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Literary Writers and the Future of Modern Civilization

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Sociologists make a clear distinction between 'culture' and 'civilization' (see McIver & Page, Society). According to sociologists while the term civilization stands for the palpable achievements of an age like technology and the visible artifacts created by technology(ies), culture of an age connotes certain value-systems, certain ways of thinking and living and certain worldviews which distinguish it from the culture of another age. The relationship of civilization to culture is roughly one of hardware to software. In this paper the two terms will be treated as synonymous and may sometimes appear to overlap.

In Europe, 'modern civilization' can be safely said to have commenced with the Renaissance, that is roughly with the beginning of the sixteenth century. The Renaissance, with its emphasis on empiricism and reason as against the medieval stress on authority and belief inaugurated a period of rational thinking and observation leading to scientific thinking and inventions. The Industrial Revolution was a direct descendant of this change in the worldview. Rise of technology, large-scale urbanization, excessive exploitation of natural resources, breakdown of old family structures, breakdown of community life, sexual permissiveness, a commercialized outlook on life and human relations, rise of individualism, breakdown of human communication resulting in feelings of loneliness, large-scale urban poverty following exploitation of labour by the capitalists who owned the means of production, dilution of religious faith, rise of violence in society as a means to solve problems of social conflict, the outbreak of the two World Wars driven by a desire for imperialist expansion and to corner more fruits of colonization by each participating country, large-scale battlefield violence and the resultant disillusionment of sensitive souls with the concept of 'progress', the invasion of Vietnam by the United States of America to counter the threat of communism, the collapse of the socialist system of economy following the collapse of the USSR, the end of the Cold War era and the dominance of capitalism are the features that almost comprehensively cover the modern age. Industrial society has seen itself being replaced by post-industrial society in which the service sector has all but replaced the manufacturing sector.

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The emergence of a new capitalism following globalization and I.T. revolution and the lowering of the international trade barriers is contemporary history. The dominant features of the modern Industrial society have only been accentuated in the post-industrial age offering the old socio-economic challenges in a more pressing and complicated form.

The term 'future' also needs some clarification. All knowledge, whether arrived at by using the methodology of natural sciences or those of the subjects covered under the broad rubric Humanities are interested in indicating the future course of the activities studied by them in their respective fields. They do so not by using any astrological insights but by carefully observing available data which when tested through controlled experiments and passed through verification gives them a working hypothesis. Further experimentation with more data and verification may lead to a theory which is predictive in nature. The predictivity value of a theory both in the natural sciences and Humanities is of great importance as it helps in understanding the future.

The case of literature is slightly different in the sense that its methodology of engaging with the present is different from the methodologies employed by the natural sciences and the Humanities although literature is also included in the Humanities. Literature is not created in a socio-historical vacuum. The socio-historical, scientific and technological features of an age do seriously impinge upon literature in every age. The creative writer is believed to be more sensitive to these impacts and literary creation is the resultant of a serious emotional engagement with these impacts. Although literature does not engage itself in taking on the prophetic role of the natural sciences and other Humanities subjects, the creative writer, whether a poet or a dramatist or a short story writer or a novelist or a literary essayist-to name the dominant literary forms-has her/his hand on the pulse of the techno-scientific developments of her / his age and is extremely responsive to the resultant socio-cultural impacts of these changes. The literary pronouncements of the creative writer, therefore, acquire a definitive predictive value and sensitive readers can have a sure grasp of the direction the things underscored in the literary composition will take in future. Herein lies the value of literature in indicating the future of modern civilization. It won't be too much to say that literary writers are the unacknowledged crystal-gazers of the world. In this paper I shall try to show how the thematic insights of the western writers of 19th and 20th century, from both sides of the Atlantic, point in the

direction of the future of mankind. The relevance of these writers for our own country will also be shown. After all we have decided to take the road traveled by the West.

William Wordsworth, the high priest of Nature, was cut to the quick by the increasing indifference of the nineteenth century man who, thanks to the abuse of science and technology, found himself losing the mystic appeal of nature. More alarming than this was the commercializing attitude of the nineteenth century man to whom nature was fast turning into a useful resource to be exploited for economic profit promised by the march of the Industrial Revolution. In his well known sonnet *The World Is Too Much With Us* gives a highly rounded, economical and powerful but painful expression- the poem is a sonnet -to the twin attitudes of commercialization and indifference to Nature: "The world is too much with us / Getting and spending, soon or late / We lay waste our powers./ Little we see in Nature that is ours, a sordid boon." The Industrial Revolution unfolding before the eyes of the poet had made him sit up and take serious note of the dangers of the technological changes in industry which promised much larger productivity and counted Nature as nothing more than a useful resource. The futuristic indications of the poet's concerns are impossible to escape by anyone who has followed the progress of industrial expansion with much greater speed in the West and with less speed in the developing countries. The inhuman destruction of natural resources for commercial purposes-a sordid boon-and complete indifference to ecology and the resultant environmental imbalances, even disasters, are there for everybody to see. Whether the Himalayan glaciers will completely melt away by 2035 or much later is irrelevant. What is very relevant is that they will melt away tomorrow resulting in the drying up of rivers, large-scale desertification, famines and the drowning of low lying coastal countries of the world. Was Wordsworth not indicating his finger in the direction of the future of modern civilization in this little but profound poem? Mathew Arnold, whom many consider to be the first modern poet (see the volume on M. Arnold in the *Pelican Guide to English Literature*), understood well the direction that man woman relationships were taking in the fast industrialized England and other countries of the world. Loyalty to partners was falling a prey to promiscuity and the poet was deeply worried that in a world in which the consolations of institutionalized religion had all but lost their appeal-thanks to Darwin and other

evolutionists-fidelity in love held some promise of consolation when misfortune and suffering strike a person. This is the burden of his well known poem *Dover Beach*: "Ah! love / Let us be true to one another." Was not Arnold gifted with a poetically couched prophetic insight in this poem which is indicating in the direction of the breakdown of loyalties in love in our own age? Multiple partners, one-night stands, treating of sex less as an emotionally binding experience and more an entertainment is the characteristic of our own age. No matter what the champions of flexibility in sex relations may say, the rising number of suicides among the youngsters because of unhappy love experiences tell a different tale. The Arnoldian poem written in the nineteenth century against the backdrop of expanding industrialization points in the direction of a clearly visible future. Further, what Arnold said in 19th century regarding the earthly destiny of humankind has turned out to be only more true in our own age and day. The words of Arnold in *Dover Beach* come to our minds with a prophetic but frightening certainty as we face a world bereft of spiritual values of love and faith, an ever present danger of a nuclear conflict, mindless terrorist violence killing innocent people almost every day and leaving their family and friends with inconsolable grief : "For the world which seems to lie before us like a land of dreams / Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor help for pain / And we are here as on a darkling plain / Confused with false alarms of struggle and flight / Where ignorant armies clash by night." Can you think of a more comprehensive and accurate glimpse into the nightmares of the 21st century delivered to us in 19th century in the peculiar mode of literature? Arnold mourned the disappearance of the certainties and consolations of religion in the wake of techno-industrial landscape of the Victorian age. Many years later the fragmentation, the alienation and sufferings of humans in the world hit by rampant industrialization and World War I made T S Eliot ruminate on the destiny of humankind in *The Wasteland*. While Arnold bemoaned the passing away of religious faith as a solution to suffering, Eliot emphasized the role and necessity of religious faith in coming to terms with the fact of suffering in the world consumed by materialistic greed and selfishness. If we trace the poetic and philosophical development of Eliot from *The Wasteland*(1920), to *Ash Wednesday* (1930) and to the poems in the *Four Quartets* (1943), we shall not fail to notice the stress that Eliot lays on the necessity of reviving religious faith and the cultivation of spiritual values to confront the fact of

human suffering. The themes of *Burnt Norton*, *The Dry Salvages*, *East Coker* and *Little Gidding* point in this direction. As violence and capitalistic greed and sheer commercialization of human relationships lead to spiritual emptiness in today's world, interestingly more and more people are being drawn to the consolations of spirituality. The popularity of spiritual leaders like Shri Shri Ravi Shankar and other genuine spiritual leaders only attests to the prophetic insight of Eliot. To turn to a different genre now. The legitimately famous short story entitled *Quality* by the 20th century writer John Galsworthy told the tale of two honest shoe makers whose shoes refused to break despite years of wear and tear. They could not withstand the economic might and advertisement power of the wealthy capitalist shoemakers whose main concern was maximum profit. Durability was knowingly thrown out as a business ethic because it stood between them and their sales. Can any sensitive reader of this story who has also followed the growth of the modern multinational corporations fail to see the significance of Galsworthy's theme? As globalization spreads and countries take recourse to protectionist measures-the two are mutually contradictory in principle yet they are practiced-shall we not see more small-scale businesses being swallowed by the MNCs? Is Galsworthy not indicating the trend of the capitalist business tricks in the future world? Arthur Miller, the American dramatist, drew the attention of his readers to the sacrificing of durability of manufactured goods by large manufacturing establishments to continue to make repeated profits in his celebrated play *Death of a Salesman* (1949) In the same play he dramatizes the seepage of the absence of ethical values in the capitalist / commercialized world into the family with disastrous consequences. The play may be dated in America but it holds a special significance for India because we are going the way of the Industrialized America. What social impact it is beginning to have on the Indian society is there for everybody to see. What pray is future? Is it not an extension of the present? And also an expansion of the evils of the present? William Butler Yeats is probably the most prophetic in his *Second Coming*. The prediction of a holocaust of societal violence, the loss of control over the anarchic forces and the destruction of all the civilized values is so well articulated in his little but prophetic poem. In our own times we have seen the beast mentioned in *The Second Coming* symbolically slouching back not only to Bethlehem but to other locations as well to be reborn. The rise of societal intolerance,

the emergence and growth of religious fundamentalism of every shade, Hindu and Islamic included, faith in violence as a recipe to solve socio-economic problems and the drowning of the "ceremony of innocence" in human relations attest to the prophetic insights of *Second Coming*. In our own country the rise of Naxalite violence to solve problems of economic imbalance and the recent memories of violence rooted in religious fundamentalism and the failure to address these violent issues by governments recall to mind the words of W B Yeats: "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold / The blood-dimmed tide is loosed / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world...." The invasion of the week by the militarily strong is a feature of our civilization which will only acquire greater power and justification in the coming years. The world trends in the 20th and in the first decade of the 21st century give a frightful prophetic insight to the poem of Yeats. The violent invasion of Vietnam and the trampling of that country, though not its spirit, by the American might and more recently the invasion of Iraq and the unleashing of the violence of war, the ever present danger of a nuclear conflict, with its attendant horrors were foreshadowed in that small but significant poem of Yeats who could read the writing on the wall though it may have been written in hieroglyphics.

The breakdown of communication is a feature of increased industrialization and M. Arnold was sensitive to this social change in his own times. That is why in his well known poem *To Marguerite* he is so pained to see "million mortals" living alone: "In the sea of life enisled / With echoing straits between us thrown / Dotting the shoreless watery wild / We million mortals live alone." The irony in the expression "million mortals" living alone is impossible to miss. Do rampant industrialization and urbanization and the resulting hectic life styles, increasing suspicion of motives not point in the direction of more alienation and atomization of human beings in the years to come? Is Arnold not throwing an indicative glance at the future of modern civilization in his poem?

The rise of industrial capitalism and wealth becoming the only parameter of social worth putting all other values into the backyard came in for criticism by several American writers. Besides Miller, Scott Fitzgerald in his well known novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925) showed the underbelly of the American Dream which made Gatsby take to illegal bootlegging to acquire status, throw lavish parties and win the hand of Daisy. As industrialization makes big strides in our country

today and the Indian Dream becomes a possibility available to anyone who can dream this dream, can we fail to see the fact of the young and the-not-so-young taking to crime to make it big because only wealth matters.

Dystopian fiction has been particularly futuristic in its handling of the impact of technology and the organization of economic activity and the mode of production on socio-cultural life. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1931) captured most prophetically the direction the capitalistic world was going to take. Huxley's novel dramatically demonstrates that consumerism and recreational sex will become an integral part of human societies and children will be indoctrinated into these activities from childhood. Children will be conditioned in childhood to value consumption with such platitudes as: "Ending is better than mending." In a work of non-fiction entitled 'Brave New World Revisited' (1958), Huxley reviewed the insights expressed in *Brave New World*. He concluded that the guesses expressed in *Brave New World* were turning out to be correct much faster than he originally thought. Among a score of dystopian works of fiction four works which deserve special mention are: *The Iron Heel* (1908) by Jack London, *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) by Ray Bradbury, *Running Man* (1953) by Richard Bachman and *Neuromancer* (1984) by William Gibson. *The Iron Heel* is about the great evil of the modern age: the rich crushing the poor, the propensity of the forces of capital to react with the most monstrous and tyrannical violence against the organized labour which seeks to grab more of its fair share from them. *Fahrenheit 451* presents a future American society in which the masses are hedonistic and critical thought through reading is outlawed. The number 451 refers to the temperature at which bookpaper combusts. The novel is a critique of what Bradbury saw as future America: anti-intellectual, hedonistic America. Bradbury said in a 2007 interview that the book explored the effects of television and mass media on the reading of literature. Does it ring a bell? Are you not reminded of our very own Reality TV and Saas-Bahu type soaps. *Neuromancer* which belongs to the category of Cyberpunk is a dystopian novel, set in a post-industrial world, featuring information technology, cyberspace, cybernetics, coupled with a breakdown or radical change in the social order. *Neuromancer* is believed to have directly influenced the way the Web has developed. *Neuromancer* is among the most honoured postmodern works of science-fiction in recent history.

Nearer home, writers show how literature grapples with subjects which are going to have momentous consequences for humans. For reasons of want of space I shall take just one example from India to show that literature in every country tries to come to grips with the essential features of the times and great writers every where contain a futuristic vision in their compositions. A dystopian futuristic play called *Harvest* (1996) by Manjula Padmanabhan presents the frightening scenario in which the rich Americans shop for body parts of the poor people of the third world countries in order to hang on to youth. *Harvest* is about the sale of human organs. It is a play concerned with organ-selling in India set in the near future. It is about global predatory capitalism giving rise to commoditization of human body and international trade in human organs. Already, there is a strong lobby in the West in favour of legalizing the sale of human parts. Let us wait and see how the scenario of *Harvest* unfolds itself before our eyes.

The above-mentioned illustrations from different literary forms- poetry, short story, drama and longer fiction- and analyses support beyond doubt the view that there is a close relationship between literary writers and the future of civilization in a given time period. Although no literary writer, worth his salt, sets out to do palm-reading of the future of a civilization, yet no writer can avoid being a harbinger of things to come for reasons outlined above. Yes, the quantum and nature of literary crystal-gazing will and does vary from writer to writer.

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Vanquishing “Moral Delinquency”: Ethical Regeneration in Philip Roth’s *The Professor of Desire*

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The study of the present text is not confined within the strict boundary of any branch of moral philosophy. Ethical values are relative and vary in different spatial and temporal context. As Mabbot explains, “the terms ‘right’ and ‘good’ are relative terms and describe or express the desires or feelings or preferences of the speaker toward actions or states of affairs contemplated by him” (777). Nevertheless, moral principles are established in a society as a result of collective will and consensus, and the individual is expected to follow them to ensure the welfare of others as well as his own. William K. Frankena rightly observes that morality is a “social enterprise, not just a discovery or invention of the individual for his own guidance”(6).

Philip Roth’s novel *The Professor of Desire*, published in 1977, was widely praised by critics as well as the general readers. Here Roth probes the universal dilemma faced by humanity since times immemorial, viz. the urge for sensual pleasures on the one hand and a wish for peace and social approval on the other. David Kepesh, the protagonist, is initially tortured by the repercussions of his hedonistic pleasures but through a strenuous process of self-restraint he is able to extricate himself from the mire of sensual indulgence. In the end, he transcends the disturbing temptations of physical gratification and begins to enjoy a happy and peaceful life. Thus he achieves a kind of reconciliation between the opposing tendencies in his own self. Owing to the universality of its theme and flawless structure, the book received highly favorable acclaim from the critics. According to George J. Searles, “The Professor of Desire is one of Roth’s best books because it is among his most intelligent” (63). Similarly, Bernard F. Rodgers, Jr. calls it “the most formal of Roth’s fictions” (160).

In this paper I have tried to examine the social and psychological conflict faced by the protagonist, the process of sublimation of his base instincts and the resultant attainment of spiritual harmony. by

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Roth—and not only by Roth, but also by most of us caught in the muddle of our ordinary lives”(711). In my analysis I shall be guided to some extent by such concepts as “Virtue Ethics” which is “especially concerned about inner states of character and motivation” (La Follette 10), and “Intuitionism” according to which “the prima facie moral principles are self-evident” (9). According to Jeff McMahan “a moral intuition is a spontaneous moral judgment, often concerning a particular act or agent, though an intuition may also have as its object a type of act or, less frequently, a more general moral rule or principle”(93-94). The implications have much to do with sociological and psychological facets of the protagonist’s predicament rather than any religious or metaphysical abstractions. Broadly speaking, the text will be examined on the basis of universal morality, embodied in a Yiddish proverb, which is given as the epigraph of Philip Roth’s first novel *Goodbye, Columbus*, “The heart is half a prophet.”

In *The Professor of Desire*, Roth takes the problem of moral degeneration to its logical end. Here, the conflict is almost exclusively internal, albeit always in the ambience of family and society. After enjoying unbridled sexual pleasures, David Kepesh (most of the characters of *The Breast* are recast in *The Professor of Desire*) suffers the pangs of guilt and repentance due to his high moral ideals. After much pain and suffering, he begins to understand his true nature and his condition vis-à-vis the social and moral forces governing his existence and arrives at the conclusion that his idealistic notions can coexist with the surrounding pragmatic reality only after some adjustments and modifications on his part.

Comparing Kepesh’s situation to that of Portnoy in *Portnoy’s Complaint* Judith Paterson Jones and Guinevera A. Nance observe that like the latter he “fights a recurring battle between passion and reason, pleasure and duty, violent self-assertion and dedication to the discipline of his profession as a teacher and scholar”(87). But in *Portnoy’s Complaint*, the conflict is also external as the hero attributes his suppression and unhappiness to his Jewish parents. Even till the closing lines of the novel *Portnoy* is not able to resolve his conflicts. Kepesh, on the other hand, “begins to gain some insight into his own internal struggle”(Jones and Nance 116). And once he realizes the real cause of his conflict, he resolutely wages a war against his libidinous instincts and triumphs in the end. In *The Professor of Desire*, the hero is

ultimately able to overcome the adverse forces – mainly internal in his case – and achieves self-fulfillment; albeit like all other things in human life his happiness is tentative and not absolute. Jones and Nance accurately describe the moral progress of Kepesh when they observe: “Kepesh becomes the first of Roth’s protagonists to make the transition from professor-rake to ‘conscientious’ professor” (112).

Early in the novel as a student, Kepesh realizes that like Lord Byron he wants to be “studious by day, dissolute by night” and like Richard Steele imagines himself to be a “rake among scholars, a scholar among rakes” (Roth 1995:17, subsequent references to this book are indicated by page numbers only). On the one hand, he is the high priest of ethical principles, supposed to inspire his students with supreme moral values and on the other, cherishes the fulfillment of his most wild erotic desires. Like Portnoy, he suffers the dichotomy of his libidinous urge and conscience. He faces the age-old conflict between base desires of the flesh and high moral ideals, “between reckless erotic ambitions and conscientious intellectual dedication” (Lee 65). In his early youth, though, he finds it difficult to resolve this conflict: “Either I turned against my flesh, or it turned against me...” (171). No doubt, unlike Portnoy his childhood is comparatively innocent and happy at the Hungarian Royale, his parents’ hotel in the Catskills. Still, the seeds of romantic escapism are present in him from the very beginning which can be discerned in his praise for Herbie Bratasky, his childhood hero, who had the rare gift of mimicking all sorts of sounds. Kepesh’s psychoanalyst rightly remarks: “Moral delinquency has its fascination for you” (102). His tendency to live beyond the moral boundaries is also seen in his unsuccessful attempt to seduce Marcella Walsh in his college days. His voracious indulgence in erotic orgies with the two Swedish girls is reminiscent of Portnoy’s sexual adventures with his shiksas. Elisabeth Elverskog and Birgitta have come to London University to improve their English. Unlike Birgitta, Elisabeth is sensitive and conscientious despite her flair for sexual adventures. Initially, Kepesh feels emotionally attached to her and, as he confesses in his letters to her, romantically fancies marrying her and even having children by her. But after a rather perverse and vigorous sexual workout with Birgitta and Kepesh, Elisabeth feels guilty and repentant and, finally, leaves for Sweden. Birgitta, on the other hand, embodies the true spirit of hedonism and seems to suffer no regret or remorse for her debauchery. In her

uninhibited and frank indulgence in sexual pleasures she appears to be a replica of Mary Jane Reed, “The Monkey”, of Portnoy’s Complaint. Her “total immunity from remorse or self-doubt” and her “courteous, respectful and friendly” behavior fascinates Kepesh to her (50). But, finally, Kepesh decides to desert her, for she embodies that side of his moral nature which, ironically, he strongly disapproves. This “perfectly brought-up child of a Stockholm physician and his wife” departs from his life as unobtrusively and gracefully as she plays her role in sexual feats (50).

Kepesh resembles Portnoy in his “erotic daredevilry” and the consequent feelings of remorse and guilt (44). After a passionate love making with Birgitta he reflects, “An hour earlier I had been fearful that it might be decades before I was potent again, that my punishment, if such it was, might even last forever” (41). The fear of impotence is a natural corollary of the acute pangs of guilt and it again finds expression in his complaint during his session with Dr. Klinger: “I cannot maintain an erection, Dr. Klinger” (103). At this stage, Kepesh does not understand his true nature as he himself admits, “No, nobody understands me, not even I myself” (26). That is precisely the reason why after making the mistake of choosing Birgitta as his paramour, he again decides to marry a woman like Helen Baird despite his awareness of “the deep temperamental divide that has been there from the start” between them (67). However, he faces his characteristic dilemma before taking the plunge: “I marry Helen Baird – after, that is, nearly three full years devoted to doubting-hoping-wanting-and-fearing” (66).

But he soon discovers that Helen is even worse than Birgitta in the sense that at least the latter was what she appeared and was not afflicted with any psychological dualism. She does enjoy sexual intimacy with Kepesh for some time but leaves him the moment she senses his disinterest in her without so much as a hint of accusation or grumbling. Helen, though beautiful and exotic like her, is driven by a passion for the romantic and the unreal, and certainly does not feel at ease in her role of a domestic married woman. Soon after their marriage “mutual criticism and disapproval continue to poison our lives”, and he realizes with dismay that Helen is irresistibly drawn to those hollow values which lead nowhere but to moral vacuity (67). The exotic world of romance and fun she enjoyed with Jimmy Metcalf in Hongkong always seems to beckon her like a mirage. In her best make-up, this “princess of the Orient” stealthily visits the airport to be picked up by

any stranger and transported to Hongkong or any other Utopia of romance (101). In fact, she does go to Hongkong where she has her experience of evil in the form of her former lover, Metcalf. Mauled physically and psychologically, she is brought back from Hongkong by Kepesh himself.

Kepesh plunges in a kind of psychological and moral vacuum after his separation from Helen. On his visit to his son in New York, his father is rather disturbed to see the kind of life he is living. At this stage, he is in the abyss of his circumstances; he is having his sessions with his psychoanalyst; he is on anti-depressants; and even in his father's presence an unknown homosexual pesters him with his phone calls at midnight. During this period, he makes friendship with one of his faculty colleagues, Ralph Baumgarten, and both of them try to seduce a girl who, ironically turns out to be Dr. Klinger's daughter. Meanwhile, he gets a job offer from Arthur Schonbrunn, the chairman of the comparative literature program at the State University of New York. Now he makes a serious attempt to understand his motives and intentions in the context of his moral convictions and the demands of his surrounding society. His confession to Dr. Klinger, “I can't go ahead”, actually proves his intention to wade through the state of stasis and limbo in which he now finds himself (100). At this moment, his receptivity for truth and will for moral regeneration is at its peak, and gradually reality begins to dawn upon him.

