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Cultural Dynamics

N. K. Neb

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As a result of all these developments, women particularly in the upper sections of society in the Indian metropolitans seem to have shunned all inhibitions related to women's sexuality. They not only talk about this aspect of life but also assert their sexual rights inside and outside matrimony. In a way, the emerging world indicates the arrival of an era where people seem to be least bothered about the traditionally held values and are all for individual progress, money, careerist tendencies and success in the capital governed world. One example of such developments can be observed from the attitude of the parents of a prospective bride. People are no longer seen seeking an honest, humble, and docile and teetotalitarian young boy, they rather find a rich man more suitable a groom irrespective of his character, outlook, and in some cases even age and family background. To talk about the caste and background of the family seems to have become funny and ridiculous. The matters related to marriage are considered and settled in terms of economic and pragmatic considerations instead of moral, religious, ethical or cultural. It can be easily ascertained from the matrimonial columns of different dailies where the prospective brides and bridegrooms are advertised as commercial goods.

Another factor that has introduced more pragmatic dimension to the institution of marriage and human relationships in recent years is people's craze for settling abroad. In spite of the fact that people generally talk of home in ideal terms they have always been swayed by the prospects of earning great wealth abroad. Earlier the people who used to leave their homes for these reasons always yearned to come back and settle in their native places. With the changing pattern of human thoughts and concerns, people hardly ever think in these terms. Such an attitude of people and their migration to other countries at a large scale has brought a change in the understanding of the concept of nation and nationhood. People's concerns for individual progress and a marked shift in their attitude after their settlement abroad has added a new dimension to the concept of Diaspora experiences. Instead of love for the country these people have migrated from or the country they have adopted as their home, these people's behaviour is generally governed by the level of comfortable living a country offers. Apart from this, these people adopt certain means to settle in the country of their choice that shows their disregard for social or moral values. There have been many cases where already married people sometimes with the consent of their marriage partners, marry again and shockingly enough there have been examples where brothers and sisters have married, though formally, to settle abroad. (to be continued.....)

Raja Rao: The Voice of Mother India

Dr. Anju Bala Agarwal

Raja Rao is one of the central figures in Indo-Anglian fiction. In fact, Indo-Anglian novel attains in his hands a dialectical force as well as a structural plasticity which he drew from the synthesis of Indian and western aesthetic modes. And in this process, Raja Rao seems to discover his own India. He has interpreted Indian politics (particularly Gandhism) in *Kanthapura*. Indian philosophy (particularly Advaitavada) in *The Serpent and The Rope* and *The Cat And Shakespeare* and Indian life (particularly South Indian) in *The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories* to the west in his unique style.

In adopting English to Indian themes and in projecting the real image of India, Raja Rao has been most successful by evolving an essentially Indian style. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is firmly rooted in the soil and it draws sustenance from it in keeping with the law of 'degree' he assigns everybody a place in the village hierarchy. The Brahmin is the spiritual leader of the community and in mundane matters, the word of the village Patel is the law, even if he is a pariah like Ranga Gowda. The decision of the villagers to take part in the freedom Movement is quite expressive of the principle of 'degree': *If the Elder (Moorthy, a Brahmin though young) says 'Yes', and the Patel (Range Gowda though a pariah) says 'Yes', and the panchayat (composed of all communities) says 'Yes', what else have we to say? (Kanthapura, p. 108)*

Kanthapura is not only a realistic epic-novel of the freedom struggle, it also turns out to be the first of Raja Rao's explorations of the 'real' nature of Gandhism. It is rightly called the Gandhi Purana and microcosm of India. It is steeped in the Indian sensibility. It is Indian in theme, myths images, narration and style. The story is narrated against the background of an Indian locale (the Ghats, the Malabar coast, centres of cardamom and coffee, sugar and sandal, Champa and Kola passes and the Himavathy), of the Indian people, with their distinct Indian traits and Indian sensibility. He acquaints the West with the aspirations of Indians and with the British atrocities on the Indians through the Cow of Barricades and *Kanthapura*.

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Religion becomes the nucleus of social regeneration in *Kanthapura*. Here social reformers have been profoundly religious men. In the true tradition of India, *Kanthapura* comes alive with the flame of religion and spirituality. We have the installation of the Linga, the Sankara-Vijay, the Sankar-Jayanti, the cycle of festivals as, Rama festival, Krishna festival Ganesh festival, Suryanarayana Puja, the procession of gods and to crown it all, the grand Harikatha, harping on the greatness and prosperity of India and her subjection to the British and the advent of Mahatma not as a political pioneer but as one who is religious first and political later. He is regarded as the Hindu Avatar fighting against the British; like Lord Krishna, he is slaying the serpent of foreign rule.

Kanthapura as a microcosm of Indian society shows division of people into castes, untouchability, and poverty, exploitation by usurers and foreign rulers and ruthless tyranny at their hands. The division of the village into the Brahmin quarter, the Potter quarter and so on speaks of the age-long caste system and untouchability; the size and shape of the quarters speak about the prosperity of the few and the poverty of the many.

The use of myths and rituals further expresses the Indian sensibility. The central myth of *Kanthapura* is of Ram-Sita-Ravan which is used to illustrate the fight between Mahatma Gandhi and the British. Further, the Mahatma is like Krishna, a precocious child, with a band of followers: Krishna began fighting at the age of four and fought against the demon and the serpent Kali. : *So too our Mohandas began to fight against the enemies of the country. ...more and more men followed him as they did Krishna the flute player, and so he goes from village to village to slay the serpent of the foreign rule. (Kanthapura p.17-18)*

Moorthy is Ram and Seenu, Lakshman. The agent of the swami also uses the concept of Ram-Rajya and of the rule of ten-headed Ravan. The technique of story telling is Indian and like the technique of the Mahabharat and the Ramayana, it tells an interminable tale, without punctuation and prepositions, but exhaling the tempo of Indian life. The Technique corresponds with the theme. The grandma narrates the story, though in English, in an idiom different from that of British and that corresponds to a generation caught in the throes of exploitation, injustice and slavery and yearning for independence. The images, proverbs, phrases, idioms, pictures and literal translation of Indian

expression also present Indian sensibility. The Indian flora and fauna figure either to illustrate a person or to highlight a problem. Moorthy is a holy bull, elephant and cow; Range, a tiger; Rangamma, a kid; the use of violence against an enemy is like pulling out a lantana bush; the army of the Mahatma is an increasing garland.

In fact, Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* has come to be a classic, as it has powerful narrative mode and unfailing capacity to evoke the Indian scene and events. It is a classic of ancient India moving into the modern times raised to a level of national myth. As Dr. Naik observes: *Kanthapura is thus a memorable work. The utter authenticity, the lyricism, and the intensity of this inspired and inspiring novel are unmistakable. It has immortalized a historic moment in Indian life with rare power.*¹

Raja Rao's English conforms to Indian ethos, rhythm and intonation. His similies smell of the soil and his technique is essentially suited to express the native moves. He has drawn much from the western as well as the eastern technique of story-telling.

In *The Serpent and the Rope* Raja Rao handles the clash of cultures, treats the characters as real beings, and interprets all Indian and Western phenomena philosophically and metaphysically from the Brahminic point of view. It is the story of an Indian scholar, Ramaswamy, who explains the whole phenomena of life. The continuous and rapid changes in Indian social, moral and religious lives are properly presented.

By creating the intellectual Ramaswamy who has a heightened awareness of his Indianism and Brahminism he succeeds exceptionally in presenting a faithful picture of India of his own vision and in explaining Indian values. He draws parallels from the history of the world contemporary or past. This helps him much in establishing his Vedantic point of view. Ramaswamy is a combination of truly Indian and world citizen for which reason he balances the scales both on the Indian and the European counts. He feels that India alone can deliver the message of peace to the world, by providing metaphysical truths. This novel "while enacting Raja Rao's central preoccupation with the concept and image of India, shifts the focus from history to biography, from the community to the individual and from the folk to the metaphysical basis of Indian spirituality."²

Raja Rao's imagery is drawn from the sights and sounds of his native land. Names and words like Benares, the Himalayas, and the Ganges. Shiva, Parvathi, tiger and cobra conjure up Indian images. His similes are based on his observation of Indian life. The rice should be as fine as filigree. The sky is as blue as a marriage shawl. Women are as beautiful as new opened guavas and as tender as April mangoes. The style of *The Serpent and the Rope* is like that of the Puranas in which the ideas and stories are not narrated in a plain and direct manner but a lot of philosophy, history, literature and religion are woven into the fabric of the narration. The use of Sanskrit quotations and Indian idioms and proverbs and Indian words enhances the Indianness of this novel. Raja Rao uses words like kumkum, aarthi, sari, choli, tali and "My lord Sher". Writing about Raja Rao's style, Prof. Amur observes: *As a writer Raja Rao has achieved remarkable success in his conscious endeavour 'to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own, and to communicate Indian modes of feeling and expression'... Raja Rao has used the resources of Indian languages like Sanskrit and Kannada in a highly original manner.*³

The title of his novel *The Cat and Shakespeare* appears to be a whimsical and paradoxical one. On the simple narrative level the novel is an uproariously funny story of a cat and two clerks. Ramakrishana Pai, the narrator, is an innocuous little man, who loves Shanta and dreams of building a big house. Pai's office is a microcosm of India's postindependent middle class, with members from all of india's major religions- Islam, Christianity and Hinduism. His neighbour, the hero of the novel, Govindan Nair is a typical South Indian character, intellectual, poor and devoted to philosophical argument that one should surrender oneself completely to the supreme energizing principle in the universe which he symbolically calls 'Mother Cat'. This comic extravaganza has a sound philosophical foundation. M.K. Naik says: *Nair's symbol of the cat is drawn from Ramanujacharya's (11th century) philosophy of modified Non-dualism, according to which Man can save himself not through knowledge, but through self-surrender.*⁴ This novel, despite its heavy philosophical machinery, does offer an interesting picture of India's rising bourgeois culture. The novel is thus both an insider' and outsider's look at post independence India.

Comrade Kirillov also reveals the true Indian religious cells present in the mind , the body, the blood and soul of Padmanabha Iyer whose

adopted name is Comrade Kirillov. He ultimately proves to be a Brahmin at heart. His love of the Hindu scriptures, Gandhism, Indian ethos has gone deep into his constitution and finds expression at intervals in his life. The novel proves that the truly Indian religious identity of an India-born and India-bred Brahmin cannot be transformed. The termination of the novel as the epitome of the story of Parvati crossing the Gangas, the Vindhya and reaching the ocean waiting for Shiva to come and marry her, his indifference and virgin Parvati's turning in anger into stone, that is KanyaKumari, is typically emblematic of the deeply Indian ethos and sensibility of the writer. The book ends with a few pages from Irene's diary which also throws light on the character of Kirillov. P. P. Mehta comments: *Raja Rao's attempt seems to be to point out that an Indian, whatever be his political leanings, will always have his Indianness uppermost. The emotional pull of India will overweigh or soften the political conviction.*⁵

Indo-Anglian novelists adopt various methods to create an Indian atmosphere. One method is to make a literal translation of the Indian words used by the speakers. This gives the impression that it is an Indian novel and it is Indian who are talking to each other. Raja Rao's use of these translations is very effective. Let us see how he translated Kannada proverbs into English. He writes, "You can't stitch it (Tante Zoubie's tongue) with a gunnybag needle". "For a Shiva's lip (a flower) of the courtyard Shiva's head is the Kailash. And for a woman the sacred feet of her husband be paradise." In Kanthapura the village women speak of the cat that has "taken to asceticism only to commit more sins". The peasants and pariahs address people who are socially superior to them as "Learned Maharaja" or "Learned one".

Raja Rao's main concern has always been with the Indian tradition and culture. His fiction traces the perennial rather than the ephemeral essence of Indian spirituality. He is decidedly an innovator in modern Indian fiction which he has enriched than any other Indian writer. J.P. Sharma says: "he rightly interprets and disseminates Indian knowledge and serves the cause of his country through literary creations following the path shown him by swami Atmananda Guru."⁷

In fine, Raja Rao transported the Indian writers in English into the realm of Indian themes. This process of writing obliterated from the European mind the mischievous impression about India made by some European writers. The attainments on a spiritual plane are central

to Indian culture because dharma, artha and kama must find their culmination in moksha. He justifies all this in his writings and is thus rightly a volitive ambassador of Indian culture abroad.

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The Context of English as a Language of Global Communication

Hema Dahiya

Undoubtedly, it is the present-day emphasis on business which is largely responsible for seeking the utilitarian role of language. Rather than have language for literature, the business world would prefer to have language for communication. We know how English studies in the institutions of engineering and technology have been wholly restricted to the teaching of communication skills. Pressure is also being felt for a similar shift from teaching English literature to teaching functional English in the institutions of liberal education. The defence for literature teaching is getting weaker by the day as the aggression of the job-oriented education keeps mounting on our institutions of higher learning.

More than the business ethos of our age, it is the globalisation of the world economy, its trade and business, which has necessitated the sole emphasis on English for communication. When countries come closer to do business in any way, their nationals need to communicate with each other. International business, an outcome of liberal economy, requires a common language for communication. Thanks to the British empire and the advancement of technology in the English-speaking countries of England, America, Canada and Australia that English emerged as the leading language of the world.

According to David Crystal, "If a language is a truly international medium, it is going to be most apparent in those services which deal directly with the task of communication - the postal and telephone systems and the electronic networks" (Crystal, 20). It can be ascertained from the example of Internet. It started out as the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network in the late 1960s. When people in other countries began to form links with this network, it became essential for them to use English. The dominance of English was then reinforced when the service was thrown open in the 1980s to private parties and commercial organizations. Most of these were already communicating in English. There was also a technical reason underpinning the position of the language at this time. It was in English that the first protocols to carry data on the Net were developed. As a matter of fact, even today no browser is able to handle all aspects of multilingual data presentation.

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The context of English becoming a language of global communication includes the important factor of its being spoken more by people outside its native countries. As such, it has ceased to be owned by any of its constituent communities. The British, for example, are a minority group of English-speaking world population. Even the Americans count for only 15% of the world speakers of English. More people in India speak English today than the combined strength of its speakers in England and America. In the total global scenario today, three out of four English speakers are non-native.

Consequently, so many varieties of English have emerged over the years. As we know, when a language spreads, it changes. Since different parts of the world have different cultures and geographies, the speakers enjoy innumerable opportunities to adapt the language to meet their communicative needs. These adaptations largely take place in vocabulary, because not only new words are added by non-native speakers, but also new meanings are added to old words. Further, new idiomatic phrases are added by different nationalities and regions, by different cultural and ethnic groups. For it is in this area of language that the living conditions and ways of thinking of a people are most closely reflected.

All aspects of social structure generate complex meaning systems - local governments, family relations, clubs and societies, geographical conditions, variety of animal species, different foods and food habits, mythologies and religions, and a thousand other aspects of life peculiar to its place and people will necessarily make their own contributions to the language. English in today's conditions, therefore, has grown into such a large variety of its various dialects that the native speakers would not follow at times communications in their own dear English.

In such a scenario of global English, the need to develop communication skills to meet the growing challenge of internationalism has become all the more urgent. What is being taught in the name of communication skills is merely the manner of using 'standard' English effectively in business transactions, etc. But do we have today such a thing as 'standard English'. As a part of the curricula in communication skills there is need to include these so many varieties of English, their peculiarities, their special meanings and speeches, etc. of course, that would lead to specialisations, training students to communicate not only effectively, but also more (understandingly, with one or another

nationality of English users. But such a development seems unavoidable. For as a subject of study, or discipline of knowledge, expands, grows, and becomes complex, it always raises the need to split the subject into specialities, as no individual can be expected to master all the large and complex size of the subject. Communication in English today has grown into that large and complex a subject of study.

To cite Crystal once more, "The twenty-first century is likely to see most educated first-language speakers of English becoming tri-dialectical... Foreign-language learners will also find themselves needing to cope with these variations -developing a sense of international norms alongside the national norms which are currently the focus of teaching. ..It may not be many years *before* an international standard will be the starting point with British, American and other varieties all seen as optional localizations"(Crystal,39-40). It is this global context of English that should remain in sight whenever we speak of communication in this language, designing the course content, devising pedagogical strategies, and drilling the sounds. An awareness of the context in which, English is placed today should form an important component of our discussion or teaching of the subject of communication. Leaving the learners unaware of this context will only keep them unprepared or underprepared for one of the most important tasks cut out for the teachers of English in this country, or any other country.

The scenario visualised here, the global context of English, may take long to become fully established. But it seems almost a certainty that transition to the scenario projected here would not be an easy one, for such a transition always involves important changes in our methods of teaching and testing. Also, the situation fast developing around the use of English the world over is decidedly an unprecedented one. For the first time in over four hundred years of the growth of the English language, what is being experienced is the drastic dramatic change taking place in the use of English. As a matter of fact, this change amounts to no less than another revolution in the manner in which language is used. The present-day context, thus, throws up challenges that are gigantic - both exciting as well as burdensome.

It is no doubt that conventional methods of teaching language are likely to continue with (maybe) some minor changes. But signs that are already appearing of the broadening of our existing methods with regard to the teaching of listening comprehension do indicate that our conventional

practices may not go on for long. The fact that a large variety of Englishes being used "in different nations and regions of the world are different from the long established twins of the British English and American English, it would look unfair on the part of the teachers of English to leave their students unprepared for what David Crystal calls "the brave new linguistic world which awaits them"(Crystal, 41).

