objects of the colonial shades and which finds its reverberation in the literary works and the character portrayals. Amitav Ghosh chooses *A House For Mr. Biswas* as the referent to the *idee fixe* of the Indian writers of the diasporic experience.

The founding discourse of the old Indian diaspora is to be found in the writings of V. S. Naipaul, notably in *A House For Mr. Biswas* (Naipaul, 1961) where the idea of India exists in the minds of the diaspora through forms of spatial displacement which the sacred finds in areas originally transformed into the local (Ghosh, 2, 1: 73)

Ergo, the geographical sites of the colonial set up become the contested sites of the past and the present. Vasantha too envisages a home carved out of the dead wood of the past which she and Srinivas had left behind. Their cultural displacement from their place of derivation urges the immigrant couple to envision a transnationalistic version of the concept "home".

Not only a house, but other leftovers of the native culture are the artifacts which constantly imbue the immigrant's psyche with their inescapable links with the past. Srinivas and Vasantha too never flounder in asserting their culturally finer and traditionally rich Indian nationality even in the face of more self-assuming and narcissist British. They try their best to keep alive their traditions and customs in continuity with their modes of living in India. Vasantha was a staunch Hindu obeying all the sanctities and rituals which are the by-products of an Indian existence. Vasantha was a Hindu, born and bred in a subtle religion whose concepts, being on the cosmic scale made no concessions to puny mankind: a religion that postulated one God, infinite, resplendent,

with a thousand and different aspects but One: God the creator, and preserver, destroyer, union with whom was the supreme purpose and bliss. (pp. 8- 19). Her belief in the superiority of her religion than that of the whites shows her allegiance towards her native culture which remains in the scraps of her memory.

Vasantha and Srinivas also don't shed their Indian traits and living styles forgetting that they were in England. Like a good future mother-in-law, Vasantha discusses about her future planning of the house with Srinivas. She had already decided, even before the formal acquisition of the house, which room or floor would be allocated to Laxman and his wife and which storey would be perfect for Seshu and his wife. She had already made up her mind about the ground floor as it would be difficult for the aging parents to climb the stairs. Srinivas was amazed at such a metamorphosis of Vasantha, from an immature young wife to a pragmatic matter of fact woman who is obsessed with the dream of establishing a home of her own in the alien environs.

Srinivas and other Asian and African immigrants had set up their small businesses with a long term perspective in mind. These exilic people surviving all eyebrows and doubts carried on with their business in white communities isolated by virtue of their racial and cultural discontinuity with the native population. Farida Karodia, the South African born author of post-colonial situation in her literary works, describes the situation of the south Asian traders who, after their dislocation and relocation in other worlds continued with their solitary existence building walls around themselves and secluding themselves from the rest of the world which breeds alienation and discrimination for them. In her critically acclaimed novel *Other Secrets* (Karodia: 2000), Karodia makes an allusion to the apartheid days of South Africa which witnessed mass destruction and genocide. Having the first hand experience of exile, as she could return to South Africa after a hiatus of no less than twenty six years in Canada, Karodia's colonial experience permeates through her entire narrative. Her description of the migrancy experience and socio-cultural differences between the suppresser and the suppressed make its comparison with *The Nowhere Man* all the more important. Karodia notes in her text that it was quite common before the politicization of the South Africa's territorial conflict to find solitary Asian traders living and conducting business in the heart of the white rural communities. "Isolated because of their racial and cultural

differences, the Indian families, who pursue their daily routine as inconspicuously as possible" (Chetty,2003:22). Srinivas like these Indian traders in England had createa coterie of his own with his friends like Ahmed, the Zanzibari anUiitterlin~e, the Dutchman. Thus, along with men of similar were mostly traders in the white areas, built walls around themselves-surviving like bits of flotsam in a hostile sea, practicing their religion and conducting historical background, Srinivas, like an archetypal immigrant tries to forge new paths for himself Srinivas and his family undergo mannensms as a result of their long-drawn-out practical attitude but still ooze with Indian traitsa foremost change in their lifestyle and stay in England. They acquire the British of being accommodating and kind to all those who seek their helping hand. Vasantha and Srinivas, in spite of their feeling of head and shoulders above the British as far as the religion is concerned, help their neighbours inthe hours of need. During the years of the war, all the neighbours of Srinivas and Vasantha take a safe haven in their house, in the attic.

Srinivas and Vasantha's easy going life was not supposed to last for longer. Both being the products of a different lineage had to pay the price of their matter of fact incongruity with the normal British reality. Laxman, the elder son, goes on to show the audacity of marrying an English girl Patty in Plymouth without even seeking the consent of his parents. The couple is traumatized at the delinquency of the son for whom they had big plans. This is first of the series of cultural shocks which the couple bear and which are foreseeable and consequent of every diasporic reality or lives at margin. It has been referred to as 'cultural shock' by Alvin Toffer(Toffer,1970: 13) as it results in the breakdown of the communication, a misreading of the reality and the inability to cope owing to the immersion in a strange or foreign culture. Such a cultural shock intimidates an expatriate into self-questioning related to his identity and situation. It leads to the crumbling of all the imaginative edifices launched by the immigrant in an attempt to relive the past of the homeland and procure a haven in the alien soil which should be a facsimile replica of the home back at "home".But this 'cultural shock' is further aggravated by Laxman when he doesn't invite his parents at the birth of a child to his home in Plymouth and pays seldom visits. He can't stand the sight of his old world parents sticking to the backward place called India. England, thus, makes the

old couple realise the repercussions of the colonial confrontation.

The plight and tragic death of Vasantha raises many questions about the life,conditions and the consequences of an expatriate in exile. Vasantha, who was so ingrained in her traditions and customs, who carried her little India with her in the form of her customs, beliefs and ideas about a family and who was so proud of her Indian lineage that a puissant and an overbearing country like England with a rich racial and cultural antecedents, dies a disastrous death with no one except her husband to harmonize and identify with her tragedy.

Srinivas's tragedy emanates from his disillusionment and demolishing of his dreams about England. He had come to England out of disappointment from his own country and had envisioned a stay and support in the foreign land. He does his best to strike a rapport with the adopted culture and people, builds a nest for himself and his family, succeeds to some extent but in the end is rejected and emitted asan outcast, a pariah who had come to the white man's land to spread his disease.After the death of Vasantha when Srinivas goes to a river to flow Vasantha's ash into the river, the policeman on duty calls it rubbish garbage and warns Srinivas againstdoing it again. Srinivas tells the policeman that it was his wife and he is made the butt ofridicule. His sentimentality with his house and family gets cowed down by the materialism and pragmatism of the English life. It is the disheartening facet of the immigrant survival that one's sentiments and attachments with one's homeland are seldom interpreted in a compassionate manner.Srinivas's disillusionment with England is worsened by the loss of his sons and the loving wife Vasantha. His dream of a perfect house and close-knitted family is shattered into pieces. The death of Vasantha is last nail in his coffin. He retires to his attic and shrinks from the world outside. At this moment he realizes the pointlessness of his existence. His condition without Vasantha and his sons start taking toll upon his health and -That period, for Srinivas, was a dust bowl of being. Empty. Without meaning.Scooped out, picked clean, no climbing up the slippery sides. (p.40). His loneliness and feeling of barrenness nears him to the rummg of his business. Srinivas, thus, inches towards his decay.

At this stage of life he walks into Mrs. Pickering, a destitute homeless English woman. At first he demurs while approaching her owing to her race and nationality but soon they become good friends so much so that Srinivas lets her live in his house on the ground floor.

Srinivas's chance meeting with Mrs. Pickering alleviates some of his pain and he finds a companion whom he could externalize and share his feelings of loss and worthlessness. It is Mrs. Pickering who introduces him to England and for the first time though this identification is transient) Srinivas feels an affinity with his environment.

Mrs. Pickering makes Srinivas alive to the fact that one can achieve comfort from the adopted culture after being cut-off from one's native culture. He starts considering England as his own country. He starts believing that he has found another identity and home which would be his stay and support for the rest of his life, which is shaken by Abdul who reminds him that he would always remain nigger in the eyes of the white and this was not his country. It always would remain "their" country. Not all English people, like Mrs. Pickering and Mrs. Fletcher, were hostile towards Srinivas and empathized with his circumstances. But Mrs. Fletcher's own son Fred makes Srinivas's life hell in England and forces him to blurt out to Mrs. Pickering over his situation in England: "I am to be driven outside, which is the way they want it. An outsider in England. In actual fact I am, of course, an Indian." (pp.231-232) His situation as an outcast and outsider is confirmed.

He has nowhere to go in India and nowhere to claim any place in England. The feeling of rejection maimed him and the shenanigans of Fred and party had left him desolate and destitute. The fear and hatred of the whites sometimes crystallized into words and sometimes verbose invokes sympathy for the old man. Adding more to his tale of woes is his catching leprosy which morally encourages him to ask his tenants to evacuate his house without any prior notice. The act gives Fred and other sons of Belial an opportunity to provoke other people against Srinivas and give the minor show of inhuman personal acrimony the shape of a movement against Srinivas and other prosperous immigrants. Srinivas's leprosy becomes the symbol of the malady which the whites think the Asians have brought with themselves. Srinivas's condition as a lonely individual and the victim of a fatal macabre ailment in another country points out at the alienation of the modern man with his envilfons where he is not understood and sympathized. Such an existence is an inevitable outcome of the cold inexorable social forces indifferent to one's sufferings and dreary conditions of life. What Srinivas could best do was to contemplate over his existence and position silently waiting for his end. He mounts the road towards decay and disintegration both

physically as well as psychologically- His health deteriorates and the conspiracies to oust and pester him also take a terrifying shape- Laxman also doesn't come to his father's aid and even couldn't save the pitiable old man to be burnt alive by the mob of white hooligans led by Fred. Thus, Srinivas dies alone the death of a nowhere man with none to mourn over him.

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(Re)Presentation and Re-creation of Subalternity in the Poetry of Langston Hughes

Sanjeev Kumar

Langston Hughes (1902-1967) has widely been acclaimed for his powerful and discerning depiction of the diverse experiences not only of the African Americans but also of the rest of the American subalternity. The subaltern, maintains John Beverley, “is not an ontological category. It designates a subordinated ‘particularity,’ and in a world where power relations are spatialized that means it must have a spatial referent, a form of territoriality” (Beverley,1999:2). Hughes catches varied moods and perspectives of this “subordinate particularity” in America where power relations are actually spatialized, thus, forming a territoriality of the silenced group. This paper attempts to highlight different shades and moods of this representation of the subalterns that had been suffering indignities in the U.S. because of their ethnic background, economic status, and gender. An allied area of enquiry will be to uncover the world outlook of Langston Hughes that provides coherence to this representation. With a close analysis of some of the more important poems of each phase of his poetic career, the present paper seeks to underline the approach/s behind this representation and how it undergoes diverse dispositions.

In “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” the “I” represents chiefly the oppressed and marginalized negro, and argues that he has been a witness to the ancient and dusky rivers that existed even before humanity. Commenting on the poem, Jean Wagner maintains that the poem “heralded the existence of a mythic union of Negroes in every country and every age. It pushed their history back to the creation of the world, and credited them with possessing a wisdom no less profound than that of the greatest rivers of civilization that humanity had ever known” (394). In a sober yet passionate tone, the subalterns says:

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep
I looked upon the Nile and raised pyramids about it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went
down the New Orleans, and I’ve seen its muddy bosom
turn all golden in the sunset.
I’ve known rivers:

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers. (Hughes,1995: 23)

The poem traces the constructive benefaction of the black subalterns in the rise of various civilizations from time immemorial. Primarily concerned with the plight of the African Americans, the poem focuses on the forced import of different ethnicities from their homeland and how they were forced to work for the power people. The marginalized ‘I’ strives, first to assert himself against a background of political and social oppression and, secondly, after breaking all the barriers of “territoriality,” to occupy a meaningful place and recognition at the centre of humanity.

“Negro” (1922) deals with the historical predicament of African-American subalternity in an equable and somber mood. . The poem engages our attention immediately to the sordid reality of the silenced group:

I’ve been a slave:
Caesar told me to keep his door-steps clean.
I brushed the boots of Washington.
I’ve been a worker:
Under my hand the pyramids arose.
I made mortar for the Woolworth Buildings.
(CP: 24)

This poem is “a saga of suffering and sorrow,” as Robert Niemi puts it, and highlights the evils of oppression and how the marginalized had to suffer disgrace and abuse in different forms from the power people (Niemi,1992:414).

In “Mother to Son,” Hughes renders life to the bitter experiences of a subaltern woman who describes how her life had been a tale of hardships and sorrow. The stoic courage with which she bore all the affronts, opines George Houston Bass, is “an affirmation of a people’s determination to reclaim their humanity, to celebrate their dignity, to grasp their own destiny and define it” (99). She wants her son recognize the fact that their life is hard and thorny that keeps on pricking their life in the form of repression and maltreatment:

Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.
It’s had tacks in it,
And splinters,

And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare. (CP: 30)

Representing all the ill-treated and vanquished subaltern women, she asks her son neither to “turn back” nor to “set down” but face the hard life. The subaltern mother asserts, , “the paradox of the American mythmakers, who propose that all Americans are equal. Subsequently, she acknowledges the personal and racial progress through her metaphor of ascent” (Miller,1989:35).

Langston Hughes also shares subalternity’s hope and dream for a better future and undertakes not only to speak about but also to speak for it. He does neither give mimetic representation nor represent the subalternity as an object of disciplinary knowledge but strives to dress it a political delegation to draw attention of the elite—the power people mired in deceit and corruption. This finds persuasive voice in “Our Land” where the collective voice of the subalternity hankers after a more advantageous and healthier time to come:

Ah, we should have a land of joy,
Of love and joy and wine and song
And not this land where joy is wrong. (CP: 32-33)

The poem laments over the sad plight of the subalterns who fail to forge their true identity in the United States. They seem to be fed up with the prevalent system where “joy is wrong” and the dream of having “a land of sun” full of love and joy has rather dried up like a raisin in the sun. By and large, argues Arnold Rampersad, this poem “decries the pallor of white ‘civilization’ ” that has hindered the way of happiness in the lives of American subalternity (Rampersad,1986: 61). The poet as a keen observer of the mind of the subalternity gives another dimension to his representation that is largely optimistic.

In “Shadows” (1923) the subalternity desires to run away from its sordid present to find out the sun of its happy life. The poem is evocative of its suppressed anger and resentment:

We cannot stand these shadows!
Give us the sun.
...
We must break through these shadows,
We must find the sun. (CP: 34)

The subalternity here no more wishes to live in “shadows” given by the “white things” but in the open sky. The anguished subalternity is not ready to breathe in the “narrow space of stifling air” and rejects the forced life to achieve fairness and egalitarianism in America. “Shadows” throws light on the plight and predicament of the subalterns who wish to get out of the “circus of civilization” in which they were caged by the mercenary and prejudiced capitalistic class (CP: 39).

During this phase, Langston Hughes accentuates the subalternity’s dejected and unfortunate life, and its inner urge for a better and prosperous life. The poems of this phase are full of arrested emotions with a tinge of anger and resentment. With the passage of time, nevertheless, the poet represents the open bitterness of the subalterns and their eloquent protest to get equality and freedom. This change, nonetheless, was in tune with the period of the Great Depression as a consequence of which, writes Anthony Dawahare, the Harlem Renaissance’s “dream of equality achieved through cultural production “crashed,” along with many other hopes of economic and political progress in America.”(Dawahare,1998:21). During 1930s, Hughes fell under the diametrical influence of Marxism and spoke for the subalternity in a bitter and violent tone.