In a way, Kepesh's moral development follows the archetypal pattern of innocent bliss to experience and pain which is, ultimately, succeeded by serene though not unqualified happiness. Eventually, he arrives at the Chekhovian conclusion about the essential human condition as expressed by one of his students, Kathie Steiner, in her paper: “We are born innocent, we suffer terrible disillusionment before we can gain knowledge, and then we fear death – and we are granted only fragmentary happiness to offset the pain.” (94). After his horrid experiences, Kepesh realizes that the moral virtues like renunciation, self-control and stoicism are essential to achieve peace and harmony in life. Commenting on Roth's concerns in *The Professor of Desire*, Jones and Nance say: “He is writing about the human condition – the transformations from innocence to experience, from idealism to disillusionment – and those fragmentary moments of happiness which offset the pain” (118). In fact, the influence of such writers as Henry James, Kafka and Tolstoy can be discerned in many novels of Roth.

But owing to the elements of moral realism in his fiction, Anton Chekhov ceases to be just an ‘influence’ in *The Professor of Desire*; he is very much a “part of the subject matter” (Green xiv).

In sharp contrast to Helen and Birgitta, Claire Ovington represents positive and affirmative traits of character; unlike them, she is pragmatic, mature, self-controlled and considerate. “She is to steadiness”, he tells Dr. Klinger, “what Helen was to impetuosity. She is to common sense what Birgitta was to indiscretion” (158). With her help and co-operation, Kepesh starts recuperating from his past psychic wounds and makes serious attempt to reaffirm his faith in himself and the ethical ideals which he cherishes. After his unhappy marital life with Helen, Claire appears to him so orderly, affectionate and good that she assumes symbolic significance for him – the symbol of the possibility of a life on a higher ethical level. Besides being beautiful and charming like Helen, she is an assiduous and practical woman, and warmly helps him in recuperating from his moral and psychological exhaustion. At least in the case of Claire, it seems difficult to accept Mary Allen's contention that Roth “rails at the world because he has never found in it a woman who is both strong and good” (147). To spare Kepesh any inconvenience arising out of his obligation to marry her, she gets an abortion without so much as informing him. She later explains her reasons to Kepesh, “I don't want to make anybody unhappy. I don't want to cause anyone pain” (222). With her encouragement and emotional support, Kepesh gradually starts enjoying his life as a professor and a husband. Obviously, his intimate relationship with Claire is no longer founded merely upon his sensual passion for her, for with the passage of time he finds his “overheated frenzy subsiding into quiet physical affection” (199). Unlike Helen she understands his true nature and extends her whole-hearted co-operation in his moral redemption: “For within a year the job is somehow done, a big check mark beside each life-saving item. I give up the anti-depressants, and no abyss opens beneath me (153). At long last, he feels hopeful of his deliverance from those entrapments of the flesh which were the root cause of generation of guilt and conflict in his psyche. In the last section of the novel he feels a rare sense of pure joy and spiritual bliss.

But living with Claire in this blissful state, he is still nagged by doubts and fears and, perhaps, this is the reason why he procrastinates his marriage with her. The “rake” in him is sometimes fed up with the

orderly and down-to-earth Claire, as she singularly lacks the raw and uninhibited sexuality exhibited by Birgitta and Helen (17). His exasperation is obvious when he says, “I see how very easily I could have no use for her. The snapshots. The lists. The mouth that will not ... The curriculum-review committee. Everything” (162). During their tour of Europe, he remembers with longing his sensual pleasures with Birgitta though just for a moment. Before long he feels that “all such yearnings have begun to subside, as left to themselves those yearnings will” (163). True, the lure of carnal orgies in his unconscious mind sometimes crops up in the form of his disinterest in Claire: “How much longer before I’ve had a bellyful of wholesome innocence – how long before the lovely blandness of a life with Claire begins to cloy, to pall, and I am out there once again, mourning what I’ve lost and looking for my way!” (251). Nevertheless, he has realized now that his sexual indulgence is actually an impediment in the fulfillment of his ethical aspirations and the resultant achievement of spiritual harmony which is his ultimate goal. Having realized this truth, he exerts his utmost will and strength to shed the ghost of his past profligacy and turns a new leaf in his life. With determination, self-denial and self-control, he is able to extricate himself from the labyrinth of his illusions and starts “living at last in accordance with my [his] true spirit” (196). No doubt, there are pitfalls and obstacles in his quest, they are but an inevitable and essential part of life. His choice to act resolutely and with all his inner resources eventually leads him to his destination.

Jones and Nance are of the opinion that in the end Kepesh gets only “fragmentary happiness in a relationship with Claire Ovington” (117). According to them, Kepesh’s statement that in his relationship with Claire he feels “sealed up into something wonderful” (164) amply demonstrates that he considers his life with Claire as “entrapment” (118). But Kepesh has now learnt to preserve the sanctity of the social and moral bonds which are an essential part of human life. The word “wonderful” itself suggests the sense of psychological fulfillment and harmony he feels in his limited life with Claire. Rodgers also complains that “his dream of Kafka’s whore makes it clear that the struggle within him has been repressed, not ended” (163). True, in the absurd dream he has the night before leaving Prague, he sees Kafka’s whore Eva, who invites him to touch her withered private parts. But his reluctance to accept her lascivious offer amply shows his disinterest in

wayward sexual pleasures. Moreover, his vision of the whore as a decrepit old hag may be interpreted as an evidence of his realization of the futility of carnal gratifications. Mark Shechner calls *The Professor of Desire* “a novel of convalescence”, celebrating the “erotic and emotional recovery” of the protagonist (235). It would be more appropriate to call it a novel of moral convalescence, as it portrays the process of the hero’s deliverance from the turbulence caused by his ethical degeneracy. In the closing pages of the novel, Roth describes with rare felicity Kepesh’s domestic joy and happiness:

The story ends just like this: her pretty head on his shoulder; his hand stroking her hair; their owl hooting; their constellations all in order – their medallions all in order; their guests in their freshly made beds; and their summer cottage, so cozy and inviting, just down the hill from where they sit together wondering about what they have to fear. Music is playing in the house (260).

The tenderness, sentimental affection, deep serenity and contentment expressed in the passage evoke a scene from a novel of Charles Dickens or George Eliot. It reflects the reconciliation and composure attained by a man who has had the painful experience of divergence from the ethical path approved by his milieu and his own conscience. He appears eventually to have extricated himself from the gnawing feeling of guilt and despondency and achieved spiritual harmony.

Still, Kepesh is pestered by apprehensions of the possibility of relapse into his former moral degeneration. Even in the last paragraph of the novel he is seen to be troubled by “bad dreams” sweeping through him “like water through a fish’s gills”, which implies the precariousness of his happiness (262). As far as his promiscuous intentions are concerned, he is fully satisfied with Claire. He admits, “Claire is enough. Yes, ‘Claire’ and ‘enough’ – they, too, are one word” (165). His apprehensions serve only to show that the probability of deviation from virtuous path cannot be ruled out permanently and man can preserve his moral values only by strenuous and constant efforts. Roth seems to suggest here that the evil in the form of carnal temptations is always lurking below the outer surface of normalcy and can erupt out any moment. However, Kepesh reaffirms his faith in his latent capabilities: “Near dawn I awaken to discover that the house is not in ashes nor have I been abandoned in my bed as an incurable. My willing Clarissa is with me still!” (262). After his harrowing moral ordeal

he has, at long last, understood and learnt to accept the essential human condition. His predicament transcends the temporal and spatial boundaries, and assumes a universal dimension. Human problems do not have permanent solutions and life has to be accepted in its entirety and with all its imperfections.

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Shakespeare and Post-Modernism

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10

Shakespeare need not be abandoned by the postmodern world. Indeed; the postmodern world does & continues to embrace his works wholeheartedly. Hugh Grady rightly observes “we are now witnessing the emergence of a postmodernist Shakespeare through the development of critical paradigms which incorporate aspects of contemporary postmodernist aesthetics”. (p.207) Though, his plays in chaste form do not always agree with post-modern ideologies, they prove conducive to a myriad of discussions relevant to the postmodern era. Under postmodernism, Shakespeare undergoes theorizing, deconstruction, textual criticism, political & cultural criticism and clarifies hitherto undiscovered features which are unraveled by the postmodernist interpretations of Shakespeare’s plays.

When approached in a historical manner, aesthetics provide mediation between Renaissance & the age of post modernity that is not a dismissal of history but a representation or re-interpretation of history. Many social issues of Shakespeare’s plays are still the burning issues in today’s dysfunctional global society. Shakespeare’s plays teach us much about the current postmodern culture & reveal the struggle of the British people both in the early 1600’s & in the late 1900’s with sexism, capitalism & racism.

The postmodernists explore the inter relationship between Shakespeare & 20th contemporary culture by discovering postmodernist themes, tendencies & attitudes within his literary works. The issues of Race constitute one of the most important themes of in postmodern literature which figure prominently in Shakespeare’s plays like *Othello*, *The Tempest*, *Merchant of Venice* & *Titus Andronicus*. In both *Othello* & *Merchant of Venice* there are several instances in which the non-whites & non-Christian characters are marginalized & rendered victims of outright racism. The racism laden description of *Othello* as “the Moor” (1,i,57), “the thick lips” (1,i,66), “an old black ram” (1,i,88) & “a Barbary horse” (1,i,113) associate him with something less than human. In *Merchant of Venice* Shylock is termed as a ‘misbeliever, cut throat hound’ & Antonio has even dared to “spit upon [his] Jewish gabardine” (1,iii,107).

Though Shakespeare inherited an environment of racial tensions & uses racial stereotypes in his plays he often challenges racial attitudes. Though 'Moors' were regarded as savage & barbarous, he has presented Othello as mild-mannered & exceptionally 'civilized' as a general & aristocrat. Similarly in Merchant of Venice through Shylock's moving speech: "Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions...? If you prick us do we not bleed?... If you poison us do we not die?" (III,i,49-55) he seems to be emphasizing his humanity & sameness & pleading for sympathy & understanding. Shakespeare doesn't attempt to form the idea that the white characters are any better than those who are subject to discrimination.

Shakespeare has often been called 'sexist'. Though feminism, as we refer to it today was not a concept present in Shakespeare's times, resemblances of feminist concerns can be found in his plays. Issues like patriarchy, gender & sex role appear again & again in his play. Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* is regarded as a sexist play. Much controversy is centered around Petruchio's actions & intentions of breaking Kate's spirit like 'one would break a horse' & she is 'tamed'. But many of Shakespeare's women characters like Cleopatra, Portia, Desdemona & Lady Macbeth are portrayed as very strong & independent women. Even Kate, as Toril Moi observes: "refuses to be selfless, acts on her own initiative & rejects the submissive role patriarchy has reserved for her" (p.57). In many ways, she is a very 'modern woman' - perhaps, one of the first 'women's libbers'.

Shakespeare's lifetime coincided with the consolidation of modern Capitalism & his plays reveal his interest in economics & the economics of time. His Roman-history plays suggest that economic & political systems are not everlasting but only stages in the development of society. The question posed by Shakespeare's depiction of the decline of feudalism & the fall of Roman civilization is if, late capitalism be succeeded by socialism or barbarism, by a new Renaissance or a new Dark Age. His plays also offer a critique of the new capitalism by showing the extent to which it can be applied to time. In *Henry IV* Hal acts as a kind of temporal financier investing time according to sound economic principles in order to redeem it at a high rate of return. In *All's Well That Ends Well* Helena teaches the king that the value of time is qualitative rather than quantitative, thereby transcending capitalism's assumption that a small amount of time, even if joyful, cannot be more

valuable than a longer time, even if of despair.

11

Shakespeare's plays are replete with themes of male-bonding, female friends & homoeroticism which constitute an important aspect of postmodern culture. Bonding between males is conspicuous by its absence in the writings of Renaissance because the structures of patriarchal society had an "obligatory homosexuality" built in the male dominated kinship systems (Sedwick, p.3). But, it is apparent, that there exists a bond between Adam & Orlando in *As You Like It*. Orlando's eagerness to take Adam with him & Adam's stubbornness to join him hint the possibility of something between them that was hidden in the patriarchal structures of relationship.

The convention of a cross-dressed heroine represented same sex attraction in Shakespeare's times & his plays abound in such type of characters. In *As You Like It* Celia & Rosalind's friendship can be an example of the phenomenon of female friendship. Shannon observes, "The female friendship seems to appear in a specifically social form of female chastity which revises the characteristic masculinity of friendship rhetoric in the period" (p.658). Celia & Rosalind's relationship appears exceptional to many characters of the play who describe their love as "dearer than the natural bond of sisters" (I,ii,244). Celia's candid avowal that she "cannot live out of her [Rosalind's] company" (I,iii,49) goes on to prove that the relationship they shared was much beyond that of friends.

The idea of homoeroticism was quite prevalent in Shakespeare's writings. There is an evidence of homoeroticism not only in *As You Like It* & *Twelfth Night* but in a number of sonnets also. Celia's speech: "we still have slept together/Rose at an instant, learned, eat together/ And went wherever we, like Juno's swans still we went coupled & inseparable" is so "emotionally & erotically compelling as anything spoken in the heterosexual moments" (Traub, p.257). However, it is difficult to state whether a relationship in Shakespeare is truly erotic or if, it is only the views that our modern society is placing on it.

Postmodernism replaces traditional values with an eclecticism of styles & genres. Shakespeare's plays, in their eclecticism & in their often violent abuse of generic stabilities of Renaissance literature can be regarded as postmodern even before postmodernism. Shakespeare's style borrowed from the conventions of the day but adapted the to tailor his own needs. Many of the comedies of Shakespeare like *All's*

Well That Ends Well & Measure For Measure have a complicated combination of tragedy & humor defying the generic conventions of contemporary times. Clemens rightly says, "Shakespeare combined the two throughout his career, with Romeo & Juliet perhaps, the best example of the mixing of style"(p.63).

Pastiche is an important feature of postmodernism which puts together a plethora of references, allusions copies & altered versions of other texts to create a unique narrative or to comment on situations in post modernity. Luhmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo+ Juliet is a good example of the postmodern pastiche. It documents the illusive & allusive strategies that infuse authorship with life in two historical periods. By employing pastiche as a cinematic device Luhmann has tried to pay homage to Shakespeare by making him accessible to the street sweeper as well as the Queen of England. Similarly, Tarry Pratchett is noteworthy for his famous pastiche 'Wyred Sisters' which was inspired by the plays of Shakespeare particularly Macbeth & Hamlet.

Intertextuality has come to be regarded as "the very trademark of postmodernism...postmodernism & intertextuality are treated as synonymous these days" (Pfister, p.209). But, rightly speaking, intertextuality is much older than postmodernism and most of its forms i.e. imitation, parody, travesty, quotations & allusions existing ever since antiquity. It was the hallmark of Renaissance & Shakespeare is no exception to it. Over the centuries, Shakespeare has been accused of plagiarism on grounds that he pirated phrases, lines & even entire poems. He is charged with plundering the plots of Boccaccio, Plutarch, Marlowe & Green also. The following line from Merchant Of Venice "Love is blind"(II,v,35) has been bodily lifted from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales "Love is blynd" and the title of his play All's Well That Ends Well (1603-04) has been taken from John Heywood's proverb "All's Well That Ends Well"(1546). Likewise, Shakespeare's famous description in Antony & Cleopatra of Cleopatra on her royal barge is taken almost verbatim from a translation of Plutarch's life of Mark Antony.

The postmodernists challenge the distinction between high & low culture & highlight texts which work as hybrid blends of the two. Shakespeare's plays are an instance of popular culture which is, & always been a blend of both cultures. This blend is perceptible in the speech of Hamlet wherein he juxtaposes the two levels of mankind in "the paragon of animals...yet what is this quintessence of dust" (II, ii,

321-31). Shakespeare introduced ghost on the stage & alluded to popular cultural references in his plays only to meet the demands of popular culture. However, he elevated low culture to high culture & provided some sort of transcendence of ordinary reality to the audience through excellence of expressions & speech patterns. In Marcellus's famous Christian speech, one can see the low raised high & the folk religion raised in poetic form, yet retaining its earthbound magic:

"Some say that ever'gainst that season comes / wherein our savior's birth is celebrated / the birds of dawning singeth all night along / ...So hallowed & so gracious is that time"(I,ii,166-70)

Postmodernism is characterized with a liking for aleatory forms which incorporate an element of randomness or chance. In Shakespeare's plays, what runs through all randomness is the power & design of Providence. Macbeth vouches that randomness simply doesn't exist. All that exists is the operation of Divine Justice which may be sometimes abrupt & direct and sometimes devious & slow. Therefore, "if chance will have me king / Why chance may crown me" (I, iii, 48). Over & over in Hamlet, chance turns into a larger design & randomness becomes retribution. Polonius hides behind the arras so as to enable himself to explain everything & is silenced forever "Thou findest to be too busy in some danger" (IV, iv, 33). Similarly, in the end, it is not from Hamlet's rapier that Claudius dies: "O yet defend me friends I am but hurt"(V, ii, 316) but from the poisoned cup he has himself prepared & that he has just tried to have passed to Hamlet: "He is justly served/ It is the poison tempered by himself" (V, ii, 299).

Stephen Greenblatt argues that the literature of Renaissance prefigures the postmodernist concern with the indeterminacy & relativism of truth. Post moderns have come to believe that mankind cannot find absolute truth & have given up the search for it, resulting in indefiniteness or inconclusiveness. Shakespeare's plays dramatize the indeterminacy of mankind with rare felicity. For instance, Hamlet is regarded as insane by his friends and family. The play's audience is asked to consider whether he is crazy or just pretending & Shakespeare, finally leads to the conclusion that it doesn't matter much. Hamlet seems to be insane and in the moral universe, appearance & reality have become indistinguishable. In fact, his insanity is defined by his inability to distinguish between reality & appearance as in his rebuke to his mother: "Seems, Madam! Nay seems it is \ I know not" (I, ii, 77)

The postmodernist paradigm which provides for the collapse of binary opposites into new fusions is exemplified at its best in Forizel's paean of love in 'The Winter's Tale' & in 'Macbeth', the witches prophesy the collapse of binary oppositions by telling of a world where "Fair is foul & foul is fair" (I, ii, 10). Instead of the modernist quest for meaning in a chaotic world, the postmodern authors eschew the possibility of meaning. Many famous lines in the Shakespeare canon like 'To be or not to be' (Hamlet, III, i, 55) or 'sound & fury signifying nothing' (Macbeth, V, v, 26-28) seem to refer to the fragility & emptiness imbued in life.

Shakespeare has not become obsolete in the postmodern age; rather he continues to thrive still by way of a growing number of Shakespearean troupes & festivals, the reconstruction of the Globe theatre, websites, stage productions & films. Shakespeare's physical image, a familiar & iconic image on consumer objects from credit cards to souvenir mugs doesn't have a single authentic original. Indeed, Shakespeare has already become postmodern: a simulacrum, a replicant, a montage, a collection of found objects repurposed as art.

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Poets as Social Critics and Reformers

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No literature could be called true art if it does not depict reality. Literature shall reflect the living world, its people's experiences, responses, feelings, desires and expectations. It must pronounce the conditions of their lives and the world they live in. The voice of literature is the voice that speaks about "order and harmony and conflict and equilibrium and paradox and reconciliation and intimacy and delight and longing and a thousand refractions of the civilizing human faculties— as a voice aspiring to, and celebrating, the creative community of man in his world." (CS 61)

Focusing specifically on poetry, as other genres of literature, it is not a sealed-off aesthetic entity devoid of reality. Poetry is essentially a platform for projecting the true and real picture of the world we live in. For socially aware poets, it is a medium of expression, a method of exploration, a mode of awareness, a process of introspection and above all, a way of living. Instead of negation and reduction, poetry thrives on illumination and intensification of thoughts. It penetrates the surfaces of the things which we either ignore or put-off and in the process; it enriches and deepens our experiences of day-to-day reality.

Though men and women contribute together to make a nation, society and literature but in confirmation with the design and scope of the present paper, a critical probe of the English poetry penned by the four contemporary Indian male poets namely I. H. Rizvi, O. P. Bhatnagar, Vijay Vishal and Kulbhushan Kushal has been undertaken. Each one of them reflects social awareness in his respective poetic work. Before considering their poetry, it must be acknowledged that Nissim Ezekiel is the forerunner among the new crusaders who registered the disillusioned affirmation of the contemporary social and political reality. He is the one who inaugurated a new era of Indian poetry in English by transforming the reality of modern world into poetry. While rejecting the archaism and jangling rhyme of the past, Ezekiel as a pioneer, has set the tradition of confronting the confusion, bewilderment and disillusion of the time using a fresh medium and modern sensibility.

The survey begins with I. H. Rizvi, one of the most talented living Indian poets writing in English. He dares to bring alive the

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dilemma of man in the modern world through his verse. Perturbed by the irrational ways of man in society, indifference of man towards other man, lack of poetic justice and the bitter experiences of life, he registers his resentment and anger through poetry.

His poem 'Lesbians' is a potent voice against the perversions and idiosyncrasies of the modern society. It is an aesthetic denunciation of the unconventional sexual behaviour of men and women alike. He derides at the restless people who wrestle "with fair nature's laws" by breaking "fresh grounds" and practice homosexuality: "The sight of man marrying man / In the church may lead animals / To shake their heads in sheer dismay." (*UB* 64) By placing man in contrast with animals, the poet satirizes the perverted and reckless modern society. He scoffs at the lesbians who when haunted by the desire for children, beget them from artificial insemination. His rage multiplies to see, "Children without fathers / Hov'ring the markets of the world / Will look for fathers whose / Names e'en their mothers cannot tell." (*UB* 64)

In 'Achievement' Rizvi registers his ire against political barbarity and religious frenzy prevalent in our society. The tang of his satire and irony is inevitable at the 'achievement' of civilization which has reaped a rich harvest of religious fundamentalism: "A woman's body charred, / Half-naked, mutilated, crooked, / With mouth agap, with forks of teeth / Piercing the flesh of culture, / Is crying aloud in death / To the deaf world." (*TP* 18) The modern society that boasts of women's emancipation and empowerment but actually shows scantiest regard for them, ignores the heart-rending cries of that ill-fated woman. Poet's heart swells with anger to see men covering the lower half of her body "with a linen" as a mark of respect to women. Undoubtedly, we are living in an age of missing dimensions and weird experiences.