To the global scenario of English developing today there is also another side, which is: when a language becomes dominant in a country, just as English is becoming in India and many other countries of the world, there are always implications for the native language or languages of that country. The problem such a dominance raises is: how do the native languages retain and maintain their identity? When a language becomes global just as English has become, such implications affect all the languages encountering the imperial status of the dominant one. We can very well see how the earlier political empire of Britain has been replaced by the linguistic empire. In the change that has come about, a different set of questions arise as a consequence. It is likely that the powerful influence of English will permanently change the character of the native languages, as it seems to be doing in the case of Hindi. Read Hindi magazines and newspapers, the shop hoardings and truckscripts, all are full of English words, at time outnumbering those of the native language.

Thus the global context of English calls for a careful study of the effects of encounters and confrontations between English and other languages before we shape our syllabus for English studies, especially the one for teaching communication skills. The process of lendings and borrowings between English and other languages has been unprecedentedly accelerated by the fast changing scenario of globalisation. Consequently, the acceleration calls for corresponding speedy modifications in the methods of teaching we the teachers of English have been following as a routine. Those teaching English as language for communication seem to be comparatively more aware of the phenomenon taking place than those used to teaching English literature for culture.

Before this short note is concluded, it seems in place to say that there is a need to reconcile the seemingly contrary claims of language and literature, or communication and culture. On a serious thought to the subject one would realise that no communication can be effective without an adequate knowledge of the contents to be communicated.

Since neither communication is a matter of mere sounds and styles, nor is culture or literature a matter of mere sense and sensibility. Only a person of sense and sensibility can be a good communicator, and only a good communicator can effectively put across the matter of sense and sensibility. Hopefully, we shall succeed, like the speaker in Robert Frost's "Two Tramps in Mud Time," in combining our "vocation" with "avocation" (Williams, 198), making the business of communication skills also an experience of emotional satisfaction.

With the advent of the internet, however, communication in the global context opened up a set of new forms of interaction between individuals and nations. Modes of communication like the World Wide Web, Electronic Mail, Chatgroups, Netspeak, so on and so forth, have thrown up new challenges to the linguists and language learners alike. As Ned Thomas put it in an editorial of his bulletin called *Contact*, "It is not the case... that all languages will be marginalized on the Net by English. On the contrary, there will be a great demand for multilingual Web sites, for multilingual data retrieval, for machine translation, for voice recognition systems of the multilingual" (Thomas, 2). The global context, thus, demands multilingualism as well as multimedia knowledge for becoming a successful communicator. With most activities of life getting globalised, communication acquires a key role in carrying out these activities on a global scale. Our courses of reading indifferent languages, therefore, need to be recast radically in order that the learners can find their meaningful roles in the global set-up. Although not totally eliminating other languages, English seems to have become central as a medium of communication between nations drawn into a close circle.

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Journey as a Post-colonial Metaphor in Amitav Ghosh's *Hungry Tide*

Dr. Ujwal Jana

"I am a great believer in quest narratives. I think it is the best, the fundamental narrative. All the great narratives of literature are quest narratives—the odyssey, the Ramayana. So I like quest—the very idea itself— and writing about it. But unlike the people who are on a quest and know what they are searching for, I do not think I necessarily do"— Amitav Ghose (Interview with Amitav Ghose, *The Hindu*, Literary Review, Sunday, May 21, 2000) Ghose's preoccupation with the quest motive assumes a new dimension in the contemporary trans-cultural paradigm and the narrative of his fiction orients the issue of journey in the post colonial perspective. Ghose addresses the issue of journey in a broader context and he deconstructs the traditional notion of journey and situates it in the terrain of multicultural, geo-political, and historical reality. Before indulging in a discussion of the perspectivalising of journey metaphor in the text (*The Hungry Tide*), I would like to outline the overtones, the notion of journey reflects, in the multiple realities of existence.

The journey metaphor in postcolonial perspective situates the concept of search: a search for identity, a search for a sense of place, and a longing for situatedness—homeland. Indeed, it is a longing for the center, which is always elsewhere. To quote Stern:

The journey doesn't need to be a literal voyage It can be physical or mental, deliberate or accidental, voluntary or forced, a quest or a flight (Stern 33).

Amitav Ghose's text *The Hungry Tide* engages the motif of journey as the main thread that binds together a complex pattern of the narratives, incorporating into it such themes as myth, politics, colonialism, other forms of life, family history, and the drama of individual survival as it battles with extreme forces of nature - including dangerous rivers and forests, man-eating tigers and hurricanes.

The novel also problematises the issue of self, uprootedness, and relocation. It is about a shift from the center to the periphery.

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Simultaneously the issues of cross-culturalism come up to the fore. In this paper what I would like to present is to examine the search for a multiple spaces in the post colonial Indian perspective.

The novel chronicles the notion of journey from multicultural perspectives. It narrativises the journey of Piya, Kanai and Fokir in a completely layered reality. Piya is an American marine biologist who visits the Sunderbans to study the Orcaella, riverine dolphins which frequent the region encountering unsavoury characters and situations as obstacles to be overcome on her path to academic success. The book's other major character, Kanai Dutt, a learned Delhi businessman, has been called to the area by his aunt, who has uncovered a bundle of papers that her late husband had addressed to him. Their contents, and their whereabouts when the uncle died some years earlier, provide the mystery that Kanai must solve. Their stories are told in alternate chapters, and the romantic possibilities of their relationship are made more complex by Fokir, a married, illiterate, fisherman to whom Piya is deeply attracted. He is a key to both quests. He and Priya share no common language, but through his deep knowledge of the environment, her thirst for that knowledge and the aid they can offer each other, their communication becomes almost complete. In the novel, we see Kanai, searching for his own true identity, is attracted to Piya, and accompanies her on a trip through the Sunderbans, along with their boatman, Fokir, a simple illiterate villager, who is more in tune with nature and life than his boatmates.

The journey is a journey of the mind, the heart and the spirit. "It's a Conradian expedition, and a Forsterish collision between western assumptions and Indian reality, which throws in some Indiana Jones-style encounters with tigers and crocodiles (Hickling).

The structured, truncated urban sensitivities of the protagonists, coming from a multicultural background are confronted with a fluid, everchanging environment, reshaped daily by the 'hungry tides'. Here Ghose emphasises the ephemerality of concepts of national and ethnic identity. The multiplicity of names for the Sunderbans is a metaphor for that ephemerality. Another metaphor for ephemerality, albeit one which has a great deal of material heft behind it, is the fact that the land itself is inconstant -- subject to sometimes radical alterations as a result of late summer storms. Whole islands are washed away by the

cyclones that sweep in with huge tidal surges. Thousands of human beings and animals routinely die in these storms (Singh).

Very subtly Ghose inducts the concept of historicity into the texture of the novel and this constitutes a part of the same journey motif. This is another journey- a painful one - which makes it an exploration of the plight of the homeless refugees for a green island home, because Bangladesh, their original homeland, happened to be so green and so full of rivers. The events of Marichjhanpi come before us through Nirmal's diary, who acted as the headmaster of the Lusibari school. A revolutionary and a dreamer, he was forced to leave Kolkata and take shelter in the far-off Sunderbans for his radical beliefs. At the fag end of his life, when he retires from his school, he comes face to face with a strange reality: a group of East Bengal refugees, who left Dandyakaranya and tried to settle in Marichjhanpi were forced to abandon that island, in spite of the fact that the then left front Government of West Bengal had given them assurances that they would be given land and shelter in the Sunderbans. As Nilima (Nirmal's wife) puts it, 'Marichjhanpi ... was a tide-country island ... In 1978 the refugees trickled into West Bengal and eventually as a flood of mass migration to Morichjhapi - one of the northern-most forested islands of the Sunderbans - from where they were brutally evicted for violating the Forest Acts. The government's stated primary concern was to preserve the ecology of the Sunderbans. The use of force in Morichjhapi that resulted in the violent deaths of hundreds of refugees was seen by the Sunderbans islanders as a betrayal of the refugees and of the poor and marginalized in general. This historical incident - the eviction of refugee settlers from the island of Morichjhapi in the Sunderbans by the government of West Bengal in 1979 - is recreated in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*.

The novel's another concern is confluence of the local and the global played out in the figures of Nilima and Nirmal, culminating in the question of whether Nirmal's broader and more abstract social concern does indeed add up, as Nilima puts it, to "nothing." With regard to the natural environment, Piya and Fokir, too, stand for the local and the global. Fisherman Fokir is solidly rooted in his natural habitat but knows nothing beyond, while marine scientist Piya seems to have lost all traditional roots, insisting that she finds home wherever her study objects are. The two relate across their differences on a deeper level,

however: that of their shared, if very different, ties to the river dolphin and its natural habitat. Submerging all of his protagonists in a gigantic storm tide, Ghosh resists a marked dichotomy of the local and the global, the traditional and the modern, the seemingly irrational and the rational in the face of ecological crisis. Instead, he insists on the complexity and messiness of such seeming opposites, and on the interdependence of human and natural histories and futures. The global, in the end, is the local, and it is in the face of ecological crisis that this becomes most evident.

Ghose also weaves another metaphorical implication of the journey and that gets reflected in the volatile nature of language in which all the distancing come to a state of motionlessness. This is what constitutes one of the problems in the criticism of postcolonial literatures - a lack of language in which to resolve the complex relationships. This is explained by Chatterjee: [A]utonomous forms of imagination of the community were, and continue to be, overwhelmed and swamped by the history of the postcolonial state. Here lies the root of our postcolonial misery: not in our inability to think out new forms of the modern community but in our surrender to the old forms of the modern state. If the nation is an imagined community and if nations must also take the form of states, then our theoretical language must allow us to talk about community and state at the same time. I do not think our present theoretical language allows us to do this. (Chatterjee 11)

The mutability and mysteries of language come to the fore here. Like most of Amitav Ghosh's books, language and its mutability are a key theme. The language of science versus the language of the jungle, Bengali versus English. Kanai and Piya are a metaphor for what Ghosh calls our "translated world." Urbane, educated Kanai is a businessman who gave up his early enthusiasm for Bengali poetry to find a successful interpretation agency in New Delhi, specialising in the lucrative field of accent modification for call-centre employees. Kanai uses language as an instrument of power; he is a Delhi-based translator thriving on India's globalized economy. If Kanai represents the commodification of Indian languages, Piya stands for their suppression. Raised in Seattle, she remembers Bengali simply as the language her parents argued in. She knows only the language of her adopted country; straining for a Bangla word—*gamchha*—for checkered towel, Piya wonders, "How do you lose a word? Does it vanish into your memory, like an old toy

in a chest, and lie hidden in the cobwebs and dust, waiting to be cleaned out or rediscovered?" Although Piya has abandoned emotional language for the pure, objective discourse of science, Kanai senses that they share a wavelength. Both characters, one devoted to penetrating the secrets of nature, the other occupied with venturing deep into the interior of other languages, find themselves adrift on a tide of shifting tongues. The archipelago of the Sundarbans is India's doormat, settled and resettled by every wave of migrants, and as the waters are neither wholly fresh nor salt, they are awash with many linguistic currents: "Bengali, English, Arabic, Hindi, Arakanese and who knows what else? ... they create a proliferation of small worlds."

Yet the defining incidents of the novel occur when the limitations of language are exposed, causing it to break down altogether. Piya does not take the services of Kanai as an interpreter to communicate with Fokir, virtually an illiterate fellow. Kanai says: "I think you'll be able to manage perfectly well without a translator" (333). In the book's most defining and musical moment, Fokir recites the legend of Bon Bibi - mythical tiger goddess of the tide country - while Kanai attempts to translate: "Suddenly the language and the music were all around her, flowing like a river, and all of it made sense ... Although the sound of the voice was Fokir's, the meaning was Kanai's, and in the depths of her heart she knew she would always be torn between the one and the other." The fluidity of communication in a transcultural perspective is very important. If closely scrutinized, it stands conspicuous that it is the question of journey that envelopes all the issues. The search for self, identity, and space, whatever its nature might be, get duly attested in the narrative design of the text. That the problematics of the notion of journey in the post-colonial perspective get a serious and mounting significance is testified by its proof in a polyphonic text like *The Hungry Tide*.

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11

The God of Small Things: Fictionalized Facts and Factualized Fiction

Dr. Vellikkeel Raghavan

Critics and professional reviewers unite in their assessment that Arundhati Roy's literary debut, *The God of Small Things*, appears to be, by and large, an autobiographical fiction or fictionalised autobiography. At the same time the text being a fiction according to generic classification, its representation of specific socio-historical facts or illustrations of actually existing or existed individuals forfeits all claims of accidental resemblances, thereby turning this internationally acclaimed literary masterpiece, by an Indian woman-writer in English, into an ideal site for intense political discourse. In critical readings, the frequent textual allusions to actual socio-political events and real-life figures are definite pointers to the undeniable political and social prejudices of the author. In such a contextualisation, these accidental similarities or resemblances could no longer be neglected and pushed to the peripheral. Avoiding a possible slippage into the fallacy of fictional realism, this article offers some fresh critical re-assessment and political commentary on the novel.

For weaving out this social tapestry of Kerala of 1950s and 1960s, the author clubs together volumes of factual elements with exact historical dates and numerous layers of fictional fragments. In spite of its over-all emotional appeal and easy readability, most of the socio-political components here remain to be an unmixable mix, especially for a reader who is familiar with the society that is depicted throughout. In other words, the persistent inseparability of facts and fiction remains to be a major ideological challenge with this work.

The virtually incomprehensible and indistinct boundary between fact and fiction could be one of the key ingredients of postmodern narratives. The accessibility to historical "facts" lies open to all who are ready to check the relevant recorded documents. Whereas the accessibility to fictitious beliefs, which exist or existed in a society, is guaranteed only to those who lived in that specific society. Only a highly focused reflective revisit to these factual events and fictional

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narratives can distinguish between the real and the imagined. In short, facts that are fictionalised yield to empirical accessibility; while factualised fictions, which exist or existed in a society, offer accessibility only to the level of lived experience of the natives in that particular locale. The former can be checked and verified. The latter can only be experienced or felt. On this relative complexity of overlapping fiction and fact, in literary narratives, Rockwell notes that:

There are two general categories of fact which may be obtained through fiction: one is specific information about whether a social institution or custom exists or existed in the society which produced the fiction The other, and more important, is the information about the values, norms, and expectations in the society, which are inferred from the attitudes of character and their behaviour. (Rockwell , 1974: 117)

In *The God of Small Things* fictionalisation of facts starts right from the topographical setting of the novel itself. The place where this *sthalpurana* (chronicle of a locale) is located is Ayamanam, a locality near to Kottayam. The author makes only some rearrangements in the vowel phonemes of the proper noun to change the real Ayamanam into her fictional Ayemenem. Krishnakumar brings into light the relation between the real Ayamanam and the fictional Ayemenem, where there was no “zebra-crossing” on the main road (103). Regarding the fictionalization of the lived or still living people, let us start with the female protagonist of the novel, Ammu. She is believed to be the mirror image of Mary Roy, Arundhati’s mother. On this resemblance, Mary Roy admits:

It’s me, more or less. It was much worse in real life. The question then was how welcome I was when I returned [to her home in Kerala from her husband] with two children. Ammu was thrown out of her house. I was also thrown out of the house and I had the children with me. In the novel Ammu dies within twenty-three years because of her sufferings, but I survived. (25-26)

Although many illusionary and fictional characteristics were attributed to Mary Roy, especially by bringing a totally fictitious character, Velutha, to her personal domain, Ammu stands more or less as a replica

of Mary Roy who had suffered a lot from the patriarchal domestic environment and the Catholic religious establishment for going for an inter-religious marriage followed by a denouement separation. Mary Roy identifies herself with the predicament of the fictional Ammu by saying, “There was much trauma for me in the sixties as Kottayam didn’t accept me as I was a woman separated from my husband. We were not divorcees, though I tried to hide the same from my children” (26). But this dilemma of a separated mother somehow ignited and agonized the tender heart of Arundhati, then a child, who was fond of reading a lot that enabled her to touch the core of things and happenings. To put it in a nutshell the fictional protagonist Ammu inescapably represents the author’s real mother Mary Roy almost entirely.

The Rhodes scholar in this family saga, Chacko, too has a factual counterpart in the author’s life. On the resemblance between the fictional character Chacko and his real self, George Isaac, the real uncle of Arundhati, clarifies: “But practically all the characters are real. Sometimes she [Arundhati] modifies and combines. She has described me very vividly in the book. And Ammu. Ammu is Mary, every bit of her. There is no Sophie Mol. She is fiction” (Krishnakumar 106-7).

The twins, Esther and Rachel, having a “Single Siamese Soul”, too have real counterpart in the author’s life. Though they were not twins by birth, Arundhati and her brother, Lalit Kumar, take up the mask of Rahel and Estha respectively in the novel. But the imaginative author brings down their actual eighteen months difference in birth to mere eighteen minutes in the fictional representation. Through this sort of blending of autobiographical and imaginative pieces the author maintains that, “the texture is autobiographical, the incidents are not” (Sing 4). The fictionalisation of the author’s kins doesn’t end here. About the fictional character Baby Kochamma, Mary Roy says that, “Baby Kochamma is my mother’s sister who died with her jealousy” (Krishnakumar 106-7). Besides these, Arundhati’s real grandfather Rev. Rao Bahadur John Kurian is also fictionalised as E. John Ipe in the novel. According to Aymanam John, even the elephant Kochuthompan in the novel is the little elephant of Ayamanam whose real name was Kochukomban (28).