Under the influence of Marxism, Hughes reworked his aesthetic toward conscious political assertion and the poetry of 1930s became, what Arnold Rampersad maintains, “militantly radical socialist utterance” (Rampersad,1991: 197). He felt the need to eliminate oppression, segregation and discrimination through a collective struggle based on the solidarity of subalternity. The oppressed, he says, have hoped and waited for justice and impartial opportunities but failed and are now ready to assert their claims of equitableness. “Tired” (1931), for instance, draws attention of the marginalized to recreate themselves:

I am so tired of waiting,
Let us take a knife
And cut the world in two—
And see what worms are eating
At the rind. (CP: 135)

A more informed reader can see the firm and confident stance of the subaltern to break the shackles of repression and end injustice and abuse.

Langston Hughes registers a strong protest against discrimination and injustice, and exhorts the proletariat to resist hostilities collectively. In “Good Morning Revolution” (1932), Hughes presents the revolutionary mood of the subalternity against the biased and hostile America. In this “buoyant prophecy of international Communalism,” Eric J. Sundquist emphasizes, the marginalized wishes Revolution to accompany him like a crony and work together to get rid of all the evils and injustice (Sundquist,1996:57):

Listen, Revolution,
We can take everything:
All the tools of production,
And turn’em over to the people who work.
Rule and run’em for us people who work. (CP: 163)

The subalternity, the poet says, has been treated as an “alien-enemy,” a “trouble maker,” and even a “son-of-a-bitch” by the capitalists (CP: 163). The poem represents the subalterns quite ready to revolutionize and overthrow the capitalistic system to take its control in their deserving hands.

Hughes did not believe in a static America but in a dynamic one that alters as its natives, including the subalterns, wish it to change. He was a firm believer in democracy and its dear ideals that would provide equal and ample opportunities to the subalternity that could uncage itself from the shackles of oppressed “territoriality.”

Representing the collective mass of rebellious humanity, Hughes lets out the subalterns’ suppressed anger and sense of retaliation. There is an attempt to end exploitation, hunger, poverty and unemployment by a collective struggle of the subalternity and establish a public ownership of the means of production. In the poems of this phase, argues Donald C. Dickinson, part of Hughes’ pleas was “directed to the white majority in America, but as with many other writers discouraged by capitalist society, part was directed to the communist world” (Dickinson,1979:331).

In “One More “S” in the U.S.A.” (1934) the Marxist influence on Hughes finds an explicit and stimulating expression :

When the land belongs to the farmers
And the factories to the working men—
The U.S.A. when we take control

Will be the U.S.S.A then. (CP: 176)

The speaker advocates to replace capitalism to socialism. There is an idea on the need for a public ownership of the means of production, on work as the primary requirements of the deprived, and a fair distribution of material wealth—according to the work done and according to man’s needs.

Most of the poems of 1930s, the readers may note, carry a note of defiance and ask the wretched and oppressed to forget their inner divisions of colour and class to work together and fight against the exploiters. In “Let America Be America Again” (1936), Hughes presents the oppressed’s mood of sobriety to see America a land of dreams full of unbounded opportunities. He, representing the marginalized, wishes America to be a land of love without any tyranny, craft and guile:

O’ let my land be a land where Liberty
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,
But opportunity is real, and life is free,
Equality is in the air we breathe. (CP: 190)

The poem articulates the desire for equal participation of the deprived masses in America on the assumption that the American Dream provides space and opportunity for such an accommodation. The poem, however, also highlights the historical plight of the oppressed and marginalized:

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,
I am the Negro bearing slavery’s scars.
I am the red man driven from the land,
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek—
The poorest worker bated through the years.
(Ibid)

The life of the subalterns, the poem reveals, has been a tale of relentless suffering and misfortune.

From early 1940s, the poetry of Hughes undergoes a change and the poet develops a sensible and thoughtful standpoint in his representation of the subalternity. The poet’s understanding of how freedom, equality, dignity and justice could be secured for the disadvantaged groups in America, in this phase, is based on the recognition that it is a long-term design and preservation of subalternity’s distinctiveness is more significant than confrontation and conflict for

short-term political gains. In “Vagabonds,” for instance, the poet depicts the desolate and deplorable fate of the estranged and distressed subalternity:

We are the desperate
Who do not care,
The hungry
Who have nowhere
To eat,
No place to sleep,
The tearless
Who cannot
Weep. (CP: 239)

The exploited and segregated subaltern, nonetheless, keeps his even temper and does not get swayed away in the excitement of desperation.

“Freedom’s Plow” (1940) talks about the ever-present American Dream in the heart of the subalterns. The poem captures the equable mood of the subalterns and accentuates the views of different social reformers who suffered and sacrificed their lives for the betterment of the dispossessed. Lloyd W. Brown writes that the “poetic insights of Hughes’s “Freedom’s Plow” insist on a frank, if unflattering, admission of the gulf between the artist/intellectual and the masses, a gulf which [the poet] deliberately crosses in order to share a popular faith in the American Dream” (Brown,1976:18). Towards the end of this long poem, the poet says:

To the enemy who would divide
And conquer us from within,
We say, NO!
FREEDOM!
BROTHERHOOD!
DEMOCRACY!
To all the enemies of these words:
We say, NO! (CP: 268)

These lines illustrate the subalternity’s refusal to accept anything that goes against the ideals of freedom, fraternity and democracy in America.

“I Dream a World,” a “more sentimental [poem] in its expectations,

despite its strong social criticism,” argues James A. Emanuel, “creates an ideal world that the subalternity covets—without racial bigotry, discrimination, avarice, greed for money, or hatred”(Emanuel,1967:129). Representing the complete oppressed community in America, the poet visualizes a dreamland with equal participation of all the tyrannized:

A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every man is free,
Where wretchedness will hang its head
And joy, like a pearl,
Attends the needs of all mankind—
Of such I dream, my world! (CP: 311)

The poem reminds us of Martin Luther that may have influenced the poet. The potency and magnetism of the poem lay in the tension between the unrealized dream and the subaltern’s harsh realities.

Soured by the futility of the expectations of the American Dream, the subalternity finds its dejected voice in “Oppression.” It says that “New dreams/Are not available/To the dreamers,/Nor songs/To the singers” (CP: 340).The poem highlights the emptiness of the appalling character of the American Dream. Hughes presents the similar emptiness of the Dream in his much-quoted poem “Harlem” in which the subaltern questions:

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
(CP: 426)

The poem is evocative of the pain and anguish of all the segments of the subalternity. The deferred dream is not forgotten, argues the poem, but subdued and smouldering and may explode one day. The poem also connotes that the subalternity has enough potential for violence against injustice and oppression of the power class.

The poetry of Langston Hughes, a conscious reader may note, is devoted to the articulation of the shared urges and aspirations of the oppressed in America. He gives a powerful expression to their anguish and sense of humiliation suffered by them on account of the biased and

selfish attitude of the dominant class. Representing the oppressed, maltreated and exploited, he fervently outpours their strong protest against man's cruelty to man and their belief in the ideals of equality, brotherhood, and justice. The mood and stance of the poet, however, undergo changes from disciplined anger and resentment of the first phase to the subalternity's mood of violence and insurgence in the second phase. In this phase, argues Arthur P. Davis, Hughes "looked upon his protest poetry as a weapon in the arsenal of American democracy" (Davis,1971:28). In the third phase, nonetheless, the mood of anger and resentment mellows down and the subalternity is represented to have acquired a long-term perspective that the deferred dream of American ideals had been deferred too long and serious efforts should be made to translate it into a reality.

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Right of Ownership of Women as Male Property: Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni*: The Story of Draupadi

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The *Mahabharata*, raises the question of the right of ownership of women as male property and therefore it acquires legal dimension as in answer to this question of Draupadi in *Sabha* lies the status of not only Draupadi but all women of all times. Draupadi of the *Mahabharata* by raising questions in the *Sabha* has rather spoken for all women of her time and it is really interesting to note that her questions still are relevant in the contemporary world where women still are trying to raise similar questions and gaining strength from the epic Draupadi to seek answers from powers that be.

The revival of the mythological themes in art, theatre, television serials, dance and literature emerging on the Indian cultural scene in the recent past has been responsible for the reinterpretation of the mythic female characters in the contemporary world. The depiction of the main female characters of the *Mahabharata*, courtesy the popular cinema and tele-serials, has further generated a new interest in the epic narrative and its characters. The contemporary Indian fiction writers have made an endeavour to reread and reinterpret the great epic the *Mahabharata* in a new light. The importance of the epic characters in an average Indian's life can be well understood by the references that are made to these characters even today, in day-to-day life. Shashi Deshpande has argued: "Myths form a large part of this baggage that we bring to our self-image. How we see ourselves collectively or individually depends greatly on myths. They are part of the human psyche, part of cultural histories."¹

The *Mahabharata*, sage Vyasa's great composition has permeated Indian life to such an extent that it has not only become significant in the contemporary world but it becomes imperative to assign a pertinent and meaningful version to this great epic. More so, since in the present society, the literary critics tend to look at the western world for feminist values and cultures and unfortunately relegating the epics to backstage.

In this context, it is to the credit of some Indian authors who have very courageously tried to translate the silent portions of the *Mahabharata* to give a new understanding to the characters mentioned therein. Pratibha Ray, the first Indian woman to receive the Moorti Devi Award of the Bharatiya Jnanpith (1991) for her path-breaking novel, *Yajnaseni: The Story of Draupadi*, has in this novel rewritten Draupadi's saga of insult and humiliation in society and the exemplary courage shown by this brave woman to challenge such practice:

...wicked people, driven by perverted lust, are insulting the bride of the Bharat dynasty and stripping her body naked in the assemble hall! Such a gross outrage on womanhood will never be wiped out in history. . . For this insult there is no forgiveness, for this sin there is no expiation.²

The *Mahabharata*, raises the question of the right of ownership of women as male property and therefore it acquires legal dimension as in answer to this question of Draupadi in *Sabha* lies the status of not only Draupadi but all women of all times. Several scholars have followed up the legal side of Draupadi's question, and have provided important perspective on her question.³ This famous question tells two things about Draupadi. One, that she wants to fight the case of ownership on her by Yudhisthira and second more important interpretation by many scholars is that she was certain of her status of being free but she was just buying time for her husbands to come to a way out of this situation.

Yajnaseni is stunned by the behaviour of Yudhisthira and wonders, "Does even the most immoral uncivilized gambler ever stake his wife? Has anyone ever done such a detestable act in the history of the world" (234)? Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni* also wants to find her position as a wife and clear a doubt for all women to come:

Full of anguish and anger I was thinking; was woman merely man's movable or immovable property? Was I part of Yudhisthir's movable or immovable property, male and female slaves, horses and elephants? Being a woman did I not have a right over myself, my own soul? If they had right over this body of mine, did it mean they could do as they wished with me (235)?

At last jackals start barking and donkeys braying prompting Dhritarashtra to open his mouth to calm her down. And now the blind emperor Dhritarashtra suddenly rises to the occasion to grant her boons to save Kuru's from her wrath. The boons she asks again give us a rare insight into her character. She asks for Yudhisthira's freedom as well as other husbands', plus their weapons. Karna recognizes Yajnaseni as Pandavas' saviour who has rescued them from the vast predicament they were in.

The *Mahabharata* has a terse *Shloka* glorifying Karna's tribute to Draupadi. It is for the second time that she earns Pandavas freedom from ignominy and slavery by winning back their lost *Sri*:

I have heard of many lovely
women...
but not one of them ever did
anything like this.
When Pandu's sons and Dhritarashtra's
sons lost their heads,
Krishna, daughter of Drupadaa,
showed them sanity.
Pandu's sons were sinking,
boatless in an ocean
of humiliation, and a woman became
their boat of rescue. (72.1-3)⁴

Bhishma, the misogynist, who ruins the lives of Amba, Ambika, Kunti, Gandhari, and watches, without being perturbed, the attempted disrobing of Draupadi, figures as a weak person in the *Sabha Parva*. And it really goes to the credit of Draupadi to maintain her calm even at that crucial moment.

The beginning of the strained relationship between Yudhisthira and Yajnaseni leads to upturn the events of their life. Pratibha Ray has provided a new insight into the psyche of the heroine of this novel to reveal how she might have felt as a wife in a polyandrous marriage. This depicts the feeling of hurt and reproach that a wife as woman must have undergone on being treated as a chattel:

My absence will not prove any obstacle to their
happiness and prosperity. Had it been so then Yudhisthir
would not have staked me in the dice game. He has

several other wives. He did not stake them. Therefore
I am free. They will look after my husband's needs
(244-45).

After the dice match the relation between Yajnaseni and Yudhisthira as husband and wife reaches its nadir and it is never the same again. She perhaps on her part and rightly so could not forgive Yudhisthira for the humiliation that he caused her and Yudhisthira on his part could not perhaps forgive her for challenging his male authority over her and that too in the entire *Sabha*. Pratibha Ray has used this episode as a turning point for Yajnaseni as hitherto she had been blindly following Sita as her role model but now she rejects her and finds a new way for herself. "The *Sabha* is the epic's ultimate setting for constructing, deconstructing, and rethinking authority."⁵

In this context, it is worthwhile to remember that it was during her acceptance of five husbands when Krishnaa had shown tenacity of her character by asserting: "But I was not patient, all suffering like Sita. If necessary, I could rebel, I could even take revenge" (62). The *Sabha Parva* acts as a catalyst for Yajnaseni to rebel and to avenge insults and humiliations meted down upon her:

If I had prayed, would not have the earth opened? But
I did not do so. If I had done so my modesty would
have been protected but the wicked would not have
been punished. In the future this problem would remain
unresolved for women. Tolerance is the ornament of
women. But if the husband adopts the wrong path and
the wife remains quiet, then everyone will suffer. The
portion of sin in the world will increase. Innocent
people will suffer the consequences of that sin.
Therefore, even after the terrible outrage and the
insufferable insult I am alive. Happiness, prosperity,
enjoyment of the kingdom are not the aims of my life.
Krishnaa has been reborn (251).

The *Sabha Parva* is the turning point Yajnaseni's life where she is able to see her female identity and this self-understanding enables her to transcend all boundaries of normative religious and social behaviour for women of her time and thereby feels empowered to diverge from the Sita stereotype. It is Yajnaseni's rejection of Sita

model that enables her to subvert orthodox norms and it really makes the difference to the entire course of the events. Had she remained content with identifying herself with the traditional Sita role model, she might have welcomed eternal rest in the lap of mother earth to escape humiliation and thereby uphold restrictive social structure. Yajnaseni, on the other hand has a strange ferocity and when it is a fight against injustice in the *Sabha Parva* where she being a woman is considered a soft target and is humiliated publicly. Yajnaseni, being a woman, was more vulnerable to all abuses and had to tolerate all that humiliation and utter disregard to her modesty. She prefers to fight her humiliation than to escape. She has demonstrated brilliantly the difference between the fight and the flight mechanism that any human would undergo in a similar circumstance. Transforming from a weakling to a *Shakti Punj*, she decides to avenge her insult and to punish the culprits. Pratibha Ray's Krishna had rightly said: "Any woman, irrespective of age, caste, religion, country is worthy of a man's respect. For a woman is formed of Shakti and without worshipping Shakti none can become a hero." (45)

Her remarkable beauty, that attracts kings and princes from far and wide to test their luck in the *swayamvara*, proves her worthiness as a rare prize. And just like a rare prize she is staked in the dice match. Her only fault is, to be exquisitely beautiful over which not only ordinary kings and princes lost their heart but even the eldest Pandava brother develops turmoil of emotion. God had given her a body of unprecedented loveliness as even before her birth she was destined to avenge her father's insult! "I was going to be the weapon for preserving dharma on this earth and destroying the wicked. It was for this that I was born"(8). Most of the wars throughout the history of the world have been fought for women and in the case of the *Mahabharata*, it is nothing different. Draupadi's only fault seems to be her exquisite beauty. Perhaps it was to entice the best man in the Aryavrat to win her and become a tool in the hands of Drupada, her father, to help him take his revenge. A very pertinent question has been raised by Pratibha Ray, not only for her Yajnaseni but for all women of the world: "Should only woman be forced to be the medium for preserving dharma and annihilating evil throughout the ages? Is it woman who is the cause of creation and destruction" (8)? Her unprecedented beauty results in her five husbanded marriage and that too in a manner that makes people

pass derogatory remarks at her for her polyandrous marriage. "The Krishnaa of the *Mahabharata* took five husbands, and still not being satisfied, was attracted to Karna and Krishna..."⁶

As a grown up lady at the time of her *swayamvara*, Yajnaseni is strong in body and mind and comes forward fearlessly in the assembly of princes to select her life partner. She gladly follows Arjuna when he fulfills the conditions. Even at the gambling game, her strength of character is clearly exhibited when instead of crying she has the courage to ascertain her legal position in such a way that she is often called *Brahmavadine* and *Pandita* by the poet and seems to have been a well educated woman. Her discussions with her husbands regarding the political situation show her learning. She is consulted by her husbands and gives fair advice at all councils of the family. She emerges out of all untoward situations unscathed and triumphs by the sheer strength of her will.