His 'The Onward March' is a pointed satire on man's schizophrenic desire to conquer the whole universe. Using an analogy, the poet portrays the over-ambition of man. Like an Icarus, he flies high to achieve the impossible and ends into self-destruction and death. Mark the acid satire sliced with grim humour in these lines: "To herald the twenty first century; / He has already started gathering / The material for the royal road / Of human dead bodies." (*WRS* 9)

In 'The Inauguration', Rizvi takes to task the modern-day politicians and ministers who inaugurate the already inaugurated buildings

for the sake of advertisement, propaganda and cheap publicity. The poem is a pointed satire which exposes the real and ugly faces of the corrupt politicians and leaders who misuse their authority and powers just for the sake of self-promotion and advancement in their political careers. The poem is a sizzling cauldron of the poet's disgust for the corrupt politicians. A tinge of satire flows down from Rizvi's pen when he writes, "Safety measures, combing process, / Investigations, hectic enquiries, / Officers shooting instructions, / Men of intelligence in disguise / From far and near, anxiety-torn; / Police 'high-ups' at the 'chosen spot' / Sprinkling orders in full detail, / The whole administration on its toes / To make sure of everything problem free / On the eve of the minister's visit: / A thousand policemen sans sleep." (*SD* 15)

'Last Nail' bemoans the loss of rituals, customs and traditions in the Indian society. With the advent of westernization of our society, culture, religion and tradition have become things of past. Marriage, an event of great importance in one's life has been reduced to a sheer formality with the changing times. Now, it is solemnized in a jiffy, taking into consideration the availability of leaves and holidays, job-profiles and amount of cash present in the personal accounts of bride and groom alike. He figuratively presents the contrast between marriages of earlier times vis-à-vis marriages of the contemporary times: "Gone are the days of the palanquin, / the days when the palanquin exhaled / fragrance of feelings on wings of love / and made the two souls dead-drunk / with the wine of expectancy." (*FB* 19)

In 'The Drug Addict' Rizvi concentrates on the drug-addiction, one of the grave problems faced universally in the present times. The distracted youth easily falls prey to the demon of drugs. He poignantly registers the slow death of the drug-addict: "Life is oozing out of him / Drop by drop, bit by bit, / Little by little, crumb by crumb." (*DW* 6)

With an incorrigible sensibility, O.P. Bhatnagar strives to comprehend a wide range of themes which are his heart-felt experiences in life. It is the puzzled present and not the myth-ridden past that arrests his attention. In the poem, 'Of Court and Cancer Ward', he exposes the corruption of the doctors, physicians and surgeons. He delineates the plight of a man who wishes to live but denied to do so by the callous and indifferent doctors in juxtaposition with the one who wants to die but is kept alive to suffer: "But deaf to his cravings / The doctors pronounce in hushed silence / Of the painful end to be / And

quote medical ethics / For his sufferings / Giving an unsought for hope / To his life.” (TP 6)

Bhatnagar’s ‘I Have Promises to Keep’ is a parody of Robert Frost’s popular poem namely, ‘Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening’. While putting the politicians of our times under scanner, he uncovers the diagonal difference between what they preach and what they actually practice: “I don’t have miles to go / But promises to keep.../ To keep my countrymen awake / With more dying words to reach / Before I sleep.” (FF 12)

The poet strongly believes that political corruption is the root-cause of all evils and miseries of our society. While continuing his tirade against the unethical politics, Bhatnagar in ‘Thoughts on Election Day in India’ vehemently throws a coaxing question: “Why call the people / and make a mockery of elections?” In the next couple of lines, the poet unleashes a shocking truth: “He wins / who pours more notes”. (AR 46)

Bhatnagar in a single poem entitled, ‘The Living Scene’ presents a panoramic view of the modern living. Without mincing matters, he presents a kaleidoscopic view of social, cultural, political and economic upheavals of our country. The “living scene” of our country has upset his mind so much that he is compelled to state, right at the outset: “The living scene in my country / Is worth only for the granite eyes / Insensitive and resilient / For our visions to unfold.” (SBPN 37)

‘Beauty Queening’ is an ironic punch on the face of modern-culture of beauty-pageants organized globally. Bhatnagar’s persistent concern over the import of western culture finds words with this poem: “Beauty queening these days / Is the God of small things / Made big for people / Of some good parts / To sell big and steal limelight / Competing not what to wear / But what to expose and bare / Shedding coverings for skin / Like snakes.” (CFD 32)

Vijay Vishal, a multi-lingual poet, is one of the new voices of Indian poetry in English who reads message in the smallest objects of Nature and weaves his verse with Indian themes and motifs. In his maiden collection of poems namely *Speechless Messages*, Vishal poeticizes the very mundane and ordinary experiences of life with an objective to instill faith, confidence, peace and harmony in our troubled and disturbed lives. In the poem, ‘A Biting Question’ while comparing man with the

“Lowliest of the low” i.e. animals, he finds out that later ones are better than human beings. Expressing man’s frailty, he asks: “Is it not / An irony of ironies / That the animal / Whom we call / Lowliest of the low / Whom we use / Or misuse / Or use as abuse / Is “faithfulness” incarnate / Serving his proud master / Who is / Fathoms deep in “faithlessness”? (SM 10)

Again, in the poem ‘Opportunism’ man’s infirmity and frailty is brought to the surface. It is man not animals who “fall a prey / To the knave of opportunism.” Vishal presents a very realistic pen-portrait of an opportunist: “Is akin to a thief / Who might escape / With a bounteous booty / Once, twice or even thrice / But not always”. His ‘Kitty Coquettes’ unleashes the shallowness, frivolity and triviality of the pretentious social “butterflies” who wear “shady smiles”, carry “coquettish hearts” and “Assemble to dissemble” with “Painted faces” to “flirt in lush lawns.” Ironically, Vishal calls them “amorous aesthetes” who “Outfat sums / On paintings of shying poverty / But / Shy away from the poor!” (SM, 21-22)

Apart from projecting the ostentatious parade of wealth-sick Belindas of contemporary times, Vishal through his poem, condemns the affected culture in vogue among the nouveau rich class. In ‘Cactus’ he is pained to see that instead of exchanging “Pansy, marigold and rose”, people these days prefer “cactus” as an expression of love! The craze for cactus connotes to depravity and deformity of a modern mind. These thorny plants are “Exhibited / With puff and pride / Freezing all fine feelings.” (SM 27)

Corrupt and fraudulent politicians who cheat, deceive, and mislead the masses too cannot escape from poet’s ire. The poem ‘Portrait of a Politician’ is thematically similar to I.K. Sharma’s ‘The Leader’. Vishal perceives a politician as a “canker” who “cankers the very wood / Wherein he stays”, as a “climber” who sucks “The marrow of those / Who nursed and nourished him / With pills and potions of power” and finally a “snake” who “stings and bites / Those / Who managed milk for him.” (SM 52-53)

Poems like ‘Hubby’, ‘Irking Irony’, ‘Gender Bias’, ‘A Cycle’, ‘Luckless Lass’, ‘Fair Encounter’ and ‘An Unborn Female Foeticide’ display a deep concern towards women-related issues. All these poems not only expose how women are subjected to suppression,

marginalization, subjugation and suppression in the patriarchal world but also reveal how strategically they are exploited and browbeaten without even an iota of reverence.

'The Lost Son' is a clear depiction of resistance which is put to work in an Indian socio-cultural matrix in the form of mother-in-law versus daughter-in-law squabble. The entry of daughter-in-law in the house is often perceived as a threat to the bond between mother and son. She is dreaded as an intruder or an outsider responsible for creating a hiatus between mother-son duo. Stricken with this natural loss, mother-in-law, "Finds fault / With her 'son's wife / On flimsy pretexts / Resulting in loss / Of domestic peace." (*SM* 36-37)

The poet is aware of gender inequality practiced in a typical Indian set-up. The poem 'An Unborn Female Foetus', deals with the issue of female foeticide. Vishal ironically presents the nerve-shattering incident of the tragic end of an unborn female child, "Who quite often / Has to die / In the womb itself at the hands of "some 'Doctor Uncle' / Or some 'Doctor Auntie'." (*SM* 33-34)

Another poem 'Luckless Lass' is a tragic ordeal met by a girl who is abducted and subsequently pushed into the vicious circle of flesh trade. Refusal for acceptance by her own kith and kin leaves her "Heart-broken and crestfallen / She beat a hasty return / To the flashy world / Of foul and filth." (*PW* 31) 'Hubby' is an ironical poem unleashing the hypocrisy of a husband who denies a respectable status for his earning wife at his home but "Eagerly awaits her pay-packets / To inflate his elephantal ego / To double his earnings / To actualize his yearnings." (*PW* 22-23)

Vishal highlights the step-motherly treatment met by daughters by their own mothers in Indian households. It is shocking that even educated strata of our society prefer a male child. In the poem 'Gender Bias' he strongly opposes the maxim: "Sons are gold / Daughters silver". (*PW* 33). 'A Cycle' is a cinematographic projection of suffering, denial, misery and neglect of a woman during her life-journey initially at the hands of her brother then her husband and finally at the hands of her son. She takes a rebirth; "To be born afresh / And suffer afresh!" (*PW* 34)

In 'Irking Irony', Vishal exposes the yawning gap between the status of man and woman in an Indian society. In our patriarchal

society, not only men are free to "tie new nuptial knots" after the death of their "better or worse-halves" but also indulge in "extra-marital misadventures" along with their alive wives. On the contrary they "Insist on Venus-like chastity / From their pathetic partners / And Sati-like sacrifice / Even after / Their ignoble exit?" (*PW* 32)

'Walking Shadows' appreciates the advancements in science and technology, growing wealth and prosperity, sharp precision and architectural acumen but at the same time he is pained to find Man lost in the mad, calculated, self-centered and artificial life-style: "Man is lost / In concrete jungles / Of steep skyscrapers / Busy broadways / Crazy crowds / Of walking shadows." (*PW* 29)

Kulbhushan Kushal, is another bilingual contemporary poet who expresses genuine concern for various social issues. He feels that poetry has not only got the potential to communicate the insights but also has the ability to rectify and reform the human psyche. He has penned four verse-collections till date. In an interview with Dr. N.K. Neb, he rates poetry on a higher plane in comparison to fiction. He opines that poetry continues to be "the most celebrated genre. The impression of its low popularity is because of its imposed restricted territory orientation. I think that the text of songs and the texture of sounds are essentially poetic forms and cannot be denied that millions of people sing songs and listen to songs and music. This obviously reflects the power and popularity of poetry." (*IS*, 47)

Kushal's poetry exhibits sensitive responses to the contemporary life and its complexities. His sensitive soul feels perturbed to see restlessness, fretfulness, anxiety, impatience, unease, agitation and angst in the modern generation. Modern man's unquenchable yearning to achieve the impossible and the irresistible desire to acquire the unfeasible comes to the fore in his poem 'Adventure': "Nothing could halt them / the dream had its sway / the sun is to be touched / ant way." (*SH*, 41) This particular approach proves fatal for the people who intend to fly high like Icarus to acquire the unattainable and meet their tragic end: "The hungry sun / engulfed them all / but beyond / it felt / too small." (*SH* 41) The title of the poem ironically introduces the subject of the poem.

His poem captioned 'Communication' points at the importance of the choice of words one should make while communicating with the people around. The words, their connotations and denotations along

with the body language, gestures and facial expressions of the speaker reflect his/her whole personality. Conversely, our body language speaks more than our words: "Shower of words / meanings ever / elude us / gestures come to our rescue / frowns convey / smiles say." (SH 53) The poem carries an extended message for the readers that along with the language and words; the gestures, smiles and frowns are equally important to nourish long-lasting relationships.

'Neck to Neck' is a touching tale of a farmer who commits suicide owing to the wretched life he was leading along with his family. Though superficially it appears that it was nature that conspired against the poor fellow but underneath the lines, the poet makes a sad comment on our governance also. Ideally, it should be the responsibility of the government to provide sustenance to the farmers so that their survival can be insured irrespective of the natural calamities which affect their agricultural yields. Though the government makes policies and strategies for the irrigation and farming but those policies are hardly put into practice. The family obligations, hunger, starvation, poverty and squalor force the unfortunate farmer to take the extreme step: "The sun during the day / Keeps watch / And the moon at night / To the tree he went / And roped its neck / To support his neck / And the tree / Like a good friend / Kept his promise/ Gently took him to his fold" (RR, 60-61)

The poem entitled 'Coffin of dead facts' presents the naked truth of newspapers. Using the poetic devices of personification and simile, Kushal reveals: "The newspapers are vendors / Hawking in the streets / Marketing the stale news for fresh / Like the fish-selling beautiful girls / With their wild eyes / Tempt us to believe / The dead fish for fresh / And coax us to take it home" (WE, 44)

In the same poem, he informs the readers how the print media resorts to cheap sensationalism with a sole objective of increasing their readership: "Newspapers serve / Terrible delicacies / On our platter / With Sprinkle of / A nude poster here / And a smiling mask there" (WE, 44) The print media could be a blessing if it is serious, disinterested and clean and gives its readers a wise, clear and real picture of the day-to-day happenings and a courageous and frank perspective of the crying questions of the day. On the contrary, commercialization of the press is an evil. To increase their sales some frivolous, prejudiced and corrupt newspapers pander to the worst taste of the people by filling their pages with scandal and sensationalism. Consequently, it not only

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affects the authenticity of media in particular but also spoils our civilization and culture in general. Unfortunately, the list of newspapers dedicated to their job is very short in length.

Fears, suspicions, qualms, worries, insecurities, doubts, reservations, betrayals have somehow become synonyms to the contemporary life and living. We are constantly being haunted by innumerable suspicions and doubts regarding the future happenings, our relationships with near and dears and above all, regarding our own lives. Kushal speaks fearlessly about these doubts in his poem 'I have a fear': "I have a fear / My beloved who / Danced with me / In moonlit nights / May choose / To stay in distant lands / Next year" (WE, 57)

His poem entitled 'Hollow men' reminds one of T. S. Eliot's famous poem 'The Hollow men'. An instant, unexpected and colloquial start startles the readers: We are not hollow men / we receive fast / we conceive fast / We deceive fast / We presume / We consume / We assume" (SS, 71) Using irony, Kushal comments on the trends and ways of the contemporary life and living. With these words, he perhaps hints at the depleting and degenerated value-system. Treachery, infidelity, forgery, deceit, treason, betrayal, artificiality, pretense, sham, hypocrisy, insincerity, duplicity, opportunism, double-dealing have, perhaps become the most sought after personality traits these days. Whosoever exhibits these attributes can taste success within no time. The needle of irony pierces deeper at the concluding lines: "We strike packaged deals / We thrive on distant inventions / We bless gods / We curse God / We are not the hollow men" (SS, 72). Poet's heart aches to see the modern man challenging God, the act which ultimately will take all of us towards our tragic doom.

From *Shrinking Horizons* (1989) to *Song of Silence* (2008) the poet continues to portray the pain, suffering and anguish of the contemporary life and living on his poetic screen. The invasion of western culture, globalization and the electronic and technological advancement has resulted in the loss of culture and value-system. The strangeness, angst, vacuity and absurdity of modern life have shaken people's faith towards God. Undoubtedly, modern poetry is an attempt towards soul-searching and self-speculation towards finding new ways to sustain in the modern world.

To conclude, the critical probe of the poetry of these Indian

English poets confirms the speculation made by Christopher Hampton which reads, “poetry does not exist in vacuum. Its utterance is determined by the language and the sensibility of each poet, which in turn is rooted in the language of his community and the conditions which define the life of that community.” (CS 60) These poets believe in the dictum, “Poetry is the response to situations of life.” (MTPC 13)

In fact, poetry is embedded in the structure of the world we live in. The denial of this fact by the poet is to negate individual responsibility and to evacuate one’s status as a member of the society. Therefore, the poet cannot afford to turn his/her back upon the conditions or factors that define his/her native roots. Doubtlessly, he has social, moral and intellectual responsibility to pen the true society. Purposeful poetry does not believe in the hollow maxim of ‘Art for art’s sake’. Conversely, it is ‘Art for life’s sake’. If a poet aspires to become an unacknowledged legislature of mankind of P.B. Shelley’s conception, he is expected to raise his prophetic voice towards the crying questions of the day. Conversely, if it is riddled with personal hang-overs, hallucinations and other idiosyncrasies, poetry will cease to reflect reality.

The four poets selected for this paper are sensitive souls who portray the complex and bewildering nature of Indian reality in particular and human experience in general. Besides entertaining, they aim at refinement and a subsequent correction in the psyche of their readers through poetry. To achieve the desired effect these poets use irony as a poetic tool for social criticism. Their poetry transcends the barriers of regions, caste, colour, community and engulfs the whole gamut of human predicament. They have used creative writing as a powerful medium to awaken and enlighten masses on various social and political issues of our times.

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Silence and (re) Birth: Heterogeneous Phases in Shauna Singh Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers*

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"I, Satya, return from silence...Again I am born a woman, foolish girl-child who has entered the world with her eyes wide open and so will never lower them before a man. Foolish girl-child with two whole lungs to scream and a body that remembers, remembers the thought, remembers the un-thought, the good deeds and the bad, even as others remember only the bad. This is my karma."

What the Body remembers Epilogue "Being born a woman is my awful tragedy" *Sylvia Plath*

And Shauna Singh Baldwin, a second generation Punjabi born in Montreal and reared in India, in her debut prize winning novel, "What the body remembers" offers us a sensitive vignette of displacement, refugee dilemmas and dispossessions interlaced with the specific gendered violence performed on the bodies of women. Set against the tumultuous years leading up to the division of colonized India, the novel depicts the socialization of young women, the devaluation of women in marriage as baby-making machines, the maltreatment of girl-children, the problem of dowry and unlivable situation between co-wives. The partition here becomes the partition between Satya (the truth) who dared "not to lower her eyes before men" but has to share hearth and husband with another woman, and Roop (the beauty) who by her own choice faces the double tyranny: Sardarji's and Satya's. Confronted with a problem she cannot solve – her barrenness, Satya – a competent, beautiful woman who runs her household and her husband's orchards and mill with an iron fist, is exiled and goes into 'silence', but later to return from that 'silence', to take birth as a woman, to become an epitome of the sorrows of patriarchy and a woman's role in the emerging nation.

The 'birth' or rather 'rebirth' of an individual as a woman is a

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fate worse than death; an inexorable 'karma' that cannot be changed, however many good deeds she performs. The Atharva Veda says, 'The birth of a girl, grant it elsewhere, here grant a boy' (vi, 23). If this could be the prayer of an age when the condition of women was relatively better and they were granted an almost equal status in the society, one can imagine the poor lot of other ages, when an engineer like Sardarji (he has not been given a name in the novel) shows his primitive, rustic face when it comes to choosing between daughter and son. The prologue and the Epilogue here become similar in emphasizing:

"I am not a boy. Some things need no translation. And I know, because my body remembers without benefit of words, that men who do welcome girl-babies will not treasure me as I grow to woman-though he calls me princess just because gurus told him to." (474)

We see the world of a girl-child through the eyes of Roop, an aspiring young Sikh woman in Pari-Darvaza, a tiny hamlet located somewhere in the old undivided Punjab. Despite being from the family of limited means, she has fanciful dreams of fine clothes, jewels and marriage to a wealthy man and when she is married to a man twenty five years senior, she already knows that he has a barren first wife, Satya. A rebellious, inquisitive and impressionable girl metamorphosing into an embodiment of the innocent, charming and beautiful bride, Roop, though naïve, realizes that her father needs money and the only way to get it is for her to marry well, but she has little understanding of the complicated situation she is about to face. Fallen into this perilous state, ironically by her own choice – in order to escape the even worst state of not being married: "did she not choose this life in desperation, afraid she might know the great shame, the stigma of women like Rewati Bua who are left unmarried", the choices for her are limited. Little she knows that she will be treated like 'Sita', her fear of rejection, of being sent back home, silences her in giving the custody of her children to Satya, the co-wife and childless Senior. However, slowly gaining a foothold in her husband's home and heart, she insists that she be allowed to raise her own children and Satya be ousted from the household. Aided in her efforts by Sardarji's own perception of the two women, "Roop will listen to him admiringly, carefully, her eyes upon his mouth as if ropes of pearls fell from his lips, while Satya never listens", this 'little brown Koel' of Sardarji's becomes a perfect foil – a woman

so ornamental that she is like an irritating itch, but it is the mastery of Baldwin that we never forget that this Roop is but a sad parody of that feisty girl who once roamed her father's haveli without fear of consequence, a girl in whom poverty, fate and personal ambition have passed down to being little more than a 'vessel'. Her character undergoes perhaps the most significant change as she learns the power of her body, beauty and ability to bear children and how to use them to her advantage, contrary to Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf and Shulamith Firestone's (Firestone:1979) view that it is this biological capacity to reproduce that is the key to women's oppression. While we sympathise initially with Roop and her treatment by Satya, we come to recognize, as she does, that more subtle power games are being played and this village girl is more adapt to them than we initially expect. After Satya's death she takes on the self-preserving ambition of the woman who was her mortal energy and is now her guiding spirit and hence risks everything to build a new life for herself, Sardarji and their children.

However, Satya is the one who really rebels and the one who has to die before the novel ends, though before her death, she does everything she can to disrupt Sardarji's second marriage. Born before her time in a feudal world, insisting on taking over Roop's children the moment they are born and Sardarji's powerlessness to resist her because he knows what he owes her, she is forced to adopt even more desperate measures to maintain her place in society and in her husband's heart. Roop's beauty, to put it metaphorically, lacks the power to stand up to the beauty of truth. If hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, imagine the rage of a barren, shrewdly intelligent maverick and beautiful forty two years old, who finds that her husband has secretly taken a 16 years old bride and her realization that despite the egalitarian tenets of the Sikh religion, in traditional Punjabi culture, a woman's main value is as the mother of her husband's sons, and therefore she has no need. This fact combined with jealousy turns her heart 'black and dense as a stone within her'. Although Satya calls Roop her sister, she loathes her because Roop is everything she is not – beautiful, young and fruitful. Moreover her rival is not only twenty five years her younger, but of considerably lower social rank and her husband's infatuation with Roop ranks considerably.

So Satya, angry and heartbroken, but still wielding the power of her Savvy management, is left behind as the rest of the family moves to Lahore. Willing herself to that long silence, i.e., death by kissing her TB

ridden cousin Mumta on her lips, she proves till the very end that she has taken charge of her life. Her grim determination is as potent in life-negation as in her grasping love of life. Satya wanted "love and marriage to go hand in hand" and her final act of leave-taking neatly packages self-sacrifice, pride and rebellion into a tragic but cunning offering to Sardarji, who eventually comes to miss her when he no longer has her. Her spirit, however, is not exiled entirely and years later when Roop and Sardarji find themselves swept up in the bloody partition of India and Pakistan, it is memories of the elder woman's strength and wisdom that Roop draws on to survive. Satya's spirit, bold, proud and capable, later imbues the young Roop with her courage and a mere cynical, clear-eyed view of her own situation and life, especially during the younger woman's perilous journey with her children from Lahore, Pakistan to Delhi, India in search of safety. Even after her death, she remains an invisible presence, a soul being 'reborn' into a new body, each time understanding what it means to enter a woman's body, yet again, in a world where male bodies are the seats of power, respect and privilege.

The story of what marriage means to a conventional Indian woman is here told as a story of both 'exile' and being uprooted, and as Baldwin herself acknowledges in an interview with Rich Rennicks, a 'diasporic' For all the characters, the meaning of 'home' is constantly evolving and changing, and in this sense, "What the Body Remembers" becomes a captivating journey into the human heart and its experiences as a witness to the events that turns lives and a whole country inside out. It is not a mere story that features the two women contesting for the attention of one man, though this contest does form the crux of the story, but a deep insight into the complexities that drive a person to doing what is right and what is ordained of him or her. Threaded through this sensitivity and compellingly narrated saga of a family is the story of India being cut up by the British in their final act of departure. The growing distrust between neighbours like those living at Pari-Darvaza, the rise of religious factionalism, and an impending sense of doom culminating in the blood bath of anarchy during the violent birthing of India and Pakistan, triggered by the mass exodus of lines of millions of frenzied refugees on both sides of the borders bring this debut novel of Shauna Singh Baldwin into the canon of novels like Khushwant Singh's 'Train to Pakistan', Chaman Nahal's 'Azadi', Bapsi Sidhwan's 'Cracking India' and more recently Manju Kapoor's 'Difficult

Daughters', though with an entirely new perspective. As Baldwin herself remarks: "My challenge to myself was not to tell the story of Sikhs from the stand point of the men – there are a few non-fiction books that cover their story – but from the perspective of Sikh women,"

Using 'Vayu', the wind, as an innovative literary tool, Baldwin brings snatches of political developments in faraway Delhi, Bihar and Bengal into her story. Echoes of Jinnah, Gandhi, Tara Singh and Nehru texture the lives of Sardarji and his family and those at Pari-Darvaza with intimations of the great convulsion that is to come. Developing her characters, personalities and interactions against the backdrop of changing Anglo-Indian relations, sometimes the political bleeding into the personal, the novelist juxtaposes India's struggle for independence with smaller outrages and betrayals. Religion tears people apart and makes enemies of those who before the Partition, lived in peaceful co-existence; so much so that Shyam Chacha sets fire to the ancestral home of his step brother Bachan Singh, Roop looks the other way when her childhood muslim friend, Huma cries for help when Sikh soldiers attack her. But here are also acts of kindness in the most unlikely situations – Burhan –e-din, the Pathan doorman at Faletti's restaurant escorts Sardarji and Atma Singh to Sikh enclave, and saves them from the fury of the muslim mob, Revati Bua converts to Islam as the price for saving Bachan Singh and his Grandsons and Gujri's choice to remain in Pakistan, not wishing to hold up Bachan Singh's fleeing family is another example. Roop herself matures and transforms from the innocent naïf she had been when she married Sardarji to a woman full of 'haumai' or self-worth. Even Sardarji, a traditional and dominant male figure at the beginning of the novel, a man who has always looked at his woman from the 'corner of his eyes' has an English alter-ego as a mirror of his inner conflict between his Indianness and English values he cultivates, gets transformed into a thoughtful and generous man.