Apart from the fictionalisation of real individuals, it is the fictionalisation of the authentic socio-cultural events of Kerala in the 1950s and 60s that makes the text politically vibrant. Most of such

events do have tremendous ideological overtones. One of such major historical events that get fictionalised is the *Vimochana Samaram* (Liberation Struggle) of 1959. Historically it was a mass movement, against the budding communist movement in the state, incited by the Catholic Church and the opposition Congress Party, with a direct involvement of the right-wing media of the state. The political goal of this movement was to overthrow the incumbent Communist Government. This well-orchestrated partisan politico-religious movement culminated in the dismissal of the first communist government of the state. This historical fact is fictionally described in the novel as: “Over the next two years [after the swearing in of the first communist government in Kerala] the political discord, fuelled by the Congress and the Church, slid in anarchy...Nehru dismissed the Communist government and announced fresh elections. The Congress party returned to power” (68). What the author conveniently forgets is the fact that the consequent election was conducted under the authoritarian presidential rule with the intention of achieving intended outcome. This kind of selective memory exposes the political orientation of the novelist.

Consciously or unconsciously the author passes many political comments throughout the fictional discourse. Only by gathering the factual fragments present in the fictional realm and juxtaposing them with the political facts which are intentionally omitted by the novelist can one conclude that, “Arundhati Roy hits the socio-political ball of Kerala society” (Dasan 30). In this context, many contemporary questions like communism, casteism, patriarchy have to be reevaluated through the prism of sociological analysis. The conspicuous international catapult of Kerala happened in 1957 with the first ever-elected communist government’s ascendancy. Since then the word “Communism” has been incessantly reverberating in the state’s socio-cultural spheres. This peculiar leniency as well the phobia to a particular political ideology has undoubtedly created a permanent rupture in the mindscape of the citizenry of the state. Responses to literary texts are also still not free from this factional interests prevailing in this society. Accordingly, the initial responses to *The God of Small Things* in the state too were distinctly categorised into the pro-communist and anti-communist appraisals.

Communism as a practical political programme, not as a theoretical doctrine, is the focal point of the author’s criticism. She criticises the alleged follies of communists by presenting the communist

characters like comrade K. N. M. Pillai. Nowhere does she attempt any theoretical criticism on ideological communism. There is virtually no communist character in the novel who personifies the ideal; almost all of them are presented as perverts. Comrade K. N. M. Pillai is presented as a chameleon-like, wife-beating, greedy politician who doesn’t protect even the card-holding member of the party, Velutha, by his deliberate omission in the police station “to mention that Velutha was a member of the Communist Party” (232). Comrade Pillai is depicted as inciting the workers against their factory *Modalali* (owner), Chacko. At the same time, through the backdoor Pillai canvasses business orders for his printing press from the same *modalali*. He sends son, Lenin, abroad to work for a foreign embassy. Lenin is reported to have changed his name into P. Levin as his former name reminded something overtly political. Therefore, by presenting Comrade Pillai in this manner Arundhati was registering a sweeping generalization that like all politicians, communists also are corrupt and dishonest. The anti-communist pronouncements of the writer, a familial inheritance which she hides, materialise in the form of deformed depictions of almost all characters who show some explicit leniency towards this particular ideology. Even the faceless participants in a communist-procession are also shown as hurling abuses against the aristocratic Baby Kochamma. Chacko, the Rhodes scholar, was presented as having some intellectual sympathy towards ideological communism. This “communist”, described as a “Marxist with a feudal libido... Rumbled porcupine, a tortured Marxist at war with an impossible, incurable, romantic” (245). These direct statements and many other specific implications unconsciously reveal the author’s political orientation. “The communist [who] don’t believe in ghosts” (200) are intentionally converted, by the author, into people who have no ethics and morality. On another occasion, by the description of a group of children playing with a red flag, she implies that the Communist revolution is only a child’s fantasy: “a Twin Revolution with a Puff” (202). It is these highly charged anti-communist comments that made the novel a remarkably popular one among the anti-communist circles of the cosmopolitan intelligentsia.

George Isaac, the author’s uncle, who is fictionalised as the Chacko of the novel, authenticates political atmosphere of the time as:

There was a very genuine fear of communism in the Christian community in Ayamanam. Fear, ignorance and dislike. But they did not

take any decisive action. They remained too frightened for that. Despite the fact it was a Christian conclave, the caste system and the problems of untouchability were also real. Communities were very sharply defined. (Krishnakumar 107)

This comment by the real counterpart of fictional Chacko makes it clear that Arundhati's anti-communist prejudices are never unintentional, or for the sake of mere fictional effect. Her childhood experiences along with what she had gathered from the anti-communist domestic atmosphere made her cynical of the movement.

Considering these evidences, one cannot simply bypass that the author's political pronouncements as simply innocent and aimless. The description of the real political personality like E.M.S.Namboodirippad [known as 'EMS', a pioneer of the communist movement in the state and the first communist chief minister] as a "flamboyant Brahmin high-priest of Marxism in Kerala" (67), "a Soviet Stogee" and as a "running dog" (69) etc. cannot be belittled as done by Dasan by remarking that "Many of them are emotional" (32). Historically these derogatory terms were/are used against the Maxists by the political opposition as a part of their anti-communist campaign. Such an anti-communist hangover still persists in the author, according to Ajax Ahmad, who says, "Her ideological position to communism is not in itself surprising; it is very much a sign of the times, in the sense that hostility towards the communist movement is now fairly common among radical sections of the cosmopolitan intelligentsia in India and abroad" (103).

An artist who depicts actual historical figures and events cannot enjoy the absolute bail of poetic license. These sorts of pronouncements on the lived-history of a society should be analysed and evaluated thoroughly. So a political trial of the author is necessary to reveal her political preferences and predispositions. Hence, the treatment of EMS, along with other communist characters should be theoretically considered. In doing so one cannot help but agree with Aijaz Ahmad who opines:

References to Namboodirippad...belong straight in the realm of libel and defamation. It is simply not true that his ancestral house exists anywhere near Kottayam [as mentioned by the author]; or that it has been turned into a tourist hotel where communists serve as waiters. Naming an actual historical figure and ascribing him

degradations that bear no resemblances to actuality has nothing to do with artistic license. It is spite, pure and simple. (103)

One of the other contemporary questions dealt with in this novel is, what has been termed by the bourgeois media as, 'aggressive trade unionism', which came along with the communist movement in Kerala. Of course, trade union activity is a widespread phenomenon in almost all industry or service sectors in the state. The envious spread of literacy and the consequent awakening of consciousness of their rights among the working class prompted them to organise themselves to fight against ruthless exploitation and for a dignified working atmosphere in the work places. This sense of unity among the proletariat is often looked at with awe and suspicion by the bourgeoisie. In order to tarnish the image of trade unions, and thereby harness them, the right-wing media always used to sensationalise and exaggerate the isolated incidents of violence in labour related issues. In *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati describes the trade union activity in the Paradise Pickles and Preservers factory rather scornfully. On the closure of this factory, the author implies that it was because of the aggressive trade union activities. In actuality the unions have played a very positive role in the welfare of the working class in the state. Even though in fictional narration the author doesn't agree with trade unionism, which in always diligently protected the interests of labourers, in an interview with Praveen Swamy, she admits:

I feel a certain pride that in Kerala, compared to almost anywhere as in India, people are much more dignified. Not necessarily though, because of their politics, but because of an awareness of their own rights. Every labourer is aware of his own rights. What this has done to the state economically, I don't know, but it has certainly given people a dignity they don't have elsewhere. (20)

But, Arundhati is reluctant to admit that this awareness is nothing but a direct result of the timely intervention of the left-oriented trade union movements in all labour related issues.

Another major political undercurrent of the time called in question by the author is that of Naxalism. It is again a historical reality that in

the late 1960s and the early 1970s a formidable faction of the mainstream communist party, the CPI [M], broke away and formed an extremist group, the CPI[ML] – popularly known as the Naxalites. This faction believed in armed struggle, rather than ballot battle for the final settlement of the class question. The landed feudal gentry were much frightened of the die-hard cadres of the Naxalite organizations. This politico-historical fact is brought into the fictional world by the author as:

In Kerala they breathed a plume of excitement and fear into the already frightened air. Filling had begun in the North. That May there was a blurred photograph in the papers, of a landlord in Palakkad who had been tied to a lamppost and beheaded (70). ...Peking switched its patronage to the newest most militant faction of the CPI [M] – Naxalites – who had staged an armed insurrection in Naxalbari, a village in West Bengal. They organized peasants into fighting cadres, seized lands, expelled the owners and established people's courts to try the class enemies. The Naxalite movement spread across the country and struck terror in every bourgeois' heart. (68)

Reading *The God of Small Things* from a political standpoint, it seems that this novel is not purely innocent, impartial or neutral. This argument can be validated by simply considering the fact that Arundhati's narrative style takes the form of factual reporting whenever she deals with the political content. She takes up the role of a journalist or historian while dealing with the political theme. Look at the following paragraph for her deviation from fictional narration to factual reporting:

During his second term in office, comrade EMS went about implementing the peaceful transition more soberly. This earned him the wrath of the Chinese communist party. They denounced him for his 'parliamentary cretinism' and accused him of 'providing relief to the people and thereby blunting the people's consciousness and diverting them from revolution'. (68)

These statements have nothing fictional in them, but are rendered as historical information. The EMS government's distribution of the surplus land to the landless masses were criticised by the radical Marxists, and, of course, by the Chinese Communist Party, as an anti-

Marxian measure because of Marxism ultimately believes in revolution not reformation. Again, quite surprisingly and with an extreme ahistorical sense, Arundhati tries to blame the communists for the prevailing casteism in the state declaring that, "As a reformist movement that [communism] never questioned the traditional values of caste-ridden, extremely traditional community. The Marxists, worked from *within* communal divides, never challenging them, never appearing not to" (66). These comments seem to be political statements, rather than fictional descriptions. The author's blaming of the communists for the prevailing caste system in the state cannot claim any historical authenticity and intellectual integrity. It is a historical fact that the communists in the state have been effectively questioning the demeaning casteism along with economic exploitation. Putting together all these historical facts, one can say that *The God of Small Things* is a documentation of the history of Kerala. But this is not a realistic documentation. Rather, along with the selective and manipulative documentation, the author mainly tries to factualise some of the political rumours, especially those against the Marxists.

Arundhati's textual utterances come close to that of the anti-communist propaganda. According to Aijaz Ahmad, with this she becomes a representative the anti-communist camp that upholds a regressive radicalism. In the treatment of caste and gender issues, the author tries to be idealistic. However her handlings of the real-politick content exposes all her political prejudices. Throughout the text the author attempts at malignant manipulation of the communist politics, by the presentation of all communists as perverts. Class tensions are presented as caste-conflicts in disguise, and feudal magnanimity is glorified by the purposeful vulgarisation of communist activities. Politically this novel is about the spread of Communism in Kerala. This comprises the dismissal of the first-ever democratically elected communist government's dismissal, about the ideological conflicts in the party and the Naxalite flood of the late 1960s. To sum up, this sort of historical contextualisation of *The God of Small Things* turns this 'hauntingly personal novel' into a fictionalised account of some selective *political fictions* and manipulated historical facts which consequently expose the author's unconscious political prejudices and preferences.

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16

Metaphor and Metonymy in the *Sari Shop*

Rajbir Kaur

Jacques Lacan has modernized Freudian theory through language. He postulates that the unconscious is structured like language or language creates unconscious. To support his view he has drawn upon Saussure's concept of 'linguistic sign' and Roman Jakobson's idea of 'metaphor' and 'metonymy'. He has connected Saussure's 'syntagmatic' and 'paradigmatic' level with Jakobson's 'metaphoric' and 'metonymic' level and further emphasized the correspondence of 'metaphor' and 'metonymy' with Freud's 'condensation' and 'displacement'. In any signifying chain metaphor and metonymy co-exist and also show the tendency of overlapping.

Metaphor is the substitution of one word for another and metonymy is based on the word to word connexion. Both of these terms of Jakobson create an additional pair of crosswise relationships:

The psychical mechanism by which neurotic symptoms are produced involves the pairing of two signifiers – unconscious sexual trauma and changes within, or actions by, the body and is thus metaphorical, whereas unconscious desire, indestructible and insatiable as it is, involves a constant displacement of energy from object to object and is thus metonymic.¹

Lacan describes these fundamental structures by the algorithm. Metonymic structure is defined with the help of equation:

$$f(S \dots S\phi) \quad S @ S (-) s$$

It indicates that:

It is the connexion between signifier and signifier that permits the elision in which the signifier installs the lack-of-being in the object relation, using the value of 'reference back' possessed by signification in order to invest it with the desire aimed at the very lack it supports. The sign placed between () represents here the maintenance of the bar.²

The metaphoric structure is defined as :

$$\begin{array}{c} S' \\ f \text{ — } S @ S (+) s \\ S \end{array}$$

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It indicates that to produce an effect of signification one signifier is substituted for another signifier. Here, the sign (+) represents the crossing of the bar.

The narrative of the Sari Shop displays the interplay of metaphor and metonymy.

Lacan has related language with the unconscious. In his view unconscious is structured like language or language creates unconscious. To support his view he has drawn upon Saussure's concept of 'linguistic sign' and Roman Jakobson's idea of 'metaphor' and 'metonymy'. He links Saussure's 'syntagmatic' and 'paradigmatic' level with Jakobson's 'metaphoric' and 'metonymic' level. He further emphasizes the correspondence of metaphor and metonymy with Freud's 'condensation' and 'displacement'. In any signifying chain metaphor and metonymy co-exist and show the tendency of overlapping.

The narrative of *The Sari Shop* displays the interplay of metaphor and metonymy. Sevak Sari Shop becomes the signifying chain in which many signifiers find their place, interact with each other and sometimes overlap. The sari shop is also a signifier in it self, which signifies the multifarious society that is further, signified by various other signifiers. So the shop becomes the metaphor of multilayered social system comprising different people belonging to different professions. As the shop serves as a backdrop for presenting multiple images, various signifiers seem to be condensed in one metaphoric setting. Interaction between different signifiers connects them with each other. They pass through different power relations, which determine their identity.

Lacan has applied his concepts to Edgar Allan Poe's story 'The Purloined Letter'. Like that purloined letter Ramchand becomes 'a pure migratory signifier' who passes from place to place "and moves from point to point within a complex web of inter subjective perceptions" and "mediates different kinds of power relationships and determines

subjects in what they do and are."¹ He comes in contact of customers belonging to varying ranks of society, via the sari shop. He gets acquainted with the Kapoors and Guptas who are powerful and rich people and miserable Kamla and his colleagues Chander and Gokul, whose main concern is their existential needs.

On metaphoric as well as metonymic level Ramchand and Kamla get connected with each other. They are metaphors of revolt against injustice, ill treatment and brutality inflicted on the powerless by the powerful. Kamla rebuking and hurting Guptas and Mr. Kapoor, and Ramchand insulting and challenging Mahajan seem to stand on same plane. Kamla's mental angst finds an outlet in her bodily actions. She dares to be foul-mouthed and even dares to attack Mr. Kapoor with a stone. Ramchand's psychic trauma leads him to wander without purpose and also becomes the cause of his aggressiveness towards Mahajan. Metonymically, there is the displacement of energy from one object to another. Kamla challenges the authoritative people and same revolutionary power overpowers Ramchand when he listens about Kamla's doom and he revolts against Mahajan's authority. Chander's action of beating his wife habitually is also metonymical. He cannot revolt against his employers but mental disturbance given by them gives birth to an unconscious desire to hurt them, which he fulfils while beating Kamla.

Ramchand himself is a victim of injustice like Kamla. After the death of his parents, his uncle usurps his father's property. He is left with nothing except his eighth standard certificate and a tin trunk but accepts his fate without saying anything. His desire to revolt remains suppressed in his unconscious. It comes to the forefront when he listens about Kamla's tragedy. His avoidance of Lakhan Singh's tragic story of his sons who became victims of Operation Blue Star is an attempt to suppress his unconscious desire about which he himself is not aware. There is a connection between all these events which allow Ramchand to invest his desire aimed at the very lack they support. Fate of Kamla shakes him and he feels sympathetic to all such victims. It is at that time he goes to Lakhan Singh to share his grief and consoles him saying "just don't worry, I will do something. These things can't just go on happening. Everything will change one day."²

His words show the connection between different tragedies including his own and his desire to revolt against 'these things' fills his

earlier lack of it. At metonymic level his object of desire shifts from his uncle, aunt, Kapoors and Guptas to Mahajan. He rebukes Chander and Hari also. He holds Mahajan from his collar which shows metaphorically his revolt against the whole system which is corrupt, hard hearted and full of injustice and leaves no place for humble creatures. Here, different objects of desire condense into one.