As Yajnaseni is married off in the full bloom of youth and was deprived of a childhood and the experience of slow growth, so whatever decisions she takes are based on her own judgment depending upon the situation she finds herself in. As she had not been conditioned by social mores like an ordinary woman she is fully prepared to function in the adult world with innate qualities she is born with.

In this context it is really interesting to note that Yajnaseni of Pratibha Ray herself had Sita as role model when she was won over by a mendicant Brahmin youth in the *swayamvara*. Like an average Indian woman, she had complete devotion to her husband, his life and his cause. It was love in her heart that guided her for such a life. Even today, a Sita stereotype is preferable to Draupadi archetype for the majority of Indian women. It is of concern that in spite of being such a versatile and accomplished woman, who displays remarkable courage to question her status in the *Sabha*, Draupadi is not accepted as a woman with full expression of femininity. Draupadi to common folks reminds of her vile tongue that uttered sarcastic remarks to Duryodhana and her refusal to marry Karna because of his low caste lineage and thereby she loses any sympathy that merits her. Her vile tongue is thought to be responsible for the *Mahabharata* war. Pratibha Ray has accorded a different perspective to her Yajnaseni. Neither she stops Karna from taking part in the competition nor does she laugh at Duryodhana when he comes to visit them to Indraprastha.

Women have since time immemorial been considered a weaker sex and men have throughout been lustful and herein lies the universal predicament of women's lives. A man would go to any limits to satisfy his lust for a woman's beauty but the impact of this lust on the life of a woman is never considered and she is always blamed for inviting lustful remarks of men. For an average Indian woman who becomes an object of lust there is the example of Sita who immerses herself in the lap of mother earth when she could no longer tolerate the insults heaped on her by her husband who suspected her chastity. It could be that Rama wanted to prove Sita's fidelity to his people to garner public acceptance. The Sitas and Ambas of our epics by choosing death when they find themselves unable to fight the injustice choose death, set an example for an average woman to follow them. The Sita role model renders Indian womanhood escapist by not asserting their rights and tolerating all injustice. Pratibha Ray's Yajnaseni, thus is the real role model for contemporary women to follow.

Yajnaseni was used by her father to get the most suitable son-in-law during her *swayamvara*, and was used by her husband as a stake during the dice game. She was, thus, left with no other recourse than to challenge the right of others over her. Though Yajnaseni seems to have no say in the decisions pertaining to her life prior to the *Sabha Parva*, she suddenly becomes empowered and takes control of her own life after it. She emerges as a *Shakti Punj* after this traumatic episode of her life.

Draupadi of the *Mahabharata* by raising questions in the *Sabha* has rather spoken for all women of her time and it is really interesting to note that her questions still are relevant in the contemporary world where women still are trying to raise similar questions and gaining strength from the epic Draupadi to seek answers from powers that be.

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- 1 Shashi Deshpande, "The Indian Woman – Stereotypes, Images and Reality," 25 June 2004 <<http://ch.8m.com/talk1.htm>>.
- 2 Pratibha Ray, *Yajnaseni: The story of Draupadi*, trans. Pradip Bhattacharya from the Oriya original *Yajnaseni* (New Delhi: Rupa, 1995) 242. All subsequent references are from this edition.
- 3 M. A. Mehendale, "Draupadi's Question," JOIB 35, 3-4; 1985,

183 on slave status and whether Yudhsisthira could rightly bet Draupadi after he had lost himself; and S. M. Kulkarni, "An unresolved dilemma in Dyuta-Parvan: a question raised by Draupadi," ed. Matilal, 150-56, on the husband's authority over the wife.

- 4 P. Lal, *The Mahabharata: Verse-by-Verse Transcreation* (Calcutta: Writers Workshop Calcutta, 1968ff). All translations are from this version unless otherwise specified. Two hundred and sixty seven fascicules have been published and are currently available.
- 5 Bruce Lincoln, *Authority: Construction and corrosion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) 12. Had he discussed India, the *Mahabharata* court scene would have to have been a focal point for discussing "authorized speech and significant silence," stripping and questions raised about women.
- 6 Ray, afterword 401.

The Waking Dream in Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale": A Wish for Death

Kalwaran Singh

One wonders when on a deeper analysis one discovers in the "Ode to a Nightingale" a compelling desire of the poet for a peaceful release from the sorrowful world in which he was living at the time when he wrote the poem. It seems that throughout the poem he is courting death. His unconscious desire for death appears to be spontaneously pouring out of him in the form of the beautiful Ode. By the time he comes to write the sixth stanza of the poem he becomes conscious of this desire and even confesses to having it. Perhaps, because of this confession, Vendler regards the poem as "the most confessional" among his odes (83).

At the end of the poem, Keats calls the experience recorded in the poem a waking dream, a dream had while being awake. It is, however, probably a dream of soothing and bewitching death. In this paper I am trying to trace the progression of the desire for death, from the first to the last line in the poem.

That the poet was extremely unhappy with his life in this world is obvious in the poem throughout. However, the scholars who are well acquainted with his personal life would find my thesis in this paper easier to accept. The poem was written in the spring of 1819 when he was in the grip of the terrible disease of tuberculosis. His life as a poet, too, was not showing the results he desired. At this time he was also facing deep disappointment at the hands of his beloved, Fanny Brawne. To add to these misfortunes, his brother Tom died. Namita Singh is of the view that the 'Ode to the Nightingale' "is permeated with a sense of sadness caused no doubt, by the death of his brother Tom, a few months earlier" (101).

As regards his falling health, in the month of September 1820, "he knew that everything was over" (Bate 508). In his letter written to Charles Brown, on September 30, 1820, he writes:

I wish for death every day and night ... and then I wish death away, for death will destroy even those pains which are better than nothing. (Bate 508)

In the "Ode to a Nightingale", too, he wishes death away at the

end when the song of the bird ceases and he is thrown back into the world of reality. This we are to see later in this paper.

Now we move back to our poem. It was written when the poet was living with his friend Charles Brown at Wentworth Place, Hampstead. A nightingale had built her nest near Mr. Brown's house. The poet liked her song and sat near the nest one morning and composed the poem in two or three hours (Bate 501). An analysis of the structure of the poem indicates that the poet must have worked very hard at it. The poem comprises eight stanzas, each stanza having ten lines and thus making a total of eighty lines. The rhyme scheme throughout the poem is ababcdcedc. The structure of the poem seems to add music to the melancholy atmosphere in the poem.

Now we can take up the analysis of the poem for our purpose. The beginning of the poem is dramatic. The poem is addressed to the bird directly and the address continues till the poem ends, with the last two lines bearing the address either to the reader or the poet himself. On hearing the bird's song, the poet tells the bird (of course, in an imaginative way) that her song has such an effect on him that his "heart aches" and "a drowsy numbness pains" him. These words are highly suggestive of his unhappy state of mind. First we consider the idea of 'drowsy numbness.' In a letter to Bailey, Keats writes: "I am now so depressed that I have not an idea to put to paper – my hand feels like lead – and yet it is an unpleasant numbness: it does not take away the pain of existence." At the opening of the poem the 'drowsy numbness' pains because "the 'unpleasant numbness' is related to the pain of existence." This is so in the same way as the phrase 'My heart aches' "is certainly related-if more remotely- to the 'weariness the fever and the fret' of life in the third stanza" (Pettet 257).

Still, further, on hearing the song of the bird, the poet feels as if he has drunk hemlock, an intoxicating drink. The choice of the word hemlock is highly suggestive again. It points to the poet's unconscious desire for death. The ancients in Greece used the hemlock plant to prepare poison. Socrates had to die by drinking it.

Now the song of the nightingale, which seems to liberate the poet from the painful real world, makes him sleepy. He feels he has taken opiate, a sleep-inducing drug made from opium. Feeling sleepy, he says, he has now sunk Lethe-wards. Lethe according to the Greek

mythology is a river of the underworld to which the souls of the dead turn to drink its water to enable themselves to get rid of the memories of the past. Beyond its metaphysical meaning, the symbol of Lethe in the poem seems to indicate the poet's unconscious love for death. Namita Singh, however, takes up the metaphysical meaning of this context when she remarks, "the cause of the deathward (Lethe-wards) movement is an overwhelming happiness so intense as to be painful" (101). This overwhelming happiness of the poet, however, (we cannot forget) is the result of his escape from the painful actual to the soothing ideal.

In the fifth line of the first stanza, he indirectly hints at the unenviable condition of his (real) life and affirms his extreme joy at entering the world of the bird's song:

'Tis not though envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness

The bird here appears as the symbol of release from unhappiness and also as symbol of help from nature. Like Wordsworth the poet seems to have found the solace in nature. The bird, which seemingly represents the nature here, becomes the symbol of the eternity in the seventh stanza, the eternity, which is both attractive and inscrutable.

In the second stanza the poet expresses a strong desire to reach the bird. He thinks he requires a draft of powerful vintage or a beaker full of warm South, a wine from southern France, to be able to vanish from the real world into the world of the bird. The words that follow seem to strongly indicate that in his unconscious mind he, perhaps, sees the nightingale as the symbol of his death:

That I might drink, and leave the world unseen
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

The choice of the words in the above lines is worth noting. The poet wants to leave the world "unseen". He probably, though unconsciously, wants a peaceful and painless departure from this world. He wants to depart quietly and thus does not wish his suffering to be seen by people. And with this desire for an unseen departure, he wants to "fade away into the forest dim." The desire for fading away into a dim forest seems to confirm our stance in this paper.

The third stanza makes the poet's desire for a flight from his world of suffering all the more noticeable. It also explains the rationale

behind this desire. The stanza begins with an ardent wish for an escape:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou amongst the leaves hast never known

Again the word 'fade' is used. Earlier it was used with 'away' now it comes with 'faraway'. Death certainly is going far away. The words 'quite forget', too, are significant. The poet wants to quite forget what the bird among the leaves has never known. The nightingale knows no sorrows of the human world. The bird here seems to symbolize eternity or the eternal natural world, which continues on its way unconcerned with human suffering. This symbolism is reinforced when the poet, in the seventh stanza, addresses the bird thus:

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird.

The bird here is written with a capital B. The poet thus, it seems, wishes to 'dissolve' (his own word) into the eternity.

In the third stanza we find the poem moving towards its climax. The poet condemns his world (as contrasted with that of the nightingale) and rejects it outright. The following lines are a classic example of how he looked at the human life on earth at the moment he wrote the poem:

Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale and spectre-thin and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new love pine at them beyond tomorrow.

In the above lines, the image of the youth growing pale and spectre-thin and then meeting with death seems to illustrate well the point being made in this paper. It also indicates that the poet had, perhaps, foreseen his death. And, perhaps, because of this tragic realization in the above lines he says that in this world just to think is to be full of sorrow. Namita Singh is of the view that "Keats, because of his personal tragedy and also because of deeper philosophical insight, felt keenly the tragedy of the world which 'is full of misery and heartbreak pain, sickness and oppression' " (101).

In the fourth stanza the poet says that he will fly to the bird not

with the help of any drink but with the help of the viewless wings of poetry. It is quite obvious that this poem is taking him to her. Here, again, the poet becomes aware of his debility: "Though the dull brain perplexes and retards." This stanza sees the poet in the presence of the bird in the fruit trees and the thicket where the night is already tender because of her presence. The bird has her abode in the darkness: "there is no light," though sometimes moonlight intervenes due to the breeze blowing. There seems to be immense peace at this place.

In the fifth stanza we find the poet making guesses about what he finds here. It is sweet fragrance and sweet fruit. Nature appears to be at its best here.

In the sixth stanza the climax is reached. It seems here that the first five stanzas were simply paving the way for it. The poet stands face to face with his troubled self. For the first time in the poem he admits:

.....and for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;

That the poet is wooing death becomes more obvious in the lines that follow. Being completely overwhelmed by the song of the bird, he exclaims:

Now more than ever seems it rich to die
To cease upon the midnight with no pain.

The phrase 'with no pain' is important here. In the second stanza we have seen that he wants to depart 'unseen,' which means probably the same as 'with no pain'. If there were pain, it might attract notice. This wish was however granted by the Providence when he "died, as if sleeping, on the afternoon of 23 February 1821," "and he had seen the moment arriving with the words 'Don't be frightened. Thank God it has come' " (Blunden 43).

In the sixth stanza we find that the poet wishes to die listening to the song of the nightingale. He says her song will continue even after his death. The nightingale is seen as the symbol of eternity in the following lines:

Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain-
To thy high requiem become a sod.

The highly impressive song of the bird now becomes a religious song of death, a requiem, a dirge of a high order. The man who was at the beginning too happy on hearing the nightingale's song now sees the same song to be a requiem at his death. Commenting on the above lines in the poem, Cynthia Chase remarks: "What is remarkable about these lines.....is that the crucial futility which is the very condition of the poem, to 'have ears in vain', is identified as a condition common to both death and life" (117). However, that the poet wants to have his ears in vain in death is clear from the next line where he says he would become a sod, i.e. lifeless.

That the nightingale now symbolizes eternity is further confirmed in the seventh stanza. As noted earlier, too, it is now the 'immortal Bird,' not born for death. The generations of mankind come and go. Keats calls them hungry, perhaps, because of their materialistic bias and these he says cannot tread the nightingale (which now represents eternity) down, i.e. eternity cannot be harmed. Its (unheard) music will continue forever. According to Namita Singh, the "poet here passes from the world of time to the world of eternity...The song of the bird is the voice of eternity heard by emperors and clowns in all ages" (103). Ruth, who felt homesick, now the poet tells us, heard the song of the bird, in an alien land. The same song is also heard in far off fairylands. According to the poet, the fairylands are "forlorn". The very word "forlorn" brings the poet back to the world of reality from the inscrutable forlorn world of the eternity. The inscrutability of the eternity is stressed when the song of the bird vanishes passing through the meadows, over the still stream and up the hill side. The poet bids it farewell. He now realizes that the viewless wings of poetry, which had taken him to the bird, are now a mere fancy, 'The deceiving elf'. The last stanza sees the separation of the poet from his attractive vision.

To conclude, the poem begins with a conscious expression the poet's desire for escape from the world of sorrow and misery. This desire for escape has its origin in his unconscious desire for death. The wish for death becomes conscious and even emphatic in the sixth stanza. However, the poet's dream of a painless and quiet death breaks as he realizes in the seventh and eighth stanzas that his dream can't come true at his will. The eternity is powerful and ungraspable. He then decides that his imagination cannot cheat him anymore. He will have to face the painful world anyhow. This sudden realization, however,

is very shocking to him. He concludes his poem regretting thus when the song of the bird, which embodied his desire for death, vanishes:

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?