David Arnold points out in connection with medical discourse, colonialism in India was essentially a 'colonization of the body' concerned with the collection and classification of data about the subject's corporality; but that opposing readings meant that 'the body' formed a site of contestation and not simply of colonial appropriation. The body also takes on a heightened significance at the time of partition, in that it bears the signs of ethnic allegiance, marking subjects as belonging to one or

the other side of a new unbridgeable divide. (Morey, 2000) and 'What the Body Remembers' becomes a leitmotif in the novel. Satya remembers her body when she was younger and attractive, as Roop remembers her body and of Kusum whose body is dismembered by her husband's father to prevent 'dishonour'. Roop will remember Kusum's body, remembered and also of all those women who like Huma get 'dishonored' whenever the birth or 'rebirth' of a nation is there.

Thus, the novel portrays its universe through the voices of women who are seldom heard, even as we enter the new millennium. Women in this subcontinent are still marginalized, are not equal to men, though the constitution of India says otherwise. Here is an author who confesses: 'What the Body Remembers' is a very feminist book if you define feminism as a radical notion that a woman is a person', and out of the brutal drama of Partition, we have a rich, eloquent and stunningly accomplished literary debut, which is not at all formulaic and is a worthy addition to the canon of modern Indian Literature in English. Full of transliterations, this novel comes before us as a poignant tale of yesterday, whose blood-stained shadow continues to bite chunks of all our todays and tomorrows as a nation.

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Light from the Past: Historical Representations in Indian Novels in English

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When white light hits glass one of two things can happen. Either you have an image, which is faithful if somewhat unexciting, or you have a glorious spectrum which though beautiful is rather a distortion. Light from the past passes through a kind of glass to reach us. We can either look for the accurate though somewhat unexciting image or we can look for the glorious technicolour. (Killam in African Writers on African Writing)

Ever since its genesis in the first quarter of the twentieth century, Indian Novel in English has continued to engage itself with nearly the same themes, that is, history, politics and social reforms, the search for self-identity and so on. In fact, Meenakshi Mukherjee in her book, *The Twice Born Fiction*, tracing the growth and development of the Indian novel, reveals that the novel emerged at different times in different regions of India, but “almost everywhere the first crop showed a preoccupation with historical romance.” (30) This historical romance then gave place to the historical novel. In India, too, the historical novelists drew upon the past to explain the present. Around 1920s there emerged a trend wherein the novelists used history to write what Mukherjee describes as “narratives of resistance” to the experience of colonialism. The novel which still acts as a lighthouse to the Indian fiction writing is Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura*. It is the seminal text which set out to subvert the colonizer’s view of India. An ingenuous blend of myth and history, the novel instantly develops a sense of affinity with the Indians while subtly castigating the British for exploiting the country. Viney Kirpal, in one of his essays, writes:

...while most critics link up the growth of the novel in India to a concomitant growth in the Indians’s\ sense of historical time, Raja Rao has written a historical Indian novel not by linear but by the “mythic” or “cyclical” time perspective. (Bharucha, 63)

Kanthapura may not be a historical novel in the Western sense of the word as novels like Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* or Boris Pasternak’s

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Dr Zhivago are, nor is it a traditional epic such as the Ramayana or the Mahabharata, yet it contests the Western notion that India lacks a sense of history. Raja Rao says: There is no village in India, however mean, that has not a rich sthala-purana, or legendary history, of its own. Some god or godlike hero has passed by the village — Rama might have rested under this peepal-tree, Sita might have dried her clothes... In this way the past mingles with the present, and the gods mingle with men.... (Kanthapura, Foreword, v) Raja Rao, through *Kanthapura*, has tried to produce the history of India but on his own terms and conditions and in writing his version of the ‘history’ he refutes not only the colonizer’s version of India but also the narratological process conventionally used in the West to write history and literature.

The journey of the historical novel continued through the 1920s to 1950s. The 1950s in Indian historical fiction specially dealt with the national freedom movement with Gandhi as the hero of those times. The 1960s saw a sudden obsession with history all over the world which can be attributed to E. H. Carr’s series of lectures at Cambridge University in 1961 on what constituted history. Carr describes history as “a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past.” (30) The past makes sense to us only in the light of the present and present can similarly be understood only in the light of the past. The historical novels written in 1970s, like Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* and Manohar Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges*, though engaged in writing history were more humanistic in approach. These novels were written, not against, but “with the grain”. Kirpal feels that these novels “question tradition but they also mediate it with a compromise. However, the 1970s were also the gestation period for the revolution in fictional technique and national sensibility that was to occur in the 1980s.” (Bharucha, 68) Hence the period marks a watershed in the psyche of the Indian novelist who looks at the authoritarian regime of Mrs. Gandhi during Emergency as a form of repression, reminding once again of the ‘colonial’ rule and resented it fiercely through his writing. This experience made the novelist turn to history for a theme in the same manner as the novelists of 1920s and 1930s but with new directions to their writing. These directions incorporated a whole new range of literary exploits, the likes of which had rarely been witnessed on the Indian English scene. The question that arises out of this exercise

is that if the same themes of history continue to be fictionalized in the novels of the 1920s as in the 1990s and engage the writers of both the ages, then what makes these novels different? Is it the technique or the outlook or both?

This paper undertakes the study of two historical novels in Indian Writing in English with almost identical backdrop — one published on the threshold of 1980s and the other immediately after. A study of the narrative technique and style of both the novels and the novelists' outlook would certainly prove worthwhile in answering the queries raised above.

The first novel, Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, published in 1975 deals with eight tumultuous months in the history of the Indian subcontinent and also represents a momentous period of our history. A moving saga of the division of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan and the accompanying disaster that hit these two newly-declared independent countries in 1947 forms the backdrop of the novel. The novel is neatly divided in three parts titled — *The Lull*, *The Storm* and *The Aftermath* — all suggestive and symbolic of the three distinct stages in the narrative. 'The Lull' describes the peace and communal harmony among the people of Sialkot before the idea of partition captures the imagination of some Muslim zealots. The novel opens on 3 June, 1947 with the most important historical event of the century, the announcement of the partition of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan and ends with the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on 30 January, 1948. References to various historical events like the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy, Quit India Movement, the Cripps Mission, the Radcliffe Boundary Commission, the Interim Government with Nehru as Prime Minister and the Sikh demand that the river Chenab should be the boundary between India and Pakistan abound in this part of the novel. There are frequent references to Gandhi's offer to Jinnah for a home-land for Muslims within an independent India itself.

What were at first only sporadic acts of murder and arson subsequently explode into massive and organized violence by the Muslims in the city of Sialkot. A sizeable majority of the Hindu families shift to the newly set up refugee camp for safety, and those residing in Bibi Amar Vati's two houses on the Fort Street also move there on August 2, 1947, under Lala Kanshi Ram's leadership. Lala Kanshi Ram is helped out by his friend Chaudhry Barkat Ali and a British sergeant,

Billy Davidson who lived in the barracks near the Hurrah Parade Ground and was a friend of Arun. Though an Englishman, Davidson was a very reasonable man who liked India and felt that the British rule was a great injustice to India. He had always been against imperialism and foreign possessions. He also knew what his people had done in Malaya and Africa before he came to India. "Local cultures had been destroyed everywhere. More so, in India which had such a long history and tradition." (117) After the announcement of Partition, Davidson commented: "If you ask me, I think this is the most stupid, most damaging, most negative development in the history of the freedom struggle here. And this time it is we who are pushing things." (122) He was highly critical of Lord Mountbatten, "You may sing songs in honour of Mountbatten...but he has duped you into a division of the country. Even Gandhi and Nehru failed to hold their balance before him — Jinnah I never counted for much. They have fallen for a handy prize..." (123).

The novel ends with the news of the death of Mahatma Gandhi and the realization of the "loss of identity". Lala Kanshi Ram becomes painfully conscious of the fact that freedom or *Azadi* has been achieved at the cost of enormous sufferings and hardships to people. His "loss of identity" and dignity is represented by the following act of his: *It hurt Lala Kanshi Ram no end. From the time he set up this little shop, he had stopped wearing a turban. A turban was a sign of respect, of dignity. He had no dignity left. He now wore a forage cap. Or he sat bare-headed, advertising his humble position to the world.* (366)

The other novel for review is Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), a panoramic book spanning a period of seventy years in India's modern history. The author, born and brought up in the multi-cultural city of Bombay, recreates the vitality and eclectic culture of urban India, with reference to the early decades of the century to the mid-seventies. Sinai, the narrator protagonist, is the embodiment of a supreme moment of history, a crystallization of an evolving mood, a distillation of a vision, nostalgic, critical and philosophical. He is one of the thousand and one children, born between 12 midnight and 1:00 a.m. in the night of August 14-15, 1947, the hour of the nascence of free India. Midnight is the point of time where past and future coalesce in the present and there is liberation from the clock time. Midnight is also the province of fantasy which is a dream like

recreation of the actual world. The opening of the novel marks the element of fantasy, "I was born in the city of Bombay... once upon a time..." Saleem's life, thus, due to his providential birth becomes the history of the country, "I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country." (Rushdie, 3) Out of a total of such thousand and one children born at midnight, 420 die and 581 survive up to 1957. This is the story of these children whose privilege it was to be both masters and victims of their own time, "The children of midnight were also the children of time: fathered, you understand, by history." (137)

The novel along with the story of these midnight's children, is also the story that encapsulates the experience of three generations of the Sinai family, living first in Srinagar then in Agra, and then in Bombay, before its final migration to Karachi. Saleem Sinai, describes the story of three generations of his family to his girl friend, Padma. Sitting up at night in a pickle factory telling his story to Padma, Saleem flaunts his capacity to hold our attention. He is gifted with supernatural power of entering other people's minds. Saleem takes us back, by courtesy of his "all knowing memory" to his grandfather and grandmother, thirty- two years before his own nativity.

A close study of the two novels, thus, reveals certain aspects about the treatment of history at the hands of the authors. Nahal, who treats history as something sacred, has used it as a metaphor and has also been utmost careful in treating it as "mere chronicle". His records about the places and dates are true to his word and are maintained in a chronological sequence as if he were a historian instead of a storyteller. The fictional part of the novel appears to be a sub-plot in the scheme of things and the novelist's main focus lies with the narration of the holocaust. Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, on the other hand, turns out to be a multigenerational, mock-epic family saga, complete with family trees, maps, and a long list of dramatis personae, that tell the story of the protagonist's family as a national history. Rushdie, unlike Nahal, does not subsume his version of the history into the official version. He rather presents a version of his own based on memory's truth which, "...selects, eliminates, averts, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events..." (211) For Rushdie truthful recording of events is a matter of the past. He doesn't mind juggling

with the dates, sometimes giving wrong dates to the events and sometimes narrating events in retrospection. This sleight-of-hand has been performed deliberately by Rushdie to lay emphasis on story telling and not mere recording of events. In a clever fashion, he wants his readers to pay greater attention to his art of narration and tries to convince them to treat the narrator as a master story teller rather than a historian. That is why, he prefers memory's truth to 'the truth'.

Nahal's *Azadi* has its roots deeply embedded in social realism. He himself admits, "For historical fiction to carry a deeper meaning, it must succeed at the realistic level first.... Indeed, this is the only genre in which the artist cannot dispense with realism." (Dhawan, 41) Rushdie, however, dares to reject the traditional, social realist novel in favour of larger-than-life allegorical characters and events in the tradition of magic realism. Fantasy is the be-all and end-all of *Midnight's Children*. The opening passages of the two novels present an interesting contrast as far as the aspect of realism is concerned. Nahal's *Azadi* begins on a note of realism with due reverence to the historical event and its date. The novel opens on a serious, historic note: "It was the third of June, 1947. This evening, the Viceroy was to make an important announcement." *Midnight's Children*, on the other hand, has a fantastical and fairy-tale beginning with, "I was born in the city of Bombay... once upon a time..." His 1001 midnight's children in fact reminds the reader of the classic *Arabian Nights*, where for one thousand and one nights Scheherzade tells different stories to Prince Shaharyar, each story beginning with, "Once upon a time..." Rushdie, like a magician spreads the magic carpet of his fantasy and creates for us a magical piece of prose fiction.

Nahal also places an additional burden on an author of historical fiction with the belief that the novelist is "obliged to do careful research into the period he has chosen for representation and every detail of that period has to be accurate." (Dhawan, 43) but Rushdie finds himself under no such obligation. Taking a cue from twentieth century masters of fiction like Aldous Huxley, Gunter Grass, William Golding etc., Rushdie tends to discard absolute realism for myth and fantasy. Life in the present day circumstances is so complex and difficult that the contemporary writers find traditional realistic novel incapable of portraying it satisfactorily. That is why; twentieth century has seen the emergence of such schools of fiction such as the naturalists,

expressionists, the symbolists and so on. Like many contemporary writers Rushdie too provides a blend of realism and fiction. He presents the readers with reality but with a dash of fiction and is careful enough not to jolt the sensibility of his readers by exposing them to the glaring reality of the society. His style of narration is sprawling, rambling, full of digressions and humour. The novel is metafictional in nature and even the protagonist is self-conscious that what he is writing is fiction. He uses lapsed memory as a device to destabilize meanings and also deconstructs well-established notions of history, family, tradition, patriarchy, etc. The novel abounds in the use of myth, oral tradition, and different versions and ideas of history. A playful irreverence for the sacred cows of nationalism and religion is another prominent feature of *Midnight's Children*. Rushdie also shows both a fluency in Standard English and a confidence with the language in contrast to writers like Nahal who feel their imagination being crippled by "the terminology borrowed from the West..." (Dhawan, 44)

All these factors explain why the Indian novel since the 1980s is different from its precursors. It is different, both in technique as well as sensibility. Powered with these two, the new generation of writers, not only destabilize the given versions of history but also subvert them and sometimes install newer versions to correct the relations of power in contemporary Indian society.

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Aurora Leigh : A Woman's Epic of Her Age

*Tripti Choudhary**

A woman's epic is hardly mentioned in any discussion of the genre of epic because historically the genre of epic has been gendered as male. Since ages it has been considered a literary kind of the men, for the men and by the men¹. This could be taken as an indication that woman and epic are mutually exclusive terms. Are woman and epic really mutually exclusive terms? The answer to this question is no. Feminist literary critics in the recent times have identified a number of texts written by women which, they argue, deserve to be considered epics. In doing so they have vigorously reimagined and revised the generic concept of the epic and given the concept of the female epic. A few important works in this context that are worth mentioning include Susan Stanford Friedman's "Gender and Genre Anxiety: Elizabeth Barrett Browning and H.D. as Epic Poets" (1986), Deborah 'A. Gutschera's "A Shape of Brightness': The Role of Women in Romantic Epic" (1987), Lynn Keller's *Forms of Expression: Recent Long Poems by Women* (1997), Jeremy M. Downes' *Recursive Desire: Rereading Epic Tradition* (1997), Adeline Johns – Putra's *Heroes and Housewives: Women's Epic Poetry and Domestic Ideology in the Romantic Age (1770-1835)* (2001) and Bernard Schweizer's *Rebecca West: Heroism, Rebellion and the Female Epic* (2002) and *Approaches to the Anglo and American Female Epic, 1621-1982* (2006). These works demonstrate the ways in which women writers like Mary Tighe, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, H.D., Rebecca West, Gwendolyn Brooks, Virginia Woolf have successfully adapted the masculine epic tradition to suit their own aesthetic needs and to express their own heroic literary, social and historical visions.

This critical reading of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* can be read as the culmination of the critical readings of the poem as an epic that began since the advent of feminist literary criticism in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Before the late 1970s, *Aurora Leigh* was mainly read as "a novel in verse" particularly 'Bildungsroman' and 'Kunsterroman.'² The only exception seems to be Peter Bayne who described as early as in 1881 *Aurora Leigh* as the "modern epic" singing 'not of arms and the man, but social problems and the woman'

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(107). By writing Aurora Leigh she not only entered the prohibited and exclusively male domain of epic but also revised it for the woman poet and wrote a woman's epic. The obvious epic qualities of Aurora Leigh such as its epic size (as it is two thousand lines longer than Paradise Lost), its division into nine books, its numerous epic similes and allusions, its in media res narrative order, its epic catalogues and its heroine Aurora's explicitly epic aspirations have been highlighted by the gender sensitive feminist critics. Ellen Moers hailed Aurora Leigh as the "epic of the literary woman" (40).

Aurora Leigh is an epic by a woman poet, about a woman poet (i.e. Aurora Leigh) and as evident from its popularity among women readers, writers and critics for the women.³ Writing of Aurora Leigh was wish-fulfilment for Elizabeth Barrett Browning, her wish to be "the feminine of Homer" "a little taller than Homer if anything"⁴, a wish she tried to fulfil through her first printed work *The Battle of Marathon* (1820). A Homeric epic in four books written in the style of Pope's *Iliad*, *The Battle of Marathon* sings of the Greek victory over the Persians in 490B.C. at Marathon, the scene of battle at a distance of 22 miles from Athens. Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote the poem as an obedient daughter of her literary forefathers and therefore couldn't fulfil her wish to be the feminine counterpart of Homer. But in writing Aurora Leigh she defied her literary forefathers and declared:

The critics say that epics have died out with Agamemnon and the goat-nursed gods;

All actual heroes are essential men,
And all men possible heroes: every age,
Heroic in proportions, double-faced,
Looks backward and before, expects a morn
And claims an epos.⁵

In the above lines Elizabeth Barrett Browning revises the idea of epic in order to dismantle the gender barriers in the genre of epic that she well understood. She herself enacts the advice that she gives to her contemporary poets:

Never flinch,
But still, unscrupulously epic, catch
Upon the burning lava of a song
The full-veined, heaving, double-breasted Age:(5:213-16)

Instead of the past, she makes her age – "this live, throbbing age,/That brawls, cheats, maddens calculates, aspires/And spends more passion, more heroic heat,/ Betwixt the mirrors of its drawing-rooms,/ Than Roland with his knights at Roncesvalles." (5:203-07) – the subject of her epic.

Aurora begins to write her story at the age of 26 or 27 as a mature, young, renowned woman poet, more or less as a contemporary of the "full-veined, heaving, double-breasted Age". Her song of the self is the song of her quest for a complete identity i.e. an integrated identity. Her story is the story of her journey from fragmentation to unification or integration. Aurora Leigh is the daughter of an Italian mother and an English father. She has unconventional upbringing because her social experience of Oedipalisation is cut short by her mother's death at the age of four and her father's death as she attains puberty. She does not have to realize her mother as a rival or come to terms with her own lack of masculine power. Cora Kaplan rightly remarks, "Aurora's 'mother-lack' makes her less conventionally feminine, perhaps less spontaneously affectionate..."(85). Moreover, the education her scholarly father provides her – "He wrapt his little daughter in his large/ Man's doublet, careless did it fit or not" (1: 727-28) – nurtures her masculine self. As Aurora grows up, her mother's portrait appears to her "by turns/ Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch, and sprite," (1: 153-54). The confluence of so many images of women in the mother's portrait suggests Aurora's search for her own woman identity in the portrait which ends up inconclusively. Aurora has to leave her mother's Italy after her father's death and arrive in her father's England at the crucial age of thirteen. The woman's education provided by Aurora's aunt is diametrically opposite to her early education. Aurora compares her years of education in womanhood to the "water-torture" suffered by Brinvillers ... "flood succeeding flood/ To drench the incapable throat and split the veins..." (1:467-69). The woman's education makes her internalize some values, roles and traits of a person's self as feminine. Her self-education into the western culture "which both parallels and subverts her aunt's effort to educate her in 'femininity', leads to further self-division" (Gilbert, from "Patria to Matria" 202) because it makes her internalize the patriarchal disdain for femininity. Thus, Aurora becomes a divided self. This split within herself becomes quite clear when her cousin Romney Leigh, a Christian socialist devoted to the service of

the society proposes her to marry him and she experiences for the first time conflict between love and work (art). In the midst of her solitary play-acting in the garden, she finds that she is being observed by Romney. He is a blatant spokesperson of patriarchy. Without mincing words, he tells Aurora “your sex is weak for art” but “strong/ For life and duty”. (2:372, 374-75). This begins the verbal battle of sexes. Denigrating Aurora’s ambition to be a poet he says that women “give us doating mothers, and perfect wives”, (2:222) but “We get no Christ from you, and verily/ We shall not get a poet, in my mind:” (2:224-25). Therefore, he proposes Aurora to love and marry him and be his helpmeet. But Aurora rejects his proposal and finally asserts:

You face, to – day,
A man who wants instruction, mark me, not
A woman who wants protection. (2:1061-63)

The conflict between the man and the woman in Aurora intensifies as the artist man in her scorns and suppresses the woman in her. The result is that she is unable to love either her work or her life. She says:

How dreary ‘tis for women to sit still
On winter nights by solitary fires
And hear the nations praising them far off,(5:439-41)

The conflict between her two warning selves reaches culmination in the following lines:

It seems as if I had a man in me,
Despising such a woman.(7:213-14)

It is important to note that like Aurora, Romney Leigh suffers from self-division because like her he too is a victim of patriarchy. His eagerness to go “hand in hand” with Aurora among “the arena-heaps/ of headless bodies” (2:280-81) and his proposing to Marian Erle by saying “though the tyrannous sword/ which pierced Christ’s heart, has cleft the world in twain” (4:122-23), they should try to “compress the red lips of this gaping wound/ As far as two souls can” (4: 127-28) suggest that he understands the psychic fragmentation that afflicts both him and his cousin. Aurora’s and Romney’s ruptured selves lead to a fractured vision of the world. If Romney believes that “barley – feeding and material ease” can solve the problems of the world, Aurora believes that only “a high-souled man” can “move the masses”. But in the end both realize -

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Natural things,
And spiritual, - who separates these two
In art, in morals, or the social drift,
Tears up the bond of nature and bring death. (7:763-65)

Aurora and Romney realize this truth only after Marian Erle becomes a victim of the tearing of the bond between body and soul. Marian Erle is a poor working-class girl who first suffers at the hands of her parents and then at the hands of society when she is tried to be forced into prostitution by heavily drugging and raping her at a Parisian brothel. It is important to note that besides Elizabeth Barrett Browning, other important Victorian writers like Arnold, Carlyle, Tennyson dealt with this problem of conflict that marred their age. Holy A. Laird rightly remarks that to the list of conflicts – “how to balance social duty with aesthetic interest... how to move from a failure of belief to renewed belief... how to reconcile the heritage of the past with the changes of the present” (277) – dealt with by the Victorian poets, Elizabeth Browning adds the conflict between man and woman. Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s solution to this problem of conflict between the opposites is different from other Victorian poets but closer to “the Carlylian vision of the coexistence of antagonistic possibilities” (Laird 278).

The solution to the problem of conflict within the self and within the society is to accept the twofold nature of both the human being and the world. As Aurora remarks:

....., I forgot
No perfect artist is developed here
From any imperfect woman. Flower from root,
And spiritual from natural, grade by grade
In all our life. A handful of the earth
To make God’s image! (9: 647-52)

Aurora reconciles the artist (“ For still the artist is intensely a man” (7: 799)) and the woman in her and Romney reconciles the reformer with the motherly instinct to feed the hungry world and the patriarchal man in him.