Some other events are also there which can be seen metaphorically as well as metonymically. Weddings of Rina Kapoor and Kamla also serve as signifiers in this signifying system. These are two distinct events whose connection with each other serves the novelist's purpose of presenting a multifarious or multi-layered society. Granidose and flamboyant wedding of Rina is contrasted with Kamla's highly frugal wedding. On the one side there is a grand dinner with forty desserts, Rina's hands and feet covered with beautiful henna patterns by a Rajasthani mehndi-wali, her Delhi based beautician, her lehnga with real gold thread designed by a Bombay based fashion designer and her preparation for her wedding day in her own way ignoring the instructions of others. On the other side there is the smell of laddus everywhere, circles made with henna on Kamla's both palms by her sister-in-law with a matchstick, shiny synthetic red salwaar kameez bought at cheap rate by her brother from his factory where he works with a dyed matching red chunni with golden gota at its edges sewn by Kamla herself and her aunt's instructions to her in every matter present a clear-cut distinction between different and extreme layers of the same society. It further gets connected with Ramchand's new way of looking at things-'every coin has two sides' that he has read from his essay book. Daily happenings in the sari shop also give evidence of his new belief. "A particular sari, disdainfully, rejected by one woman, would be eagerly pounced upon by another". (p.96)

Kamla also has a belief that turmeric stains do not go, no matter how hard you scrub. This belief is suggestive of the idea that one cannot escape from harsh realities of life. Turmeric stains shift into blood-stains when Kamla is raped by two policemen. These stains also clear her impossible escape from the brutality of the policemen. Ramchand sees rust colour stains on her sari and listens to her account of policemen's behaviour. Her words crawl into his ears like worms and embed themselves in his brain. His mind becomes 'panic-stained'. He feels wetness on his palm. He thinks that Kamla's blood is wetting

his hand but when he checks, he finds it is wet with rum, which is lying on the floor. 'Panic stained' he comes to his room. To get rid of his restlessness, he decides to wash his bed sheet and pillow cover. His pillow cover has oil stains on it. He feels its stickiness against his fingers and scrubs it hard intently trying to remove its stains. At metonymic level the image of stains shifts from turmeric to bloodstains and then to oil stains. But metaphorically these images condense to present the idea of escape. Like Kamla, for Ramchand also it seems hard to escape from his state of mind. His unconscious desire to remove blood stains from Kamla's sari, his desire to do something for her, his desire to remove injustice from society metaphorically finds an outlet through his action of removing stains from pillow cover.

In the sari shop, a great variety of saris with different shades or colours are metaphors of different idiosyncrasies. When Mrs. Bhandari and Mrs. Sachdeva visit the shop to buy a sari, Ramchand shows them various shades - orange, red, golden etc. But they feel irritated and clarify that they want a decent colour. Mrs. Sachdeva says, "I want some decent colours, not orange and gold and all. Something to wear to college, not a village fair". (P. 28). They try to make him understand that they want nothing shiny'. Mrs. Sachdeva "liked to look plain and business like. She wasn't one of the vain, housewives that this city was so full of. She was a literate woman, Head of an English Department." (P. 28). Their choice for a subdued colour shows their highly developed and sophisticated dressing sense. They are knowledgeable. They don't want any noticeable or distracting shades as they know what suits to their personality.

Rina Kapoor's choice regarding her trousseau gives the evidence of her refined taste. She chooses colours of her own choice to look different from other brides on her wedding day. She is particular regarding her make-up and gets it done from a Delhi based beautician. She says:

I was so afraid that these people in Amritsar would ruin my looks. Imagine my wedding pictures, showing my cheeks red with rouge, three necklaces hanging around my neck, shiny scarlet, lipstick and garish eye shadows. (P. 127). The colours, which she condemns, are liked by most of the brides. This clears her uncommon idiosyncrasy.

Kamla's attraction towards luminous red glass beads and her insistence to wear the string of those red beads on her wedding day represents her commonplace taste. She is illiterate and is going to be a housewife. Her taste grows according to her own atmosphere in which she lives.

Besides these colour symbols there are some other metaphors also which are suggestive of one or another thing. White flowers of Kamla's sari that have turned rust red are suggestive. White is the symbol of purity and innocence and white turned rust red suggests loss of purity. Another symbol used in the novel is 'lathi'. 'Lathi' is a metaphor of authority of powerful over poor and helpless. 'Lathi' is also a symbol of protecting power, which checks the wrong doers. Here is a paradox. The power, which should defend innocents, is the power that dominates them. Same is the case with the policeman. He represents a protecting figure and also the authority of law. But he becomes a dominating force who instead of protecting helpless people treats them brutally. Alcohol is a metaphor of loss of control and escape from the harsh realities. Kamla consumes it to escape from the miserable realities of her life. To conclude, the narrative of *The Sari Shop* develops on metonymic as well as metaphoric level. Different events are closely connected with each other. Characters are related with each other metonymically and also have metaphoric value. The author has used suitable symbols to contribute to its metaphoric and metonymic progression. These two concepts go hand in hand and also overlap sometimes creating crosswise relationships.

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The Enigma of Cultural Encounter in *Desirable Daughters*

Manpreet Punia

Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* fits well within the parameters of Bromley's comment about various diasporic fictions being "written from the affective experience of social marginality, from a disjunctive, fragmented, displaced agency, and from the perspective of the edge" (Bromley, 2000:1). The novel is by, and concerns itself with, those who are displaced and are facing the inherent question of belonging. Mukherjee has shown two sisters, Padma and Tara, . . . undergoing absolutely oppositional experiences of cultural acclimatization. Almost the entire text uses Bakhtin's concept of the dialogical "as one means of challenging the oppositional presumptions of border, division, exclusionary thought and absolute difference" (Bromley, 2000:2). Padma's expatriate voice shows a resistance to absorption in the alien culture, whereas Tara's immigrant voice, similar to that of Mukherjee, shows a desire to merge with the adopted culture.

Multiplicity, ambivalence, inauthenticity are the characteristics of culturally sandwiched women, whose sense of marginalisation, search for roots and attempts at self-definition are perennial. The present paper primarily aims to study such women's intercultural positionality in this novel, by enlarging the concepts of expatriation and immigration. Multiple voices arise out of a mixture of cultures. An effort has been made to study the displaced voice trying to locate its center through a never-ending dialogue of 'self with 'other'.

The cross-border dialogue leads to the dual marginalisation of women - one, culture-based and the other, sex-based - as they become the victims of "racist gaze" and "male gaze" (Rai, 2004:205). The cross-cultural discourse pushes the displaced women into a position of temporality, where 'other' places, 'other' times, and the past continue to creep in and take over the present. Such diasporic women, who create a hole in the present to peep into the past, are called 'expatriates'. Padma fits perfectly in the expatriate mould. "Change is corruption; she seemed to be saying. Take what America can give, but don't let it

tarnish you in any way.” (DD: 134). Expatriation, as defined by Christine Gomez, is a complex state of mind and emotion, which includes awistful longing for the past. . . . The expatriate builds a cocoon around herself/himself as a refuse from cultural dilemmas and from the experienced hostility or unfriendliness in the new country (Gomez, 1995:72). Padma’s “clinging to a version of India and to Indian ways and Indian friends and Indian clothes and food and a ‘charming’ accent,” (DD: 134) is an evidence that she has formed a cocoon around herself, to prevent the American culture from penetrating it. According to Avtar Brah : “Not all diasporas inscribe homing desire through a wish to return to a place of ‘origin’ “ (Brah, 2003:193). Padma is one such example who stayed on in America, but formed a little Indian community by colliding with the diasporic subjects, and reassembling and reconfiguring her memories of those encounters. In the nearly twenty-five years that she has been in the U.S., she has become more Indian than when she left Calcutta. She is a ‘multi-cultural performing artist’ for local schools . . . and community centres, staging mythological evenings, with readings, slide shows, recitations and musical accompaniments. (DD:94). Padma seems to have collected the rags, patches and scraps of her Calcutta days and weaved them into the texture of the future without severing the nostalgic anchoring in the past.

With the world shrinking into a global village, the national and cultural boundaries have become porous making border crossing more frequent and accessible. As a result, the whole concept of diasporic consciousness is mutating. Instead of the ‘homing desire’ of an expatriate, a new immigrant sensibility is emerging. An immigrant has a metamorphic or fluid identity. Without annihilation, during the process of dislocation, an immigrant recreates the ‘self. This trait of a fluid identity is clearly depicted in Frantz Fanon’s statement: “In this world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself” (Ifekwunigwe, 2003:184). Tara, the narrator of this novel, depicts one such immigrant or hybrid identity, who, in order to avoid being viewed as ‘the other’ escapes the ghetto existence and adapts to the patterns of dominant culture. Through hybridity she recreates a new self.

The displaced voice of Tara indulges in a constant dialogue between ‘self and ‘other’. This constant dialogue justifies Bakhtin’s notion that nothing exists independently and we all live lives of ‘simultaneity’ i.e. there is no ‘self without the ‘other’.

Immigration does not imply severing the deep connections in the past. It is an assimilatory phase where the subject is able to accept and love two homes without conflict and ambivalence. Tara admits: That dusty identity is as fixed as any specimen. in a lepidopterist’s glass case, confidently labeled by father’s religion (Hindu), caste (Brahmin), sub-caste (Kulin), mother tongue (Bengali), place of birth (Calcutta), . . . (DD:78).

The cross-cultural experience may relegate this ‘dusty identity’ to a secondary position, but is not able to fade it completely. An immigrant subject like Tara, may grow out of her nostalgic yearning and take refuge in cultural acclimatization, yet she does not allow her original identity to succumb to the new ‘self. This observation is justified through Anita Desai’s statement:

I don’t think anybody’s exile from society can solve any. problem. . . . problem is how to exist in society and yet maintain one’s individuality rather than suffering from a lack of society and a lack of belonging. . . . (Desai, 1987: 15).

Tara being aware of the history, the dual existence and alternate realities takes a path forward to redefine her hopes, aspirations, roles and goes to Mishtigunj (in India) for a ‘roots search’. Perhaps the show of a ‘self, fully acclimatized to the alien culture is ultimately only a flimsy, fragile cover hiding a vulnerable woman going back in search of her roots.

Cultural conflict in all its multiplicity forms the crux Mukherjee creative accomplishments. Her works mostly represent the movement from expatriation to immigration, which coincides with her own movement from Canada to U.S.A. Mukherjee refers to it as “a movement . . . away from the aloofness of expatriation, to the exuberance of immigration” (Mukherjee, 1990:2-3).

Mukherjee’s existence, like most of her diasporic characters, is a dialogic event, which is the result of ‘addressivity’ and ‘speaking across’ i.e. she has to constantly respond to the utterances from the various worlds that she passes through. Tara in *Desirable Daughters* closely resembles Mukherjee as far as her adaptation or assimilation is concerned. Like Tara’s ‘dusty identity’, Mukherjee’s past, continuing to haunt her present, is vividly portrayed in her statement:

I see my “immigrant” story replicated in a dozen American Cities, . . . I see most of these as stories of broken identities and discarded languages, and the will to bond oneself to a new community against the ever present fear of failure and betrayal (Mukherjee, 1990:3).

Having closely scrutinized the diasporic experiences of Mukherjee and Tara, we are in a position to answer the question raised in the beginning of this paper. Tara and Mukherjee may overtly show their complete hybridization or acclimatization with the alien culture. But embedded deep in their psyche is the echoing voice of Padma that constantly reminds Tara of a ‘dusty identity’ and Mukherjee of the ‘ever-present fear of failure and betrayal’. This inherent voice strikes a chord of nostalgia and desire for home in them, preventing them from merging completely with the adopted culture: Tara’s search for her *Toots* and Mukherjee’s constant literary creations based on diasporic experiences, hint at the strong link that these characters have with their past.

In conclusion, one can see that the multiple voices arising out of the cross-cultural narrative result in the ‘never-finalised interactivity’ of dialogism in this novel. Hence, the displaced voice feels lost in the enigma of cultural encounter, and is never able to locate a center.

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Songs of Silence

The fourth collection of Kullbhushan Kushal's poems has been released. These poems mark the poet's concern for human predicament in the technology governed contemporary world and fast crumbling of established values. Conveyed in an effective evocative style and fresh images his poetic messages sensitize the readers to new reality orientations.

Introducing Bakhtin

Anand Bajaj

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A Russian philosopher, literary critic, and scholar, Mikhail Bakhtin is one of those few theorists who have had a tremendous impact on English literary theory in the later part of twentieth century. Bakhtin was born in Orel, a town near Moscow in the year 1895. As a child, Bakhtin not only learnt his native Russian but also German because his governess was a German lady. Thus Bakhtin grew up in a polyglot family. This presence of heterogeneous ideas, cultures and languages at home was powerfully reinforced by his early experience in the polyglot cities Vilnius and Odessa where he spent his childhood. Living in Vilnius, Odessa and St. Petersburg, Bakhtin realized that polyglot and heterogeneous ideas prevented one from adopting any rigid ideological position. He also realized that there can be multiple language systems within a single language. This helped him work out the concepts of polyglossia and heteroglossia.

After the First World War, Bakhtin studied at St. Petersburg University. He was trying to formulate his theories of language and dialogics but the times were unpropitious. He worked under the most adverse conditions, including exile, scholarly neglect, and life at the edge of Russian intellectual life far removed from the great libraries. After Lenin's death, Stalin imposed his own views upon the populace. Any view point other than that of socialist realism was dubbed anti-revolutionary and bourgeois; and was crushed. Bakhtin tried to show how texts and cultures were actually hybrid constructions of heterogeneous elements. This heterogeneity and plurality entailed carnivalization of discursive practices and implied dialogization rather than a dialectical materialistic procedure. This Bakhtinian perspective was contrary to the monological, authoritarian and reductionist ideology of socialist realism.

The authorities were understandably suspicious of Bakhtin's theories and he was arrested in 1930. It was a year before his arrest that he published his first major work namely *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art*. The book was revised and published in English as *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* in 1984. In this seminal work, he introduced the

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important concepts of unfinalizability, the relationship between the self and the other and most importantly polyphony. Bakhtin lived in Moscow and wrote the second major work *Rabelais and His World* in which he explored the fusion of grotesque realism with carnivalistic elements in Rabelais' work. One of the more important books of Bakhtin *The Dialogic Imagination* was published in English in 1981. It contains four essays written at different times. These essays are "Epic and Novel", "From Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse", "The Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in Novel", and the most celebrated "Discourse in the Novel". Chronotope in the third essay and heteroglossia in the last essay are the important concepts discussed in *The Dialogic Imagination*. Bakhtin never enjoyed a lot of popularity in his younger days but he became very popular in 1960s and 1970s when he was rediscovered by a group of loyal students and his work was translated into English. Julia Kristeva and Tzvetan Todorov brought Bakhtin to the center stage of Francophone literary theory and since 1980s his popularity has continued to grow all over the world.

Though Medvedev, Kagan, Voloshinov and others clustered around Bakhtin to form Bakhtin Circle yet Medvedev's, Kagan's and Voloshinov's contribution is generally believed to be comparatively less important than Bakhtin's which forms the centre of the circle's activities. The circle was concerned with an exploration of social and cultural issues arising out of Russian Revolution and its degeneration into Stalinist dictatorship. The circle believed that the linguistic production is essentially dialogic and it is formed in the process of social interaction. The authorities posit a single unalterable discourse as eternal and desirable whereas the ruled groups consciously or unconsciously subvert this monologic closure.

Bakhtin agrees with the postmodernists like Derrida that the texts have multiple meanings and no sacrosanct center, but unlike them he believes in the specificity of the dialogical relationships between authorial, narratorial and the characters' voices, all of which individually as well as collectively generate meaning. Unlike Roland Barthes Bakhtin doesn't believe that the author is dead. The author is one of the powerful voices along with equally powerful narratorial and the characters' voices which are autonomous, equal and independent.

It is difficult to classify Bakhtin because he combines the tenets of both Formalism and Marxism. He was a formalist because he was

interested in the linguistic structure of a literary work. But he did not believe that linguistic structure could be understood with the help of abstract linguistics. For him language was a social phenomenon. Like Marxists he believed that a word or an utterance changes meaning according to different social classes in different situations in which this word / utterance is spoken. Bakhtin coined various terms like heteroglossia, polyphony, dialogization and carnivalization to explain his views.

Heteroglossia is probably the most distinctive feature of novel as a genre. The word heteroglossia is a translation of the Russian word *razmorechie* which literally means multi-linguagedness. Bakhtin introduced it in his paper “*Solvo V Romane*” published in English as “*Discourse in the Novel.*”

At any given time, members of a culture speak a multitude of ‘languages’, by which Bakhtin means forms of speech shaped by a specific set of values, assumption and purposes. So there may be languages of medicine and other distinct professions, languages of teenagers and other age groups, languages of ethnic, urban and countless other kinds of communities. ‘Dialects’ are only a small part of such languages which reflect different understandings of life.

Heteroglossia also becomes a double voiced discourse as it serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions; the direct intention of the character who is speaking and the refracted intention of the author. Heteroglossia and dialogism always go together even if technically the two terms are different. Heteroglossia describes the different languages in themselves, whereas dialogism describes the way these languages interact. But heteroglossia is always dialogically arranged in the text; therefore, one cannot talk about either heteroglossia or dialogism without talking about the other. A unitary language is not something given but is always in essence posited – and at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981: 289). The voices of the subaltern groups forming centrifugal forces within heteroglossia attempt to subvert the official language of culture overtime, usually by infusing diverse, unofficial forms of language into the official forms.

Polyphony, on the other hand, refers, “precisely to the construction of the voices of characters and narrator in the novel, as its etymology — the Greek for ‘many voices’ suggests” (Vice: 112). All novels have

multiple characters but they all are not polyphonic novels because in a polyphonic novel “[c]haracters and narrators are known by their voices, rather than by any other features, ... and it is the way in which these voices are arranged that determines whether or not a work is polyphonic” (Vice: 112).

