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## The Charm and Nature of Poetry

**Dr. N K Neb\***

Poetry as a form of verbal art has certain qualities that mark its difference from other verbal arts like fiction, prose, drama. The most distinctive feature of poetry is recitation. Whereas fiction and prose are meant for reading, drama is spectacle oriented; poetry primarily has appeal for the listening faculty. The elements like rhythm, music, melody and harmony have greater significance for poetry than they have for other verbal arts. Apart from this, poetry being closer to human emotions and feelings has comparatively more and immediate impact on the listeners or readers and generates quick response. Consequently, greater importance is awarded to how rather than what has been said. It makes the craft part of a poem more significant than the content. It is perhaps due to this quality of the poetic art that most of the critics have tried to define poetry in terms of its ability to add charm to the ordinary and the prosaic through the use of different devices that make a verbal expression poetic. The significance awarded to artistic devices in poetry or the poetic art can be easily ascertained from the views expressed by different critics and thinkers. According to Ransom, "The true poetry has no great interest in improving or idealizing the world, which does well enough. It wants to realize the world; to see it better poetry is the kind of knowledge by which we must know what we have arranged that we shall not know otherwise." Ransom preface to the world poetry p.9 In order to make the people realize the world more intensely and in a novel way poetic devices play a very significant role. In the same way, Pope's often quoted lines, "True wit is Nature to advantage dressed, what oft thought was bought never so well expressed, "also assert the greater and effective role of artistic techniques for the development of valuable poetry.

In spite of the fact that poetry as an art form involves the effective use of different ways to say things more powerfully and in interesting manner poetry can not be reduced to merely a combination of various devices. The content or the subject matter cannot be considered to be of secondary importance. In fact, poetic utterances without a balance between the content and form fail to have the desired impact. Poetry though has some distinct features of its own, also shares with other literary arts the quality of adding novelty to our perception of the world around us. Unless and until one finds a change in perception, though minimal and only for

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the particular reader only, one cannot relish any work of art including the art forms not including verbal elements. The success, winning acclaim and appreciation of a work depends on how far it has been able to add to people's perception of the world and to what extent. It may be in the form of giving new perspectives to the already known things and experiences or adding to our knowledge through imaginative recreation of experiences, worlds, situations, images etc.

Let us understand it through the example of popular cinema in India. It is usually accepted that most of the Indian formula films are almost alike. Their being similar to one another is not the real cause of people's interest in them and the success of these films. Their success depends upon their difference from one another. They may look alike, yet there are certain variations in presentation, theme or characterization or situations that forward the story or the way plot is developed. It also brings out the reasons of the success of the so called offbeat cinema. The analysis of Indian popular films is relevant in terms of their artistic value and not in terms of commercial success. It is a different matter that people or casual viewers may have different reasons to go and watch these movies, still the addition of new perceptions, ideas, understanding, etc. that creates a charm of the fantastic and wonderful remains the main focus of success of art. Their success in terms of art ultimately is bound to the element of novelty in them. An objection may be raised to this proposition through the argument that universals in the form of life like situations always mark a process of repetition that forms a pattern and is often related with collective unconsciousness of the people or what more often is referred to as archetypes.

Here again, the element that sustains people's interest may be the archetypal nature of human experience presented in works of art, the attraction that a work of art offers is concerned with the new ways in which these experiences have been presented. If it had not been the case, no subsequent works than the original prototypes should have had generated interest amongst the readers or the audience.

Now the question arises, does poetic art succeed in introducing novelty through different devices concerning the form and expression or it has to do with something else also.

Answer to this question entails a clarity regarding the difference between what is said and how it is said. In other words, there are two different dimensions that have to be taken care of while trying to understand the artistic worth of a work of poetry and the elements that play or have

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played major role in it. One dimension of this art form may be called the theme or the subject matter and the other the form or poetic devices. Although this demarcation is well established already, the need to emphasize this difference arises out of the fact that a large number of scholars and critics often tend to include the thematic aspect into the reign of devices used. They treat theme as one of the devices used in a poetic work which leads to a confusion in studying the role of poetic devices and the thematic elements or the content.

So far as the ability to charm the reader and create a romance which offers promise of something enchanting and interesting is concerned it depends on the writer's mastery over the use of different elements to award a sense of wonder and novelty to different objects and experiences. Earlier it has been related with the art of demilitarizing the familiar to add a sense or romance to different things. The success of a work of art can not be limited to the extent it defamiliarizes different objects and experiences. It has to add something new to our understanding, information, knowledge or the faculty of realizing life. It also involves the role of the process of defamiliarization but for the purpose of giving new dimensions to our thoughts etc. If defamiliarization does not lead to new perceptions and an addition to our realization of the phenomenological or the abstract world of ideas, it may not generate the desired interest in poetry or even any other kind of art.

Another argument that makes defamiliarization limited framework to understand the nature of poetic art is related to the function of poetry and art that we find even in the most celebrated poets whose works tend to familiarize the unfamiliar.

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**The Text-Intertext Rhizome***Dr. Chetna Gupta\**

*The Zigzag Way* (2004), reflects a significant departure from Desai's earlier works. The title itself reflects a typical postmodernist typology of construction and coinage, a purely innovative expression directly related to the very narrative matrix of the novel. The author coins the title *The Zigzag Way*, as her revelation about "a sense of pleasure in form", as a "characteristic of fabulation." (Robert Scholes, 2) Consequently, the lives, actions, choices and preferences of the chief personages in the novel, bear close proximity to this innovative title, especially the manner in which the mind-sets of the chief protagonist operate. As the title, the words *The Zigzag Way*, become a diagnostic, linguistic paradigm reflecting the crux of the novel's narrative, characterization and overall theme. Unlike the earlier novels of Desai, the feminist stance in this work does not concentrate upon one single female protagonist, but gets sequestered among these female characters appearing in three different parts of the novel. As an innovative departure from the preceding works of the author, the epicentric protagonistic situation, instead, devolves upon Eric Jennings, a Mexican and a miner by profession, who had settled in England.