Fled is that music: - Do I wake or sleep

Incidentally, the poem at the end unconsciously seems to negate the Wordsworthian idea of finding solace in nature. The music of nature has vanished.

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A Conversion – The Image of a Jew in Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant*

Kavita Bhalla (Nee Dhir)

"Jews are men in extremes, they have been at once the most magnificent and the most wretched of people and this is the essence of man". Budapest

The image of a Jew has constantly been undergoing a change. In the past, the figure that emerged before us was that of a despised Jew, the restlessly wandering and inhuman usurers. It was the Shylock type blood sucking Jew, hated for his meanness and greed. But modern literary imagination has formed a new picture of poor, suffering Jew. It is a figure which experiences frustration without yielding to desperation or defeatism. It is the image of a naïve, weak and bungling Jew – bungling in worldly affairs, but showing the inner strength and in the worst of calamities retaining an uncanny belief that good will somehow triumph over evil. It is this stoicism and sense of optimism rooted in the Jewish consciousness which modern literary imagination takes into account; and thus the image of the Jew that emerges before us is that of a victim, an everyman blown about by the forces of hostile social and political reality, retaining nevertheless his inner grit and spiritual grandeur.

The arrival of the American Jews on the literary scene was both celebrated and deplored by various critics. There were many who were Jews but hardly accepted their own Jewishness. It was more or less shadowed with ambivalence and they did not take pride in it. Mailer was more conscious of himself as a writer and not as a Jew. Saul Bellow and a few others backed away from their Jewishness. Bernard Malamud turned out to be a unique figure in that, he accepted his Jewishness positively. It is one of the principal sources of value in his work. Bernard Malamud, who is one of the most important writers of the century, has been credited with shaping the present literature as well as providing a basis for the future one. The reason why he has become one of the most prominent figures of literature is that his writings are unique. He writes about these Jews precisely at a time when they are no longer a separate entity.

But the theme of their alienation in the past gained much importance and became an indispensable feature of their modern theme of transcendence through suffering.

A Jew has always been a strange disturbing figure who neither rejects the society, nor accepts it. He is in an uneasy relationship with the place where he lives. The image of a Jew carrying the burden of human suffering becomes more distinct in his novel *The Assistant*. It becomes more unique because here it is not a Jew who creates this image but a gentile. The conversion of a gentile, a Christian into a Jew authenticates the picture of a Jew as a willful sufferer. Frank Alpine, an Italian in New York, who is search of a new life, comes to choose the life of a Jew running a dead grocery. The reader is more keenly involved in his transformation. The image of a Jew, thus, in this novel is presented in a very unique manner. The Jew here is apprehended by a non-Jewish character. The image that is formed is reflected through his mind. In his transformation lies the final triumph of a Jew. Frank Alpine, the assistant to Morris Bober ultimately embraces the life of suffering where his ego dies and his self dissolves in the terror of complete dispossession. Like Morris he is finally ready to suffer for others, to suffer for all. He waits, he dreams and patiently feels that something will happen.

Morris Bober, the Jewish Grocery holder is a 'displaced' person, who is all time trying to order his life. He can rightly be called a stranger but not like Camus's 'outsider' showing total indifference, but a representative Jew involved in catch-as-catch can relationship : "The Karps, Pearls and Bobers, representing attached houses and stores, but otherwise detachment made up the small Jewish segment of this gentile community".¹ This is how the detachment of all the Jews is defined quite early in the novel. Thus Morris Bober is entombed in his own grocery store whose emptiness created a gnawing anxiety in him, 'Luck and grocer', we are told, were not good friends. He was the one who happened to own everything only on the verge of loss. The image that is created in our minds is that of an honest, clear-hearted Jew. He is the victim, feeling sick of himself, his high expectations and his endless frustrations. His life makes no sense and is devoid of all hope but still he endures. It is the recognition of this endurance, which, for Frank Alpine makes sense and which leads him to violent affirmation.

The image of a Jew, in this novel is neither idealised nor too realistic, but is distorted through a Christian. Frank Alpine first sees Morris Bober from a prejudiced angle. He sees him, as all Christians see a Jew. But his conception of a Jew as a blood-sucker, is very soon corrected, when he himself comes into contact with the Jews. The goodness of Morris Bober stands against the exigencies of the world and of history.

Morris is a Jewish sufferer and the life he has led seems to be a waste to those who have observed him eking out existence. The writer never tries to mitigate the pain that Morris is undergoing. Every experience of Morris' life is undercutting his hope. But his hope is never diminished; it keeps persisting. He is a 'dispossessed man' who learns nothing from his own experience. He endures suffering, painfully no doubt, but at the same time, he takes pride in his suffering. It is this dignity and patience that enables him to accept suffering and makes him a moral man, a 'mensch'. Morris symbolises all the Jews who live there, whether it is Al Marcus, Breitbart or any one else. They all are born prisoners, known for their patience. Frank is ultimately drawn towards this 'deadly patience'. He is ready to enact the same 'absurd role in a surreal situation'.² His ambition to become St. Francis is ultimately realized by his becoming a Jew.

In the beginning, the Jews got on Frank's nerves because they tried to suffer. But there is a constant change in his attitude towards them. The mere disgust and hatred for them is transformed when he becomes aware of their willful suffering and the note of morality attached to it. A poignant note of Jews and their Jewishness is struck when both Morris and Frank have an argument about the Jewish religion. Frank is baffled by Jewish religion. Morris did not follow the Jewish principles but he still preferred to be called a Jew. When Frank says that the Jews seem to suffer more than they have to, Morris' answer is, "If you live, you suffer. Some people suffer more but not because they want. But I think if a Jew don't suffer for the law, he will suffer for nothing." [TA 335] Here Morris rises up to acquire the figure of an apostle. His answer shows how deeply involved he is, with humanity. The wisdom which Morris has acquired and in which all the Jews believe, in general, has come to him through constant anguish and pain. Frank will have to undergo all this torture of suffering before he comes to be converted into a true Jew. He comes to assume the role

of Bober only by passing through suffering, not the ordinary one but through the phase of continued penitence through suffering. Then alone will he be re-born spiritually. Living and suffering for others and thus imprisoning himself in these self-imposed and newly acquired roles would make him a true, devoted Jew. Devotion to others will make him transcend his own self and complete his quest for a morally and spiritually better life.

Frank is a Dostoevskian character in whom the saint and the criminal are all the time trying to integrate. From the very first appearance of Frank in the book, we get the evidence of this dual personality in him. When he enters Morris store with ward Minogue, standing before the mirror, he sees not his own face. What is reflected is the mixture of saintly and hate-filled criminal, which truly symbolises his own duality. They both obscure his face and they then appear to be the image of his own disparate nature. This image keeps flashing before his eyes till he finally becomes a Jew. He is all the time alternating from lover to hater, from victim to victimizer and saint to criminal. He can find 'fulfillment' only when his fractured personality is finally resolved; when the saint in him triumphs over his criminality.

Frank's development throughout the ten chapters can easily be called a parable of Jewish history itself. It is a pattern which Malamud himself has described as, "First the Prophet's way of gentleness, the Sins of the people, Punishment, Exile and Return the primal problem of man seeking to escape the tragedy of past."³

The phrase, 'I need experience', with which Frank begins his work as an assistant itself signifies both his defeat and his salvation. At that moment, it seems, as if he were ready to accept the victim's identity. He is happy to be in a store, which is separate from the outside world, and he welcomes the moral firmness of it, in spite of its being a poor store. But there is a curious admixture of the feeling of love and hate in him. Whenever the desire to confess is most poignant in him, he retreats from it, thinking of the 'Jew listening with a fat ear'. The saint in him wishes to compensate for what Morris had lost because of him, but the Sinner keeps 'snitching the bucks' from him. There are two ways, in which he feels about stealing: he suffers from 'smell' of his own decay on one hand, and on the other hand he experiences a 'curious pleasure'. It is through these relapses that Frank will ultimately emerge as a Jew.

In the course of the novel, there is another kind of relationship established between Frank and Morris. It is that of the father and the son. The son in his curious endeavour to seek a new life, is also on the look out for a father to lead him, to guide him towards his goal. Frank, from the very beginning had an image of such father in St. Francis. He was fascinated by the life and personality of St. Francis because "He was born good, which is a talent of you have it." [TA-237] Frank finds the image of St. Francis reflected in Morris. He is born good and seemed to be half in love with his own poverty, with the emptiness of his own store. Frank is at once attracted towards this man. He could read his own future in Jew-grocer's eyes. Morris is conscious of the deadness of his store and its coffin-like dullness, but because of his goodness and fullness of his own heart and also his charity, he never gives up hope till the end and is able to cull out some kind of place for himself. It is this place which Frank is in search of but never gets because he tries to avoid suffering.

In the beginning of the novel, Frank, in a typically Dostoevskian manner, seeks expiation for his crimes which leads only to the further intensification of his guilt. He fails to translate his good intentions into action only because of that 'something missing in him'. The only way open to him to redeem himself, is to choose the life of the Jew – a Jew in style of Morris Bober. Morris Bober is a man completely devoid of alternatives, enclosed in his impoverished store, in an alien neighbourhood. He is alienated because he is a Jew but is more of an isolate because of his honesty, leading an honourable life among the thieves. He truly symbolises St. Francis for Frank, always adding to his own burden, by trying to remove or satisfy the needs of other human beings. He does this as far as his strength allows him. Jonathan Baumbach has very correctly explained his situation by calling him 'a victim of his own indiscriminate kindness'.⁴ Frank is another Stephan Daedalus, a catholic in search of an unacknowledged Jewish father.⁵ This is the basis for his final conversion into a Jew, he is drawn towards the martyred existence of Morris. Morris is the Engineer of his final assertion: "when a man is honest, he don't worry when he sleeps. This is more important than to steel a nickel." [TA-] Morris life is based on these principles and Frank will adopt the life of Morris by renewing and reliving on the same principles. Both his wish to become like St. Francis and his quest for a father are finally realized

when he literally steps into the grave of the grocer and completes the ritual of becoming his son. This “pratfall”⁶ has a moral significance. A downward movement signaling an upward trend.

Frank is a man of principles and at the same time a compulsive sinner. His guilt-ridden soul is further debased when he destroys his relationship with Helen. His crimes now come out to be his self-punishment. But, in these too, he attains something, they are those attainments of the soul and the intellect which according to Mann are “impossible without disease, without insanity, without spiritual crime, and the great invalids are crucified victims sacrificed to humanity and its advancement, to the broadening of its feeling and knowledge – short, to its more sublime health.”⁷ What Frank attains after all his failures and frustrations is meant not only for himself, for his salvation, but also for the ‘sublime health’ of humanity. The redemption will come to him only when he will fall deeper and deeper into his own interior hell.

Both his purgation and rebirth sound very ironic. All his attempts to purge himself are frustrated and moreover they have an opposite effect. In the course of the novel, there are terrible stages through which Frank has to pass before the final Passover. These ironies and experiences are constantly testing and preparing him for the suffering in which he eventually engulfs himself. These ironies build up his affirmation and add to his sense of conviction, so that he is successful to change the attitude of others towards himself. Helen feels the weight of his presence and is quite aware that he alone has kept them alive : “It came to her that he had changed . . . There could be an end to the bad and a beginning of the good.” [TA-] This completes his spiritual regeneration. He is re-integrated, the tension of the good and the evil is resolved for the others come to recognise goodness in him.

Most of the critics find ambiguity in the final affirmation of Frank, as Ihab Hassan also says, “The act is one of self-purification of initiation, too, in Frank’s case, but it is also an act of self-repudiation, if not as some may be tempted to say of symbolic castration.”⁸

The novel ends on a note of tension and ambiguity. Malamud seems to be picturing the self in struggle with the amorphous world which in its turn transforms the self into ‘absurd posturing Orixoticism.’⁹ But there also is a staunch affirmation, a belief that the self will remake

itself, in spite of the absurdity of the world. These antinomies express the irony contained in the book, which to some critics is most clear in the conclusion. The success, which Frank wants to attain, the new life which he wants to lead is knitted into the defeat, the negation of his own self. He too will have to be entombed in the poor grocery store. The affirmation, the conversion, the circumcision becomes convincing only with its doubtfulness. We read Martin Buber’s observation that is “faith must encompass not expunge doubt.”¹⁰ The end contains both; the mystery of human personality as well as the forces of inhumanity.

The ending contains both the sense of awe and a sense of hope. It is neither the defeat nor redemption that Malamud wishes to convey but a way of life which Frank wishes to adopt, in which he finds his hope for salvation, that is, the life of a suffering Jew. Incessant pain and suffering constitute an essential part of a Jew’s life. This conversion is neither a road to salvation nor to self incarceration, but to a life of satisfaction, which Morris Bober or any man for that purpose extracts from his suffering for others. This resuscitates in him a hope which he had lost earlier in living only for himself. This is the image of a Jew, captured in this novel, that alleviates the long suffering Jew to the pedestal of self-sacrifice and the deep pleasure he gets out of it. This is the beginning of heroism, a life of perfect love, of perfect freedom, of a man awakened and in a quest of discipline finds it more pleasurable to live by loosing the self. Frank seems to re-enact what Christ had told his disciples:

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it (Mathew 16:25).”

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10. The irony in the end qualifies this statement.

Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* From the Perspective of Feminism.

Sandeep Kumar Sharma

Tennessee Williams is one of the most influential and commendable dramatists in modern American theatrical history. He is widely considered the greatest Southern playwright and one of the outstanding American playwrights in the history of American drama. *A Streetcar Named Desire* is a remarkable drama for its sincere portrayal of moral decadence, the explosive power of production and exquisite characterization. It cemented Williams' reputation as one of the distinctive American dramatists, winning him the New York's Critics Circle Award, the Donaldson Award and the Pulitzer Prize.

Much has been written about *A Streetcar Named Desire* from the time of its first show. Avtar Singh asserts "as a socio-historical play, it is indebted to Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, as a psychological drama, to Strindberg's *Miss Julie*."¹ According to Bryn Pearson, "This play is a powerful tale of lust, poverty and decay."² Masood Ali Khan remarks, "The idea of a woman coming to terms with life and shattering the image which is no longer possible in the disintegration of society and the death of the old aristocracy, is the theme of *A Streetcar Named Desire*."³ Eric Bentley admits Williams' play to be on the borderline of real good drama.⁷ Robert Heilman claims this play as "the drama of disaster."⁴

The present paper is an attempt to see whether it is only the patriarchal social system that results in Blanche DuBois' tragic plight or she herself too is one of the factors that spell doom for her.

Western civilization is predominantly patriarchal. Women play a secondary role in all cultural spheres- social, political, familial, religious, legal and artistic. "From the Hebrew Bible and Greek philosophic writing to the present, the female tends to be defined by negative reference to the male as the human norm, hence as an other, or kind of non-man, by her lack of the identifying male organ, of male powers, and of the male character traits that are presumed, in the patriarchal view, to have achieved the most important scientific and technical invention and the major works of culture and civilization."⁵ From the very beginning, females are brought up in such a way that they calmly accept their

secondary position in society. While many feminist critics have considered the literature written by men as biased for its depiction of women as marginalized, docile and subservient to men's interests, emotional needs and their own psychological fears, some of them have also identified male writers, who in their views, have sufficiently managed to rise above the sexual prejudices of their time to understand and represent the cultural pressures that have shaped the personality of women and forced upon them their negative or secondary social roles. Now we will see how Tennessee Williams has represented his female characters in the play, what does the work say about gender-bias, and how does it influence the characters by the use of patriarchal language.