Bakhtin explains how Dostoevsky creates polyphonic novel by embodying the novelistic truth into various and multiple consciousnesses. The author is also repositioned as one of the consciousnesses. He is creator of these consciousnesses but also their equal. The unified truth of the polyphonic novel requires a plurality of consciousnesses. At times polyphony is confused with heteroglossia. Prominent critic like Roger Fowler has asserted that “polyphony is no different from heteroglossia” (96). Polyphony does ensure heteroglossia but it also creates dialogism. Therefore, polyphony is not reducible to heteroglossia. The basic difference is that polyphony means “multi-voicedness”, where as heteroglossia means “multi-linguagedness”.

In “a polyphonic novel, characters appear to be the subject of their discourse rather than the object of author’s discourse (in the mind of the reader). The reader responds to them directly without the determining influence of author or narrator. Thus the relationship between author and hero is dialogic. It means that hero is not an object for the author. The hero is like a living person (even for the author) who is independent, who has his own freedom and who is unfinalised. The relationship between author and hero is not like that of “I” and “he” but that of “I” and “you”. “You” is an independent character with his own consciousness.

The presence of polyphony in a text raises the question whether or not an author has control over his material or whether or not a polyphonic novel has an artistic design. Bakhtin himself has clarified that there is no contradiction between polyphony and authorial design. He says: “It might seem that the independence of a character contradicts the fact that he exists, entirely and solely, as an aspect of a work of art, and consequently is wholly created from beginning to end by the author. In fact there is no such contradiction. The characters’ freedom we speak of here exists within the limits of the artistic design and in that sense is just as much a created thing as is the unfreedom of the objectivized hero” (Bakhtin, 1981: 64).

The character's discourse is indeed created by the author, but "created in such a way that it can develop to the full its inner logic and independence as *some one else's discourse*, the word of *character himself*." (Bakhtin, 1981: 65). In his writings the significance of carnival in Renaissance and the Middle Ages assumes representative importance indicative of a particular form of counter culture. Bakhtin analyzed the carnivals of medieval Europe. During these carnivals the kings, noblemen and priests were made fun of and thus the political, legal and ideological authority of church and state was upturned. Carnival used to be a temporary phase and people returned to their normal lives after it was over. While discussing the revolutionary aspect of the carnival, Michael Holquist in his "Prologue" to *Rabelais and His World* states:

Carnival must not be confused with mere holiday or, least of all with self serving festivals fostered by governments, secular or theocratic. The sanction of carnival derives ultimately not from a calendar prescribed by church or state but from a force that pre exists priests and kings and to whose superior power they are actually deferring when they appear to be licensing carnival. (xviii)

The basic purpose of carnival is to upturn the dominance of any ideology that seeks to have a monologic view of the world. It also tries to find different meanings of life to find out potentials to lead an alternative style of living. Dialogism is the key concept of carnival — a plurality of "fully valid consciousnesses" (Bakhtin, 1984: 9). Each consciousness brings with it different points of view, a different way of seeing the world. Bakhtin says: "Two voices is the minimum for life, the minimum for existence" (Bakhtin, 1984: 252). Those groups which are marginalized by the dominant ideology during normal times gain a voice during carnival and comment on the ideology that dominates them. Thus the dominating and the dominated ideologies come together in a carnival and enter a free and frank communication, although each "retains its own unity and open totality, they are mutually enriched" (Bakhtin, 1984: 56). Carnival is thus a theory of resistance, a theory of freedom from all domination. Bakhtin states that carnival "is the place for working out a new mode of interrelationship between individuals ... People who in life are separated by impenetrable barriers enter into a free and familiar contact on the carnival square" (Bakhtin, 1984: 127).

In the modern literary world any act or phenomenon that challenges the set traditions is taken to be an example of carnivalization. The whole movement of feminism is a good example of carnivalization because feminists challenge the patriarchal laws and try to upturn the male centered ideology. Clive Thomson in this connection says that in spite of "his male bias, misogyny, and silence to the question of gender, Bakhtin is useful ... to the feminist project ... Bakhtin's works are seen as the source — not of specific methodology — but as a theoretical and philosophical basis which can be exploited in order to deconstruct a whole series of patriarchal myths" (158). Thus although Bakhtin does not address carnival from a gendered perspective yet it is still found worth while by feminists to use the concept because of its approach to diffuse hierarchies and to create changes within an oppressive system.

The concept of dialogue is at the core of Bakhtin's theory. It may simply be thought of vis-à-vis the conditions one associates with 'dialogue' in everyday life. Lynne Pearce explains that in essence "all thought became, for Bakhtin, a matter of 'dialogue' and 'difference': dialogue requires the pre-existence of differences, which are then connected by an act of communication to generate new ideas and positions" (Pearce in Waugh: 226).

Gary Saul Morson perceptively points out that the basic unit of dialogue is not sentence but utterance. Explaining that unrepeatable as all utterances are, all of them may not be truly dialogic, Morson says, *When an utterance's purpose belongs simply to the speaker, it is said to be monologic*; when the very point of utterance is to engage in an unpredictable dialogue with the other, in which both seek to enrich meaning by an exchange with no predictable outcome, the utterance is said to be (in this second sense) dialogic. The novel is the literary form dedicated to dramatizing this dialogic aspect of language.

The novelistic dialogism assumes different forms as one can find dialogism in many aspects of the novel's discourse. The dialogism may be intertextual, intra textual or between a text and a reader. It is variform as Bakhtin has shown in its application to novelistic discourse.

Dialogism is the organizing principle of both polyphony and heteroglossia. Bakhtin points out that an utterance lives, takes shape and becomes meaningful in only "dialogized heteroglossia anonymous and social as language, but simultaneously concrete, filled with specific

content and accented as an individual utterance.” (Bakhtin,1981: 127). Sue Vice explains that in dialogized heteroglossia “social registers of language interact in a friction-filled way to produce meaning” (Vice: 50). Polyphony is the name for one method by which heteroglossia can enter the novel, in the form of characters’ discourse; these discourses are arranged in a way which allows them maximum freedom. So not only heteroglossia is dialogized in novelistic discourse, even polyphony develops together with dialogism. An autonomous character is one that is able to stand alongside author and reply to him. Bakhtin says: “By the very construction of the novel, the author speaks not *about* a character but with him” (Bakhtin, 1984: 63). It implies that the equality of voices is ensured dialogically. The characters in a polyphonic novel remain on the same plane, so they can hear and respond to each other. As the novel is “multiform in style and variform in speech and voice” (Bakhtin, 1981: 261) and as a genre consists of a combination of distinct and interacting unities, it does include different languages. In “Discourse in the Novel”, Bakhtin has listed the following five basic types of different elements out of which a novel is usually composed: 1. Direct authorial literary-artistic narration (in all its diverse variants); 2. Stylization of the various forms of oral everyday narration (skaz); 3. Stylization of the various forms of semi-literary (written) everyday narration (the letter, the diary etc.); 4. Various forms of literary but extra-artistic authorial speech (moral, philosophical, or scientific statements, oratory, ethnographic descriptions, memoranda and so forth);5. The stylistically individualized speech of characters. (261).

In *After Bakhtin* David Lodge has summarized the above diversity of dialogized heteroglossis into three main categories:1. The direct speech of the author. 2. The represented speech of the characters. 3. Doubly oriented or ‘doubly-voiced discourse.’ It includes all speech which acknowledges not only what is being spoken about (*i.e.* the object of utterance) but also the existence of another speech act by another addressee. Bakhtin divides this double-voiced discourse into several subcategories of which the most important are: 1. Stylization, 2. Skaz, 3. Parody, 4. Hidden polemic (59 60).

Lodge summarizes the sub categories usefully as follows:

Stylization occurs when the writer borrows another’s discourse and uses it for his own purposes — with the same general intention as the original, but in the process casting ‘a slight shadow of objectification

over it’(PDP, 189). When such narration has the characteristic of spoken discourse it is designated skaz in the Russian critical tradition ... Stylization is to be distinguished from *parody*, when another’s discourse is borrowed but turned to a purpose opposite to or incongruous with the intention of the original. In both stylization and parody, the original discourse is both lexically and grammatically invoked in the text. But there is another type of doubly-oriented discourse which refers to, answers, or otherwise takes into account another speech act never articulated in the text: *hidden polemic* is Bakhtin’s suggestive name for one of the most common forms of discourse (59-60).

Dialogism thus interrelates heteroglossia, polyphony and other elements in whichever form they enter the novelistic discourse (carnivalization would be obvious example of such elements). Bakhtin’s concepts of dialogization, polyphony, heteroglossia and carnivalization are extremely useful in analyzing literary texts, especially the postmodernistic novels. While ensuring multiple interpretations of a text, Bakhtinian perspective marked with inherent dialogicality goes much beyond the nihilism and relativism of the postmodernistic theories like deconstruction. That explains why it has emerged as a dominant theory in the post postmodernist era.

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26

Polyphonic Texture of Kulbhushan Kushal's Muse

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Indian English Poetry has been a meandering stream ever since it arrested the brainwave and fancies of the Indian English poets ranging from Henry Derozio and Toru Dutt of yesteryears to Nissim Ezekiel and Jayant Mahapatra of the current scenario. Indian English poetry has witnessed the rise of many prolific poets who have agitated the Indian literary arena with their most enlightening as well as shocking creations. The themes and the ideas of the poets have defied the domains and ranges and have encapsulated the peculiar Indian ethos and specificities within the boundaries of language.

Indian sensibility and the Indian-ness is, without any presumptions, the ruling passion of all major Indian poets. Writing about India, these poets haven't overlooked the concept of Indian-ness in literature¹ as nothing but a total response to the human situation. This total human situation includes a way of life, an ethos and certain archetypal patterns, sometimes even in the form of ideals embedded in the culture. This identification with the human situation gives a universalism to the poet to document not only the currents and lives in his own country but also chronicle all the humanity in general. The poet voices the social, cultural, regional, economical and political patterns of his land eyeing the universal human nature and conditions. India, thus, becomes the microcosm of the whole world. The disintegration of human personality, identity crisis, devaluation of moral values, alienation and longings, memories, webs of relationships, legends and myths, mystic pulls, psychic conflicts thus become the way of life and common recurring themes. All contemporary as well as vintage poets have chosen either of these themes to forward their peculiar vision of life and perspectives. Kulbhushan Kushal is one such poet among the gamut of modern Indian English poets who has channelised his muse towards the rendering of his mystic as well as realistic perspectives of the world.

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Kulbhushan Kushal's poetry has perhaps given a new lease of life to the moribund poetic art of the Indian English writers. He is a meticulous artist with a genuine flair for the muse. With three major anthologies to his credit, Kushal purports to be a new ray of hope after the fertile imagination of Jayanta Mahapatra, Nissim Ezekiel, Shiv K. Kumar, Arun Kolatkar, A.K. Ramanujan, R. Parthasarthy, Keki N. Daruwalla and many other prominent names in print. He has published three books – *Shrinking Horizons (1990)*², *Rainbow on Rocks (2005)*³ and *Whirlpool of Echoes (2006)*⁴ which testify his resilience and ardour in times as such when the climate, social and economic, is most appalling for the poetic endeavour. Kushal is a bilingual poet, like Mahapatra, who writes both in Hindi as well as in English and has displayed an astounding ease and command over both the major languages of India in presenting his peculiar vision of disintegration and decay of the modern civilization. He is indeed the torch bearer of the lineage mentioned above and is destined to explore new heights and horizons in the field of poetic art as mastered by the very stalwarts.

Kulbhushan Kushal's poetry, as perceived, is the product of the contemporary history as well as the post-independence poetic sensibility of the Indian poets of English. This can loosely be tagged as modern and post-modern poetry with the resonances of the precursors of the Indian English poets as Aurobindo Ghosh whose poetry transported the reader to the mystic plane. His poetry is rife with a sensitive and sensible response to the ambush of the feelings-devoid culture of the modern, or the post-modern era. His complexity of poetry stems from the complex human relations and responses of the individual towards this dragnet. The disappointment from such entanglements takes the poet sometimes to the realm of mysticism and the unexplained. The present paper aims at underlining such some of the recurring patterns in the poetry of Kulbhushan Kushal which makes him at once a first rate poet of fine human sensibility as well as a poet of concrete imagery .

As an Indian poet, Kulbhushan Kushal's poetry is a lament on the growing mechanization and the horrid aspects of our ultra-modern society and the intrusion of technology which has

invalidated emotions. The wells of human kindness, he seems to say, have dried up. What we have are only façades empty of depths and significance. Our pretensions have prevented us from behaving according to the natural instincts making us robotic and simulated human beings (an obscure hint to the 'simulations', as enunciated by the postmoderns). Our inner worlds are crumbling, giving way to masks and veneers of deceptions which are smiling but try to hide inner void . The faces are but a game of hide and seek whereby the hope for tranquility and protection is asking for moon. The huddles of faces around us do nothing except breed further alienation and dislocation. C. Kulshreshtha's observation for Ramanujan's thoughts about the capability of faces to dispel alienation is relevant to Kulbhushan Kushal's perspectives of masks as mere veils which conceal and extend alienation and hopelessness: *The persona or the mask cannot provide a consistent armour to the self because it can never fully cope with the variety and depth of inner life brought into interplay in one's encounter with reality. The mask may be looked at only to consider oneself, to become aware that one needn't be troubled by what one is.*¹⁰ This postmodern thought of clinging to illusion and faring nothing is conspicuous in "Dance of Masks" where the man is shown to be in thick of masks, feels deranged but reluctantly and feebly joins the depressed extravaganza of life:

In the dance of masks
 Faces are intimate strangers
 The laughing masks
 Again play
 Hide and seek
 Hot is the game.

The poet seems to feel a nausea but in the end jumps on the bandwagon because

The invitation of masks
Is hard to resist (Whirlpool of Echoes)

The man is constrained to submit to the humdrum din of the world. The world around is impossible to elude and the man has to embrace the estrangement arising out of the promising company. This is the world as perceived by Kushal – "a thundering void".

Time as a fleeting phenomenon, a manifestation of the frail and reliant existence of human beings in the world is realized by the poet. Kulbhushan Kushal's awareness of the all powerful time and its capability to graphisize the human destiny is a testimony to his belief in a higher reality than is perceived in the commonplace adventures of the mortal world. This transcendentalism proves to be the core of Kushal's poetry as he delves deep into the human experience and finally concludes that human technological and mechanical prowess notwithstanding, the cosmos is time's pawn and will be destined accordingly. Time, he says, is a jumble of moments and the moments are, every moment, evanescing. The watches are the illusion of the containment and predictability of time but

The watch laughs at us
 we laugh at the watch
 we think
 we can catch time
 by forelock
 but time
 has fettered
 our feet
our hands (Shrinking Horizons)

The poet does not miss to underline the power of time under which everything withers .Time, thus, is a vanishing fragrance eluding hold.

Mental conflicts and the extrasensory tensions arising out of the onslaught of technology and the sentiments empty society also form one of the major motifs in Kushal's highly modern poetic art. The adverse effect of technological and materialistic progress has been given an artistic vent by the poets from the beginning of the century, precisely the imagists like Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell and T. S. Eliot . It is only in the current times that the anxieties and strains have increased manifold due to the flood of scientific progress and developments. The poetry of Kushal aims at highlighting the irony enshrined in the fact that the tools of human ease have taken a toll upon his natural instincts and have lent a cerebral apprehension which is the tragic aspect of modern existence. The poetry of Kushal is rife

with supernatural and supernormal references to objects beyond the discernment of ordinary human beings to emphasize the human wish to relieve these psychic pressures. In an interview with N. K. Neb, Kushal admits his preoccupation with the psychic concerns of his muse:

*My poems broadly mirror psychic concerns that are explorations of different aspects of human consciousness. They profile a psychic quest for integrated meaning of flight of imagination and try to understand the fabric of response and the texture of questions. They also have an assumption that poetry is not for definite answers but a statement of definite probing.*⁶

This intellectual probing into the human mind and the effects of the outside world upon the sensitivity has been a major concern with Kushal.

His subtlety in rendering of the subconscious mind and its complex alleys hints at his profound psychological insights into the human situations. The complex imagery of his poems also adds to his acknowledgement of the psychological tensions and neurotic ailments playing their devious games over the human beings. While chronicling the scheming of the subconscious mind Kushal takes his poetic art to a different level. He eludes the definition and logic while registering this experience but certainly it has a psychologically convincing power as seen in the supernaturalism of S.T. Coleridge who would resort to the paranormal but successfully made the reader to endorse it and appreciate it. As a romantic, Coleridge and other sought to forward their intuitive perceptions via their poetry which labelled them escapists and the strain is loosely seen in Kushal's poetry when he shows his preoccupation with the same:

*The celebration of intuitive impressions in Kushal's poetry marks the strains of romantic poetry in Keats, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley. The romantic poetry of such writers celebrates their intuitive impressions through the use of strange and fantastic images that adds an element of mystery and makes their poetic utterances mystic and strange.*⁷ In poems like "Dance of Sirens" and "Angels from Hell" (*Rainbow on Rocks*) the unnatural has been rendered with such a dexterity that the reader

doesn't bother to situate its true essence but contemplates to relate to his own existence and the reality. The imagery of rocks juxtaposed with that of heaven and hell and the angels from hell devouring the fairies are not crude gothic paraphernalia aiming at sensationalizing the matter but to challenge the limits of the working of human minds and approximate to the realities of life which shape such a life. The cynicism in the following lines is noteworthy:

God's comforting proximity
 And after a few days
 Is sickening
 A flight we crave
 To test our masculinity
 And these seeds now
 Shall be sown
 In the wombs of rocks.