The internal union of the fragmented selves of the individual is symbolized by the external union of Aurora and Romney in the society. The marriage of Aurora and Romney is an unconventional one being not a union of two complementary individuals but two complete

individuals as suggested by the following lines. Romney says to Aurora-

Shine out for two, Aurora and fulfil
My falling – short that must be! work for two,
As I, though thus restrained, for two, shall love ! (9: 910-12)

The lines suggest that in Aurora and Romney's marriage there is no division, therefore, no conflict of gender roles. Rather there is exchange of gender roles by both and therefore the coexistence of opposite gender roles. Elizabeth Barrett Browning suggests that "the love of wedded souls" (9: 852) such as Romney and Aurora's can give rise to a new social order since from marital love spring all other forms of love. "The love of wedded souls" is the

..... human, vital, fructuous rose,
Where calyx holds the multitude of leaves,
Loves filial, loves fraternal, neighbor – loves
And civic – all. Fair petals, all good scents,
All reddened, sweetened from one central Heart! (9:886-90)

Thus, the woman poet (i.e. Aurora as well as Elizabeth Barrett Browning) envisions a new world order, the New Jerusalem wherein Aurora and Romney are new Eve and Adam whose love relationship of equality and not of hierarchy will be the role model for all relationships. The new world free of hierarchy that thrives on the principle of co-existence will be a land/world of equality, a woman's world. These Miltonic echoes make Aurora Leigh a female rewriting of Milton's Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. Thus, Aurora Leigh begins with the story of a woman poet's self-division and ends with a vision of woman's paradise.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning once remarked, "I look everywhere for grandmothers and see none."⁷ Truly, she found no grandmother when she began to write her magnum opus Aurora Leigh. Among grandfathers, she chose Milton – the severest grandfather – as her role model. But by choosing her contemporary age represented by the contemporary woman poet as the subject for the "most masculine" of English poetic vehicles i.e. blank verse, she wrote as a defiant "Milton's daughter's."⁸ She dismantled the gender barriers in the genre of epic and regenderised it to write the first important woman's epic in verse which became the mother epic for the succeeding woman epic writers. Aurora Leigh is a female odyssey, the journey of the growth of both a woman poet and her age from self-division to integration. Aurora Leigh,

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the heroine of the epic is torn between love and art, the woman and the man in her. Her age like her is torn between haves and have not, spiritualism and materialism, socialism and individualism, aestheticism and morality, religion and science, doubt and faith. Aurora Leigh is able to resolve her inner conflict when she realizes that love and art, woman and man are not opposite to each other but they co-exist with each other. Both are equals. The principle of co-existence, the acceptance of the two-fold nature of the world is the key to the resolution of the conflicts of her age, her society as well. Therefore, she envisions a new world order based on the principle of co-existence, the principle of equality. Such new unified world will, no doubt, be woman's world because there will be no separation and therefore no hierarchy between body and soul, head and heart, man and woman. Truly, Aurora Leigh is a woman's epic about her present age and future age.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 See H.T. Swedenberg's *The Theory of the Epic in England, 1650-1800* (1944) which is a compendium of arguments asserting the masculine as the "proper" gender of epic.
- 2 Coventry Patmore in his review of Aurora Leigh in *North British Review* 26 (1857) described its genre as "a novel in verse, a novel of the modern didactic species written chiefly for the advocacy of the distinct 'convictions upon Life and Art.'" Virginia Woolf in "Aurora Leigh" (1932) and Alethea Hayter in *Mrs. Browning: A Poet's Work and Its Setting* (1962) assessed Aurora Leigh as a novel though not a successful one. Even after 1970s, important critics including Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, Angela Leighton, Helen Cooper, Alison Case, Dolores Roseblum, Elaine Showalter, Rachel Blau Du Plessis, Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi have read Aurora Leigh as 'bildungsroman' ("novel of formation" or "novel of education") and particularly 'Kunsterroman' which represents the growth of a novelist or other artist.
- 3 Aurora Leigh was a phenomenal success in its own day. Making its first public appearance at the end of 1856, it ran through thirteen editions in England by 1873 and was still read and republished until the turn of the century. See Preface and Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning on Aurora Leigh section of Margaret Reynolds edited Norton Critical edition of Aurora Leigh (1996) for Aurora Leigh's popularity among women.
- 4 *The Brownings' Correspondence*, ed. Philip Kelley, Ronald Hudson, and Scott Lewis, vol. 1 (Winfield Kans: Wedgestone Press, 1984-) 361.

- 5 Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh: Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Contents, Criticism*, ed. Margaret Reynolds (New York: Norton, 1996). The lines are quoted from Book 5 of the poem and the line numbers are 139-141, 146-155. Hereafter all the quotations from *Aurora Leigh* are from this edition and are identified by book number and line number(s).
- 6 Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "To George Sand: A Recognition" *Poems* (1844) in *The Poetical Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, Cambridge ed., introd. Ruth M. Adams (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974) 103.
- 7 Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, ed. Frederic G. Keyson, vol. 1 (London: Smith, Elder and Co. 1897) 232.
- 8 The phrase was coined by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) for the many women writers who have made efforts to "come to terms with the institutionalized and often elaborately metaphorical misogyny Milton's epic expresses..." (189).

Arundhati Roy's Woman: A Gendered Subaltern in Patriarchy

*Bhudhadeb Kar**

While the novels of the 1980s realistically enrich the recorded principles and ethics of Indian history and unmask the shortcomings of the political versions, the novels of the 1990s with their centrifugal and centripetal tendencies have expressed serious concern for the small, the local and the subalterns with much assertiveness.

The issue of subalternity of women based on gender and caste in the patriarchal society receives the prime concern of Arundhati Roy. As a feminist writer, Roy depicts the tormenting picture of the sufferings, oppression of Indian women, their hopes and aspirations, subordination and marginalization, shame and humiliation, and their submit to male authority, altogether their outcast in a male dominated society. The present paper aims at unfolding patriarchy as a powerful complex order in Indian society and how it works as an offensive force against the subaltern man and woman on the basis of caste and gender.

The novel is set in a small town named Ayemenem now part of Kottayam in Kerala and records the dominant facets of Kerala life giving special emphasis on the caste system and the Keralite Syrian Christian way of life. The novel offers the gruesome tale of three generations of women who are subalterns and the victims of the brutal system. Ammu, Rahel, Mammachi, Baby Kochamma and other women are subalterns in the novel. All of them suffer in the hands of rich and powerful in a gender-bias, caste-ridden Ayemenem society in particular and Kerala society in general. Dushant B. Nimavat calls the novel as "the story of suffering of Baby Kochamma, Mammachi, Ammu and Rahel" (143).

Up against the subalternity, marginality, exclusion, subordination, and subjugation Roy's female protagonist Ammu, the representative of the younger generation, keeps her head high against the barriers of patriarchy. Her rebellious spirit helps her resist the "traditional grids of oppression" (Baneth – Nouailhetas 2002 : 80). A gruesome tale of gender discrimination begins from the very childhood days in Ammu's

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life. Born in a middle class orthodox Syrian-Christian family, as a girl child she is deprived of the parents love and care, intimate relationship, the opportunities and privileges, the rights and independence, what has been extended to her brother Chako. When she fails to comprehend the reason of her deprivation and denial, she is subjected to suppression and subordination in the family. As a small girl she experiences many hair-raising nightmarish incidents seeing her mother Mammachi severely tortured and abused by her father. Very often she is even the victim of her father's brutality and wild treatment. Presenting the awful picture of Indian women in the patriarchal domesticity, Roy painfully says; "not content with having beaten his wife and daughter, he tore down curtains, kicked furniture and smashed a table lamp" (181).

Education is the most crucial element or self-development and cultural enrichment. But girls' education is treated with social taboos. Education defiles her stereotypical roles of wife and mother in the eyes of the orthodox males in India who are the custodian of patriarchal values. On the threshold of patriarchal dictation, Ammu is denied of her fundamental right to higher education. Her father thinks that "college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl" (38). However, her elder brother Chakoo has been sent to Oxford for higher studies. Trapped in the whirlpool of dull, monotonous household chores, futile waiting for marriage, unhealthy atmosphere and callous attitude of the family members, she suffers from restlessness and desperation. None of the family members shows any concern about her life and career. Ammu gradually develops a sense of rebellion against the order of the patriarchal value system and wants an immediate respite from the oppressive atmosphere in the family as well as release her from the marginalized status. During her visit to Culcutta, she enjoys absolute independence for the first time liberating herself from family restrictions and prescriptions.

In marrying a man of her choice outside the community and caste disregarding the norms and sanction of the family, Ammu asserts her right of taking decision about her own life rejecting the conventional role and image of a 'good woman'. "She thought anyone at all would be better than returning to Ayemenem" (39). She writes a new chapter of freedom for women by breaking the shackles of patriarchy of the Ayemenem House. Unfortunately her marriage fails in a short time. Her quest for identity, honour and independence appears blurred. The

man whom she marries, turns out to be a drunkard who proposes her to gratify the lust of his English boss, Mr. Hollick. Outraged by the ugly proposal, she snaps all ties with her hypocrite husband and accepts lifelong sufferings as a divorcee returning back unwelcomed to her parents in Ayemenem with her 'dizygotic' twins Estha and Rahel. To quote Roy, "Ammu left her husband and returned, unwelcomed to her parents in Ayemenem. To everything she had fled from only a few years ago. Except that she had two young children and no more dreams" (42). Ammu's reintroduction in the Ayemenem House turns out to be a catastrophe. She and her children are treated as burden. Both inside and outside the family, she is despised by her nears and dears.

It is a matter of irony that Ayemenem House is thoroughly infested with the hypocritical values of patriarchy and gender discrimination. Ammu being estranged from husband is tortured in the family whereas Chako being estranged from wife is wholeheartedly received. A divorcee daughter lives in her parents' house on others' mercy. But a divorcee son rightfully commands his right over the family property, power and prestige. He always asserts, "what is yours is mine, what's mine is also mine. Get out of my house before I break every bone in your body! My house, my pineapple, my pickle" (57). Chako symbolizes the male chauvinism of patriarchy. However Ammu resists her marginalised status, imposes her presence in the family and demands from them the material support what her husband is supposed to provide. Ammu represents the voice of gendered subaltern in patriarchy.

Ammu rebels against leading a sterile life. She dismisses a sex-less, body-less identity as a divorced mother and proudly declares her feminine desire. In the Ayemenem society, assertion of her female desire outside the sanctioned frame of marriage and wife-hood is 'unchristian'. To achieve her right to live on passionately after divorce, Ammu is drawn towards her childhood friend Velutha, an 'untouchable'. Velutha's fiery spirit inspires her to make him a part of her protest against the high-caste tradition. Her love for the 'untouchable' itself is a protest and challenge to the upper-caste Christians in Ayemenem. The affair between the high caste Ammu and the untouchable Velutha is an example of transgression for crossing the borders. The affair not only breaks the codes that govern the women's sexuality but also the boundaries that divide the castes. Brinda Bose rightly says: In asserting her own 'biological' desire for a man who inhabits a space beyond the

permissible boundaries of 'touchability', it appears that Ammu attempts a subversion of caste/ class rules, as well as the male tendency to dominate by being, necessarily, the initiator of sexual act . . . the subversive powers of desire and sexuality in an arena that is rife with politics of gender divisions and the rules that govern them "(92).

Caste stratification is so acute in Ayemenem. Mammachi, Ammu's mother is nearly vomiting knowing her daughter's relation with an 'untouchable' when she states, "a paravans coarse black hand on her daughter's breast. His mouth on hers. His black hips jerking between her parted legs..... His particular paravan smell" (257). Interestingly, Chako flirts with labour women, but nobody objects. Mammachi ignores it saying, "He can't help having a Man's Needs" (168). Ammu defiles generations of breeding and brings disgrace to family by loving an 'untouchable' whereas Chako's relation with the women in the factory does not tarnish the image of the family. R.S. Pathak views, "The only fault of her was to divorce the drunken and abusive man she married, and in the course, love an untouchable"(179).

The transgressive lovers, Ammu and Velutha, enter into the forbidden territory and their move unsettles the formidable patriarchal power structure. The agents of high caste patriarchies want to give violent and exemplary punishment to the transgressive lovers. Velutha is brutally killed in police custody for his unforgivable crime. Ammu is insulted badly for being a woman, a divorcee and loving an untouchable by inspector Thomas Mathew. In Roy's words: ". . . stares at Ammu's breasts as he spoke. He said that The Kottayam police didn't take statements from Veshyas or their illegitimate children..... Then he tapped her breasts with his baton. Gently, tap, tap. As though he was choosing mangoes from a basket "(8).

Ammu is seriously shocked. Finding no sympathy, no support from anybody, she leaves the Ayemenem House in search of her livelihood and "died in a grimy room in the Bharat Lodge in Alleppey, where she had gone for a job interview as someone's secretary. She died alone"(161). Even after death, Ammu's dead body receives the inhuman treatment of the patriarchy as the church refuses to bury her dead body. Finally, she turns to ashes in the electric crematorium. Her tragic death brings no tears. K.V. Surendram rightly asserts, "She (Ammu) is made to suffer quite early in her life and continues to suffer throughout her life. She is humiliated in the hands of police, the near and dear ones

and also the public at large. Even at her deathbed, she was left to herself"(65). The tragic end of the transgressive lovers is not a defeat but a victory against all the forces of the world. Ramesh K. Srivastava writes, "being small and vulnerable, Ammu and Velutha meet their tragic end but the fact remains that the two had taken up a humble fight against all-powerful multiple forces of caste, class, patriarchy and politics"(389).

Rahel, belongs to the younger generation of women who faces the wrath of patriarchy, gender subalternity like her mother Ammu. But she revolts against the oppressive order more boldly and in an effective way. In her childhood, she experiences the indifference of her maternal grandfather Pappachi and maternal grandmother Mammachi. She feels herself as an 'outsider' inside her mother's house. A sense of isolation grows intensely in her. For her, the Ayemenem House is a symbol of eternal suffering, subordination and oppression of women.

Rahel's is a love marriage with Larry Mc Caslin, an American. Her marriage does not last long. Her attempt to get happiness by releasing her from the reminiscences of traumatic spectacle of life, is shattered. Larry Mc Caslin is often embarrassed in love looking at Rahel's eyes "But when they made love he was offended by her eyes. They behaved as though they belonged to someone else"(19). Being divorced she is an outsider to the marriage and caste system and wants to find her own answers to life and career outside the marriage. Rahel returns back to Ayemenem as a divorcee. Her return to the Ayemenem House is a new beginning where her mother Ammu starts her struggle. Rahel and Estha meet each other as strangers. Even though "they had known each other before life began" and soon got attracted in an adult desire for a pervasive taste of sex to realize no "happiness but hideous grief" (328). The incestuous relation between brother and sister affects the Indian moral codes of the purity of sex. Rahel articulates her own understanding of resistance to patriarchal system. She asserts the women's desire and relation across class in a more dynamic and liberated way than her mother. She is a symbol of freedom, liberation of women from their eternal bondage to patriarchal strictures.

The woman of older generation, Mammachi is an ordinary conventional woman who offers herself to permanent oppression and exploitation of patriarchy. Performing the stereotypical role of a 'good woman', she is submissive and unprotesting wife who silently suffers

the brutal treatment of her husband Pappachi. Roy presents the gloomy picture of Mammachi rightly in her words: "Mammachi was almost blind and always wore dark glasses when she went out of the house. Her tears tickled down from behind them, trembled down from behind them, and trembled along her jaws like raindrops on the edge of a roof (5). She becomes the slave of her husband's desire. To satisfy the male ego Pappachi beats her mercilessly. Employing physical and mental torture, he reaffirms his total domination. Wife beating is common sight in Indian family. Roy writes; "The Kathakali man took off their make up and went home to beat their wives. Even Kunti, the soft one with breasts"(236). Pappachi exhibits his intolerance to Mammachi's talent in music and prevents her from developing her potentialities.

Mammachi, a victim of patriarchy, is marginalised and subordinated as a gendered subaltern. But she becomes a part of the foul play of patriarchy. She is instrumental in the process of oppression of her daughter and daughter-in-law. Believing the dominant patriarchal codes of gender division, she accepts the established social order.

Baby Kochamma is a dutiful patriarchal ally who suffers in life in her own way as a woman of older generation. She remains single in life. Her single status develops frustration and she is intolerant to others' happiness. By repressing others' lives like Ammu and the twins, she gets solace for her own unhappiness. She is a victim of the social order as it prevents her from marrying her beloved Irish monk. Roy rightly says, ". . . lived her life backwards. As a young woman she had renounced the material world, and, now as an old one she seemed to embrace it" (22). She preserves the social order paying heavy price by suffering entire life and prefers to punish the transgressive lovers for the survival of the social order.

By presenting the women of different generations, Roy creates a line of conflict in their senses of identity. When the women of older generation (Mammachi and Baby Kochamma) accept the rules of social order, the women of younger generation (Ammu and Rahel) resist the social prejudice. Roy prefers to castigate the hypocrisy of older women and sympathizes the inspirational younger women by standing behind them in the rebellion for the liberation of women and social reform. Even though Ammu and Rahel's rebellion against the male chauvinism is ruthlessly put down, Roy praises their bold resistance

which set a new face of the identity of women.

To sum up, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* makes a critical survey of Indian patriarchy responsible for oppressing Indian women. The heavily coded Indian society leaves no room for the women. As gendered subalterns in patriarchy, women submit themselves to the life-long enslavement of patriarchy. Roy raises her voice for the gendered subalterns and caste subalterns who are further parenthesized in the economic class system.

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Interacting Casteism : An Interpersonal Analysis of Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things"

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Besides others, one function of language is to interact with other people and to establish and maintain social relations with them. Interaction is an inherent function of language i.e. one uses language to communicate ideas to others. It implies the presence of certain aspects of grammar that enable one to interact through language. In this research paper an effort is made to investigate those lexico-grammatical structures that Arundhati Roy has used to exchange her ideas about the issues associated with casteism in India socio-cultural milieu in her fictional discourse "The God of Small Things".

Being a fictional narrative, Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things" primarily deals with exchange of information. But the exchange that takes place in the novel is of different levels. At one level the interaction is between the author and the assumed readers. Here the readers are the passive recipients of information though their implicit response affects the author's speech moves. At another level the exchange is between various characters e.g. between Ammu and Velutha, between Ammu and her brother Chacko, between Ammu and the police inspector, between Chacko and Comrade Pillai, and so on. But in all these exchanges, the writer's oblique presence cannot be ruled out. It is the author who decides the moves of exchange of the various characters and the subsequent response by other characters. Thus, it is she who through the use of various lexico-grammatical structures constructs their value and belief system and their attitude towards and judgement of other characters.

Through the use of various lexico-grammatical structures, Arundhati Roy has tried to present the clash that exists between two sets of people. On the one side we have high class, powerful people, who draw their strength from history, tradition, family culture, patriarchy and political opportunism. On the other side, we have low class people, the untouchable, the insecure women and hapless children. The strong and powerful people give harsh and cruel treatment to their weaker counterparts when they try to fulfill their natural urges and desires.

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The writer's purpose is to inform the readers about the various types of dichotomies that exist in the society and make him / her aware about the need to get the things rectified. In this way, the writer assumes the role of 'giver of information' and puts the reader in 'receiver of information' position.

One of the major issues about which the writer wants to interact with the readers is Untouchability. In Indian socio-cultural scenario, a class of the people is given sub-human handling and is treated as muck and rubbish, not fit to touch or be touched. In the novel, these are represented through Velutha and his father Vellya Paapen. Vellya Paapen belongs to a time when Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom. They used to sweep away their footprints so that the high-caste people might not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into their footprints. At that time, they were not allowed to walk on public roads and carry umbrellas. When they spoke they had to put their hands on their mouths to divert their polluted breath away from those to whom they spoke (Roy 74). The passage given in Appendix 03 deals with exchange of this information. As the writer's purpose is to provide information to the readers about the plight of untouchables at a particular point in history, she has put all the 14 clauses in the passage in Declarative Mood i.e. the Finite is put after the Subject.

Not only this, the writer makes Vellya Paapen, an untouchable, responsible for the success or failure of the majority of the propositions. He is the one who is being held responsible for the functioning of the various clauses as an interactive event. The writer does so by putting him as Subject in 08 out of the 14 clauses. In 04 of the remaining 06 clauses, it is Vellya Paapen on whom, in one way or the other, rests the validity of the Propositions. In these clauses, 'his gratitude to Mammachi and her family', 'his eye', 'his gratitude' and 'his gratitude' are put in the Subject position. By putting a part of Vellya Paapen's body or an aspect of his behaviour at Subject position the writer has depersonalized him and thus reduced his stature in the eyes of the readers. There are only two clauses in which he is not made responsible for the success or failure of the Propositions. In clause 03, 'Mammachi and her family' is put in the Subject position and in clause 06, 'Mammachi' is put in the Subject position. In this way, the writer chooses, an untouchable of bygone days as an interactive agent in the passage. As the passage deals with a situation that used to exist in the past, the writer has used

'past tense' in all the 14 clauses. From the point of view of Polarity, 10 clauses contain Positive Polarity and 04 clauses contain Negative Polarity. The clauses containing Negative Polarity are:(a)He hadn't worked off his debt yet....(b)he wasn't expected to...(c)that he wouldn't ever be able to...(d)that his eye was not his own...In all these clauses the author makes use of Negative Polarity to give information to the readers about the inability of Vellya Paapen to do or have something.

This picture of the plight of Untouchables at a given time in history also continues in other passages. One such example is a passage given in Appendix 01. The passage also deals with a time of the bygone days, which is described as 'Mammachi's time'. It shows the type of power imbalance that existed in the society. A class of people was not considered equal to others. In order to interact the plight of the untouchables with the readers the writer has used Declarative Mood in all the 12 clauses.

It suggests that the passage is designed to provide information to the readers. The author makes no effort to engage the readers by setting up an imagined dialogue. In this way the information flow is one sided and the writer presents herself as a sole authority on the subject. In majority of these clauses the writer puts 'Paravans' in the Subject position. They are referred to as 'Paravans' and 'they'. This is done to make them 'resting point' of the argument presented in the passage. 'Mammachi' is put as Subject in two of the clauses and 'touchables' are also made Subject in two of the clauses.

In 66 % of the clauses, the Paravans are presented as entities on whom the validity of the assertions depends. In the rest of the clauses, the 'Touchables', 'Brahmins or Syrian Christians' and 'Mammachi' are presented as entities on whom the success or failure of the clauses as an interactive event rests. They constitute 34 % of the clauses in the passage.

The writer has used Modal Operators in three of the clauses. These are 'could', 'would' and 'had to'. Of these one is of Low Modality, one is of Median Modality and one is of High Modality:

Proportion of MODAL Operators in Appendix 01

Low 1 Median 1 High 1

The clause containing a Low Modal operator is:

That she (Mammachi) could remember a time, in her girl hood...

By using Low Modality the writer has presented Mammachi's assertion as a weak one as if she were not sure about what she was saying or remembering. The Median Modal Operator is used in the following clause:

So that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan's footprint. Here the writer uses Modal Operator 'would' partially as a grammatical necessity of using the past tense in accordance with tense of the independent clause, and partially to show that 'Brahmins and Syrian Christians' as a group are more sure about themselves in comparison to Mammachi as an individual. The clause containing High Modal Operator is: *They (Paravans) had to put their hands over their mouths...* Here the writer presents herself as someone being sure about what she is describing. The plight of the Paravans is something about which the writer seems to have little doubt.

Looking at the passage from Polarity angle, the writer has used Positive Polarity in 05 of the clauses, Negative Polarity in 04 of the clauses and Modal Operators in 03 (02 positive, 01 negative) in the clauses. Thus, the Polarity analysis again presents the author as an omniscient narrator who knows each and every detail about the plight of untouchables. As she has used a very limited number of Modal Operators, it indicates that she takes the readers for granted that they would agree with her and leaves little scope for contradictory argument.