In the very opening of the play, Blanche is first introduced as a symbol of innocence and chastity. The play opens with the coming of the thirty years old Blanche DuBois at the Elysian Fields, who is tastefully dressed "as if she were arriving at a summer tea or cocktail party in the garden district."⁶ Aristocratic, refined and sensitive, this delicate beauty has a moth like appearance. She has come to this old part of New Orleans, where her younger sister, Stella lives. Stella is married to Stanley, who is Polish by origin, but now describes himself as one hundred percent American. Stella fell in love with Stanley when he was a master Sergeant in the Engineers Corps in the army during war. Now he is a civilian working at an industrial plant where he seems to have bright prospects because of his efficiency and skill.

The first impression that we gain about Blanche from her conversation with Eunice and Stella is that she is an aristocrat who holds herself superior to the surroundings and the dwellers of New Orleans and has come uninvited to Elysian Fields to intrude in the happy conjugal life of Stella and Stanley. The image formed by Blanche, from the very beginning is that of an outsider. Her appearance as well as her outlook towards life is like this setting, which she is unable to change and compromise with till the end. Many critics hold this rigidity of Blanche responsible for her destruction but on a careful perusal of the play we find many socio-economic factors of the patriarchal society which lead Blanche to her sad-fate. The two sisters belong to the plantation background of the Old Southern region of America.

Belle Reve, the family mansion and their last shelter house was a large, white, six columned house set amid acres of lawn and garden. During her conversation with Stella she unfolds her plantation

background and the agonizing loss of Belle Reve, "Why, the grim reaper had put up his tent on our door step! ... Honey-that's how it slipped through my fingers!" (127) Blanche is blamed by Stanley for the loss of the plantation but the reality is that her family circumstances and the male dominated society is the real culprit. Different standards are set for men and women to measure morality. Blanche's morality is blamed by many critics but she attacks the morality of the males of her family particularly, and of society in general. To blame Blanche of hypocrisy and aristocratic behaviour would also not be altogether correct as the young men and women spent their time in Old South in play and courtship. Coquetry from the lady is never mistaken for indelicacy. Blanche has been brought up in a free, lively and aristocratic society from the very beginning. And to blame her for these characteristics would not be justified. Circumstances may have consumed Belle Reve and destroyed her old way of life, but it did not touch her code of honour and delicacy.

Stella has secured her future by marrying Stanley, who along with being a beast of a man, is possessive for Stella and looks after her well. Blanche, on the other hand, has been the decay of her aristocratic upbringing. She alone had to face the agony of seeing her family members die one by one and the ordeal she had to go through their illness is inexplicable. It is true that the major part of the estate was lost due to the heavy expenditure on illness and funerals. There is a hint of accusation in Blanche's talk, directed against Stella as Blanche complains that she had to face all the hardships alone, which is the hard fact. Blanche says to Stella: "I took the blows on my face and my body! All of those deaths! The long parade to the graveyard! Father, mother! Margaret, the dreadful way! ... You just come home in time for the funeral, Stella. And the funerals are pretty, compared to deaths... You didn't dream, but I saw! ... Where were you? In bed with your - Polack!" (126-127). Thus, Blanche is not exclusively to be blamed for the loss of the plantation. Her problems and despair is caused because of her troubles in the past. She had to pay a heavy price for the family and the plantation being the only working lady in the house.

At the age of sixteen, she falls in love and married to a young boy, Allan Grey. Her faith is shattered when she discovers that he was homosexual. It was her ill-luck that she found her love in a man who found his love not in Blanche but in some other man. Blanche tells Allan

that his actions irritate her. Allan feeling ashamed of his actions commits suicide by shooting himself. The only fault of Blanche was that she taunted her husband with her aversion at the discovery of his perversion. Blanche cannot get over this and she holds herself responsible for his untimely death. She surrenders her body to various strangers in an attempt to lose herself. She seduces young boys in memory of Allan but her empty heart finds no peace. Blanche is an escapist who hides from bright lights just as she hides from the truth. But the whole fault does not lie with Blanche alone. Being a human, full of feelings of love and possessiveness, she has the right to demand loyalty from her husband. As a result she becomes permissive in order to find shelter and protection in life.

In reality, Blanche gets involved with a young boy at the school in Laurel in search of love and security. She is dismissed from the job on the basis of violation of moral norms. Although Blanche's act is not permissible but the authorities are too hard on her. They could have given her a warning and a chance to amend her mistake. But the authorities are quite cruel towards the poor girl who has nobody to stand by her. After Blanche has lost everything in life, her youth, her husband, inheritance, home, employment and nearly all her family, she arrives at New Orleans to stay with her sister because she has nowhere else to go. Now Stanley is suddenly reminded of the plantation and its inheritance. He tries to get information from Blanche regarding the land, its papers and the money from its sale. Thus Stanley shows his selfish attitude while blaming Blanche for cheating him. Being a female, and that too a female without any financial and social support, she becomes an easy victim of Stanley's rude and direct accusation.

A male character is such, that the evils and misconducts carried on by him can be easily forgiven and forgotten, however objectionable they may be. And in case of women, the society has a totally different yardstick for the moral standards. Stanley is not ashamed of his habit of drinking or hitting his wife. But he certainly uses the right which patriarchy has given him to look into Blanche's past life. He tells Stella that everybody in the town of Laurel knows all about the immoral activities of Blanche and that Blanche is as "famous in Laurel as if she was the President of the United States." (186). Stanley also says that she has been turned out of the school because of her involvement with a seventeen year old boy. Finally, showing his cruel attitude he says

that he will not allow Blanche to stay in his home any longer. Proving his brutality, he gives Blanche the bus ticket, saying that this is his birthday present to her. In fact, all the humiliations are heaped on Blanche by patriarchy. Stanley is a mere instrument through which the male society forces its norms and decisions over Blanche.

Stanley is an egalitarian hero at the play's start. He is loyal to his friends and passionate to his wife. He possesses an animalistic physical vigour that is obvious in his love of work, of fighting and of sex. His following words show that his need of female body is no more functional than his poker or card game, "compliments to women about their looks ...I once went out with a baby doll who said to me, "I am glamorous type, I am glamorous type!" (136-137). His family is from Poland and several times he expresses his outrage at being called 'Polack' and other derogatory names. When Blanche calls him a 'Polack' he makes his looks old fashioned and ignorant by asserting that he was born in America, is an American and can only be called 'Polish'. Stanley belongs to the new heterogeneous America to which Blanche does not belong. Hegemony is the trait of Stanley. His animosity towards Blanche manifests itself in all of his actions towards her. In the end, Stanley's down to earth character proves harmfully crude and brutish. His chief amusements are gambling, bowling, sex, drinking and he lacks ideals and imagination. His disturbing, degenerated nature first hinted at when he beats his wife is fully evident after he rapes his sister-in-law. Stanley shows no remorse for his brutal actions. The wrongfulness of this representation given what we have learned about him in the play ironically calls into question society's decision to ostracize Blanche.

Male sexuality in *A Streetcar Named Desire* is not limited to Stanley, even though he is the most powerfully presented male. Stanley's atrocity does not end with the decision to turn her out of the house. A few hours later the same night, after leaving his wife at the hospital, Stanley comes home with a plan to take some more revenge upon Blanche. He holds fast Blanche's wrist to make her drop the piece of glass which she was holding to strike at him, and then carries her to the bed after saying: "We have this date with each other from the beginning" (215). However provocative and flirtatious Blanche may have been, but her rape cannot be justified in any way. His rape of Blanche is criminal and inhuman. Although, Stanley asserts that she has caused it as much as he, yet the ill-treatment met by

Blanche cannot be vindicated. Stanley's rape of Blanche is a much greater evidence of his essential patriarchal brutality. But "rape is the ultimate in male brutality in which the male uses sex as a weapon to subdue and humiliate the female."⁷

The patriarchal society has different standard of morality for men and women. Stanley and his friend, Mitch, both react negatively for the immoral behaviour of Blanche at Laurel. Moreover he destroys the mild hopes of marriage and settlement in life that Blanche had in concern to Mitch. In her relationship with Mitch, Blanche again faces desolation imposed upon her by patriarchy. Mitch still capable of romantic love has the same attitude as Stanley about marrying only a young virgin. When he discovers the truth of Blanche's immediate past, he does not care to look for explanations. Their relationship can work. Mitch has an ailing mother to whom he is deeply attached. He does not want to hurt his mother in any way. But in his relationship with Blanche, he finds for the first time a person who needs him and wants to depend upon him. But Blanche has told lies to hide her past. When Stanley exposes her, Mitch is not able to tolerate the truth. But the reality is that even Mitch could not escape from the influence of patriarchy and refuses to marry her as he thinks that she is "not clean enough to bring in the house" (207) with his mother. Mitch is not exemplary model. He, too, does not want marriage but sex. Mitch shows his double standard when he expresses a desire to take Blanche to bed with him, although he has refused to marry her.

The harshness of the orthodox male society does not end here. Instead of being sympathetic and feeling sorry for the ruin of Blanche, decision has been taken to send her to a mental asylum. As it is evident, this harsh decision is taken by Stanley who is the male ruler of the house. However, his friends and the ladies in the house are quite moved by the spectacle of Blanche's distraught condition. But no one dares to go against Stanley's decision.

In comparison with Blanche, Stella seems to be more in tune with the ways and standards of the male dominated society. Sometimes we feel that Blanche has certain sparks in her which encourage her to gain independence, self-respect and equality in the male-dominated society. She was the only working lady in the family; she alone went through the ordeals of illness, deaths and funerals, she alone made all the efforts to save the plantation and finally earned her own living, though by

permissive means. In contrast to Blanche, Stella is realistic and practical. She knows that she is weak and fragile and cannot face the hardships of life alone. Hence, she submits herself to the patriarchal shelter provided by Stanley in the form of marriage. She has adjusted her well according to Stanley's way of living. She certainly expresses her resentment against Stanley's irrational behaviour but cannot defy him.

We can say that it was Blanche's ill-luck to have failure in marriage and that was not because of her fault. But after the death of Allan, She tries to fight loneliness with sex which is not right at any cost. She is well educated and could have become a teacher. She could have even married someone else, like Mitch, who needed her as much as she did. But her sexual relations with the young school boy and the soldiers at the army camp is not very convincing. Moreover, Blanche is imprisoned in her sexuality. Her loneliness and permissiveness is at such an advanced stage that she is unable to think wisely. While she is alone at home, a seventeen year old newsboy enters to collect money for the papers, Blanche shows her permissiveness even to this young boy. She says: "Young man! Has anyone ever told you that you look like a young prince out of the Arabian Nights? (The Young Man laughs uncomfortably and stands like a bashful kid, Blanche speaks softly to him)... Come here ... I want to kiss you-just once softly and sweetly on you mouth" (174). So our sympathies are with Blanche but they soon vanish as we see her playing the intruder.

Blanche lives in the world of dreams and illusions which has no significance in the real life. She has failed in her own marriage and is foolish enough to break up the well set and smooth sailing conjugal boat of her sister. Stanley smashes dishes, rummages through Blanche's trunk and finally rapes her. These actions swing the sympathies of the audience towards the Southern Belle. But the structure of the play makes a different comment which can certainly be not ignored and that is Blanche's role as the invader. As far as Stanley's world is concerned, she is the outsider, the disruptive influence. Therefore she herself is partially responsible for her wretched condition.

There is no doubt that Blanche's destruction cannot be compensated in any way but only Stanley cannot be wholly held responsible for her ruin. Blanche never leaves a single opportunity to insult Stanley and incites his anger. From the beginning Blanche looks down upon Stanley and regards him as an ape and a "survivor of the

stone age.” She time and again calls him “Polak” though she knows that it irritates him. Avtar Singh says: “She condescends to the Plebian when she is not actually scorning him. There is compulsive conduct on her part, because she must feel superior to her sister’s husband if she is not to feel inferior in view of her helplessness.”⁸ Blanche knows that she is morally as well as financially ruined but her ego does not let her bow to others. She is not willing to come to terms with her ego, self respect and vanity.

It is not justified to blame Blanche for her destruction; it is her circumstances which lead to her loose living and behaviour. She is certainly a pathetic figure if not a tragic heroine; she has some virtues in her character just as her faithfulness to Belle Reve, her refinement, her polish and her genuine efforts to settle in life. In this regard she is daring, brave, courageous and dashing; if not praised heartfully, she should not be condemned and denounced at all. In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Blanche and Stella are like two sides of the same coin. They behave in contradictory ways – one believes in extreme activeness and the other in complete passiveness. Blanche reacts against dominance and Stella accepts dominance but both of them are unable to get rid of male supremacy. Williams presents through the struggle of Blanche the universal plight of womanhood and that Blanche manifests this universality in her dependence upon men, her realization of her fading beauty and her terror of her aging process. Blanche is a heightened version, an artistic intensification of all women. Her conflicts are representative of not only what every woman encounters but where every man leads a woman to. Precisely the patriarchal hierarchy overpowers women and leads them into an eternal abyss of servility. The play gathers an amalgam of feminism with the polarization between male and female characters advocating masculine superiority over feminine.

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Novelisation of Nascent Industrialism: Bakhtinian Study of Anand's *The Big Heart*

Anoop Kumar

In "Toward A Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book" (1961), Bakhtin makes a profound statement, which he considers as "Dostoevsky's second discovery" the first being polyphony:

True dialogic relations are possible in only relation to a hero who is a carrier of his own truth, who occupies a *signifying* (ideological) position. If an experience or a deed does not pretend to some *signifying power* (agreement/disagreement), but only to *reality* (evaluation), then the dialogic relationship can be minimal.

But can a *signifying* meaning become the object of *artistic depiction*? With a more profound understanding of artistic depiction, the *idea* can become such an object for it (Bakhtin 1984: 286).

Bakhtin is influenced by Dostoevsky's "*depiction* (or rather the re-creation) of the *self developing* idea (inseparable from personality)" (Bakhtin 1984: 284).

This novelisation of depiction/re-creation centrally moves around the process of self-development of the idea, which Bakhtin meaningfully says that it is inseparable from personality. Going deeper into this dialogisation, he adds that the "idea" is shown "on the level of a human event", and not at the level of the system: philosophical or scientific.

The development of Ananta in *The Big Heart* (Anand: 1980) as well as its total novelisation may be re-visioned in the Dostoevsky-Bakhtin way. The acute "problem and conflict" that Anand had himself witnessed in the community/working class of coppersmiths during his visits to Amritsar in 1939 has been recreated/depicted as a powerful self-developing idea on the level of the significant human event while being fully integrated into the personality of Anand. The process of re-creation of the crisis, the human event, caused by the entry of machine into the work of *thathiars* and *kaseras* – the artisan class making utensils and other material of social use beating the sheets of steel – the novel dialogises the ideas, the characters and the events.

Ananta occupies the place of a major character, almost equivalent to a hero in the unorthodox, unconventional way. As a firm

believer in the solution of the problems of workers through an organisation, he may fairly be called "a carrier of his own truth" and this truth he endeavours to carry forward in two ways: (a) through the recognition of the importance of machine in industrial production of goods on a mass scale; (b) to seek solution of the problems of the artisans who had been rendered jobless with the introduction of the machine; of which Ananta himself is a stark victim. Ananta occupies "a signifying...position" in the total novelisation and as Bakhtin says, this position is ideological in quite a few nuances. He is an awakened person and so his personality itself signifies the ideology of a combatant discourse against the industrialists like Lala Murli Dhar, Seth Gokul Chand and others. Having been rendered jobless with the introduction of machine; meaning thereby that the machine does the job of many a hand and thus substitutes many; the *thathiars* and the *kaseras* – the working population in this particular vocation – cling to the traditional idea and so tend to denounce and condemn the very existence and introduction of machine. The critics have generally called it as the conflict between tradition and modernity. The matter should not end there only as the novel explores the deeper nuances of the social transformation that is taking/takes place with the introduction of the machine. As the novel is the profound space for heterogeneous voices, so the "*signifying power*", as per Bakhtin is clearly marked in disagreement and agreement with regards to industrialization. As England was the first country to discover the steam engine and the subsequent use of steam to run the mechanical device; embarked on industrialization in the first event; of about which Anand had known quite a bit in his early years in England.