The pain and the anguish experienced by the man in thick of the mammon dominance and retarded growth due to the growing dissatisfaction finds an echo in the modern poetry and Kushal is no exception. His poetry aims at rendering the worldwide complacency and crumbling of the identities which thwart a man from realising his full potential. Man has been reduced to a mere nut or bolt in the machinery of the society. Man, he says, seeks solace in the fragmented past and the fractured present which are nothing but dark dungeons far from light. Kushal's poems are given to self questioning as well as introspection for this deterioration of quality of being. In the poem "Cunning Craft" from the anthology *Shrinking Horizons*, he asks childlike questions to quench his curiosity regarding the decadence of human situation – its out of joint nature from the human ties as well as the loss of primitive innocence. Using the nature imagery to its fullest, he doesn't fail to comment upon the alienation of the land, hostility of the sky and the wilderness of the stars. In the poem "Maya" from *Rainbow on Rocks* he narrates the consequences of our misreadings and ignoble actions against the norms and ethics. It is a malady rising out of the decomposition of our inner power to differentiate between the desirable and undesirable modes of existence and persistence.

Our imperfect masteries
 Our fragmented visions
 Our dwarfy reach
 And our romantic leaps
 Are all symptomatic
 Of a disease coaxing us
Not to rest.

Kulbhushan Kushal's poetry is also rife with those allusions which are a significant part of the mental make up of every Indian. Here we find the evidences of places and situations involving metaphysical, spiritual and religious experiences. Kushal's use of myths and ancient history present the perennial human situations which are intact today as in the past. Kushal ventures into the affluent Hindu past and Indian history to draw upon legends from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* to make a statement over the Indian society and culture in particular and the world in general. Poems like "Manthan" and "Maya" (*Rainbow on Rocks*) and "Deception" (*Whirlpool of Echoes*) make allusions to the Hindu religion's most cherished myths and legends which sum up the Hindu culture and mythology. Moreover, it gives an opportunity to the poet to relate it to the contemporary experiences to reflect upon.

Like other modern Indian poets, Kushal's poetry is too tinged with memories and nostalgic resonances. Globalization and colossal technological progresses have corroded the sense of belonging and have amplified the distances. Human beings yearn for the reunion with the roots and the circles from which they had detached themselves. The universal sense of alienation grips a person with a nostalgia and lends him an urgency to meet and join up his counterparts and peers. This reverse romanticism, the inverse of the escapism from the known and the mundane, is the ingredient of many a poem written by modern poets. The poem "Missed Calls" (*Whirlpool of Echoes*) renders the doubts and the unvoiced longings of the poet for the departed and also insinuates the metaphysical anguish of a person writhing in the web of life.

These may be the missed calls
 From my departed uncles and dear aunts

Sitting in heaven or perhaps in hell
 Regretting their loveless embraces
 And subtle design to trap me
 In their cunning craft.

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The various facets of Kulbhushan Kushal's poetic art speak volumes of his fine poetic sensibility, an intense passion for expression of the hidden recesses of the human mind, an authentic poetic urge, and a peculiar metaphysical concern. He is one of the most promising poets of this generation and is destined to earn prominence for himself and bring laurels for the Indian poetry in English. His poetry voices the modern man's ordeal in the world empty of empathy and ethics. His anthologies bear out his immaculate command over language and his mellowness as a poet. He is certainly the name in the reckoning in the world of Indo-Anglian poetry and doubtlessly ordained to glimmer.

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Resisting the Oppressions of Patriarchy through Female Bonding: A Study of Shashi Deshpande's *A Matter of Time*

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Adrienne Rich defines patriarchy as the "power of the fathers: a familial, social, ideological, political system in which men-by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor -determine what part women shall or shall not play and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male (57-58). Luce Irigaray (b 1932), a famous French psychoanalyst, too opines that since ancient times men have been considered subjects and women as "the other" of these subjects (e.g. the subjective supporting matter). Only one form of subjectivity exists and it is male. As a result women are forced to undergo different kinds of oppressions in every walk of life.

Irigaray wants women to reconfigure their identity in such a way that one sex does not exist at the expense of the other. She believes that strong mother-daughter relationship, female genealogy and woman to woman sociality can help women in attaining subjectivity. Feminist psychologists too contend that female bonding or female friendship help in the development of female personality. Feminist psychologists like Carol Gilligan, Jean Baker Miller and Nancy Chodorow have held the common opinion that girls identify more with mothers as compared to boys and emerge "with a basis for 'empathy' built into their primary definition of self in a way the boys do not" (Chodorow 167). Female bonding may be manifested through strong mother-daughter relationship, female genealogy and woman to woman sociality. It can help women in identity formation, attaining subjectivity and resisting patriarchal power structure. In the words of Jyoti K. Singh, "Female Bonding if employed in a positive direction can be instrumental in fighting the hegemony and implementing social change"(91).

Shashi Deshpande's novel *A Matter of Time* excellently portrays the predicament of the women of three different generations—Kalyani, Sumi and Aru of a family. Kalyani and Sumi belong to older generations, have no subjectivity of their own and are victims of patriarchal norms and conditions which oppress women in different ways. Both of them

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are abandoned wives, excluded from male genealogy, burdened with the responsibility of bringing up their children alone. Aru – a new generation girl – flatly refuses to abide by these patriarchal norms and conditions and wants to fight against the injustice done to women. This paper studies the patriarchal victimization of Kalyani and Sumi and their efforts for regaining normalcy in their life. They try to resist patriarchal oppression through female bonding i.e. by strengthening mother-daughter relationship, situating themselves in female genealogy and through woman to woman sociality.

Women are denied subjectivity from the very beginning of their life. The difference is clearly marked at the time of the birth of a child, as the birth of a male child is associated with great celebrations and joy; the birth of a female child is rarely treated as an occasion to be celebrated. Whenever Kalyani remembers her childhood, she is reminded of her mother's fondness for a male child and her feeling of disappointment in Kalyani. The male child is considered so important that Kalyani's father was instigated by one of his relatives, to go for second marriage, as her mother could not give birth to any other child. For her mother, "she became the visible symbol of their failure to have a son" (151). Kalyani remembers that her mother never enjoyed even the company of her grand-daughters, Sumi and Premi. However, when Kalyani gave birth to her son-Madhav, there was 'carpet laying' ceremony and a lot of celebrations. But the son turned out to be mentally retarded and became the cause of Kalyani's tragedy. Later on, when Sumi starts living in her parents' house after Gopal's walking out, she feels herself an outsider, an interloper in her own house. She feels that "walls of this house that seem to cry out that the very reason for their existence was a son?" (71). Thus it is quite apparent that since the very birth, a girl child considers herself an unwelcome guest in the patriarchal world. In the words of Vrinda Nabar, "typical Indian girl – child is generally a compulsion rather than a choice. She has to learn quite early that she is second – class citizen even in her mother's home. If she has brothers, she has to play second fiddle to them"(151). The importance given to sons also affects mother-daughter relationship as explained above in Manorama-Kalyani case.

The crisis emerges in the life of the protagonist, Sumi, as her husband, Gopal takes the sudden decision of walking out on his family after twenty years of their marriage. Gopal is motivated by some inner urge and finds himself unable to move on. His decision not only leaves

Sumi emotionally blank and deserted, she is also burdened with the responsibility of taking care of her three grown up daughters - Aru, Charu and Seema. Her father, Sripati, takes Sumi and her daughters to his house. During these crucial moments, her mother Kalyani and her eldest daughter Aru prove to be her strong supporters.

When Sumi starts living with her parents, the strange and tragic life story of her mother, Kalyani, also unfolds itself. Although Sripati and Kalyani, the husband and the wife, live in the same house, Sripati has not talked to his wife for more than thirty years. The reason behind this punishment is the loss of male child due to Kalyani's negligence during a railway journey. Kalyani was attending to the crying daughter, her mentally retarded son wandered away on the platform when Sripati had gone to check reservations. After the incident, Sripati did not return home for a long time and when he did come back, he stopped all communication with Kalyani.

If we compare the crisis in Sumi and Kalyani's life, we find that they are riders in the same boat. Both were deserted by their husbands and treated like objects having no will of their own. Sripati turned a deaf ear to Kalyani's explanation and pleas and bolted door on her and Gopal simply announced his decision to Sumi and walked out without waiting for Sumi's opinion or reaction. Both of them treated their wives as objects, announcing their judgment and decision, least worried about their emotions and responses. Both Kalyani and Sumi started the difficult journey of their lives from the similar point, but the response which they got from their family members in this critical phase of life, is entirely different. Sumi gets full support of her mother and daughters but Kalyani was not so lucky. A victim of patriarchal dictatorship, Kalyani did not find any comfort in matriarchy also. Her own mother, Manorama plays the role of a victimizer.

As the story unfolds itself, the reader comes to know that in fact Kalyani's mother had been responsible for Kalyani's unhappy life. Her mother not only stopped her education on the basis of some doubts but also forced her to marry Sripati, her maternal uncle, just to keep property within family. Unconcerned about the feelings of her daughter and her younger brother, she imposed this relationship on both of them. Her fondness for a male child did not allow her to treat Kalyani affectionately and sympathetically throughout her life. As Kalyani's father dies some days after her arrival, Manorama blames Kalyani for all her misfortunes and becomes highly irritating and suspicious in her

attitude towards Kalyani. She thought that Kalyani wanted to kill her. Thus Kalyani felt lonely in the critical moments of her life. Had the mother-daughter relationship been positive between Manorama and Kalyani, Kalyani would not have met such a tragic fate.

A strong mother-daughter relationship is found in case of Kalyani-Sumi-Aru. Sumi gets double support from her mother Kalyani as well as from her eldest daughter Aru during the tragic phase of her life. When Kalyani comes to know about Gopal's desertion she cries in pain "not again, not again". She feels that the same history of desertion has been repeated with her daughter. She receives Sumi and her daughters warmly and gives them her care and concern. Not only this, she goes to meet Gopal and entreats him to forgive Sumi if she has done some wrong "What have you done to my daughter, Gopala, don't do this, don't let it happen to my daughter, what happened to me" (46).

Besides her mother's support Sumi gets the firm support of Aru, who tries to become the caretaker of Sumi and takes all the responsibilities of her sisters and the house, which she can handle, so that her mother is not bothered by these matters. She is deeply hurt by her father's irresponsible attitude and questions him bluntly, "Why did you get married at all, why did you have children?" (62). Being a new-generation girl, she hardly believes in suffering silently and passively. She suggests her mother to consult a lawyer and fight against the injustice done to her by her husband. "But he owes you, he owes all of us, yes, you especially, he owes you-" lamely, "something. He can't get away like this. He has to give us maintenance"(61). When Sumi does not show any interest in consulting a lawyer, Aru herself goes to Surekha, a lawyer. She does her best to relieve Sumi of her sorrow. The bitter experience of the married life of her mother and grandmother prompt her to take the decision of not getting married.

The trio-Kalyani, Sumi and Aru sink their problems, tensions and worries to a great extent in the sea of mutual care and concern. The strong female bond between them helps them in overcoming the crisis of their lives and returning to normalcy. Kalyani enjoys the company of her daughter and granddaughters immensely. "Now when I look at you, my three grand daughters, especially at you, I think – I'm luckier than my mother. She's the unlucky one who didn't know how to enjoy her children and grand children" (227). Aru also feels that her grand mother "seems to have exorcised all her ghosts" (153). Sumi also feels

that Kalyani has achieved normalcy in her life when she finds her curiously talking about the marriage of her grand daughters, "How can she, of all people think of marriage with enthusiasm?" (124).

The strong mother-daughter relationship between the women of three generations helps Sumi in starting her life anew. Instead of sticking to her past and turning it into a tragedy, she moves on. She learns to drive a scooter, joins a job at a school and rewrites a play "The gardener's son". She tells Aru, "Be happy for me, Aru. This is the first thing in my life I think I've got for myself"(230). Earlier she led a dependent and passive life and did nothing on her own but now she feels herself energetic and wants to do so many things. She shares her feelings with Aru, "I've been too lazy all my life. And now suddenly I want to do so many things" (231). In the words of S. Prasanna Sree, "Sumi evolves herself from the utter desolation and bitterness linked up with invisible chains of patriarchal pressure and other family responsibilities. She is seen gradually emancipating herself as a new and independent woman"(107). She is moving towards subjecthood but unfortunately she meets with an accident and dies an untimely death. Sumi's situation can be best explained in Irigaray's words, "Innerness, self-intimacy, for a woman, can be established or re-established only through the mother-daughter, daughter-mother relationship which woman re-plays for herself" (*An Ethics* 58).

Kalyani, Sumi and Aru display tremendous boldness, understanding and courage in facing the crisis of their life. Sumi stoically accepts Gopal's walking out, understand his nature well and does not bear any grudge against him. But the attitude of male characters Gopal and Sripati is highly ambivalent, unrealistic and beyond understanding. Though Gopal tries to explain his inner urge and confusion which does not allow him to move on and prompts him to walk out on his family, Sripati's silence throughout the novel is highly inexplicable. Gopal's walking out is like a mirror to Sripati's own behaviour towards his wife, but he does not react at all and simply brings Sumi and her daughters to her house. He does not show any sense of guilt, remorse for torturing way his wife. He does not go to meet Gopal, or express his concern or sympathy for Sumi's tragic fate. Both Gopal and Sripati are the typical representatives of oppressive husbands who treat their wives as objects having no will, feelings or emotions of their own. They exile them from their life and leave them to suffer alone but the wives try to regain normalcy in their lives by situating themselves in female genealogy.

Another form of female bonding is woman to woman sociality or female-friendship. It helps in resisting patriarchal power structure and fighting hegemony. In the words of Jyoti K. Singh, "Along with mother-daughter relationship, women can resist patriarchy through female friendship. It plays a significant role in identity formation as well as in sustaining women in the patriarchal set-up"(85).

Though Aru is hurt badly by Gopal's desertion but Kalyani, Sumi and Premi's love and genuine concern for her helps her in moving on in her life. Although Aru does not speak out her fears to Kalyani and Sumi, she shares her agony with Premi. "I've been thinking about marriage a great deal, Premi-Mavshi. What's there in it? I mean, look at Amma and now Sumi... What do you get out of it?" (138). She also joins female activist group to raise voice against the injustice done to women. Here, she feels that she is fighting for the common cause. "For the first time, Aru is finding a proper frame for her feelings about their situation. To be part of a group gives her a sense of getting somewhere" (210). To quote Irigaray, "Women want to find themselves and their own identity. Which is why they are seeking each other out, loving each other, associating with each other" (*An Ethics* 57). Not only this, this love with other women "is necessary if we are not to remain the servants of the phallic cult, objects to be used by and exchanged between men, rival objects on the market, the situation in which we have always been placed" ("The Bodily" 422). Although Sumi is a bit disturbed by Aru's association with the activists but Kalyani approves Aru's actions. Kalyani's attitude shows her enlightened state of mind-where she can think of raising voice against the injustice instead of suffering silently, passively and endlessly. Sumi is also worried about Aru's friendship with a lawyer Surekha who holds feminist views but Gopal assures Sumi that Aru is in safe hands. Kalyani is having a friendly relationship with Godavari, her cousin, as they have spent their childhood together. They share their all joys and sorrows and find solace in each other's company. Sumi's sister, Premi, tries to share her sister's agony. She goes to meet Gopal, tries to reconcile them and treats Aru sympathetically and affectionately. Godavari's daughter, Devaki, is also a sincere well-wisher and friend of Sumi's family. She tries to reconcile Sumi and Gopal by arranging a party at her home and inviting both of them. The three sisters Aru, Charu and Seema also share good understanding and love. They take proper care of each

other in the time of trouble. These mutual bonds help in healing the wounds of Kalyani, Sumi and Aru.

It is clear that female bonding in every form can help women in living life in a better way. But female bonding does not mean excluding males from lives. Nowhere in the novel we find any hint that Sumi and Kalyani have become men-haters or want to exclude men from their lives. Although everybody is confused and slightly angry with Sumi for her indifferent, calm and forgiving attitude towards Gopal but Sumi knows that Gopal has not walked out voluntarily rather he is moved by some inner urge. She bears no grudge against him, does not want to sue him and talks normally with him. She also wants that Aru should not convert the situation as a battle between men and women. She wants her to understand the importance of relationships. "Will Aru learn that love, however brief, however unsatisfactory, however tragic, is necessary? Will she realize that without that kind of companionship some part of us withers and dies?" (169).

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Burial at Sea :A Failure of Foucauldian ars Erotica

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Burial at Sea is the latest novel of Khushwant Singh which appeared in 2004. It has an allegorical theme and is primarily based on the lives of Indira Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. The central character, Jai Bhagwan/Victor is a Brahman from Kashmir like Nehru. Ma Durgeshwari is based on the life of Sharda Ma who allegedly has illicit and secret relations with Jawahar Lal Nehru. Like Kamla Nehru, Jai Bhagwan's wife, Jaishree also dies young leaving behind a young daughter, Bharti who is patterned after Indira Gandhi. Other characters in the novel are also modelled on the real historical personages from recent Indian history. Swami Dhanajay Maharaj Brahmachari, reminds us of Swami Dharendra Brahmachari whom we have heard on radio sets and have seen on T.V. screen describing yoga *asans* and quoting *shlokas* from ancient Sanskrit texts. "For many years he held Mrs. Gandhi and her family in a hypnotic spell.. Far from leading a simple life we associate with yogis, he went into the business of acquiring wealth" (Godand Godmen 129). Earlier Mathai had blamed that Indira Gandhi had intimate relations with Dharendra Brahmachari, so has Bharti here with Swami Ji when she starts learning yogic physical postures from him.