Oppression on the basis of caste is explored by Arundhati Roy at various levels in the novel. On the one hand, she presents Vellya Paapen, Velutha's father, who never thinks about going beyond the role assigned to an untouchable in the society. His condition is presented as "the condition of a complete-in-itself being, absolutely arrested in the past, always afraid of any potential change" (Parminder Singh 145). On the other hand, we have picture of Velutha, his son, who does not intend to remain an untouchable. He perfects his carpentry skills and accepts every challenging task. The passage given in Appendix 04 lists the various traits of Velutha's personality. He is presented as a young, trained mechanic and a master craftsman. Even Mammachi, a touchable character in the novel is impressed by his skills and goes to the extent of saying "if only he hadn't been a Paravan, he might have become an

engineer” (Roy 75). An Interpersonal analysis of the passage makes apparent the linguistic structures used by the writer to exchange this meaning with the readers.

This passage contains 22 clauses in total. Considering the passage from Mood perspective, all the 22 clauses are of Declarative Mood. There is no clause of Imperative or Interrogative Mood. This is in tune with the passages previously discussed. Obviously, the writer’s purpose is to present herself as an omniscient narrator who knows each and every detail about the life of the characters she has created. The change is visible only in the choice of the Subject. If in the previous passages, it was Vellya Paapen who is made responsible for the success or failure of the passages as interactive events, in this passage it is Velutha by reference to whom Propositions can be affirmed or denied:

Distribution of various Participants as SUBJECT in Appendix 04

A cursory look at the passage in appendix 04 makes it clear that in majority of the clauses it is Velutha who carries the burden of the Propositions. Even in clauses beginning with dummy ‘it’, it is Velutha with reference to whom the clause is made an interactive move. Only in 02 clauses, Mammachi is presented as resting point of the argument. Likewise, Chacko is assigned Subject position in 02 of the clauses.

An analysis from the Polarity angle further strengthens the inferences already drawn. 21 of the total 22 clauses contain Positive Polarity. There is only one clause containing Negative Polarity: *(a)Mammachi often said(b)that if only he hadn’t been a Paravan,(c)he might have become an engineer.* This refers to the confidence level of the speaker. As Negative Polarity is put in a conditional clause, it refers to a hypothetical situation where Velutha is perceived as a non-Paravan. As this is not the reality, his being a Paravan is conveyed as a negative trait to the readers. There is only one clause containing a Modal Operator ‘he might have become an engineer’. This clause is put as Mammachi’s opinion who is a touchable character in the novel. This only hints at a possibility. But it is quite weak, as only a Low value Modal Operator ‘might’ is used to express it.

In spite of Velutha’s confidence in himself and his tendency to step over the caste barriers, not much has changed for the most of the untouchables. The British came to Malabar and a number of untouchables joined Christianity in order to escape the scourge of Untouchability.

The Britishers also gave them a little food and money and a new caste of Rice-Christians. They were given separate churches, with separate services, separate priests and even their own separate Pariah Bishop. But they soon realized that that had jumped out of the frying pan into the fire. After independence they realized that they were entitled to Government benefits like Job reservation and loan on low interest (Roy 76). On paper they were made Christians therefore casteless. But in reality there was little change in their position. The writer exchanges with the readers this scenario in the passage given in Appendix 02. Her purpose is to inform the readers about the plight of untouchables in pre-independence and post-independence Indian, especially Kerala. As the writer’s purpose is to give information to the readers about the predicament of the low-caste people converted into Christianity, she employs Declarative Mood in all the 15 clauses of the passage. The use of this Mood provides the author with a special freedom to deal with her subject matter the way she likes. It also puts the readers at the marginal position as just the receivers of information. The readers’ response is taken for granted and they are given a little scope to accept, reject, query, qualify or contradict the arguments presented in the various clauses of the passage. This becomes further clear when we look at the use of Polarity and Modal Operators in the passage. Of the 15 clauses, 13 contain Positive Polarity and 02 contain Negative Polarity. There is no Modal Operator is used in the passage. The Negative Polarity is used in the following clauses:

It didn’t take them long to realize...

They were not entitled to any Government benefits like job reservations or bank loans at low interest...

All this makes clear that the writer is quite confident about what she says. The Negative Polarity is used to present what the Paravans could not get due to Government policies.

Thus by analyzing the above passages dealing with Untouchability from Interpersonal perspective we observe that Arundhati Roy has used Declarative Mood in most of the clauses. In these she has introduced certain entities such as Vellya Paapen, Velutha and Paravans, Pelayas and Pulayas about whom she wants to make certain claims. The kind of degree of the validity of the claims she is going to make is indicated by the various Finite elements she has used in the clauses.

For instance, by making use of the past tense the writer claims that the information she has provided is valid for the past. Similarly, the limited use of Modal Operators indicates that the information is intended to be absolutely valid and the use of Positive Polarity in the majority of the clauses projects the information as something positively valid. In this way, the grammatical structures used in the passages indicate about the direction in which the exchange is proceeding. These also indicate the linguistic means the writer has used to achieve her purpose of negotiating her ideas with the readers and accordingly manipulating their response.

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Appendix - 01

They were not allowed to touch anything that Touchables touched. Caste Hindus and caste Christians. Mammachi told Estha and Rahel that she could remember a time, in her girlhood, when Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan's footprint. In Mammachi's time, Paravans like other Untouchables, were not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry their umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed.

(Roy 73-74)

Appendix - 02

When the British came to Malabar, a number of Paravans, Pelayas and Pulayas (among them Velutha's granadfather, Kelan) converted to Christianity and joined the Anglican Church to escape the scourge of Untouchability. As added incentive they were given a little food and money. They were known as the Rice-Christians. It didn't take them long to realize that they had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. They were made to have separate churches, with separate services, and separate priests. As a special favour they were even given their own separate Pariah Bishop. After independence they found they were not entitled to any Government benefits like job reservations or bank loans at low interest rates, because officially, on paper, they were Christians, and therefore casteless. It was a little like having to sweep away your footprints without a broom. Or worse not being allowed to leave footprints at all. (Roy 74)

Appendix - 03

Velutha's father, Vellya Paapen, however, was an Old World Paravan. He had seen the *Crawling Backwards Days* and his gratitude to Mammachi and her family for all they had done to him, was as wide and deep as a river in spate. When he had his accident with the stone chip, Mammachi organized and paid for his glass eye. He hadn't worked off his debt yet, and though he knew he wasn't expected to, that he wouldn't ever be able to – he felt that his eye was not his own. His gratitude widened his smile and bent his back. (Roy 76)

Appendix - 04

Apart from his carpentry skills, Velutha has a way with machines. Mammachi often said that if only he hadn't been a Paravan, he might have become an engineer. He mended radios, clocks, water-pumps. He looked after the plumbing and all the electrical gadgets in the house. When Mammachi decided to enclose the back verandah, it was Velutha who designed and built the sliding-folding door that later became all the rage in Ayemenem. Velutha knew more about the machines in the factory than anyone else. When Chacko resigned his job in Madras and returned to Ayemenem with a Bharat bottle-sealing machine, it was Velutha who reassembled it and set it up. It was Velutha who maintained the new canning machine and the automatic pineapple slicer. Velutha who oiled the water pump and the small diesel generator. Velutha who built the aluminium steel-lined, easy-to-clean cutting surfaces, and the ground level furnaces for boiling fruit.

(Roy 75-76)

Lise's Quest to Be: An Existentialist Analysis of *The Driver's Seat*

Sumneet Kaur Pahwa*

Existentialism is a timeless mode of thinking. Seen from the Indian context its origin can be traced back to Hindu epics Mahabharata and Bhagvad Gita. Mahabharata probes deep into the souls of the tormented individuals to find anxiety, fear of choice and the scare of death to be their integral part. Bhagvad Gita is a part of Mahabharata, which contains the verses from the epic as lord Krishna teaches Arjuna to do his duty in the battlefield of kurukshetra. It preaches the right way to exist in this unreal world — the existentialist-oriented attitude. Greek philosopher, Socrates' mode of self-questioning and his slogan 'Know Thyself' are built upon existentialist implications. Shakespeare's Hamlet's impasse 'to be or not to be' shows the rudimentary problems of human survival. Existentialism developed rapidly in the European countries after the World War I.

Existentialist thinkers focus on the question of concrete human existence. They regard the outside world as absurd. Their individual stands at a distance from his society because the word existence, which comes from the Latin word 'existere', means 'to stand out'. The notion of 'the Absurd' means that there is no meaning to be found in the world beyond the meaning that the individual gives to it. Amorality and injustice are a part of this meaningless world. According to the existentialists, the actual life of an individual constitutes essence instead of there being a predetermined essence that defines what it is to be a human. The elementary contribution of existentialism is that a man's identity is composed neither by nature nor by culture, but by the individual himself. To exist is to constitute an identity for oneself. Existence in Fackenheim's words is "self-making-in-a-situation" (Fackenheim 37). Charles Taylor believes that human beings are "self-interpreting animals" (Taylor 45).

The Driver's Seat opens with Lise, a 30-ish maladroitness, an unsettled, eccentric and high-pitched woman from a Northern country preparing for a vacation in the South, and follows her adventures for last forty-eight hours of her life. The novella narrates female neurosis which

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concludes in her murder. Lise seeks murder, not sex, even though she is finally raped by her murderer. Her perplexing behaviour, her bizarre expressions, her vibrant clothes, her deliberately misplaced passport and keys fit into her plan to make her self chronicled and raise a public commotion over her calculated death, because "everywhere men were losing their peculiarly human quality. They were being converted from 'persons' into 'pronouns', from 'subjects' into 'objects', from an 'I' into an 'it' (Stumpf 454). Lise's efforts are to raise herself from 'an it to an I'.

The Driver's seat depicts novelist's vision of a universe in which absurdity and eccentricity have produced distancing, chaos and meaninglessness. Lise is completely agitated with the fossilized routine of her office life in which she has lived continuously for sixteen years with little or no change. Lise, one of the misfits, is an accountant in an unspecified city somewhere in an unnamed country in the Northern Europe. She is like those "swaying tall pines among the litter of cones on the forest floor [which] have been subdued into silence and into obedient bulks" (TDS 15). The highly conventionalised social frame and the emotionless schedule of Lise's professional life have plagued her receptive mind and have awakened in her a will to an existential expression. The years of psychological illness of the emotionally sterile and spiritually vacant Lise leave her office colleagues terrified of her presence. All these years she has been unable to form any relationship or friendship with any of them. She has become a neurotic wreck. Lise therefore, searches for an authentic existence and wishes to transcend triviality and insignificance. The social circle and the office life of Lise make her a victim of desolation and purposelessness. Her emptiness and futility result in into a frenzied outburst of sudden tears and laughter, "then she had begun to laugh hysterically. She finished laughing and started crying all in a flood" (TDS 10). Her laughter and tears are as paradoxical as the routine of her professional and personal life. Lise's timetable keeps her extremely busy but in result it does not give her any satisfaction. Now she wants to protest against the frigid forces which tend to reduce her to an inanimate entity.

Lise lives in an apartment where everything is unnatural. It is almost as if no one stays there. In her modern pine walled accommodation the furniture and appliances smoothly fold away into the walls. She keeps a few visible household accoutrements in perfect

order but devoid of personal touches. Lise does not have curtains on the windows of her flat, which indicates her wish and an attempt to reach out to the world. Her apartment is like a hotel room — eternally ready for the next guest. Later, when Lise is in the hotel she begins unpacking and hanging up her clothes, but then puts them back in the suitcase, once again as if she does not want to leave a trace that she was there. Her situation can be described in the words of Srinivasa Iyenger. Iyenger says that our life has become “a pitiful somnambulistic affair, we live listlessly finding no meaning in our existence, and although we are seemingly involved in a ceaseless rattle and drive, we know of no desirable destination, we enjoy neither stability nor security, our movements are blind meanderings, we mechanically go round the prickly pear, and our heroic attitudes end only in a whimper and a whine” (Iyenger 670).

Lise tries to go to great lengths to make herself noticed. She throws fits when buying clothes, talks loudly, makes scenes, leaves her passport in a cab. Her choice of hallucinogenic dress and the glaring contrast of colours is an attempt ‘to stand out’ of the society and to assert her individuality. For Lise, using R.W. Horton and H.W. Edward’s words, “merely being-in-the-world-with-others, or even leading a ‘full’, ‘active’, ‘intellectual’ life is not enough” (Horton and Edward 482). Lise’s actions and plans are intended to alert the world to her forgotten existence. She desperately seeks acknowledgement. But most of the times Lise’s shocking efforts to provoke the attention of the people around her meet with hostility. A woman mocks her lurid dress saying, “‘dressed for the carnival’” (TDS 11).

Lise’s individuality is jeered at. All she gets from her society is social ostracism and psychological seclusion. The dull and mechanised routine makes Lise hysterical and she says, “‘I am going to have the time of my life’”, when she plans to go for a vacation (TDS 10). Her trip will help her to search the meaning of being and an authentic existence. It is an endeavour to escape from robotic life. She plans to charter her own route and takes hold of the driver’s seat to steer her way to ‘The Pavillion’ — the place where she would be murdered according to her own plans. It is a journey towards masochistic murder — a means to hunted freedom. At the beginning of the third chapter the author says, “she will be found tomorrow morning dead from multiple stab wounds, her wrists bound with silk scarf and her ankles

bound with a man’s necktie, in the grounds of an empty villa, in a part of the foreign city to which she is travelling on the flight now boarding at gate 14 (TDS 25). Lise symbolically occupies the seat of God — the driver of this universe — and decides to end her journey of this world in her own way. Peter Kemp says that the car gives the work its central symbol and meaning to Lise’s hunt, “Implicitly, in fact, the car comes, in this work, to stand as an equivalent for modern urban man: a standardized exterior, a tough casting round the vulnerable and human, steered by the mind, the seat of judgement and control, the driver’s seat” (Kemp 125).

Lise is not ready to accept any norms of a hard-boiled social and patriarchal system. The psychoneurotic woman has an aversion to sex because she believes that man-woman relationship is not merely a transient gratification but something more than the animal instinct in man. She says, “‘It’s all right at the time and it’s all right before but the problem is afterwards. That is, if you aren’t just an animal. Most of the time afterwards is pretty sad’” (TDS 103). Lise’s repugnance towards sex arises because according to her in this male dominated world, man sees a woman as a sex-object. One such man is Bill who is engaged into creating a highly sophisticated system of macrobiotics. He has an obsession for some kind of ‘crank diet’. He intends to give a lecture “‘The world – where is it going?’” (TDS 92). He always propagates, “‘you become what you eat’” (TDS 34). Lise is not interested in Bill because he would have one orgasm daily and leave her. An orgasm a day is a part of Bill’s diet plan. He is interested in Lise only as a female body because he theorises that he must have sex with a woman a day. She does not want to be a part of Bill’s dried frame work of the mechanical vegan-diet.

Throughout her journey, Lise is looking for the right kind of a man, “not knowing exactly where and when he’s is going to turn up” (TDS 57). Ultimately, she meets Richard, the sadist, who fits into the construct of her beliefs and values. Richard is a sex maniac who has just come out of the mental asylum. He had stabbed a woman and after imprisonment for this crime, he was sent to the clinic for treatment. Lise identifies with Richard because a sane man would not help her achieve her desired freedom. A man of senses would not do the job of killing for her. Now that Lise hopes that she would achieve her absurd dream, she lives each moment to the full before she dies. She squeezes

sensational amusement out of the time that she is left with. Existence has no meaning for Lise. But she conquers a meaning for her life when it glows with an image of the moment of dying. Lise compares her forthcoming death with the death of her husband. She considers his death as unheroic. Lise's husband died "in a motor accident. He was a bad driver" (TDS 77). She believes that the best seeker for an identity and authentic existence is not the one who dies in an accident but someone like her who occupies the driver's seat and ceremoniously steers her own way to her own death. Lise saves herself from an unheroic death by escaping a mob because she thinks it is futile to die unheroically. Other than being a widow, Lise's childlessness also troubles her. She spends time looking at the toys and children's clothes in one departmental store. Her regretful yearning to buy the small red fur lined gloves hint at her loneliness and her tragedy. This purposeless and vegetative life has become burdensome for Lise. I would like to explain Lise's development of strong masochistic tendencies in Sigmund Freud's words. He says, "the suppression of woman's aggressiveness which is prescribed for them constitutionally and imposed on them socially favours the development of powerful masochistic impulses" (Freud 149).

Richard tells Lise, "a lot of women get killed" near 'The Pavillion'. Replying, "yes, I know, they look for it", Lise puts the scarf around her neck and asks Richard to tie her feet with a necktie, and hands him over a paper knife with the instruction of how to strike and where to strike first (TDS 101). She says,

"I'm going to lie down here. Then you tie my hands with my scarf; I'll put one wrist over the other, it's the proper way. Then you'll tie my ankles together with your necktie. Then you strike." She points first to her throat. "First here", she says. Then, pointing to a place beneath each breast, she says, "Then here and here. Then anywhere you like" (TDS 105-106)

When an end is put to Lise's life, she "screams, evidently perceiving how final is finality, as her killer stabs her and then he runs to the car, taking his chance and knowing that he will at last be taken . . ." (TDS 107). Richard tells, "she spoke to me in many languages but she was telling me to kill her all the time. She told me precisely what to do. I was hoping to start a new life" (TDS 107). Lise achieves her purpose in her death. When alive, she always tries to be. Ironically, she gets recognition after her grotesque rape and death by being pierced ruthlessly

in different parts of the body. Her picture is printed in the newspapers and an intensive enquiry is ordered to make a search to trace her identity. Lise's journey could aptly be explained in Miller's words, "the problem has been that women have been seeking affiliations that are impossible to attain under the present arrangements, but in order to conduct the search, women have been willing to sacrifice whole parts of themselves" (Miller 93).

To conclude, I would say that Muriel Spark depicts how the mechanised modern life produces lunacy in the people, who revolt against the accepted and the demanded way of life. She impeaches the Dionysian aspects of the Western culture of the sixties. Through her character Lise, Spark unravels the complexities which arise in the inner world of some human beings. The work prompts the readers to perceive the extreme anguish of a traumatized soul. The protagonist discovers that the disingenuousness and the sterility that she is trying to escape greet her everywhere. The absurdity of Lise's existence arises from despair of being caught in the insipid hierarchical societal and economic machinery of life. And according to Finkelstein, "the despair like Kierkegaard's does not come from the awareness that sometime or another one must die. It comes when life as one lives it offers no satisfaction, or only illusionary one" (Finkelstein 37). The artificiality of the modern world has affected the life of this hyper-sensitive woman. Lise's "refusal to subordinate personal self-awareness to abstract concepts or dehumanising social circle" is a step towards freedom (Shinn 162). Therefore, Lise's "suicide might seem a mode of death which at least places the individual in position of mastery" (McMahon 160).

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Marginalization and Dattani's Plays

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Among the contemporary Indian dramatists writing in English, Mahesh Dattani has the distinction of being the first Indian playwright to be honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Award (1998), the award citation reading, "[Dattani's work] probes tangled attitudes in contemporary India towards communal differences, consumerism and gender... a brilliant contribution to Indian drama in English."

Dattani's copious literary output animated by variegated themes voicing contemporary issues with a unique boldness, unmatched literary prowess and theatrical skills, has earned him world-wide acclaim though his contribution to Indian drama is far more outreaching than the acknowledgement received. His versatility as a master of dramatic craft is evident from the range of dramaturgical moulds employed by him as also by the variety of characterization and concerns in his plays.

His characters transcend the native boundaries and represent the predilections and predicaments of any man across the globe, achieving a large measure of universality. There are just slight variations of outward contours but inwardly they retain the same universal lineaments. Stephen Bruckner in the **New York Times** remarks: "Mr. Dattani is a canny and facile writer and there is nothing [in his writing] that is alien to American audiences. Powerful and disturbing!"¹

Dattani is not writing *in vacuo* but he has his fingers on the pulse of the contemporary Indian society. This powerful rendition of the socio-cultural issues of Indian society sets him apart as a virtuoso in his métier. To quote Ashis Sengupta, "Theatre, according to him, [Dattani] must honestly reflect the playwright's time and place so as to start a dialogue that may eventually help people discover their true identity."² He himself admits, in an interview in *New York* (September 18, 2000) with *Newsweek's* Vibuthi Patel, "I became a writer because there are no plays in English on contemporary Indian issues".³

In the majority of Dattani's plays there is a persistent concern with the precarious plight of the margins and an exploration of their condition unravelling the unsaid psychological working of their strained minds pitted against a world which reduces most of them to a non-

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entity entangling them in the socio-cultural webs woven by the majority.

Broadly viewed, margins constitute the outermost limits of centrality. In the socio-cultural context a margin is equivalent to "other."⁴ Marginalized individuals or groups in a society do not feel incorporated into the societal mainstream and are often or actively and militantly kept out of the value-system of the mainstream which comprises self-styled "normal"⁵ people. Normality/Centrality is assumed by the mainstream by its materialistic or socio-cultural power as against the dominated margins—the under privileged, the sub-normal, the alien or the different. Dattani enables the readers to have a better insight into the issues pertaining to margins.

There is hardly any category of margins which does not find room in Dattani's oeuvre. The plight of marginalized communities in India has been drawn to perfection in *Final Solutions* and *The Swami and Winston*. These plays probe the socio-cultural tangles which entwine the two hostile—overtly or covertly—communities in India i.e. Hindus and Muslims. The religious, social and cultural prejudices of the mainstream community often push the Muslim minority to a periphery where they remain seething and at times on the look-out for rising in mutinous retaliation, only to be rebuffed more sternly by the majority. In *Final Solutions* Dattani is predominantly wrestling with the question of marginalized community, i.e. Muslims, in the mainstream dominated Indian society. The play ironically implies that there can be no "Final Solutions" to the ever-growing physical and psychological wedge between these two communities in India. In so doing, Dattani is in fact persuading us to try to find some "Final Solution" to the ever-present threat of a clash where the marginalized community is often at the receiving end of the odium and hatred of the majority.

Dattani raises some ticklish and soul-searching questions after a thorough analysis of the status of the marginalized communities in India and the socio-cultural paradigms:-

Is the minority always supposed to be in the wrong?

Is it always subjected to oppression?

Is the majority always right?

Dattani may not have answers to all these questions but he has stirred us to ponder over these questions and find out some possible or tentative, if not the "Final Solutions". Dattani's plea is for reason

and mutual accommodation. He is not siding with either the majority or the minority.

Some of Dattani's plays deal with the treatment of the marginalized gender i.e. females, which is considered as the "other" in the predominantly patriarchal Indian societies, i.e. a being whose experiences and expectations are irrelevant. She is condemned to lead a thwarted circumscribed life while the males are the denizens of an altogether different world, the masculine world, where treachery, conceit, immoral behaviour and unscrupulous means are socially acceptable and are the order of the day.

The play *Tara* reveals how, being a girl, Tara is denied justice materially and even biologically. She is deprived of one of the legs which "naturally" belonged to her. But being an unnatural engraftment on her twin brother, the boy is also destined to lose it later. The revelation of this gory truth shatters Tara's trust in her mother and life in general and this becomes too excruciating for her to continue with her existence. She accepts defeat like Jairaj in *Dance Like a Man* and withers in anguish and disgust. Her twin brother too runs away from his past and his personal identity. Tara has been a fighter all her life and indeed it can be said of her, "Bravely Fought the Queen" against all odds and tangles.

Bravely Fought the Queen brings to fore the socio-cultural paradigms which operate through the joint family system and a clash between the traditions and modernity and the occidental and the western values. Indian morality, cruel and repressive, is stunting like the "Bonsai" frequently referred to in the play, and it crushes the marginalized gender. The women in the play, Alka and Dolly who play the second fiddle to their unscrupulous husbands, Nitin and Jiten, are condemned to lead a miserable life. The socio-cultural norms force the characters to wear masks to conceal their real identities. The "Queens" however drop their masks towards the end of the play and experience a catharsis of their strangled emotions. Dattani's plays *Tara* and *Bravely Fought the Queen* give an inside story and an insight into the plight of the marginalized gender in contemporary Indian context.