Although the axiological/evaluative angle/viewpoint is considered to be very crucial by Bakhtin because neutrality fence-sitting is repugnant to him, yet the quote of Bakhtin with which we began our analysis with respect to signifying reality, what he calls as evaluation and that "then the dialogical relationship can be minimal" – this criticality assumes great importance. The answer to this question lies in the earlier part of the argument that the experience should have authentic signifying power: to agree or to disagree; wherein the mere depiction/re-creation of evaluational reality, carries no significance. In this whole context, one outstanding analysis of *The Big Heart* can be: Ananta is the carrier of his own truth; this truth occupies the ideological

position which has the heterogeneous voices of agreement/disagreement – this shows Anand’s “profound understanding of artistic depiction”, to attempt to establish the idea of an organisation, of a trade union and of a trade union movement.

The organisation of this pattern may be chronotopically located in Amritsar, especially in “Kucha Billimaran in the centre of Amritsar”, “Billimaran – cat-killer’s lane” (Anand 1980:16). This location has been described as having “two openings into the outside world” and has “two or three great neighbours” – “the shrine of the goddess Kali, mother as well as the dead destroyed who must always be appeased”; the other is “Golden Temple which was built three hundred years ago by a Sikh saint with money donated by Akbar, the Great Mughal, around a tank which gives to the whole city its name Amritsar, Ocean of Nectar” and the third is “the Clock Tower, the monument which ushered in the ‘iron age’” (Anand 1980:16-17). The description of these spatial characteristics is quite signifying and the same is seen in the temporal context – the time of British colonialism and the entry of machine, what the narrative mentions as “the iron age” – assumes a still greater dimension allowing enough space and opportunity to the process of novelisation to create chronotopicity of a high order. The whole novel studies the impact of the machine on the workers, the artisans – *thathiars* & *kaseras*, their families and the microscopic social formation (of artisans). Not that a big industrialist comes to install a big industry but that some *thathiars* and *kaseras* like Lala Murli Dhar and Seth Gokul Chand who have prospered from among coppersmiths and the silversmiths, have developed modernistic attitude by way of installing the factory; as well as an exploitative attitude towards the artisans and workers of their own community whose pauperization has allegedly been caused by these small scale neo-industrialists. This chronotope is artistic and has “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships” (Bakhtin 1981:83), as defined by Bakhtin.

Using the term “Polychronotopicity” (Pearce 1994:), aptly coined by Lynne Pearce, one may feel enthralled the way Ananta’s experiences of a worker and a trade union leader at the Royal Naval Dockyard foundries in Bombay, at the Cotton Mills in Ahmedabad which are dialogically integrated into the consciousness of Ananta and at the influential tangent in the poet Puran Singh Bhagat and some workers. This dynamic way of co-relating the lived experiences of Ananta is

unique in the annals of novelisation. The dimension of this can be further elaborated when we add his sincere longing to go to England to see science at work, the machine in operation, the engine in movement and so many other magical feats of the scientists and science. Ananta says:

I should like to go to vilayat one day and see what conditions are like there... I should like to see those steps which walk, and railways which run in the bowels of the earth. I should also like to go and see the giants of Roos... They have learnt to grow wheat in the snow-fields and extract power from coal in the earth without any one having to go into the mine. (Anand 1980:78)

This is yet another dimension of polychronotopicity. Bakhtin wants to give credit of being “artistic chronotope” only when the two features, i.e. space and time, “are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole”. Time spent in Bombay and Ahmedabad as a worker and workers’ organiser “thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible” (Bakhtin 1981:84) and this visibility is now illuminating the space at the centre called Amritsar. Ananta is guided by his authentic experience (he might not have left Bombay or Ahmedabad but for the consumptive disease of Janki).

The chronotope of England continues to remain surrealist, imaginary construct as the protagonist is never able to go and turn his dream into reality. However, the importance of this narrative connective, though established through an imaginary construct is a signifying feature as the ideological thrust of Ananta gets a lot of weightage from the industrial development in England. The propagation of the idea of machine, of mechanizing production of industrial unit is crucial to the total narrative, though the same has been responsible face joblessness and subsequent pauperization of the workers, including Ananta. Ralia and others denounce Ananta’s exhortation and thus their discourse becomes a voice of strong dissent, disagreement, though Ananta is no capitalist, instead he is a victim of nascent industrialization as it is still planting its roots in Amritsar.

The narrative also throws up another significant dimension between the western and the northern parts of undivided India. Ananta’s lived experience of Bombay and Ahmedabad show two chronotopic signifieds (a) process of industrialization getting rooted in the western

part of India, i.e., Bombay and Ahmedabad; (b) emergence of a new, increasingly valid, consciousness among the jobless and the workers that they have to organise themselves and fight for their rights. This chronotope of the Western India presents a shining example of the dynamic person Ananta who himself emerges as a meaningful chronotope, symbol of the new wave of awareness. The ideological thrust, in the person of Ananta, is obfuscated, almost thwarted by the illness of Janki, who is suffering from tuberculosis and is in a dire need of change of environment – the cellubrious environment of Amritsar. The chronotopicity of Amritsar is highly significant, yet the environment of Kucha Billimaran – a suffocated atmosphere, fails to bring any relief to her, and the disease continues to grow. It is notable that the number of tuberculosis patients has been alarmingly high during the British regime. By focusing on this terrible issue, the narrative places on record the irresponsible colonial government which shows callousness towards the health of the people. Colonialism has always been a sucker of the wealth and the energies of the colonized. Janki's persistent suffering is a powerful narrative indictment of the colonial exploitative system. The cases of such sufferers have always been larger than others among the workers as both the working conditions and the living conditions are not conducive towards the protection of the health of the workers.

The chronotope of Amritsar, located in the northern part of India, shows the industrial growth in its nascent, embryonic stage which goes further to prove that this region is predominantly agricultural produce and the purchasing capacity of the farmers. The craftsmen, weavers, artisans provide many other hand made goods for public utility; for example, the thathiars and the Kaseras are the utensil making artisans. This chronotope of Amritsar is a comment on the phase of development. The chronotopic significance of the difference between the west and the north is also laid bare by the sharp and loud longings of Ananta about the past of his lived experience as this pastness dialogically impinges upon the presentness of the introduction of the machine and the starvation of workers.

By foregrounding the chronotope of Amritsar, especially in the context of the formative period of industrialization, shows, as per our materialist reading, a remarkable shift from feudal, agricultural economy to industrialization and the capitalistic economy. The machine has come

in and the profit-oriented people have visualized the commercial use of the machine and so they are on their path of development and prosperity.

Is this shift from traditional artisanship to industrialism welcome and authentic? The narrative keeps sounding the negative impact of it on the mass of the artisans and its positive capitalistic profit for the nascent capitalists. The total discourse of starvation caused by the machines and consequent pauperization of the workers steadily builds up. The anguish and resentment finally assumes the bigger proportions of hostility towards the machine and the very idea of the machine. Ralia who is one of the worst sufferers attacks the machine, destroys it and in the process marked by hostility, kills Ananta. Symbolically the machine stands hit and destroyed; the proponent and supporter of machine is brutally killed.

Though the narrative gives some (meaningful) space to Satya Pal, whose exhortations for the change of system are terribly anarchistic, has certainly captured the conscience of Ralia, Veeru and others. The protagonist is killed and his supporters: the poet Puran Singh Bhagat and Janki, are shown to be condemning the violence. Janki says cryingly: “that brute Ralia!” (Anand 1980:228). The poet articulates his view in the context of wailing Janki and her sharp invective against the failure of God to save the “machine man”, “man of machine” as well as the failure of God to “ ‘come down and save this land from itself, and those policias, propheteers and the Sarkar’ ” (Anand 1980:228). So, the poet comments:

They are not louts, sister.... They are frightened, suffering, hopeless men. As I came through the lane, and stood by the shop, I saw how simple and really kind they were in their togetherness. It is no use invoking God to come and destroy them or to rescue them, but we must forgive them and try to understand them. I too feel angry with them and with those who instigated them to do all this; there is more blame attached to the buffoons who invited them than to the *thathiars*. There are many inciters in our country who are pastmasters in the art of directing the simple folk into cheap heroism, till the misplaced energy of the poor begins to seem more disgusting than the wickedness of the deceivers and mischief-mongers (Anand 1980:228).

The analysis of the poet borders on the use of persuasive discourse as he thinks that the thathiars are not wicked, but their

inciters definitely are. Taking his discourse further, he suggests that “the only cure for this is to make the men think twice before asking them to lay down their lives... to recognize the dignity of their manhood as against the blind, brutal acts which only feed their own, or their leaders’ insensate love of glory” (Anand 1980:228).

.Against this analytical persuasive discourse comes the protesting rejoinder of Janki:

How will they learn, Sardarji? When will they learn?... sermons won’t teach them!” (Anand 1980:228).

There is anger and disappointment in the voice of Janki, the lady from village Kanuwan, in district Gurdaspur whose companionship with Ananta is complex, socially unacceptable and persistently opposed by Ananta’s mother Karma Devi. Puran Singh Bhagat hopes that in “future the men will understand the dead Ananta better: For what can be more persuasive than the death of a man who loved them” (Anand 1980:229). Although Janki is inconsolable, yet she finds some solace in the words of the poet about her lover. By adding that “her bhakti, devotion, to working for others!”, the poet prepares Janki as an inheritor of Ananta’s ideology. Her own feeling of complex inferiority in being a whore and the consequent social condemnation and social ostracism – get a socially dialogised response from the poet, as the narrative articulates:

‘There are evils bigger than stupid moral condemnation’, he cut in impatiently. There is a life without fear. One day men will hear that there are many whores who have the hearts of saints and many respectable people whose lives are putrid with hypocrisy (Anand 1980:229).

As the narrative proceeds towards open-ended ending, Janki shows “brave assertions” and goes to the *thathiar* community as the poet exhorts “ ‘ the spirit of his comradeship will survive.... And as nothing that springs from effort and anguish and pain can be destroyed, so nothing must divide those who are left behind to share a common suffering” (Anand 1980:230).Janki shows her skepticism towards the poet’s bland generosity. He continues to speak of “the flood of love” in the hope that the “degraded, disfigured and mutilated” will also regain “their manhood and become truthful. He prepares her “for the new life” and helps her seek her own empowerment by organizing “the

women comrades”, as she decides to go and live at the *bunga* of Sant Harnam Dass. (Anand 1980:230).

The evening dawns as a “crow cawed his last message of doom”, the darkness spreads. In this darkness, Janki puts light and life by lighting the kerosene oil lamp: “the radiance gradually spread to each nook and corner of the room and dispelled the shadows”. In his usual practical idealism the poet suggests to Janki that they “must go to our brothers at the shop”. Janki whose eyes well up with tears is ready to go with the poet to carry on the unfinished task of Ananta. This ending is suggestive, open-ended, with a resolve to carry on the ideology of Ananta in the form of “spirit of his comradeship” to make the idea of modernisation of production acceptable to the people; to organise the workers, *thathiers* and *kaseras*, to protect their own interest as well as the interest of the machine. Had the novel ended with the tragedy of Ananta, then the ending would have been closed one and a tragic paean to the ideology of the organised strength of the workers that has its chronotopic references to Bombay and Ahmedabad. (Anand 1980:230-31)

In the context of the liting flame of Ananta’s ideology being kept aflamed; it is important for us to know that the skepticism of Ananta is also used in the text to make fatalism untenable, to make the people, especially the jobless workers deeply aware of their rights as well as duties. Ananta knows the pangs of the have-nots which are caused by the rich people – this is an excellent epitome of class consciousness.

Ananta has a mistress in the person of Janki. His marriage with Janki could not be solemnized due to the stiff opposition of his mother. His passionate love for Janki and Janki’s persistent supportive role in his life are important aspects in the novel. However, those who are opposed to him use his relationship with Janki to stifle his efforts at creating awareness among people. On the other hand, Ralia and his wife Gauri are shown to be consistently at conflict and the domestic violence that ensues is a powerful comment on the patriarchal nature of Indian society. Ralia may have acted as a sentimental stooge in the hands of the conspirators. He mauls Ananta and kills him. This death is the death of a revolutionary, for which Ralia is responsible. Ralia is the voice of degradation of the social value system.

Satya Pal is portrayed as an anarchist who incites the jobless workers against the machine as well as against the nascent capitalism. The anarchic tendency of Satya Pal is clearly reflective of infantile adventurism and vulgar anti-industrialism. His invective against Ananta is born out of Ananta's dynamism to organise the workers and spread class consciousness among the workers.

The Big Heart presents multiple voices which speak numerous motifs. The novel gives due place to the awakened voice of Ananta, Janki, Puran Singh Bhagat; the motif of anarchism represented by Satya Pal and Ralia, and the forces of nascent capitalism represented by the Chaudharies like Lala Gokul Chand and others; and above all the voice of suffering and poverty represented by the jobless workers. These voices remain unmerged as each one has its own authenticity. To build up a "plurality of independent and unmerged consciousnesses and voices... with equal rights and each with its world", is an important task in Bakhtin's parlance (Bakhtin 1984:6)

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Narrative Structure of J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye

Surekha

J. D. Salinger is a great American writer. His novel *The Catcher in the Rye* has achieved almost a cult status in world literature. No doubt, a lot has been said on this work. But most of it falls under the slot of thematic study. What is generally ignored in these critiques is the perspective of technique. There is only one notable study of *The Catcher in the Rye* from the structural angle. It is by Carl F. Strauch entitled as "Kings in the Back Row: Meaning Through Structure, A Reading of Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*." It also abounds in generalizations and is not rooted in any specific theory of narrative structure. So a systematic study of the novel from the structural angle which incorporates the insights of narratologists and linguistics is required.

Now, there are different formats of narrative structure. According to Michael Toolan, a narrative is, in essentials, a text in which the reader notes a remarkable transformation. In a narrative, something takes place. We perceive a sense of before and after. There is both a paradigmatic and syntagmatic displacement in the state of affairs. The subsequent state is both temporally and logically related to the former state. Temporal and causal change thus is the indispensable logical requirement of narrative.

Michael Toolan has advocated the use of the default format of William Labov for an analysis of narrative structure. Adapting from Labov, he enumerates six elements in their most commonly cited sequence to facilitate a proper analysis of any narrative (Toolan, 2003:137-140). This model would be listed below and applied to Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*.

1. An Abstract What transpired? Generally a one sentence summary of what took place. This generates the interest for the detailed narrative of the text.

Applying the concept of abstract, we may sum up Salinger's novel in Holden Caulfield's psychic disintegration which is brought out by the various institutions of society and his subsequent partial recovery. This abstract can be formulated in different ways. *The Catcher in the*

Rye may also be called an adolescent's rebellion and its containment by a conservative society. Alternatively, it can be called another variant of La Canian's well formulated clash between the imaginary discourse and the symbolic discourse, which is vividly illustrated in the protagonist's three day journey in the city of New York. It can be safely stated that the summary of Salinger's novel would depend upon the predilections of the reader. Each addressee may come up with a different abstract, revealing his affinity with a particular school of thinking.