In an interview with Humra Quraishi, Khushwant Singh admitted that characters are taken from the real life: "Yes, the inspiration for the central character is Nehru. . .And his love affair with Sharda Mata is well known. Mathai wrote about it and I'd myself met Sharda Mata in Jaipur ,and I'd written about her."(Quraishi 1) Sharda Mata had admitted to Khushwant Singh that she had met Nehru many times:

Yes I met Pandit Ji many times. He wrote many letters to me. If he had married again, he would certainly have married me. I put him in his place. I told him 'Yeh 'my dear' *nahin chalega* (addressing me 'my dear' in his letters won't do). You are a Brahmin, I am a Kshatriya. How can there be anything more than friendship between us?" "How is it that Indira ji does not know anything about you?" "*Bewakooj? Koi aisi baat apni beti ko batata hai?* (Fool, will any father tell his daughter such things?)" (Gods and Godmen 150-51).

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However, the thematic importance of the novel is not unusual and unexpected sexual relations between Indira Gandhi and Swami Dhanajay or between Jawahar Lal Nehru and Shradha Ma, it is rather a tragic story of a celebrity who worked like a volcano for the growth and progress of India and yet could not receive recognition from that very community for which he was working day and night. His sexual indulgence with a *sadhavi* of a dubious and doubtful past proves *hubris* for him. The novel also reveals the strange network of power structures where a human being is not at liberty to do anything one likes to .

Ma Durgeshwari enters the life of Victor when spiritual solace would have provided him much needed equipoise and serenity to his otherwise insipid and bland life. Victor was the lonely soul in this world with familial weaknesses for his daughter Bharti. Having lost his young wife and then his loving and caring father, Victor was already feeling over-burdened with his industrial empire.

The very first description of Ma Durgeshwari is startling and titillating. The novelist seems to be enjoying the discursive pleasure while pen-painting the contours of her feminine body and describing her sensuous gestures. Metaphorical portrayal of Sadhvi's body shows that the novelist wants to highlight the physicality of the relationship between Durgeshwari and Victor:

She was stark naked: skin the colour of old ivory; large, firm breasts and buttocks and a neat black triangular bush between her legs. Victor guessed she would be in her late twenties. For a while she stood rubbing her body with her hands. Then she felt the water, withdrew it quickly and said something to her tiger who raised his long stiff tail once and brought it down slowly. Gingerly she stepped into the ice-cold stream, splashed some water on her body, then sank down into the stream till the water flowed over her head.She had no towel and exposed her body to the sun to dry her. She sat on the rock, combed her hair with her fingers and re-tied it on top of her head. The tiger licked her body for the drops of water that remained. (Burial at Sea 129.1130).

According to the prevalent cultural theories even the feminine body and its beauty is a cultural construction. In *aphrodisia*, feminine breasts and buttocks have been presented as sexually arousing because of the cultural conceptions. According to Foucault sexuality as well as female body is a social and cultural construction:

Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construction of : not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power.”(The History of Sexuality V01.1 105). While bathing in Ganga she notices that she was being watched by Victor from the gallery of his guest house. That very evening she approaches him in his guest house and in the very first meeting they jump into a sexual union. She presents herself as an expert in *ars erotica* in which Yoga helps a lot.

The Eastern civilization is known for the erotic art used for getting maximum pleasure out of sexuality. She details Swami Dhanajay Maharaj Brahmachari to teach Victor *asans* of yoga to rejuvenate him physically: “I’ll teach you yoga; you will be able to hold your semen for an hour or more. If you don’t want to spill it you can withdraw it within yourself. . . You men only know the quick *chook, chook, phut*. Treat sex like worship and you will get more fulfillment than making millions of rupees” (Burial at Sea 134). Ma Durgeshwari impresses upon Victor preaching the particular Hindu dogma of disdaining what is Anglicized: “All you have learnt is from the materialistic West where nothing matters more than money. All that is *Mayajaal*; you must free yourself from that web of illusion”. (Burial at Sea 133).

Ma Durgeshwari and Swami are asked to shift to Delhi where Swami starts teaching yoga to Bharti also. Very soon, he feels enchanted towards tough-looking Bharti who has something distinctly masculine about her aura that added to her unusual beauty. Very quickly, *Guru-shisha* relations between Swami and Bharti culminate into sexual relations. Ma Durgeshwari is a sanyasan and commands a discursive respect because of the symbols of spiritualism she stands for. She speaks against the materialistic world of the West but offers no substantial substitute from the East. In fact, Eastern ethical values give utmost importance to the concept of abstinence but she is totally engrossed into materialistic and carnal world. She enjoys all the luxuries Victor offers her and in bargain she submits him her body. Even in sexual

union she does not have a total submission or surrender, she rather commands Victor to submit and perform according to her dictation and thus uses sexual feminine power over him. In the name of deliverance she involves him more with the body, the matter; rather than with something metaphysical.

Sex has physical as well as psychological pleasures because of the prohibitions ordained by the society. For a woman-and particularly for a *sadhvi*, sexual interdictions ,more stringent. The popular and dominant discourse about a *sadhvi* is that she must ‘have conquered her *nafas* (desires). Also, she should have no hunger for materialistic things . She is expected to lead a simple ascetic life.

In every society, repressive concept puts social control over the pleasure seeking pursuits. The reasons whatsoever, sexual prohibitions are more vocal and prominent in any orthodox society. Religion, too, has been corroborating the repressive forces. When Foucault made genealogical study of the history of madness, medicine, prisons and sexuality in the West, he analyzed their roots in Christianity. What is true of Christianity is basically true of every religion because religious practices are always concerned with what the people do with their bodies. Body and sexuality are always the basis of morality. Thus religion is always at the centre of a culture and operates through institutionalized power relations. Religious practices have been among the three major explicit codes governing the sexual practices, the other two being the canonical law and the civil law: “They determined, each in its own way, the division between licit and illicit. They were all centered on matrimonial relations” (History of Sexuality I 37).

The novel can be read as a case history of a celebrity who becomes a victim of powerful conventional discourses. In an orthodox society, anti-discursive sexual relations can become problematic for both the partners particularly when the male is a responsible public personality. When a powerful personality becomes a slave to his appetites or exceeds the legitimate exercise of one’s power and indulges in fantasies, that personality loses the proper balance of relationship with others. Greek philosophers have also observed that if the ruler becomes a slave of his appetites he will bring doom for the state (Ethics 288). The affair gives an opportunity to enemies to point out how the tycoon was using the empire lavishly indulging in sexual relations with a *sadhvi* and still not caring for the needs of the Labour.

While delineating the history of sexuality, Michael Foucault has traced the sexual behaviour of Greek and Christian people during seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In his analysis he has talked about two great procedures for producing the truth of sex: one is *ars erotica* and the other is *Scientia Sexualis*. China, Japan, India, Rome and the Arabo-Moslem societies are endowed with *ars erotica*. In the erotic art truth is drawn from pleasure itself, understood as a practice and accumulated as experience. Pleasure is not considered in relation to an absolute law of the permitted and the forbidden, or by reference to 'a criterion of utility, but first and foremost in relation to itself. It is experienced as pleasure, evaluated in terms of its intensity, its specific quality, its duration, its reverberations in the body and the soul. Moreover this knowledge must be deflected back into the sexual practice itself and should be kept secret (History Vol I 57). Ma Durgeshwari initiates Victor into pleasures of sexuality through Yogic art which is a part of Hindu religion, that teaches technologies and disciplines of asceticism and meditation which are thought to lead to spiritual experience and profound understanding or insight into the nature of existence, but remains on the carnal plane only. In spite of the presence of a sadhvi and a swami in the novel, there are no spiritual heights imparted to the theme of sex. Only biological tantric sex dominates whole of the novel. No doubt the bodies are very important as far as sex or the regimen of bodies is concerned yet the soul has its important part to play. It is the soul that constantly risks carrying the body beyond its own mechanics and its elementary needs; it is the soul that prompts one to choose the times that are not suitable, to act in questionable circumstances, to contravene natural dispositions. To achieve the best results there must be a cultivation of the soul. The reasonable soul, according to Foucault has a dual role:-

It needs to assign a regimen for the body that is actually - determined by the latter's nature, its tensions, the condition and circumstances in which it finds itself. But it will be able to assign this regimen correctly, only provided it has done a good deal of work on itself: eliminated the errors, mastered the desires that cause it to misconstrue the sober law of the body (The History of Sexuality, Vol 3 133). Though Durgeshwari talks about the Eastern values of sexuality she conveniently.. . overlooks or ignores that Yoga prescribes the cultivation of body as well as of soul in the *aphrodisia*. The power of

aphrodisia means that it must be used and regulated rightly. The regulation is primarily meant to assure pleasure. Victor as well as Durgeshwari; both forget that *ehresia* (self-control) is the most important power which one must have over oneself to use *aphrodisia* rightly.

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Insight : A Study of the Poetry
of Kulbhushan

Kushal

The book provides insightful study of (By N. K. Negb) Kulbhushan's poetry and includes valuable observations for the study of poetry in general and Indian English poetry in particular.

Postcolonial Experience in a Domestic Context: Commodified Subjectivity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Vikas Sethi

Black subjectivity is like an oppositional worldview, a consciousness, an identity, a standpoint that exists as a struggle that opposes dehumanization and a movement which enables creative, expansive self-actualization. For Sethe the *Beloved's* central character, self-actualization or the development of subjectivity, can be realized only outside the limits of a colonial discourse and within a collectively defined alternate discourse signifying individual empowerment. This alternative discourse can be found in the free black community to which Sethe flees. But her subjectivity is realized only when she becomes a full member of her community. Membership depends on both Sethe's and the community's recognition of internal ideologies of oppression. Morrison's text, then, can be read as postcolonial because it delineates a process of self-liberation through communal support within the colonial context of slavery. Within the post colonial framework through which we read *Beloved* as resisting the colonial perception of self as commodified inferior is a part of what is termed as "decolonization". Developing an empowered subjectivity in learning to define oneself through a perspective uninformed by dominant definition of black identity. Acquiring a perspective outside of colonial constructs of inferiorized subject position subverts these constructs and thus decolonizes the self. The process of decolonization is an important part of this mestiza text because the main character moves from a limiting "counterstance" position, signifying a mere inversion of colonial roles, to mestiza consciousness, signifying an alternative discourse outside colonial ideologies. Significantly, in *Beloved* decolonization occurs in a communal context. The central characters of the book begin to define themselves against a colonially defined and internalized isolation, fear, or even pride only with the support of others who also have experienced oppression. Attempts at self-liberation fail when they are not founded on mutual trust between individuals or support from community. Furthermore, decolonization is not only an individual process within a

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communal context. The text's emphasis on "rememory" as a collective occurrence as well as individual theorize a process of collective decolonization. The national, historical process of healing becomes a process of collective decolonization.

Morrison's text implicitly speaks of the need for collective decolonization in its focus on rememory and the necessity of confronting the past's unresolved issues. Reading slavery explicitly as a colonial institution forces a certain kind of rememory : slavery is a historical reality for every U.S. citizen, not just for contemporary African Americans. Importantly, Morrison's historical revisioning, which calls for collective rememory, defines the U.S as an oppressive colonialist nation, thus challenging official historical narratives of democratic benevolence. It also places the U.S. a nation in a parallel position to Sethe and slavery ; Sethe and her relationship to slavery, as a colonialists' institution embodies in microcosm specifically postcolonial fault of Morrison's historical rememory. In this equation Sethe represents national identity as defined by colonial constructs just as the colonialist nature of national history manifests itself through the institutionalization of slavery. Sethe's act of infanticide manifests her internalization of the oppressive ideologies that justify her enslavement. As a result, her story is about learning how to resist effectively, how to develop an empowered rather than a destructive subjectivity. Just as she needs to confront unresolved issues in her past, the nation in an act of collective decolonization, also must confront the colonialists' past in order to change the neocolonialist' present. Morrison's revisioning within a post colonial framework, is radical in its conclusion to the national narrative embodied in Sethe's story. Her decolonized subjectivity does not signify power over others, but empowerment within a context of communal support. Thus Morrison, in creating an alternative outside binary colonialist constructs for Sethe's developing subjectivity, also creates an alternative for U.S. history. In a reading of Sethe as representative of an alternative national identity, Morrison offers an alternative for the national future.

By this logic the U.S need not follow the colonialist trajectory it has been simultaneously following and creating. Morrison thus denaturalizes ideologies of nationhood that require an oppressive, strictly bounded stance. Sethe learns she cannot be truly "free" without undergoing a process of decolonization, defined by the novel as contextualized, necessarily in her African American community. If Sethe

learns to decolonize herself through and within a communal context, then in the parallel between Sethe and national identity, the nation must rethink its positioning in an international context. At the very least, Morrison's historical revisioning speaks to the need to alter national self-definitions, representations and positionings in a global "community". The novel emphasizes Sethe's contact with slavery's commodification that results in psychological, emotional and spiritual damage. Bhabha's concept of the "colonial subject" helps theorize the specific nature of the system: Because in the colonial economy of slavery, the black woman, both metaphorically and visually embodies the interconnection between "the economy of pleasure and desire" and "the economy of domination and power," she also represents the "difference" demanded by the colonial discourse. In Morrison's text, Sethe, the black female slave, represents this difference as racial and sexual "Other." This difference, once created to justify colonial domination, must be continuously reiterated in order to rationalize colonial force. The constructed difference is re-enacted through Sethe's body by the school teacher and his nephews: *I am full god damn it of two boys with mossy teeth, one sucking on my breast and other holding me down, their book-reading teacher watching and writing it up. I don't want to know or have to remember that. I have other things to do :worry about tomorrow, about Denver about age and sickness not to speak of love. But her brain was not interested in the future.* (70) Here we have white othering of a black woman and the resulting damage of a fetishized identity. The school-teacher observes Sethe's rape and makes it a discursive act, exploiting Sethe as a racial and sexual other in order to re-write her identity as that of a subhuman creature, bestial rather than human. Sethe, then, experiences the fetishization of herself and her body by the school teacher and his nephews. In having his nephews act out, on Sethe's body, the constructed degradation of one racially and sexually othered, the school teacher reinforces slavery's colonial discourse through the own, simultaneously enacted, discursivity. Sethe's personhood, as it has been allowed to exist under slavery, is reduced further to animality. Bhabha differentiates between the sexual fetish and the sexualized "fetish of colonial discourse" (78), locating the latter in the ambivalent space (72) occupied by the colonized. The space is "in between" an imposed identity and the reality of their humanity for the colonized and between the recognized and disavowed, between fear and

desire for the colonizers. The tropes of the sexual fetish are present in the colonial fetish, but syncretized with certain tropes of colonialist experience and identity to embody the larger socio-political context of colonial relations. In this context, the white school teacher inhabits the in between space of the colonizer, thus needing to rationalize slavery's dominating and oppressive ideologies in a discursive act that also serves to justify his position within these ideologies. For Sethe the fetishization of her body by the white school teacher and his nephews causes psychic fragmentation that continues to thwart development of her subjectivity after she leaves slavery. Sethe wants to concentrate on her future; however, her commodified status, dramatized fetishistically, forms a barrier which prevents her from resisting objectifying colonial influence.

Sethe lives an "unslaved life" for only twenty-eight days, although she never returns to literal slavery. Consequently, Morrison defines an unslaved life as a life with freedom to develop one's subjectivity. This process is closely bound to inclusion in and participation with one's community. Sethe frees herself but she does not "claim ownership of that freed self" alone. The past does not hold the power to frustrate the growth of her subjectivity when development is part of a collective endeavour. Her people "teach" her now to be herself because until this moment, she learns, through coercion, lessons of invisibility and silence. The necessary reciprocity of communal living and the continuous learning experience of constant communication with others' help Sethe learn to see herself as an empowered subject within a supportive community rather than the inferior other within colonial ideology. Morrison however does not portray a simplistic image of communal perfection. She writes instead about the warped codes of morality that eventually cause a collective desertion of Sethe when she most needs support. Because the generous invitation to a bountiful feast at Baby Suggs is taken as a sign of pride, the community hopes and waits for Sethe's downfall. The community therefore begins to withdraw its enveloping and empowering support the day after the party. The people of the community tacitly withdraw their support by denying Sethe, without warning, access to a system of communication developed by and for the community. Sethe's murder of her daughter and the subsequent ostracism of Sethe from the community—we can isolate the moment when Sethe's troubles begin at the moment when the community decides to withdraw its support. As a notable critic Charles Scruggs points out "somehow the members of the

black community imagine that Baby Suggs has not suffered in slavery as they have suffered and this ignorance of their mutual history makes mutual trust impossible(103). Mutual distrust is essential for the collective formation of an empowering alternate discourse. The Mutual distrust both reflects the internalized lessons of commodification and negates the mutual support necessary for the development of individual and communal subjectivity. Because the concept of history is linked closely in this text to slavery and the specific context of a colonized past, a denial of the collective nature of this experience keeps them from challenging and restructuring definitive ideologies as a community. The continued Internalization of being labeled "other" leads to the denial of black individual voice and subjectivity, thereby twisting the free black community's moral code to the point where it will turn on one of its own. Internalization of white fear and hate intensifies the tension and ambivalence that Bhabha describes as part of a border culture. Because of the internalization of a white colonial morality and the constant ambivalence of a border culture, the free black community self destructively measures and judges Sethe by a morality that denies subjectivity. The fact that Sethe's community operates under an internalized system oppressive of black identity informs her motivations for killing her child. Because her community chooses to withdraw its support, it denies Sethe the opportunity to escape from school teacher. The community's inaction forces Sethe to try to save her children from a life of imposed silence and denied selfhood by some other means. When Paul D learns about Sethe's act, he is repulsed. He cannot understand that infanticide is the only possibility, the only course of action open to Sethe within a colonial discourse. Her internalization at the lessons of commodification encourages Sethe to act, in a highly problematic attempt to save her children from commodification, as if they are not only extensions of herself, but also her possessions. In an internal dialogue with Beloved, Sethe thinks, "Some other way, he said. Let school teacher haul us away, I guess, to measure your behind before he tore it, up? I have felt what it felt like and nobody is going to make you feel it too. Not you, not none of mine, and when I tell you, you mine, I also mean I'm yours. I wouldn't draw breath without my children My plan was to take us all to the other side where my own ma'm is.(203). By killing Beloved, Sethe refuses to allow her daughter to be objectified and commodified by a colonialist culture. To Sethe, killing her child saves her not only from the physical suffering of slavery but also from

its "measuring" which signifies an appropriation of discourse and an oppression of black identity. In murdering her daughter Sethe attempts in Bhabha's terms a "counterstance" (11) against the clonial forces that coercively have defined her as property and that threaten to do the same to her children. Her counterstance exemplifies her attempt to subvert the oppressive system by a kind of inversion of roles. In this case, Sethe tries to control her children's fate by killing them.