Some of Dattani's plays depict that segment of Indian society which has been marginalized because of a "different" sexual orientation. Dattani deals with the unconventional issues of gays, eunuchs and incest

victims while most of writers of the genre conveniently brush these hush-hush issues under the carpet. Some of his plays depict the inner tribulations and turmoils of these margins and explicate how they get bogged in the overly imposing socio-cultural paradigms.

1. *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* deals with the plight of a gays
2. *Seven Steps around the Fire* deals with eunuchs
3. *Thirty Days in September* is a play of incest

In the wake of the Delhi High Court verdict in favour of gays which is bound to allow the gays in India some space and freedom which had hitherto been denied to them, the play *On Muggy* holds special significance. Gays no longer need to live as "The Invisible Minority"⁶ like Prakash, Bunny, Ranjit, Deepali and Sharad *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*.

Seven Steps around the Fire, a famous radio play has hijras as central characters who are denied any right by the centre to execute their dreams and cross the socio-cultural margins to reach out to the world of the majority culture. The social tangles are far too many for these margins to cope with and these are explored at length in this play.

Another play by Dattani mirrors the saga of misery and helplessness associated with the unfortunate victims of child abuse as brought to fore in *Thirty Days in September*. The play unfolds the painful ordeal, the guilt feeling and the string of dismal events which bedevil the life of the abused. These silent sufferers find a catharsis only through self-expression invariably denied to them by the society for a long time. The play unravels, bit by bit, the pathetic odyssey of a young girl and her mother who take refuge in a silence that speaks for their untold suffering. These play prick us with certain questions as have been silently raised by the dramatist.

Why do these victims fear the society which has wronged them?

Why do they feel guilty of something for which they are not at fault?

Should we not change our mind-set towards these victims and allow them a life of dignity, confidence and self-esteem?

Will the gays remain the "other" even after being recognized by the Indian Law?

Will the recent court judgements really change the ground reality?

By thinking over these issues we would liberate these victims from the stifling framework of a cruel hidebound society and give them a space in the sun.

Another set of Dattani's plays analyses the plight of the small group of characters who like rebels try to trespass the mainstream only to find themselves ridiculed and crushed by the stronger forces which do not allow them to transgress the rigid boundaries of socio-cultural norms and the prescribed modes of conduct. Sometimes these rebels or outcasts try to find their own solutions and "Do the Needful" accordingly, without compromising their dignity and dreams. *Dance Like a Man* and *Do the Needful* can be analyzed in this light.

In *Dance Like a Man* the protagonist, an aspiring male Bharatnatyam dancer, is intimidated and cornered by a society which deems dancing to be a female's prerogative. Any male in dancer's accoutrements is summarily expelled from the society by "the unwritten rules of authority."⁷ What is the result? A complete loss of confidence and self-esteem for such characters as Jairaj in *Dance Like a Man*, who is forced to lead a life of a pariah in the shadow of his wife in connivance with his autocratic father who believes, "a woman in a man's world may be considered as being progressive. But a man in a woman's world is pathetic."⁸ The narrow space allowed by the father strangles Jairaj and reduces him to a mere outcast, a margin. His life is a welter of socio-cultural tangles as elaborated in this play.

Do the Needful is another play which can be studied in this context where the protagonists find "Final Solutions" to their problems and march on to make their own choices in a society which in no way allows them a freedom to live a life of self-fulfilment. The play probes the inner working of the minds of Alpesh and Lata, the main characters in the play, who do not wish to rot or die, like other Dattani characters, a la Nitin, Alka, Kamlesh, Subbu, Tara or Jairaj, but they choose differently to lead a self-determined life, however, behind the socially sanctioned masks. They are smarter and more confident than other Dattani characters who are mostly margins.

The play highlights the course chartered by these rebels to launch a brave front against an antagonistic society which is unwilling to expand its parameters for taking them into its fold. These two

characters enter into a matrimonial alliance, *mariage de convenance*, only to be able to follow the way of their desires and hearts.

The play arrives at a conclusion that the only solution to become a part of the mainstream society seems to be to negate reality and take a recourse to camouflaging the identity to be able to become socio-culturally acceptable and conventional.

Dattani's plays depict his astonishingly authentic treatment of his characters and their strikingly lifelike experiences which make us feel along with them, as also feel for them, something which all drama aims at, but does not necessarily accomplish. We empathize with the characters and experience their predicament, travails and dilemmas and feel stirred to revamp our goody-goody attitude towards society and our scornful disdain for the margins who rather need to be acknowledged and embraced into the mainstream.

Being a creative artist, Dattani's approach and achievements are more diagnostic than therapeutic. His concern is what he thinks to be the erring attitudes and practices of Indian mainstream society vis-à-vis the margins or "other". But, as they say, right diagnosis is half the cure. His social activism is creative in the literary sense.

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Waning Nuptial Relations : A Study of Bernard Malamud's Dubin's Lives

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Malamud, one of the most prolific Jewish-American novelists, has enriched the American fiction by holding a mirror to the contemporary society in America. Keeping hand on the impulse of American society, Malamud has always been concerned with the transition of values and spiritual inertia that has affected it. His scrupulous examination of the elusive character of American reality has enabled him to capture the dilemma of modern man lost in oblivion being forgetful of the basic reality of his existence. Family, being a primary social unit, is of paramount importance in Malamud's canon. He shows a great concern for the family relationships particularly husband-wife relationships.

Dubin's Lives (1979) is a major novel by Malamud where he analyzes the intricacies of relationships in marriage. It is a bitter critique of American social reality pertaining to marriage. It refers to the painful demise of marriage as an institution in the most realistic and convincing manner and hints at the various factors contributing to the negative process. The marital disharmony in the life of Dubin and Kitty is emblematic of the messy lives of several American couples. Most of the couples in American society are tied together not by filial love and affection but through a practically useful arrangement. Marriage is no longer "a bond of love" but a "bond of convenience" for them. Most of the marriages go on the rocks due to lack of mutual understanding, emotional attachment and incompatibilities in tastes, interests as well as aims. It gives rise to a conflict which makes marriage a battle of egos instead of a love relationship.

Dubin and Kitty marry each other dictated by their mutual need for stability in life. They possess everything except a satisfying life. There is much they are at odds about. They do not experience the nuptial bliss because of their failure to understand and respect each other's feelings. Their temperamental incompatibilities prepare ground for disintegration of their marriage :

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Though they were alike in more ways than they had guessed; or grew to be alike; often the unmatched elements of their temperaments and tastes – disjunctions, he called them – caused tension, disagreements, quarrels. (Malamud 100)

There is no alignment of interests and goals between them. Dubin has a passion for writing biographies: “If I write I live” (DL 105). But Kitty shows no respect for Dubin’s profession. She always complains, “Maybe you oughtn’t to have got married, so you could give your life to your biographies” (DL 105). Dubin wants isolation as “being away from home, or occasionally remaining alone there, awoke moods he rarely experienced when his life was geared with Kitty’s” (DL 40).

Another reason for his loneliness is his gloomy past. Broken by his brother’s death by drowning and mother’s insanity, he shares his father’s “inertia, fear, living fate – out of habit, compassion and impure love” (DL 87). He feels that “he was not prepared to invest a self in a better self-give up solitude, false dreams, the hold of the past”(DL 87). His sense of isolation is further increased by his fear of old age and death, his impotence with his wife and the fact that his children have chosen to live in a world apart. But Kitty fails to understand him and dislikes his living in isolation. She always compares him with her former husband, Nathanael, and considers him inferior. Fed up by Kitty’s attitude Dubin declares :

I want to run my life my own way, not like yours or Nathanael’s. I don’t want to go on sharing with you to my dying day the benefits of your previous marriage. (DL 131)

On the other hand, it is also true that Kitty’s frustrations and estrangement stem from Dubin’s love for isolation that overrides his responsibility for his family. He himself admits that he has not given her proper attention and affection she deserves :

In all she had helped stabilize and enlarge his life; but he was not so sure, after a generation of marriage that he had done the same for her or why wasn’t she at peace with herself? (DL 17)

Kitty had told Dubin everything about her before marriage :

... I don’t think life will be easy for anyone living with

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me. I sleep poorly. Fear cancer, worry too much about my health, my child, our future. I’m not a very focused person. ... My father was a suicide when I was four. My mother went abroad with a lover when I was nine. She died in Paris of lung cancer and is buried in Maine. I was brought up by a loving grandmother – my rare good luck. My poor husband died of leukemia at forty. It’s such a chronicle of woe I’m almost ashamed to write it. (DL 47)

She at that time appeared to him “much more the gentle lady than he had supposed” (DL 48) but now he feels bored of Kitty’s “sameness, dissatisfactions, eccentricities... her fears, her unforgotten unforgettable past...” (DL 255). Instead of being sympathetic towards her, he views her only as a “neurotic woman groping about to keep her balance” (Briganti 181). His profession and his past suffering seem to be an alibi for his irresponsible attitude and failure to commit himself to a constructive relationship with his wife. Kitty seems to be right when she says, “Sometimes I think you’ve never felt young in your life; you’ve almost always interpreted it as obligation or lost opportunity” (DL 145).

Thus, both fail to share each other’s sorrows and feelings and give importance to their own needs only which results in disjunction in the family : “He felt confined by her limitations, she was diminished by his smallnesses” (DL 101). Both put the blame on each other but the cause of their anguish is rooted in themselves, in their temperament although they are not able to understand it. Both of them could have helped each other through love and affection to come out of the reminiscences of their gloomy past, but they expect too much from each other ignoring their own limitations. It seems that “the marriage has not provided the basis for either of them to grow” (Abramson 108).

This growing individualism both in men and women is the root cause of failure in marriages. Page Smith has rightly said, “It is the restless passion for personal fulfilment that disfigures our age” (339). Marriage being commitment involving responsibility and accountability to someone is believed to come in conflict with individual’s so-called search for freedom. Dubin fails to devote himself to his marital relationship because he wants to live his life in his own way as he believes : “If you don’t live life to the hilt, or haven’t for whatever reason, you will regret

it- especially as you grow older – every day that follows” (DL 34). He feels “bored with the bounds of marriage, would like to be free before he was too old to enjoy it” (DL 288). When Kitty feels that Dubin always remains uncomfortable at home she asks him, “What’s eating you”. Dubin replies, “May be it’s marriage. Sometimes I feel bored in, unfree” (DL 254-55). He tries to live the lives of those whose biographies he wrote. But he ignores what Lawrence, whose biography he is writing, once wrote a correspondent : “Your most vital necessity in this life is that you should love your wife completely and explicitly in entire nakedness of body and spirit” (DL 34). He forgets his duty towards his wife and children and tries to enjoy his life to the utmost.

The novel also satirizes contemporary American society in the throes of the sexual revolution that has taught the people not to take each other seriously in love affairs and shows how old ties and attachments lose attraction for a person hankering after sex. Lack of sensuality becomes the major cause of discord in Dubin and Kitty’s life. Kitty feels uncomfortable with the physical : “there were areas of sensual experience she made no attempt to know” (DL 348). Feeling a great temperamental incompatibility with his wife, Dubin strays to other woman which shows his unconscious incest desire. Due to his sexual promiscuity, he flirts with Betsy Croy who has rescued him from an accident, with Flora, his friend’s wife, and Fanny Bick, his domestic cleaner. He believes that “one recovers of youth only what he can borrow from the young” (DL 51) and looks upon Fanny, a little older than his daughter, as a “break water against age, loss of vital energy, the approach of death” (DL 287). His erratic affair with Fanny Bick aggravates the disharmony in his marital life. He deceives his wife to live with Fanny. He completely ignores the needs of his wife by spending much of his time away from her. His heart aches for Fanny for “a glowing fundamental pleasure that comes with and from her, an easeful enjoyment of life” (DL 276).

The novel also accentuates the contrast between ideals before marriage and the ground reality after marriage. Before marriage Dubin rejects his father’s racial objection to his marriage with Kitty saying, “How can a man be a Jew if he isn’t a man? How can he be a man if he gives up the woman he wants to marry?” (DL 69). But after marriage he fails to understand how a man can be worthy of being called a man or a Jew if he fails to be loyal to his wife. In-spite of

having sexual pleasures with Fanny, Dubin never gets actual happiness. Due to his incapacity to give, he oscillates between marital and extra-marital loyalties. Though he admits to Fanny that “I feel tender to you” (DL 62), yet he does not want Kitty to know anything about their affair: “... she mustn’t know about us, not have the remotest suspicion. Her life hasn’t been easy. I wouldn’t want to hurt her” (DL 61). When Kitty suggests him to live from Thursday to Sunday with Kitty and rest of the days with her, Dubin replies : “I’m a family man. We had kids we loved. I had my work to do, conditions were good. There are other things” (DL 362). He admits that he loves Kitty’s life.

On the other hand, Kitty is extremely hurt by Dubin’s indifference to her: “You seem to want nothing I have to give. You hide your life, whispering what I can’t hear. You’re not affectionate. We never really talk to each other” (DL 145-46). Dubin’s indifference makes Kitty turn to Evan Ondyk whom she often consulted for therapy. While Dubin tries to keep his affairs a secret, Kitty frankly tells Dubin about her affair and holds Dubin responsible for it : “But what I want to say now is that I’ve broken it off. I don’t regret what I’ve done, but didn’t do it easily. If it weren’t for you I don’t think I would have done it” (DL 352).

The rift between Dubin and Kitty grows wider and wider and their marriage comes to the brink of disintegration due to their lack of spontaneity, mutual understanding and commitment and inability to accept restrictions of freedom. But Malamud views true freedom “not as the rejection but the acceptance of obligations and ties” (Ben Siegel 131). Prompted by the realisation of his blunder and the importance of family, Dubin ultimately returns to his wife and repents that in loving Fanny he withheld love from his wife. He now wants to be “self sufficient, in control, good to others, good to his wife... I’m not doing anything for anybody,” (DL 301).

Thus, Dubin’s Lives is a scathing attack on the idea of infidelity in marriage. Malamud not only exposes the hypocrisy that rules the modern society but also emphasizes the desperate need to re-establish marital relationships on a firm foundation of truth, honesty, understanding and commitment in order to achieve a happy home life as a long cherished ideal of American dream. For a poised and smooth relationship both husband and wife must accept each other’s individuality, ways of life and views.

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Islands in the Stream and King Lear: A Comparative Study

*Upasana Panwar**

The main purpose of this comparative study between William Shakespeare and Ernest Miller Hemingway is to explore that in the late twentieth century the issues exercising the American mind remain fundamentally same as they were at the beginning of seventeenth century and the perennial search for ideal humanity remains in conclusive and frustrating as it was four hundred years ago. Leo Marx, in the very opening of his seminal work on American Literature¹ observes an important link between Shakespeare and America. Looking beyond the limited territory of Marx's investigation of the preponderance of pastoral imagination in American Literature, one comes upon a vast area of common pursuit between the British Dramatist's work and the works of American imagination. Although the American society in post world war period was very different from Elizabethan period England, yet Ernest Hemingway's fiction resemble Shakespeare's work in more than one. In facing the universal human problems, 'Hemingway' reminds us of 'Shakespeare', whose protagonists were not 'of an age but for all time.'

We find echoes of Shakespeare's work in Hemingway's fiction. The novel *Islands in the Stream* was published posthumously in 1970. It is a story of Hudson, who has been divorced twice and is a father of three teen-aged sons. Which suggest that he is not a young hero. Same in Shakespeare's play *King Lear*, who a father of three young daughters is also not young. One can say both works of art is based on 'domestic tragedy' in which both protagonists are mature in their age.

As the novel opens with the symbolic description of Hudson's house on the island, it is immediately established that the protagonist is living withdrawn life; his sole concern is his art: "The house felt almost as much like a ship as a house. Placed there to ride out storms, it was build into the island, as though it were a part of it... (pg.4). Like his house into the island, Hudson too seems to be a lonely ship in the flux of his life. He has created a routine work to keep himself busy whole day. So that he may protect himself from the loneliness. The only thing

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that has not been able to replace by his work is the love for his sons. He knows that: "three boys had moved into a big part of him again; that when they moved out, would be empty and it would be very bad for a while." (p.96) Thus the beginning of the novel describes both the weakness and the strengths of Hudson's character. His strength is that despite of his awareness of the loneliness, he has the necessary discipline to commit himself to an activity that imparts meaning to his existence; his weakness is that he is so attached to his sons that even his devotion to art cannot permanently replace his love for them.

Paul Theroux observes that Hudson "seems to have a separate personality for each place," and concludes that the three parts of the novel "bear no relation to one another."² Theroux is, in fact, not only one who has found Islands in the Stream lacking in structure; the novel received this pronouncement unanimously from its numerous reviewers.³ Declaring the novel unstructured, the critics have judged the characters either as realized or un-realized, or viewed them in relation to the author's personal experiences. They have isolated the novel's thought from its plot and have judged it on the basis of personal morality. If the unity of a work of art lies merely in the unity of place and time or in single incident, as the critics of *Islands in the Stream* seem to imply, then the writer like Shakespeare would not qualify for this narrow definition of plot.

Hudson has three different personalities in the novel's three sections. One can easily relate the same thing in the case of William Shakespeare's *King Lear*. It could be said that Lear in his court is a power blind king, on the heath a mad man, and in the battle at Dover a sentimental father who cannot accept the death of his beloved daughter. The changing personality of King Lear in the play's sections are quite similar to the "Bimini", "Cuba" and "at Sea" incidents in *Islands in the Stream* and the changing personality of Hudson in the novel's different sections. As the three sections of *King Lear* could be described in terms of his hero, as Lear when a king in power, Lear when maddened by his daughters' treachery, and Lear when outraged at gods' injustice, so can the three sections of *Islands in the Stream* be described as Hudson when a happy father, Hudson when upset at his sons' deaths, and Hudson when disturbed about man's fate on earth.

The descriptions *The Sea When Young*, *The Sea When Absent*, and *The Sea in Being*, which Hemingway is said to have contemplated

as the titles for the three sections of his "sea book"⁴ clearly imply an intimate relation among the novel's three sections, which the titles of the published novel (given by Mary Hemingway and Charles Scribner Jr.) do not. The titles that Hemingway contemplated are obviously symbolic and suggest the three different phases of hero's life.

Using R.S. Crane's categorization of fictional plots as "Plots of action, plots of character, and plots of thought,"⁵ One can see that *Islands in the Stream* has a "plot of action," in which "the synthesizing principle is a completed change, gradual or sudden, in the situation of the protagonist, determined and effected by character and thought...."⁶ The change of Hudson's fortune from his happiness as father and painter to the ruin of his art and life is built, as we shall see, into the novel's plot which not only has a beginning, middle, and end but it is complete whole.

As we move forward in the story the echo of *King Lear* goes deeper. When the novel's middle section opens, we find Thomas Hudson in his Cuban house passing a sleepless night in the company of cat. Hudson's Cuban house had been mentioned in the opening section in a conversation between Hudson and Roger. Hudson had told Roger that his house in Cuba was the place for him to write his intended novel (p.192). But the irony is that Hudson himself is in that house now and not for pursuing his art but to face an extreme loss of his life 'his sons'. He is mentally depressed. He had received the news of the death of his younger sons at the end of the opening section. In the mean time his eldest and dearest son Tom also died. To sustain himself from this shock he joined war and has been chasing some Germans in the Cuban gulf. But the winter storm compels him to abandon their mission and stay on the coast until it blows off.

One can easily relate the winter storm that lasts through the entire middle section of the novel with the storm in *King Lear*: "He was low on certain things and he could not beat all sure of the duration of this blow, so he had made a decision to come into Havana and had taken the beating" (p.206).

The "beating" Hudson is taking at the moment is similar to the one Lear takes on the heath. Lear was shocked by the ingratitude of his two daughters and enraged against the unjust gods. On the other hand, Hudson has been shocked by the deaths of his sons and has no gods to

feel outraged against. Hence the differences between the ways the heroes face their storms: while Lear has his ungrateful daughters and the God against whom he can lash his anger, Hudson has neither. Having no God to blame and faced with the unjust deaths of his young sons, the Hemingway hero's grief finds no outlet; violence turns inward and threatens the dissolution of his own self.

The conversation between the hero and Honest Lil in the bar is quite lengthy and this scene has been viewed as superfluous by many novel's critics, for example, the only thing that Edward Corbett has to say about the episode is that it "is an utter bore."⁷ Viewed in the novel's context, however, the scene is as relevant as the conversations among Lear, Kent, Edgar, and the Fool on the heath. As Lear on the heath considers everyone's plight the result of their daughters' treachery, so each one of Hudson's "happy stories" is tinged by his own obsession with the death of his eldest son. In his conversation with Honest Lil, he recalls a story from his past life is about his trip to the Far East during the present war. One of the things that hero reminds of his experience is about people's "digging wolfram illicitly," which leads to the deaths of so many: "Then in the mornings there were always people being carried through the streets to be buried, with the mourners dressed in white and band playing gay tunes. ." (p.289)

This section is so full of the accounts of death that it creates an impression of the world as a 'death house.' The logic governing Hudson's accounts of death is the same as that behind Lear's viewing every sad person on the heath as the victim of his daughters' treachery. Hudson, like Lear is one of the destroyed rather than a destroyer; he is a man sinned against rather than a sinner. The death of Hudson's two sons unsettles him mentally, but it is the death of his most beloved son Tom, that has changed his whole vision of life. After the death of Tom, he has lost all interest in life: "your boy you lose. Love you lose. Honor has been gone for a long time. Duty you do." (p.326)

The treachery of Lear's unfaithful daughters makes him mad, but it is the death of his beloved daughter Cordelia, that makes him question the God: "Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life/and thou no breath at all?" (King Lear, v, iii, pg.114) Also, as the battle at Dover has no meaning for Lear beyond the death of his loyal daughter Cordelia, so the war, for Hudson does not mean anything beyond the death of his son Tom. Life for Hudson is only a nightmare, in which the picture

of man's helplessness presents itself over and over again: "Perhaps it had happened all his life. But now it was happening with such intensification that he felt both in command and at the same time the prisoner of it. "(414) This is the view of life that Hudson has come to have: man is in command of his life only in a limited way, for finally he is a prisoner in the trap of death that can take away his command at any moment.

As Hudson views it, death is "final", and any moment can be "final" in man's life: Going away can be final. Walking out the door can be final. Any form of real betrayal can be final. Dishonesty can be final... death is what is really final." (p.449)

The hero's obsession with death measures Lear's obsession with life's cruelty. As Lear's suffering makes him see the superfluousness of royal robes and kingly pride, so Hudson's grief apprises him of the uselessness of his later richness. Again as we learn in the novel's opening section that Hudson's friend Roger also lost someone he dearly loved, his younger brother, whose memory he still carries with him. Thus, Roger's sad story resembles the hero's loss of his sons. This duplication of a similar experience in the novel is, on a minor scale, like the double plot in King Lear, where both King Lear and Gloucester are the victims of the ingratitude of their own children. And as in King Lear, the effect of this duplication in *Islands in the Stream* is to impart to the hero's individual case the significance of a general fact of life.

At the end, the deaths of both heroes are tragic, because there is a "sense of missed possibility" in the deaths of both. Had Lear not been betrayed by his daughters, he would not have lost his kingdom and, more precious, his sanity and finally his life. Similarly, had Hudson's sons not met with unjust fate, he would not have been unsettled and gone, finally, to his death.

Thus, one can easily see the deep and clear echoes of King Lear in *Islands in the Stream*. In both works of art, both protagonists are mature in response towards life. Lear was wisest: when he obsessed and on other hand Hudson's sorrow gives him insight into life. Both carry same worries and questions about life. Both works are the most mature and subtle in expression of tragic vision of life.