Next point in Toolan's set of elements is

2. An Orientation Who was involved? When and where was this?

Here we are to describe only the participants, the time and spatial sites of events but not the events themselves.

Explicating "Orientation" in the light of above interrogative formulations, we note that *The Catcher in the Rye* is the story of Holden Caulfield, a sixteen year old adolescent which is rendered after one year by himself. The following two sentences in the opening chapter provide us with spatial temporal orientations. "Where I want to start telling is the day I left Pencey Prep. Pencey Prep is this school that's in Aarstun, Pennsylvania." (Salinger, 1992:2). After rendering his painful fight with his roommate, he decides to leave for New York and spend three days there in a hotel before his movement to his family home. "So what I decided to do, I decided I'll take a room in a hotel in New York – some very inexpensive hotel and all – and just take it easy till Wednesday." (51) What provides us with a proper orientation about the participants and locations is Holden Caulfield's accurate account of such entities in different segments of the novel. Next in order is complicating action. Here we are concerned with the sequences of both temporal and causal set of events.

3. Complicating action So what happened just? Then what happened? (Sentences in which the all important and ordered events of the narrative are reported)

The homodiegetic narrator of *The Catcher in the Rye* furnishes us with a proper account of the sequence of the actions in the novel. Right from his forced exit from his school to his recapitulations of his three traumatic days which are of course, interspersed with ecstatic and reflective moments, we get a linear rendition of the main constituent units of the narrative. What brought about his departure from the

Famous Pencey Prep school is his failure to apply himself in studies. "They kicked me out, I wasn't supposed to come back after Christmas Vacation, on account of I was flunking four subjects and not applying myself and all" (4) and what forces his immediate departure from the school is his fight with his roommate over his protective view of romance and the inability of others to appreciate his point of view. "Sleep tight, ya morons" (52) After his forced exit from the school, he wanders around in New York, trying to establish meaningful relations with others. But his efforts are frustrated by the embers of his society. At the end, however, he is saved by the blissful sight of his sister and cognitively apprehends the meaning of existence in a simple adage. Live and let others live.

Significantly Michael Toolan makes an interesting observation about evaluative components of the narrative. We are drawn a narratives not for the events themselves but for the evaluative segments of the narratives, "for how those events went off, any why, and in what circumstances, and with what attendant accidentals. In other words, we attend to narratives for their evaluation, not their complicating action – despite the fact that the latter is always required and the former is seemingly optional." (Toolan, 139).

4. Evaluation How have you added to the basic story, to highlight how it is interesting or relevant to your addressee or to you, the teller?

Interpreted in Toolan's context, the most absorbing part of a narrative is not the sequence of events which propels the movement of the narrative forward but its evaluative component. The evaluation components of a narrative are not confined to a separate block of textual discourse but often permeate the whole text. In the process, they foreground the ideology of the author. For the sake of further refinement and clarity, they may be divided into two slots, external and internal. Whereas the external evaluative units are outside the complicating action sentences, the internal evaluative units are embedded within them. In wholly external evaluations, the narrator comes out of the trauma of narration and addresses the listeners directly. The opening segment of Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* is an evaluative commentary on the adolescent trauma of Holden Caulfield. What makes this evaluation interesting is its rendition by the first person narrator protagonist Holden Caulfield, who himself differentiates between

the narrating self and the experiencing self. With characteristic Candour, he commences his painful saga of the previous year. "IF you REALLY want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Cafferfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth." (p.1)

Here in this sentence, Holden, though in dive straits himself, and badly in need of establishing "I Thou" relationship with others, evaluates the expectations of the addressees but refuses to cater to them. Interpellated in the popular therapeutic idiom of psychoanalysis, the people generally locate the genesis of a person's psychic problems in his environment and parenthood. Engrossed in their own fabricated simplistic solutions, they have neither time nor patience for the addressee. After refusing to gratify the expectations of the listeners, he again evaluates his experience of those three days in New York: "I'll just tell you about this madman stuff that happened to me around last Christmas just before I got pretty run-down and had to come out here and take it easy" (1) Through two adjectives "madman" and "run down," he externally judges his nightmarish experience during "last Christmas" which include in a time of harmony, joy and understanding among the Christians.

Those evaluative components of Holden Caulfield's narrative are not an integral part of the sequence of the events themselves but they tellingly reveal what the narrative protagonist feels about those past events now. In addition to these external units of evaluation, there are internal evaluative elements which pervade the complicating action sentences. William Labov subdivides these into four categories: (Toolan:139-40).

1. Intensifying evaluations: These evaluations make use of gestures, repetitions, emphases, or dramatic sounds. In other words, all types of performing of the narrative fall in this slot.

At the time of his forced departure from the school, Holden Caulfield evaluates his school feers who are callously indifferent to his plight. His parting yelling at them "Sleep tight, ya morans!" is an intensifying judgment on his fellow egotists who are so absorbed with their seductive games to bother about the problems of their fellow students.

2. Second kind of internal evaluative material is called comparator evaluation by Labov. It touches alternative narrative developments which are not actually pursued in the narrative. Here the narrator makes use of negative, modal and hypothetical sentences. This type of comparator evaluative material may be seen in various fantasies of Holden Caulfield. In such segments, he fabricates alternative narrative causes which exist simply on the level of imaginary discourse. One such unit is his fantasy to kill Maurice the pimp, who had physically assaulted him. In an elaborate service, he envisions himself in the role of an avenger, who would kill the pimp in a melodramat's manner. "As soon as old Maurice opened the doors, he'd see me with the automatic in my hand and he'd start screaming at me, in this very high pitched, yellow-belly voice, to leave him alone. But I'd plug him anyway. Six shots right through his fat hairy belly." (104) But such a narrative development is not pursued in the textual discourse and culminates in his sweeping denouncement of the movies. "The goddam movies. They can ruin you. I'm not kidding." (104) This "comparator evaluation" by Holden directly and indirectly permeates many segments of his narrative articulations.
3. Third place in internal evaluation in the narrative discourse is accorded to correlative evaluations. These report secondary activities which are contemporaneous with particular events. While reflecting about the nuns, Holden Caulfield in a sequence of Correlative evaluation, recalls the narcissistic display of their persons by the charity workers: "My aunt; pretty charitable – she does a lot of Red Cross work and all – but she's very well-dressed and all, and when she does anything charitable she's always very well-dressed and has lipstick on and all that crap." I couldn't picture her doing anything for charity if she had to wear black clothes and no lipstick while she was doing it." (114) What is true about his aunt is equally true about Sally Hares's mother. They are less concerned with their religious mission and remain more worried in an ostentatious display of their biophilic orientations.
4. Fourth slot in evaluative elements which may permeate in any sequence of the narrative is accorded to explicative evaluations, which evaluations provide the background reasons and causes for narrative events.

In one such narrative sequence, Holden Caulfield criticizes Catholics who, like other fundamentalists, gloat in their exclusive religious calling. While enjoying his conversation with the nuns at Grand Central station in New York, he remains apprehensive whether they would try to ascertain from him if he was a catholic or not. His general comment on Catholics, "Catholics are always trying to find out if you're a Catholic" (112) has its genes in his family background and past experiences. In a reflective syntagm, he recounts them, "It happens to me a lot, I know, partly because my last name is Irish, and most people of Irish descent are Catholics." (112) In a micro narrative unit, which is embedded in this evaluative bloc, he analeptically recalls his conversation about tennis with one Catholic boy, Louis Shaney. In the course of their engrossing interaction about tennis, Shaney indirectly asked him about the locale of Catholic church in the town. This ploy was used by him to find out if Holden was a catholic or not. Holden's explicative evaluation, "That kind of stuff drives me crazy" (113) has thus its roots in the past experiences with his society which thrives on symbiotic divisions.

Next element in Labov's model is resolution. It deals with the question of closure. Now the narrative discourse of *The Catcher in the Rye* no doubt comes to a close but it does not provide us with a definitive resolution. It seems that the narrator has performed his own therapeutic cure by sharing his traumatic experiences with us. But whether he would be a reasonably good conformist of the American society remains a proleptic questions, which is beyond the textual space of the novel.

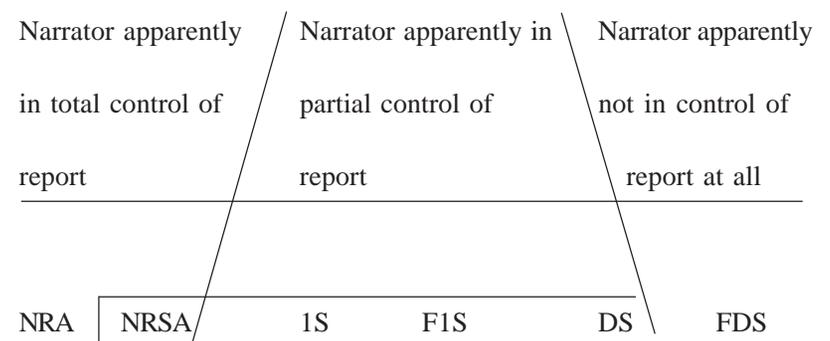
Sixth and last component of Labov's template is "a code". It deals with the addresser-addressee relations. It furnishes the moral lesson which is transmitted by the narrator-protagonist of the text. *The Catcher in the Rye* may not have a proper traditional ending but it undoubtedly transmits the message of humanistic love to us. Negation of narcissistic symbiosis and the affirmation of biophilic love is definitely the coda of the novel

Significantly, another mode of decoding the texture of Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* is the mode of speech and though rendition. Though the novel has a homodiegetic narrator in Holden Caulfield, he uses different focalizers in the course of his rendition. At this stages, we must distinguish between who speaks and who is spoken. In a

well known narrative segment where Holden questions the dubious norms of the conformists of his society, Holden is in undoubtedly performing the role of the speaker whereas the role of the "spoken" is performed by the so called adjusted Americans. His focalization has emotive, psychological and above all ideological colouring. Speaking to his addresses, Sally Hages, he bursts out against the system. "You ought to go to a boys' school sometime. Try it sometime It's full of phonies, and all you does study so that you can learn enough to be smart enough to be able to buy a goddam Cadillac some day, and you have to keep making believe you give a damn if the football team loses, and all you do is talk about girls and liquor and sex all day, and everybody sticks together in these dirty little goddam cliques." (131)

Now this focalization fuses the role of the narrator and that of the focalizer. It adopts the mode of direct speech. Interestingly, Holden's narration subsumes all the major varieties of direct and in direct modes of speech and though presentation to render his troubled experiences of a year ago into a unified and coherent structure. Geoffrey Leech and Michael H. Short, who have done seminal work on style in iction, propose six categories of speech and action rendition to illustrate how the narrator controls the voice of other or grants them partial or full freedom. (Leech and Short,1985:318-350) It is diagrammatically presented as below:

Cline of 'interference' in report (Leech,324)



NRA stands for narrative report of action. Here the narrator gives us an account of the action. For example, when Holden Caulfield describes how he lost his fencing equipment in his typical idiolect:

“We’d gone into New York that morning for this fencing meet with McBurney School. Only, we didn’t have the meet. I left all the facts and equipment and stuff on the goddam subway.” (p.3) In this unit of NRA, Holden does not use any orthographic devices to separate his account of action or lack of action and is in full control of his voice.

In another sequence of *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden blinds NRA with narrative report of speech act which is called NRSA by Leech and Short. Here he focalizes the acts and the spirit of the speech acts of Hass, the Headmaster of his previous school Elkton Hills, who adopted double standards in meeting the parents of the children. While he sought to ingratiate himself with well off parts, he disparaged the seedy ones. “I mean if a boy’s mother was sort of fat or covny looking or something, and if somebody; father was one of those guys that wear these suits with very big shoulders and Crny black-and-white shoes, then old pl would just shake hands with them and give them a phony smile and then he’d go talk for maybe a half an hour, with somebody elic’s parents.” (p.14)

In addition to using NRA and NRSA, Holden frequently makes use of indirect speech. While describing the visit of Ossenburger, an undertaker, he employs this device. “He (Ossenburger) told us we should always pray to God – talk to Him and all-wherever we were. He told us we ought to think of Jesus as our buddy and all. He said he talked to Jesus all the time.” (p.17) The use of indirect speech enables Holden to backshift his experiences of his stay at Pencey Prep and also to cast a questioning look at Ossenburger’s motives for his exhorting speech to the students. He makes a clear, in plain free indirect comment, “I can just see the big phony bastard shifting into first gear and asking Jesus to send him a few more stiff.” (p.17) This frequent movement from NRA (Narrative report action), NRSA (narrative report of speech act), indirect speech, free indirect speech to direct speech is not merely a matter of stylistic variation, but also a subject of narratorial power. It deals with the basic question of the power knowledge of narrative discourse. When Holden makes use of the device of direct speech, he reports verbatim his own words or the words of other characters. In addition, such narrative syntagms remain free from any linguistic distortion. In the following textual component between Stradlater, who fails to understand the import Holden’s discussion with the game of Chickens, to mode of direct

speech is used. It starts with Stradlater’s question:

“You used to play What with her all the time?”

“Checkus.”

Checkers, for Chrissake!”

“Yeesh she wouldn’t move any of her Kings. What she’d do, whom she’d get a king, she wouldn’t move it. ... She just liked the way they looked when they were all in the back row.” (p.32)

The use of direct speech, shorn of the reporting clause, undoubtedly adds immediacy, urgency and exactness in this dialogical encounter. Whereas Holden longs to convey his gncesh for his childhood friend Jane Gallaghes in a permissive society, his roommate Stradlater, having the ideological outlook of a male stud, fails to see his point of view. At many places, Holden uses FDS (free direct speech) to articulate his experiences. Such a mode is used by him in the passage foregrounding his cognitive understanding of the dynamism of existential process: “All the kids kept trying to grab for the gold ring, and so was Old Phock, and I was sort of afraid she’d fall off the goddam horse, but I didn’t say anything or do anything. The thing with kids is, if they want to grab for the gold ring, you have to let them do it, and not say anything. If they fall off, they fall off, but it’s bad if you say anything to them.” (p.211).

Now this syntagm, without the inverted commas of the matrix clause, and through the shift from past indefinite to the present tense, pointedly shows his existential evolution. Acceptance of the other, even of a “kid” should be the guiding principle of one’s life.

As with his use of speech presentation, Holden also uses various categories of thought presentation. He switches from NRTA (Narrative Report of Thought Account) through IT (Indirect Thought), FIT (Free Indirect Thought), DT (Direct Thought) to FDT (Free Direct Thought) in the course of his therapeutic narrative to the psychoanalyst. Spatial considerations prevent me from making a thorough analysis of thought presentation in this paper. Nonetheless, some illustrative paradigms are presented in the subsequent examples.

I wondered if just may be I was wrong about thinking (NRTA) he was making a filthy pass at me. (p.194-195) (Indirect Thought)

D. B. asked me what I thought about all this stuff I just finished telling you about. (p.213)
(Indirect Thought)

I think I am, but how do I know? (p.213) (Free Indirect Thought)

If you had a million years, to do it in, you couldn't rub out even half the 'Fuck you' signs in the world. It's impossible. (p.1222202)
(Free Direct Thought)

Actually free direct thoughts and direct speech renditions pervade most of the segments of *The Catcher in the Rye*. The speech acts of the other characters are often reported verbatim. They accord a sense of authenticity to Holden's encounters with others. Contrasted with the voices of others which puncture his persona of a saviour are the syntagms of his imaginary discourse. In these reversic like sequences, he dreams of escape, stasis, protection, among other things. He also critically evaluates the goals of his society in such internal components of the text.