The alternative discourse created in the text by free black community can be translated to national ideologies. The novel's liberatory potential lies in the embodiment of mestiza identity and consciousness. Through the concept of rememory, the text calls for a process of a decolonization that is communal rather than isolated and individualized. As a mestiza text, *Beloved* crosses borders and transgresses boundaries between self and others and as a whole, the novel forces readers to cross borders through a definition of rememory that signifies collective decolonization.

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Contemporary Indian-English Poetry (Challenges and Responses): An Overview

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Dr. N. K. Neb

A number of material, cultural and theoretical developments have introduced tremendous changes in social life and the ways of understanding reality. These changes have impacted the nature and study of literary writings including poetry. The shift informing the understanding of reality informs destabilization of traditionally established and accepted social norms as well as literary canons. Consequently, the emphasis in literary writings now marks a shift from representation and reproduction of reality to its construction, reception and the influences that determine its nature. The different art forms, including poetry, mark the emergence of aesthetics concerned with the wonderful, playfully shocking and altogether new and startling forms of life that art encompasses. The theoretical perspectives highlighting the constructed and provisional nature of reality tend to evolve an artistic perspective concentrating on how to make the world of art than to render the already given world an artistic form. It highlights the absence of a fixed reference against which one has to understand the world created in a work of art.

Coupled with these changes, the role of electronic media and the media generated and transmitted images have impacted the literary theory and practice. Its mass appeal, commodification of cultural elements in the form of popular images and entertainment value mark its success as a popular form of art also. The success of media presented forms of art has also impacted people's choices, their tastes and tendencies to respond to other forms of art including poetry. The present generation is more inclined to respond and appreciate these art forms through live shows and involvement of the audience in the form of different viewer contests. The emergence of electronic media and its popularity has not only impacted the readership of literary writings in terms of numbers but also in terms of their expectations.

The impact of these factors seems to have introduced the inclusion of certain popular elements in contemporary literature, particularly Indian English novel that marks its greater success as compared to Indian-

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English poetry. For example, the inclusion of marginalized forms of life, startling images of life, different sub-cultures like lesbians, homosexuals and the presentation of destabilized forms of established norms, multiple perspectives towards history and popular contemporary events has earned some of the novelists the status of best sellers.

Poetry too has earned greater acceptance and popularity in the form of film songs, advertisements and laughter shows and in the form of comic interludes in 24 hour news channels. But the objective of these poetic forms is more related to commercial considerations and its role as a medium of entertainment only. It is purposefully directed to attract casual, pleasure seeking audience like bored house wives, over-worked executives and common people hardly desirous to concentrate on some serious social and moral concerns.

But academic poetry in general and Indian English poetry in particular, as always, has remained limited to a particular section of society. A specific reason for the limited number of people interested in this poetry perhaps lies in the fact that academic poetry in itself is an exclusive art. It is exclusive in the sense that its beauty and worth, like that of other art forms like sculpture, music, painting and classical dances is understood and appreciated by the people who are initiated to these forms of art. Its proper appreciation and evaluation requires certain basic information about its nature and elements. It limits the target audience in terms of numbers and marks a different kind of response from that of the readers of popular poetry mentioned above. The nature of poetry as an art form, its success, relevance and significance cannot be related to its popularity among the masses only. So far as Indian English poetry is concerned, it suffers more due to the lack of readership for being in a medium that does not correspond to the language ability of the common masses. Consequently, people's lack of interest and poetry's inability to earn reward in commercial terms forms a major challenge to contemporary Indian English poetry.

Apart from receiving negligible response in the form of readership, the indifference of media to academic poetry and the lack of proper evaluation and critical appreciation form another discouraging factor. Except a few well-meaning critics, poetry is generally reviewed and critically examined by casual journalistic reviewers who are professionally engaged to review films, serials, sports events etc. having little critical ability to analyze literature. Similarly, the westernized mind-

set that seeks positive opinions from the western critics before responding to a work of art also contributes to the biased appreciation and sometimes cruel indifference to the works of art published by small or not well known presses in India.

The presence of the factors discussed above does not absolve the poets altogether of their own responsibility to evolve certain ways in the form of content and form that have greater relevance for larger number of people. To some extent, the poets too are to blame for not being able to involve the presentation of many lives we live in contemporary times. For example, most of the contemporary Indian English poets have shown concern for emerging forms of life including deviant forms of contemporary behaviour. On the other hand, there is a negligible number of the poets concentrating on sensitive responses of the tradition oriented people uninitiated to the world of business and commerce. In the same way the cultural scenario that emerges from the works of contemporary Indian English poets informs as if the problems related to livelihood, poverty, and exploitation have altogether disappeared. Instead of expressing the pain of the anguished lives, unable to acquire respectable living, most of the poets seem to be more interested in matters related to small but peculiar sections of society. Instead of providing a vision of life having futuristic implications for the generations to come, these writers have remained limited to the presentation of day to day problems of evolving forms of life and complexities of modern urban living.

In spite of the fact that Indian English Poetry seems to be one of the most endangered literary species, there has emerged a considerable number of young poets promising brighter days and better health for it. The contemporary Indian-English poetry informs its corresponding development with the changed forms of life and its complexities. It marks a phase of innovation and variety of concerns and use of English as an Indian as well as global language which no longer contains archaic forms of English language. There has emerged a renewed interest in Indian-English poetry that can be ascertained from special issues of journals devoted to Indian poetry in English e.g. *Granta*, *London Magazine*, *Poetry Review*, *Lines Review*, *World Literature Today*, *Chicago Review*, etc. Apart from this, the continued appearance of significant anthologies of poetry edited by established critics and poet critics along with scores of journals providing ample space to poetry

and some of them completely devoted to poetry publication mark its emphatic presence in the horizon of Indian English literature.

The prolific scenario of Indian English poetry indicates that its growth is not limited to the production of poetry volumes and the number of people involved in rendering their experiences in poetic form. It also indicates the evolution of the nature of Indian English poetry from its limited concerns related to traditional Indian cultural ethos, mythology, and world view to the inclusion of multiple perspectives and presentation of variety of life not necessarily limited to Indian ways of life.

The evolving nature of Indian English poetry has also marked a shift in the nature of its understanding and analysis. Contemporary Indian English poetry contests categorization that earlier made critics study different poets as following one or the other school of thought. For example, the poets concentrating on Indian philosophical traditions, mystical experiences, religion and world view were considered to be traditional. Even contemporary poets like K.D.Sethna, Prem Kirpal, K. Srivinvasa Sastri, and Subramanyam are treated to be the followers of this tradition. But the shift that involves the cultural scenario informing the assertion of the presence of subcultures and destabilization of stable social and literary canons does not allow a reductionist view of poetry. Contemporary Indian English poetry like other art forms, contests categorization in fixed terms as it endeavours to negotiate the varieties of life irrespective of their being high or low, serious or profane through an altogether different idiom. The present review paper is intended to trace some of the emerging trends in Indian English poetry.

There are poets like Meena Alexander (b 1951) whose collections *The Storm* 1989, *Nightscene*, *The Garden* (1992) *River and Bridge* (1995) show her skill in creation of sequence of scenes and mark her concern for women's existence and her position in society.

Bibhu Padhi (b 1951) in his *Going to Temple* (1998), *Lines from Legend* (1992) and *A Wound Elsewhere* (1992) mark his concern for commonplace happenings like power cuts and ability to present local society.

Agha Shahid Ali Khan's, *The Half Inch Himalayas* (1987) presents recurring concern for life in an alien land, the trauma of exile and the influence of diverse cultures.

Rukmini Bhaya Nair's *Ayodhya Cantos* marks her awareness of Indian mythology, everyday travel experiences and cultural revival. Prabhanjan Mishra's *Vigil*, *Lips of a Canyon* (2000), *Litmus* (2005), *Landscapes*, Manohar Shetty's (b. 1953) *A Guarded Space* (1981), *Domestic Creatures* (1994) inform contemporary poet's engagement with emerging forms of reality and people's indulgence in new forms of experiences.

Imtiaz Dharker (b 1954), *Purdah and Other Poems, Postcards from God*, Vinay Dharwadker (b. 1954) *Sunday at Lodhi Garden* (1994). Vijay Seshadhri (b. 1954) *Wild Kingdom*, Sujata Bhatt (1956). *The Stinking Rose* (1995) C. P. Surendran's *Posthumous Poems* (1999) concentrate on metropolitan living. Tejdeep, *Five Feet Six and Half Inches* (1997) presents conflicts in consciousness. Sudeep Sen's *Postmarked India* (1997) and his other collections mark the blending of the existential with the spiritual and the juxtaposition of the western modernity with the Indian tradition.

Jeet Thayial's (b. 1959) *Gemini* (1992) concentrates on unusual angles of sex and his *Apocalypse* (1997) is concerned with darker side of modern living. Ranjit Hoskote's *Zones of Assault*. (1991) concentrates on the loss of innocence, the death of artists and intellectuals and records the potential for violence in the Indian subcontinent.

There are women writers who have raised a voice against male chauvinism and against standardized and canonical language. In the process, they tend to introduce alternative language. Their overriding sexual connotations and anguished human concerns tend to include those aspects of human experience in poetry that were earlier treated to be a taboo. These women writers include the names like, Sunita Jain, *Silences* (1982) Sujata Bhatt *Brunizem* (1993), *Monkey Shadwos* (1993), Lakshmi Kannan, *Unquiet Waters* (2005) Mamta Kalia, Rukmini Nair, Achla Bhatia, Malavicka Sanghvi, Nilima Wig, Jaspreet Mander, K. K. Dyson, Meena Alexander, (2002) *Illiterate Heart*. Lalitha Venkateswaran, Sujata Modayil, Imtiaz Dharker, Eunice, De Souza, Kanchan Mehta, Tara Patel, Monika Verma, Meera Nair, Nilima Chitgopekar, Rajlukshmee, Debee Bhattacharya who celebrate female energy and concentrate on female body not as an instrument of identity but of power that extends their concerns beyond personal equation as they tend to subvert patriarchal myths in an unsparingly strong ironical style. The experimental forms of

these women's poetry reveal an emotional and evocative substructure supporting the main cerebral patterns and rhythms.

Another dimension of Indian English poetry that has recently emerged can be traced in the writings of the poets who openly admit to be gays and lesbians and concentrate on these experiences in their poetic expressions. For example, Hoshang Merchant *Hotel Golconda* (1992), *Jonah and the Whale* (1995), *Love's Permission* (1996), Rakesh Ratti, Shalini and a number of poets writing under pseudonyms have introduced these perspectives in their works. The conflict generated by this form of life that does not find acceptance in mainstream life is presented in Ratti's following lines in his poem 'Beta'.

I want to fill their eyes with joy
Yet let my spirit seen wild
How can I find the love I seek
And still remain their child.

Similarly, Shalini's poem 'Womanlove' concentrates on lesbian relationships. Their poetry no doubt informs a radical break in orientation, objectives and vocabulary.

Environmental studies and an unprecedented awareness about the role of environment have also imparted a new dimension to literature. Concentrating on these aspects of life some of the Indian English poets, particularly from the North East, like –

Ao, Tamsula, *Songs from Here and There* (2003), Monalisa Changkija, Mamang Sai, Bhupati Dass, Anjum Hasan, Ananya Sankar Guha, Robin S. Ngangom, Mangkynrih, Kynpham Smy, Dayanada Pathak, Bhaskar Roy Barman, H. Ramdinthari, Mona Zota, Bhupati Das, Umakant Sarma, R. K. Madhubir, Amaresh Datta, Yumlan Tana, Maheshwar Nego-go deep into environmental aesthetics for a revival of the glorious past of evergreen nature. In their nostalgic explorations of the natural beauty of hills, rivers, forest and valleys they lament the exploitation of Mother earth by the industrial giant.

Apart from the poets who exhibit certain common tendencies in terms of themes and subject matter there are writers who mark the presence of potent poetic voices in spite of treating almost the same subject matter but with a different result. Their poetry registers a significant presence as these poets share some common concerns with

other contemporary poets and at the same time show certain maturity of art that points out a more secure place for them in the ever widening horizon of Indian English poetry. Some of these poets include the names like Niranjana Mohanty with his, *Silencing the Words, Oh This Bloody Game of Life, Prayers to Lord Jagannath, On Touching You and Other Poems, Life Lines*, and *Krishna : A Long Poem* (2003) in which he tends to create cultural ambience of Orissa apart from nostalgia and touches of sorrow revealing the human in him. His responsiveness for various changes taking place and the problems confronting fruitful living form the core of his thematic structures. His poetry provides lyrical smoothness and spiritual radiance of devotional writings. Charusheel Singh's *The Creation Cocktail* (1997) *Songs of Life and Death*, and *Terracotta Flames* make abundant use of traditional Indian wisdom in the form of *Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Bhagawat- Gita, Bhudhism* and *Vedanta*. R.K.Singh with his *My Silence and Other Poems* concentrates on the theme of Eros exploring multiple aspects of sexual energy. I.K.Sharma's *My Lady Broom and Other Poems* (2004) deeply rooted in Indian culture and metaphysics. Pashupati Nath Jha's *Cross and Creation* (2002) *Mother and Other Poems* (2005) mark his sensitive response to the plight of crushed humanity and the victims of violence like widows and rape victims. , Kulbhushan Kushal with his *Shrinking Horizons* (1989) *Rainbow on Rocks* (2005) *Whirlpool of Echoes* (2006) and *Songs of Silence* (2008) provides philosophical perspectives on time, death, communication, language, and existentialist problems confronting man on the one hand and registers the sensitive responses to reality through contemporary idiom. D.C.Chambial's *Broken Images* (1983) *Cargoes of A Bleeding Heart and Other Poems* (1984) *Before the Petals Unfold* (2002). Chote Lal Khatri's *Ripples in the Lake* (2006), and *Kargil (An Anthology of Poems)* assert his belief in traditional Indian values and present Indian customs , rituals , transcribed in words. The presence of such poets and their regular contribution ensures the continued journey of this art form beyond the contributions of stalwarts like Ramanujan, Ezekiel, Shiv K. Kumar, Jayant Mahapatra.

There are many other poets who have published in different magazines, anthologies, journals and books. Some of them include Diane Mehta, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Reetika Vazirani, Darius Cooper, Melanie Silgado, Debjani Chatterjee, Shanta Acharya, Maya Choudhury, Suma Josson, Menka Shivadasani, Snjum Katyal, Ruth Vanita, Robin

Ngangom, Desmond Karmawphlang, G.C. Mago , J.S.Anand, Vijay Vishal, Jaspreet Mander, Leela Gandhi, Jerry Pinto, Smita Agarwal etc., and the list is getting extended with new names everyday.

The poets discussed and referred to in this paper inform vibrant and significant work being done by contemporary generation of poets. The rich variety and strength that Indian English poetry has exhibited marks the vigorous and assertive nature of its onward journey. There are, no doubt, problems in its way to achieve the desired success. However, the people engaged in this sacred activity seem to have enough strength that keeps their heads high and does not let them succumb to different pressures monetary or otherwise and desert their duty of providing pleasure and correction of tastes. But those who treat their success in terms of being best sellers and earn wealth may see that there are more and better options for them.

An Aspiring Heart...

Dr. Anita Kiran

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Dry wells
Pouring
Muddy filth
In bent vessels.....

A craving eye
Gulps the muddy pie
What comes out
Makes others loathe
And pray
May he never say it again
Co me what may!

Honeyed wells
Pouring
Sweet nectar
In bent vessels
An aspring heart ...

Taking sips of nectar sweet
Twirls and perceives
Swings and sways
Then
Finds a solace
To
Sing and play
In harmony
An estatic symphony !
The
Music of spheres!!!

They

Dr. Kulbhusan Kushal

They will sing a song
And we shall forget
Our homes

They will sing a song
We shall forget
Our Gods

They will sing a song
Our prayers
We shall forget

They will sing a song
Our Gods
We shall not remember

They will sing a song
We shall chase
Manufactured slogans

They will sing a song
Our visions shall be stolen
In broad daylight