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Race in Hemingway's *True at First Light***Virender Singh***

Generally considered as the "African Book," *True at First Light* provides an acute explanation of race and racial differences in the hands of Hemingway. Various events in the novel like Mary's desire to kill a lion on safari, her sneaking suspicion that Hemingway shot her lion first, Hemingway's intimate involvement with an African girl named Debba, the Mau-Mau rebellion, Hemingway's brotherhood with men of the Wakamba tribe, his shaved head, and his desire for pierced ears, tribal marks and dark skin are enough to provide an insight into how Hemingway has treated issue of racial identity.

As the book opens, Hemingway is in East Africa, the time of the notorious Mau-Mau Rebellion of 1953. His sense of brotherhood with the African tribe is so intense that he dares to live with the Wakamba tribe even in the surge of Rebellion and announces boldly:"I am going to be a Kamba." (*True at First Light*, 331)Throughout the novel he identifies entirely with the Wakamba men saying:

"We (he and the Wakamba warriors) also, since the Magadi expedition, had certain secrets and certain things privately shared." (8)

He eagerly creates an intimate and secret society with the African warriors. He uses to go with the Africans to kill the wild animals for food instead of white-hunter chaperoned expeditions: "I knew we, the hunting Wakamba, had gone a long way together." (77) His ever-increasing involvement in the local Wakamba culture is so strong that he resists Mary's urge to visit other far-off regions of the African continent and instead prepares to immerse himself with the local Wakamba culture. He explains to Mary: "I would rather live in a place and have an actual part in the life of it than just see new strange things." (422)

At this Mary, who is interested in seeing Belgium Congo, a mysterious region for those who have read *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, replies:"I want to see the Belgium Congo. Why can't I see something I have heard about all my life?" (422) Why Hemingway is not interested in going to that place? The reason may be that if he shows the urge to go there it will make him an American, an outsider

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because that place is a force of attraction for those people. If he considers himself one with the tribal people then he should stay back and let the visitors go there. As such he feels a sense of commitment to his own patch of land that he shares with the Wakamba tribe.

He takes Mary's visit away from the tribe as a chance for him to foray into Wakamba life and develops a real fondness for an African girl named Debba.

Hemingway carries on the courtship carefully watched by Debba's mother e.g. his plan to pierce their ear together, profess love for each other. Debba explains that she wishes to be a useful wife, "not a play wife or a wife to leave." And their relationship was considered serious by the Wakamba tribe and Hemingway voluntarily carried out certain customs to sanctify and formalize the union. His sincerity is noticed by Mary and she addresses the issue of Debba: "I don't mind about your fiancée as long as you love me more. You do love me more don't you?" (292)

The problems of Wakamba tribe are considered by him as his own. When Mary leaves for Nairobi, he attends to the morning's business; he, along with Charo and Ngui, must kill a leopard that has recently killed sixteen goats, eight of whom belonged to Debba's family. Considering the danger of the situation they leave Charo in the car because he is an old man wounded twice and Hemingway proceeds ahead with Ngui towards bushes following the blood trail left behind. At this critical moment, Hemingway feels oneness with the Wakamba that goes deeper than anything he had felt before. He considers that the issue of black and white doesn't matter at this moment and their status as black race and white race has reduced to nothingness and they are just human beings now:

"Ngui shrugged his shoulders and shook his head. We were both very serious Wakamba now and there was no white man to speak softly and knowingly from his great knowledge nor any white man to give violent orders astonished at the stupidity of his boys and cursing them on like reluctant hounds." (327)

Hemingway is so deeply involved with the culture of the tribe that immediately after the departure of Mary he shaves his head and prepares a plan to go to Loitokitok with Debba for shopping. He has developed the likings for Wakamba code of dressing and tries to look

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like them: "When shaved, or even clipped closely enough, my head, unfortunately, has much the appearance of some plastic history of a very lost tribe." (334)

The appearance of his own white skull after shaving does not cause any sense of radical difference in his own mind. He also thinks about using pink dye powder to dye his shirts and hunting vests Masai colour. He considers that his white hair and western dress are coming in way of establishing his identity with the Wakamba race, therefore, he says bye to both of these variables. Hemingway's trip to Loitokitok formalizes his relationship with Debba. He uses the bed of Debba's mother and for this he gives her four bottles of sacramental beer and promises to take her daughter for shopping, an event that will be observed by forty to sixty Masai women and warriors :

"As formal and definitive an occasion as Loitokitok would offer in this social season." (313)

After returning from her visit to Nairobi, Mary chops down a Christmas tree and brings it into the camp. By chance she selects a tree that has long been used as a narcotic by the Masai, an "extra-potent type of marijuana-effect tree" that would make an elephant drunk for two days if he ever ate it. It is a fitting end for a novel that seemed brimming with possibilities for Hemingway. He takes a secret pleasure in the knowledge of this tree's secret properties, and does nothing to inform Mary of its significance to the Masai. Once again she presents herself as a naïve and foolish Memsahib, while he secretly smiles to Debba and the Wakamba men about this tree. Debba gives him official entrance into the Wakamba tribe through their engagement but Mary functions as the voice of white culture, warning him that he should not get too deeply involved with the African tribal life. When asked about whether it is ethically appropriate or just plain foolish for Hemingway, as Game Warden to protect the Masai stock, he responds: "If you don't feel like a fool in Africa a big part of the time you are a bloody fool." (273)

Thus, instead of just being a casual visitor on safari, Hemingway keenly observes the issues related with nationality and skin colour. For instance, when he visits Loitokitok, a missionary refers to him as a European at which Hemingway reacts by saying: "One thing must always be clear. I am not a European. We are Americans." (229) The missionary in turn replies: "But there is no such distinction. You are classified as

Europeans.” (229) This conversation represents that Hemingway is a deconstructionist. He attacks the system that produces broad classifications which are based on race, nationality and history. He says: “It is a clarification that will be remedied. I am not a European. Mr. Singh and I are brothers.” (229)

Hemingway has denied this classification by considering brotherhood with Mr. Singh as is reflected through his conversation with the missionary. Race is not a matter in his way to establish relationship with the people of other continents, races or nationality. All these are man-made barriers as he has tried to overcome these barriers.

His views on skin colour offer a similar deconstructive perspective on his part when he justifies his position within the Wakamba tribe. Once on a morning walk, he observes Ngu “striding lightly through the grass” and starts thinking how they are brothers and says “it seemed to me stupid to be white in Africa.” This observation on his part indicates that he acknowledges how his own whiteness functions as an impediment in establishing brotherhood with the Wakamba tribe, an intriguing and introspective moment where he could discuss the ethics of his desire to alter his own racial identity. By allowing his mind to float on in a stream-of-consciousness mode, he recalls a lecture he once heard, twenty years earlier delivered by a Moslem missionary who described how dark skin is advantageous as compared to white skin and in the process elaborated the disadvantages of white man's pigmentation. Hemingway, therefore, feels satisfied on his part when he notes that his own skin is “burned dark enough to pass a half caste.”

Hemingway's approach is to paint the picture with brush fusing together the history of African, Native Americans and European Jews. He tries to say that broad categories appearing on the surface level are basically stemmed from a single root if we go into the history of their origin. He feels a sense of guilt and shame about how whites have treated non-whites throughout history. He is also angry on how the whites have maintained their supremacy on them till now resulting in the Mau-Mau rebellion. His sympathy with the Africans, who have lost their land closely, parallels his lifelong sympathy for the Native Americans and their calamitous history in the United States. As if to acknowledge his commingling of the two groups, the narrative slides into a stream-of-consciousness about the Cheyenne and their life on reservations.

According to Amy L. Strong, Hemingway's invocation of the “Native American presence sets up a useful juxtaposition between his early interest in race as a force that drove narrative tensions and his current meditations on racial difference in *True at First Light*.” (*Race and Identity in Hemingway's Fiction* 137) As far as the other works of Hemingway are concerned, the male characters in them have developed a sense of identity within the context of racial violence and racial difference. They have got enough space to establish themselves and the stories always allow the readers to maintain a greater awareness than the characters themselves have: the education of young Nick Adams often reveals that American concept of freedom, power, and identity are constructed in opposition to way of life and experiences of Native Americans and African Americans characters. As such Hemingway has tried to highlight the evils of white imperialism. At the same time, he has shown a respect for African history and tribal culture, a desire to establish kinship with the Wakamba men and women, a kind of involvement with the complicated religious and political differences and an urgent wish to achieve a deep understanding to learn a little bit more every day. The African men and women represent the norm; and it is Mary and Ernest whose white skin takes on strangeness within the culture and carries the stench of an immoral and unethical past.

Hemingway is aware of the fact that western culture believes that white male is at the centre and all other cultures and races are at periphery, therefore, the former is supreme. He knows that the subject, he is dealing in *True at First Light*, might not appeal his critics and fans because it is against their expectations from a white male writer as he has written to Robert Morgan Brown: “I don't think it will be acceptable at Fordham and I think maybe it would be better to wait until I'm dead to publish it.” (*Selected Letters*, September, 1954. He feels quite sure that his friend Buck Lanham will enjoy the book, though he remains conscious of the controversial subject-matter: “I've gotten back into the country and I live in it every day and some of the stuff I think you'll like unless you have too strong views on miscegenation.” (*Selected Letters* 839)

Hemingway's awareness about the fact that his eagerness to be one with the African people, revealed through the novel, will be misunderstood or disliked by the public tells us that he is highly conscious of his reputation and public persona and knows that his later writings

are threatening to both. But in spite of this fact he has populated his stories for decades with characters that test the boundaries of racial identity. If we provide a historical look to his treatment of the issue of race we will find that he is more direct in taking position in favour of the non-whites in the early short-stories. Keeping this in mind, we need to give a fresh look and revise some of fictional and non-fictional works to challenge his oversimplified status as the quintessential white American male – an assumption that has too long been held in critical discussions of his life and his works.

In order to see his perspective towards race, we need to reframe his works to highlight the treatment of race and class in his work. A few readers know that Hemingway dyed his hair bright coppery red, shaved his head, considered cutting his face with African Tribal marks in the 1950s, identified strongly with non-white people and culture and at many times, throughout his life, felt a keen desire to alter his identity and merge with these racial others. For example, during his 1934-35 safaris he writes: "I felt at home and where a man feels at home outside of where he's born, is where he is meant to go." (*Green Hills of Africa* 284)

During his second safari in 1953-54, he reflects a sense of regret why he ever left Africa: "I had seen a fool not to have stayed on in Africa and instead had gone back to America where I had killed my homesickness for Africa in different ways." (*Under Kilimanjaro* 205)

Despite his longing for Africa, he never quite let go of his kinship with Indians, in part, because both the Indians and the Africans shared a similar place in his world view. Patrick Hemingway confirms this in a brief story he tells about the experience of editing *True at First Light* for publication:

All these observations regarding his attitude towards the Africans provide an addition to Hemingway's studies. Readers deserve to see the work without its being clouded by the rigid mythos of Hemingway's public image and this fresh approach will allow for myriad new readings.

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Albert Camus's Concept of Resistance

Navleen Multani*

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Albert Camus, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature (1957), theorizes resistance with reference to the existential condition of the human being. *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt* is the most detailed exposition of his concept of resistance in which he examines different types of resistance, like the metaphysical, the historical and the aesthetic. Camus argues for a non-violent, moderate and positive form of resistance, which he variously terms as “revolt” and “rebellion” also. He considers resistance to be one of the “essential dimensions” of mankind, a principle of existence which aspires for “clarity, unity of thought and an order” (viii). According to him, a decline of belief in the supernatural authority, or the higher law, and a growing disillusionment with scientific reason as a means of defining the ethical foundations of life have fostered injustice and inequality in the modern world and paved the way for the rise of nihilistic ideologies. He, however, believes in the positive values of existence and the community. Resistance is an affirmation, according to him, of these values.

Camus affirms freedom against oppression and tyranny by rejecting nihilism. In this connection, it is important to note that he draws a distinction between “rebellion” and “revolution”: for him, an authentic rebellion as opposed to revolutionary nihilism is an affirmation that an individual has an inherent worth that ought to be respected and valued. Camus contends that the revolutionary movements deify the state or “historical destiny” by justifying political terrorism and violence and thus betray the true meaning of rebellion (Hoy 573). Rebellion occurs when “theoretical equality conceals great factual inequalities” (TR 20); it engenders action to bring transformation. The rebellion Camus talks about aspires for justice by refusing violence. He sees it as a positive force of life, and not of death. He is against the destructive form of rebellion that takes the form of a revolution and then flounders and fails under violence. Though freedom is the motivating principle of all revolutions, Camus thus sees revolution as a destructive and negative

The major concern of Camus is how man can give meaning to his life in an “absurd universe” in which the individual becomes conscious that life has no objective value. The precariousness of the universe and

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the human suffering in it cannot be comprehended merely with the help of scientific knowledge. Thus the “basic impulse”, which is also the “deepest desire” of man, “an appetite for clarity”, absolute knowledge and nostalgia for unity, remains unfulfilled in the pursuit of mere scientific knowledge. As a result, man remains a stranger to himself as well as to the world which he, consequently, sees as absurd. Absurdity, Camus says, is the confrontation between the irrational universe and man’s longing for clarity (TMOS 11-12). As he puts it, the feeling of absurdity is born of “the confrontation between human need and the unreasonable silence of the world” (18).

In *The Rebel*, Camus views resistance as “the categorical rejection of an intrusion that is considered to be intolerable and on the confused conviction of an absolute right.” Rebellion rejects “the existence of a borderline” and affirms “the right to . . .” (13). So rebellion takes place when “a slave who has taken orders all his life suddenly decides that he cannot obey some new command, and confronts the order of things which oppresses him and insists on preserving his rights. He says “no” to the excesses and finds his voice, turns about, faces his “master”, refuses humiliating orders, rejects the condition of slavery, and demands to be treated as “an equal” (14). The rebel, says Camus, adopts an attitude of “All or Nothing” as he wants to identify himself completely with the good he has become aware of, or to be completely destroyed by the force that dominates him. In doing so, the rebel “invokes a value” as he is willing to accept death than be deprived of freedom – “Better to die on one’s feet than live on one’s knees” (14-15). He invokes the values of equality, justice and freedom for the “natural community” – the community of victims.

Camus explains that though the act of rebellion springs from egoistic motives, it is not fundamentally an egoistic act as the rebel demands respect not only for himself but also for the community he identifies himself with (15-17). Thus the rebel’s identification with other men becomes an act of solidarity and his rebellion achieves larger, human significance. Camus thus sees a link between solidarity and rebellion: “. . . [I]n order to exist, man must rebel, but rebellion must respect the limit . . . where minds meet . . . and . . . begin to exist” (22). The rebel shares the feeling of the strangeness of things, suffering and obscurity with all men: “the malady experienced by a single man becomes a mass plague” (TR 22). Camus, like the Christians, believes

in the existence of two worlds in the human mind: the sacred world and the world of rebellion. But he notes that the disappearance of the one is equivalent to the appearance of the other as in the modern societies the eclipse of the sacred gives rise to rebellion. Camus thus explains rebellion as an “essential dimension” against the backdrop of such an unsacrosanct moment of history (20-21). The rebel rejects divinity “to share the struggles and destiny of all men” (306). The dignity common to all men “becomes the primary value of rebellion which leads to the conquest of the kingdom of justice over the kingdom of grace (280). Whereas injustice brings about silent hostility between the oppressor and the oppressed and warps the mutual understanding of people, rebellion discovers communication and mutual understanding in the community of the oppressed, thus becoming a logic of creation (282-83).

In Camus’s opinion, “metaphysical rebellion”, represented by Marquise de Sade, embodies absolute negation and extols totalitarianism. Hence, Camus disapproves of it. He disapproves of the unchecked freedom of instincts advocated by Sade. He believes that metaphysical rebellion proves disastrous for freedom and justifies tyranny and servitude. He considers Nietzsche’s philosophy of rebellion also to be destructive as, according to him, it “smothers the force of creation”(TR 103). He observes that such disastrous and destructive metaphysical rebellions, rooted in nihilism, often take the form of a revolution. But even though “freedom is the motivating principle of all revolutions,” violence and murder play a central role in them. The revolutionary movements proclaim the goals of equality and unity of the human race but adopt violent means; and they exceed all limits, which is unacceptable to Camus. Hence his judgement that revolution “shapes action to ideas” by destroying both “men and principles” (TR 106).

Camus points out that all modern revolutions have reinforced the power of the state and tried to build “the city of humanity and of authentic freedom” (TR 177). History may be seen as governed by two mutually opposed principles of action, “The state and social revolution, revolution and counter revolution, which can never be reconciled . . . engaged in a death struggle” (157). Camus observes that fascism defies the irrational elements of nihilism and denigrates reason. Mussolini uses Hegel’s philosophy and Hitler uses Nietzsche’s to deify the irrational in order to find a place in history. Camus comments, “[T]hey were the first to construct a state on the concept that everything is meaningless

and history is only written in themes of the hazards of force” (178). Therefore, he views both Mussolini and Hitler as men of action, “elemental force[s] in motion”, proclaiming “the holy religion of anarchy” (179). According to Camus, fascism is “an act of contempt, death of freedom, the triumph of violence and the enslavement of mind” (181). For Camus, Hitler is an epitome of suicide and murder who irrationally valued “success” obtained through destruction (185). Marxism, too, is regarded as a revolutionary ideology by Camus.

He remarks that often a rebellion progresses and takes the form of a revolution. But as the revolutionary chooses the path of violence, he himself becomes an oppressor and thus goes against the very spirit of rebellion. Revolutionary methods thus make a creative rebellion nihilistic. Camus totally rejects such destructive forms of rebellion - be they metaphysical or historical. Rather he recommends political moderation and relative freedom in a universe of relative values: for him, respect for human dignity and limited freedom form the core of an authentic rebellion. He suggests that if one acknowledges and accepts the absurd, one cannot sanction murder or suicide since it would betray the principle of the absurd and nullify it. Hence, he attaches great importance to human dignity and freedom and disapproves of tyranny and oppression. At the same time, he also recognizes the limits of reason, the impossibility of reducing the world to a rational principle in order to satisfy the “appetite for unity.” He values the absurdist logic of a person who is conscious that reason cannot give him any final certainty. Hence, too, there is a need to rebel throughout life against the very complacency of reason.

Camus, therefore, understands artistic creation, which defies the limits of reason, as a rebellious activity:

Artistic creation is a demand for unity and a rejection of the world . . . it rejects the world on account of what it lacks . . . Rebellion . . . in its pure state and in its original complexities is found in art. (TR 253)

Camus finds support for his position in the words of Friedrich Nietzsche, “No artist tolerates reality.” The artist resists reality and rejects the world in order, usually, to re-create it and give it a new form. He opens the essay “Absurd Creation” in *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays* with a quotation from Nietzsche, “Art and nothing but art: we have art in order not to die of the truth” (59). In this essay,

Camus examines the absurdist creation as “a great mime” that “mimes to man the spirit of revolt so that he may not die of or succumb to the truth: the absurdity of life” (Seffler 416). The works of art, believes Camus, represent a quest for “the good”, “the true”, and “the beautiful”, but only in so far as these reveal that essences, absolutes and values are non-existent in reality. Art, therefore, is the articulation of man’s revolt against despair in the face of reality and signifies his perseverance in the face of an absurd world. The aim of absurdist art is, however, not even to give meaning or purpose to life; any explanation of the world as it is, feels Camus, is beside the point. In this context, George F. Seffler comments on Camus’ aesthetics of the absurd:

[A]bsurd art . . . is not an escape from life or a refuge from its chronic disorders. Rather, it is a symptom of worldly ills, preserving them and renewing them in an act of spiteful rebellion. (416)

The Fall exemplifies such art. It is an act of aesthetic rebellion in the sense that Camus directly faces absurdity as experienced by the narrator and transmutes into a literary creation. Unlike *The Plague*, *The Fall* does not make any affirmation at the level of concepts; rather, it *constitutes* an affirmation in the form of art only.

An absurdist work of art liberates the universe from its “phantoms”. Creation is thus a revolt against one’s conditions and a way to overcome the “phantoms” in order to “approach a little closer to naked reality” (TMOS 64). Such creation requires revolt, freedom and diversity to remake the world just as the historical spirit of revolt attempts to remake the world by the exercise of tyranny (72-73). Camus holds that the artist hates his times for what they lack; therefore, he struggles for freedom and beauty. An artist, he says, resists with empty hands but with the hope of being victorious in preserving virtues (115).

Camus asserts that art negates but also exalts certain aspects of reality; and it also stylizes reality to give it what it lacks, just as rebellion “exalts and denies simultaneously” (TR 256-58). In this context, it is important to note that he distinguishes “the literature of consent” from “the literature of rebellion.” He comments that the literature of consent (which coincides with ancient history and the classical period) is concerned with fantasy and is available as fairy tales. But the modern times, he says, are marked by the literature of rebellion in the form, primarily, of novels. The novel, he believes, is born out of the spirit of

rebellion at the aesthetic plane. He holds that fiction reflects upon the “nostalgic and rebellious sensibilities” to achieve a unity. It presents life on the borderland between reality and reverie (264). It creates an imaginary world by seeking to rectify the given world and to transform it by means of style. Style gives unity and new boundaries to the recreated universe. An artist selects some aspects of reality and eliminates others to maintain an equilibrium so that the unity of the work may not be destroyed by “abstraction or formal obscurantism” (269-70). Stylization reconstructs the world; even a “slight distortion” in style can mark “a protest” that contains “the creative force and fecundity of rebellion” (271-72). In this way, artistic creation as a form of rebellion paves the way for the renaissance of civilization.

The citizens of Oran in *The Plague* have been shown sharing despair, suffering and restraints on freedom as well as resisting those restraints. Camus shows them trying in various ways to curb and cure the pneumonic plague. The individual’s concern also becomes a collective concern. Weariness from the disease is beyond a man’s comprehension; so the fellow citizens work “. . . side by side for something that unites [them] - beyond blasphemy and prayers. And it’s the only thing that matters” (178). The hatred of death and disease unites men to face and fight them in the act of struggle. The rebel’s attitude of “All or Nothing” echoes in the novel: “God had vouchsafed to His creatures an ordeal such that they must acquire and practise the greatest of all virtues: that of the All or Nothing” (184). Camus suggests, “. . . there is no island of escape . . . no middle course . . . We must accept the dilemma.” He further remarks:

We must aspire beyond ourselves towards that high and fearful vision. And on that lofty plane all will fall into place, all discords be resolved, and truth flash forth from the dark cloud of seeming injustice. (186)

The plague promotes an equality of death. The slogans of “Bread – or fresh air!” mark the revolt of the people for freedom: “they should be permitted to move out to happier places” where bread is cheap and life without restrictions (194). Rieux’s organizations, workers, doctors and their helpers resist the pestilence and the suffering by serving and helping the invalids untiringly. The newspaper resists the onset of despair by publishing optimistic notes and eulogizing the courage of the populace. The high concrete walls around the isolation camps in the

Municipal Sports Ground withstand distress by protecting the “unfortunates” so that people can carry on their work without yielding to a sense of helplessness against the plight of the suffering humanity.

Amidst the dreariness Doctor Rieux remarks, “What interests me is – being a man.” Tarrou, the journalist, also comments, “Of course a man should fight for the victims” (TP 209). Such words exemplify Camus’s belief in resistance as an act of solidarity. Rieux realizes that he is not “. . . putting up a solitary fight; the patients were co-operating” (211). The sense of misery is shared by all and they unite to fight the suffering which the epidemic has caused.

After a long ordeal which is faced with dogged perseverance, “the rising wind of hope” thrills the suffering people and assures them of the retreat of the plague. The plague-stricken people see this as the beginning of “the new order of life”, but the new order cannot be free from all restrictions (218-21). The people’s response reflects Camus’s idea that after prolonged suffering, a long silent waiting and resistance, there is the possibility of a new order, but the responsibility to keep the new order untainted must also be recognized. Resistance, or rebellion, is therefore not to be treated as an absolute value; it must be guided and moderated in the light of such values as human dignity and solidarity.

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