Summing up, we may say that the structure of Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* can be explored from different angles. A psychoanalytic approach following the structural paradigms of Lacan is likely to decode the book from the perspective of a frequent Oscillation between imaginary and symbolic discourse. To a Marxist critic, the structure of the novel resides in the failure of the social institutions to provide a worthwhile aim to adolescents of the American, nay any materialist society. New critics are likely to find the structural foundation of the novel in the motif of humanism. New historicists may approximate the structure of this text with other contemporaneous extra literary writings of the period. What it means is that there are different methods of dissecting the structural of this novel ranging from binary oppositions between the phony world and nice world to a strong indictment of the law-of-the father of the American society of the nineteen fifties. These different possibilities suggested in the conclusion foreground the rapid growth in the field of systematic analysis of literary works. They also provoke further explorations in rigorous and meticulous analysis of a great work of art. Nonetheless, the approaches adopted in this paper, based on the templates of Labov, and speech and thought presentation, are quite analytical and

illuminate the various strands of the aesthetic composition of – Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*.

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He Was God Who Won

Rahul S. Rana

He was God who won
A battle,
Long which run

My mother stepped into heavens
Taking away with her
Our small heaven
But He was god
Who finally won

Hollow, to me, was every sound,
What echoed was
her very sound.
Stunned I stood
Not able to accept, but
That very truth, but
He was god who won

Blinking my vision
For the aftermath
The sufferers only stood
But in the aftermath
Ours was the happy one
Which counted
My father, mother, sister
And me as one
But he was god who
Finally ,but, won

The traditions and society
Were as hollow
As they called 'Him' mighty
A mother who made
My existence possible
That very son 'fired' away
Her existence

But he was called God
Who finally won

Nowadays,
Music sounds untrue
People come and go
They talk endlessly
About the tragic sight
Days will pass
And they'll forget
Who suffered, was me, my father
And my little sister
Seven autumns who just
Filtered
But he was god
Who finally won

Tears roll away in isolation
As I loved her in every
Situation
I stop my tears,
To give strength
To *the mother* in my father

He tries a lot
But he is my father
I lost my mother
And she is farther

Another story about
The defeated truth
And yet they say
He was god who finally won
As the only truth

K. S. Pal's *Descending Dark Stairs*: A Review

Som. P. Ranchan

Descending Dark Stairs (Writers Workshop, Kolkata, 2007) by K.S. Pal – better known as Kirpal Singh among his friendly circles — is a collection of 42 poems. It stands out among the plethora of verse collections that continue to appear from time to time, simply because the poetic world of Kirpal Pal does not rest on derivative experiences and borrowed clichés. It is charged with a rare emotional energy that has the capacity to shock the readers out of their habitual apathy – the only quality of good poetry, to me!

What is striking about Kirpal's poetry is that it has a controlled rhythm. Emotions are not allowed to go tipsy. Ideas are not used as mere ideas, dry and boring. They come alive through well –thought images, often familiar, yet striking in their nerve - touching power. The anguish of a home-sick, alienated father in a foreign land ('Under the Other Sky'), the pangs of separation in love ('Tsunami –Swept Beach'), the confusion of self and identity ('Real Self ') the protest against God's smiling apathy in the face of the Devil's blasting of home-bound trains ('The Devil's Evening'), and many other thematic concerns are made emotionally vibrant through concrete terms . In many poems , there is an articulation of emotions which we must all have felt at one time or the other:

When I go back, popped off,
no one would be waiting –
our home is a turnstile,
my wife goes out , when I come in,
and my son is usually on his bed('Under The Other Sky')
2 . It also hurts when –
the last guest arrives,
and asks you to come along
and you are not ready,
for you have some errand to make ,
some parting advice , some left -out love
to give, knowing well
your phone is already dead('It Hurts')

The poetic 'I' in Kirpal assumes different roles – the role of a

dejected lover , a half –caste Indian African, a Punjabi Diaspora, a devotee in temple , and so on and so forth reminding us of varied poetic voices of Browning in his monologues.

Not only is there a thematic variety in this collection of poems, there is also a variety of poetic forms, techniques and tones of voice. In five sonnets, Kirpal has experimented with two traditional forms – Petrarchan and Shakespearian – and one modern (in free verse). One can, however, easily detect a certain stiffness and unease in those poems. 'Just think' is perhaps a well-constructed sonnet that ends on a more relaxed note:

So why to have much faith in anything?
Relax, and learn just to laugh and sing.

In many poems, Kirpal's use of rhythm is in consonance with the movement of thought. "Mating Dances" imbibes a quick broken rhythm that effectively catches the brisk short movements of the bird's flight. The use of heroic couplet in 'Reflections' is also well- thought of – its stiff, dead -pan ending conveying the appropriate old aged, heavy, blocked feelings. There is a contrastive ease of rhythmic flow in poems like 'To a Child' , ' What to Do' , 'Realization' , etc. in 'What is Left' , the controlled rhythm ably captures the moment of anguished silence which is more articulate than any words:

Between now and then
runs a deep river of silence.
Nothing much to see:
only a few pebbles
of tears and giggles,
and leftovers
of a vanished beauty

Basically, Kirpal to me is a love poet. His first collection *The Broken Beat* has a number of intense love poems. In the present collection, 'Till Then' is one of the most impressive and poignant love poems. One feels haunted by the lines:

Dear, if I ever fail
Look for me
Among those

Cooing night birds
On your near
Window – sill

‘Tsunami-Swept Beach’ and ‘Fell Again’, though good in general, seem to have a false note somewhere.

In fine, the poetry of Kirpal belongs to the tradition of Ezekiel and Ramanujan, but it has a stamp of its own. It is a fine blend of tradition and contemporaneity, whatever that word connotes. What I feel is that in time to come the poetry will gain more maturity and discover certain, definitive direction without which nothing can withstand the onslaughts of unsparing time.

Being, Becoming and Beyond: A Reading of *The Strawberry Sun and Other Poems* by Manjit Kaur

Rabinder Powar

Before leaving for my trip abroad to attend a couple of conferences, I happened to talk to Manjit and came to know that she was working on a project of creative writing. After my five month long stay when I returned home some pleasant surprises and shocks (of course of a very temporary nature) were waiting for me. However amongst these one differed in nature as it was a permanent one and certainly the most joyous one - of course it was none other than *The Strawberry Sun* and other poems, the creative work of Manjit which had taken the shape of a book. Curious to know, with a throbbing heart I ripped open the packet to cast a glance at her collection - and there it was shining in lovely green and golden *The Strawberry Sun* and other poems, published by P.Lal of Writers Workshop. Quenching my thirst a little with the sip offered to me by the get-up of the graceful ethnic binding, I randomly opened to satiate my rather growing thirst and found my gaze fixed on the poem entitled ‘Stars and Moon’. Hardly had I gone through the first four lines when I too started feeling as one of the group of the tiny-tots snuggling around the ‘naked belly’ of the mother for the ‘buttery softness’ and after that felt myself completely immersed in the idea as it gradually developed and moved with the invigorating afternoon nap of the mother to take care of the littluns for them to imagine and wonder at the ‘twinkling bodies’ and wish these were nearer the earth and within their reach. However there is a shift in the third and the final section of the poem which makes the speaker go back in time when the mother ‘were a child’ and dwelled in a similar dream world and establishes a beautiful connection of the past with the present in which the ideal and the real are fused -

Were we her stars and moon

Brought to earth?

The magic of Manjit’s words had worked on me for as she herself says in her poem entitled ‘The Broken Words’ -

... broken words

...

Out of the blue
... erupted
Into an orderly form.

To know exactly 'Who was the magician?', perhaps is not possible but of this she is sure that they are tended by the 'deeper self', 'a loving parent'. Interestingly these 'broken words' in her poetry turn out to be the best words, making her writing adhere to the 'homely definition' of poetry - "...the best words in the best order" by S.T.Coleridge.

The focus on the words made me look at the appealing titles thus altering my random search a little in a different direction. 'Melancholy' I read it as a title of one of the poems listed in the very beginning. Oh! No, after Keats' Ode the idea of saying something on the same subject seemed simply inconceivable to me. Despite my best effort, the printed words on the book only reflected the observations of Keats rather than any other words -

Ay, in the very temple of delight
Veil'd Melancholy had her sovran shrine.

It took great effort to put aside my obsession with Keats' Ode (I've been teaching it to my students for the past many years) and read the actual printed words -

Melancholy...
Clinging cuddling and kissing

The onomatopoeic tinkle of velar 'k' in 'clinging cuddling and kissing' was enough to win my heart (that had always been secretly in love with melancholy). Something still more important as an idea taken up in the next line is the token left by it in the form of an imprint that has changed the visage of the recipient of this love. Finally the poem is beautifully rounded off in the seventh line with a superb expression used for this tryst with melancholy i.e. 'night-long love affair'. So the poem had its impact on me despite my resistance and prejudice. Of course Keats' Ode is incomparable but I'm sure now whenever I'll read it and teach it I'll always remember Manjit's seven-line wonder on the same theme.

However the game of love goes on not only with melancholy, it's also carried on with the same intensity with joy and delight that is

offered by nature's bounty. There is joy in growing 'giant like' and trying to reach the glorious sun in the poem 'The Strawberry Sun', experiencing the supporting life force that 'Clings... Like a creeper' and goes on to live life fully, in watching 'The rusty moon... Playing the Holi' and the carpet of petals spread by the 'cheerful martyrs' in 'The Purple Beauties' and so on. What is striking about Manjit's approach is not only recognition of the dichotomies but acceptance of these with a sense of awe and wonder at the mystery of His creation. Though joy and sorrow, life and death, youth and age, past and present perturb the poetess from time to time yet the attempt is always to maintain a balance while sailing in the troubled waters. 'Strange and Serene' are the sensations of harmony which are rarely felt but for which the poetess always keeps yearning as depicted in another poem entitled 'Harmony'.

One of the dominant strains in her poetry is the quest for the self whether it's 'A Rendezvous', 'Life Dear Life', 'Resolution' or 'An Inward Gaze'. There is a complex process involved in the identification of the multiple selves as a child and a daughter, as a grown up girl, as a wife and then as a mother. The different facets of woman are explored in poems like 'A Re - (Definition)' and 'A Discovery'. The transient world in which change is an immutable law of life makes the poetess ponder over the precariousness of human situation and its corresponding fears, uncertainties, insecurities, anxieties and miseries in her different poems. The vulnerability of human beings to the 'immutable power' is clearly brought out in 'Puny Desires' which points to

... the bubble like existence
In the relentless universe.

The belief in this philosophy makes the mystery of Death even more important. A number of poems are centred on the idea of aging, waning, dying and regenerating. In her poem 'Dividing Line', she wonders whether there is a dividing line between the two or living and dying is a phenomenon that goes on simultaneously as she says -

Death flooded into Life
Life intermingled with Death
The barriers broke down...

However even death is not able to defeat the invincible will. So

soul, the immortal essence leaps up like the rising of phoenix, the mythical bird in her poem entitled 'The Phoenix of My Soul'

There is no doubt that the voice of woman is dominating and identifiable in most of her poems. The concern for the woman who is not allowed to realise her being in the suppressive and highly demanding patriarchal society is evident in poems like 'The Woman with a Cow', 'The First Rains' and 'On My Mother'. The feelings of such voiceless, marginalized women are given a voice in her poem 'Set Me Free'-

Just give me space
Free me from all the bonds
...
Let me breathe
... in the open sky.

No doubt the feminist perspective in her poetry is likely to be easily highlighted but for me focussing only on this is to delimit her larger and broader perspective in which she is more of a human being than only a woman struggling her way through the doubts and dilemmas that besiege us all.

Conveyed in a language which is free from artifice, the poems find a way to the inner recesses of the hearts of the reader. The ease and felicity with which she conveys the complex emotions is very appealing. In particular the similes employed by her to illustrate and elaborate her points are very rich and striking. A very fine example of its usage is seen in her poem 'Walls of Ego' in which she compares the bare 'timid self' bereft of the protective walls of ego to

... a fetus
Pre- matured
Pushed out of
The dark comforting womb
Sick crying
Waiting for the incubator
- its surrogated mother

OR

... a helpless maiden
Meeting the glances
Of the onlookers
Unrobed while robed
Seeking the shelter
- an authority or the mates

The collection of forty-nine poems in The Strawberry Sun and other poems are musings of the poetess on a variety of subjects which really makes it an enriching and fulfilling collection. The patience, fortitude, courage and righteousness with which she is determined to face life is pretty encouraging in a situation in which we all feel trapped in a fast changing world and with ever evolving new identities. As an effort to resolve the predicament of human beings, it is certainly a commendable attempt. The writing proves it worth when tested on the Keatsian touchstone –

The great end
Of poesy, that it should be a friend
To sooth the cares, and lift the thoughts of man.
['Sleep and Poetry']

With Strawberry Sun Manjit has certainly grown very tall and has attained new heights. I wish her to remain in that zone only where as she herself says in her poem 'Tall Growth'-

Only air and sky are my masters.

PRAGATI ENGLISH JOURNAL

Editor : **Dr. N. K. Neb**

Editorial Advisory Board : Dr. Gurupadesh Singh
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Pragati English Journal is published by *Pragati Educational Council* in collaboration with *Dayanand Institute of Education Management and Research (DIEMR) Panvel, New Mumbai, Maharashtra* in June and December.

Typesetting :
Ramkrishan Graphics
Jalandhar.

Printed by :
Paper Offset Printers
Jalandhar.

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Cultural Dynamics

(Continued from the previous issues)

N. K. Neb

The close interaction between people belonging to different cultures, due to the recent developments mentioned earlier, has introduced a sense of indifference towards their earlier cultural and social norms. Uprooted from their earlier culture, these people lack any sense of responsibility or of being answerable to some moral pedagogues; indulge in certain activities that are unacceptable in their earlier social background. In such a scenario, people like gays and lesbians, who earlier used to remain on the periphery of the mainstream society, tend to seek recognition in the form of subcultures. Such elements have, no doubt, been there in earlier societies also but their presence was hardly considered noteworthy. The way these people assert their identity and rights as members of the marginalized groups has destabilized the difference between the low and the high that was used to judge human behaviour and personality.

All these factors coupled with the intervention of democracy, in its institutionalized form, awarding individual independence and asserting the rights of individuals have brought major change in familial relationships and the institution of marriage. The individualistic tendencies have made the younger generation in particular indifferent towards their responsibilities for the family and the traditional marital vows. Consequently, the traditional family in which the senior male member used to control the affairs is on the verge of extinction. The emergence of single parent family, live in arrangement, along with the economic independence of women have caused a major blow to traditional Indian cultural ethos. The introduction of the laws intended to safeguard women's interests; the different measures taken for the empowerment of women have provided a sense of economic and individual independence to women. They are no longer treated as the marginalized other. Consequently, women not only assert their independence but in certain cases have started governing the affairs of the family.

To be continued.....

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PRAGATI EDUCATIONAL COUNCIL

H.O. Jalandhar City.

(Registered at Chandigarh in 1988 under the act XXI 1860)

Pragati's English Journal is a house-journal of the Pragati Educational Council. It is published in June and December every year.

Editor : Dr. N. K. Neb

Editorial Advisory Board : Dr. Gurupdesh Singh
: Dr. Kulbhushan Kushal

Pragati's English Journal is published by **Pragati Educational Council** in Collaboration with Dayanand Institute of Education Management and Research (D.I.E.M.R.) Panvel, New Mumbai, Maharashtra.

All correspondence pertaining to subscription/publicity should be addressed to the General Secretary Pragati Educational Council at the following address :

61/75A–Garden Colony, Jalandhar City - 144 003.

Subscription :-

(For individuals)

Per copy (Postage extra) : Rs. 100/- \$5
Annual : Rs. 200/- \$10

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Per Copy : Rs. 150/- \$12
Annual : Rs. 300/- \$25

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