Interestingly enough, Anita Desai diffuses the feminine identity of the novel in the form of four different female personages, all of whom are somehow related to Eric. Out of these women characters, it is Eric's dead grandmother, Betty Jennings who dominates the narrative 'ala' Hamlet's father's ghost in Shakespeare's famous tragedy Hamlet.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Betty Jennings, in absentia, functions as a directing and motivating character whose awe-inspiring aura functions as a big shadow looming over the minds of the central characters who fully participate in the novel's narrative-action. Eric regularly visits the grave of his dead grandmother, Betty Jennings, whose spirit comes out and in a dream sequence tells her grandson about the family past of the Jennings, especially Eric's grandfather and his own father and mother.

The narrative in *The Zigzag Way*, gets divided into four parts. Each part having Eric as the fulcrum, the nucleus around whom, all the essential details of the situation are narrated. Eric Jennings is a typical postmodernist hero who connects his curiosity with a tendency in post modernism" with a pervasive nostalgia." (Patricia Waugh 1992: 191) It is the nostalgia which

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produces "the desire to fragment, the impossible yearning for the lost object of desire...." (Patricia Waugh, :192) Because of these very issues, Eric in a typical esoteric fashion learns from his dead grandmother buried in Mexico city, about his (Eric's) own parents and some other important events connected with the family past. It is quite obvious that the narrative in *The Zigzag Way*, emanating from within the consciousness of Eric, verges on the borders of fantasy, reverie and dream.

As a dyschronic fiction, *The zigzag Way*, abjures conventional novelistic requirements of plot, characterization and imagery. Instead, all the three part of the novel fuse into one narrative rhizome which confirms to "Intention and fulfillment, a dream and fact." (Ihab Hassan, 1973:4) Eric's Mexican city pilgrimage of personal revelation horrifies as a chaotic, disorderly gratuitous action, a kind of demonic intrusion with obsessive motives. Eric's picaresque foray from England to Mexico also brings him to Dona Vera, a grand dame surrounded by acolytes and snappy pug dogs. Eric learns from Dona Vera that the workers working deep down among the intricate tunnels and pathways of the minds have the wounds of their minds as zigzag symbols. In Dona Vera's library Eric learns from the books and gains a kind of mystical experience which transport him into the realms of fantasy. At the grave of his dead grandmother Betty Jennings, Eric has spiritual rendezvous besides experiencing the uncanny or the marvelous.

The two archetypal females in *The Zigzag Way*, Betty Jennings and Dona Vera, symbolize in themselves as the two extreme polarities of an existential encounter Eric experiences. No wonder then, the eerie, bizarre, fantastic get embellished with intrusions of pure fantasy. The personage of Betty Jennings becomes awesome and totally dominates the climactic scene in the narrative. It happens when, this dead grand-dame reveals certain illuminating facts to Eric about his parents. Herself floating in the weightless void of metaphysics, Betty Jennings assumes a role of a Oracle as she informs Eric about everything he wanted to know vis-a-vis his family past. Eric's uncanny and nearly bizarre, psychoanalytical experience in Medico, percolates his consciousness and his mind with the real and the living as well as the supernatural and the life-hereafter. Coming from beyond the grave to commune with Eric the language of Betty Jennings metaphorically becomes the language of silence as she does not materialize physically but all along dominates Eric's consciousness vis-a-vis his family-past. The 'Silence' of Betty Jennings turns Eric's "consciousness upon itself, altering the modes of its awareness...." (Ihab Hassan, 1971:13) Whatever Eric learns from his grandmother confirms the

fact that his forefathers lived a tapestry of zigzag chequered existential ways and lives, sort of mystical labyrinths. The human and the mineral world of apocalyptic and demonic imagery commingle herein the form of problematic tunnels and dungeons.

After Jennings, the grand dame Dona Vera, occupies the second spot in the novel's thematic importance. Though Betty Jennings dominates the living and the dead in Eric's family, all things related to the grand dame Dona Vera get lucidly narrated and deliberately magnified as symbolic hyperboles. Dona Vera flaunts an abnormal appearance. Eric, watches her, attired impressively in Kimono, that conceals different layers of non grey flannel. Such a dress signifies an abnormal personality, how to stamp upon the minds of the viewers, a permanent awesome-cum-exotic-cum-romantic effect. In this context, we are reminded of Rider I-laggards's immortal heroine She, who as an immortal feminine personality plays the role of the central protagonist with finesse. The identity of woman in *She* as well as that of Betty Jennings and Dona Vera in *The Zigzag Way*, together projects the female identity as intensely self- reflexive. The kind of brilliant and penetrative portraiture we witness in the case of She again gets reflected by the manner in which Anita Desai diffuses the female self in *The Zigzag Way*.

Another manifestation of female authenticity cast in the mould of postmodernist deculture is given in the narrative through the character of Emily, also known as Em. Emily is a personification of the decreptive female self an erstwhile friend of Eric. Emily has been his ex-girl friend during their college days but later on she deserts him to 'grave' on 'greener pastures'. Emily, too, possesses an inquisitive and researching mind and that is what takes her to Mexico and she succeeds in making Eric accompanying her. Eric also willingly gives company to Emily with the catalytic confidence that Mexico would yield some additional impetus and energy and a soaring self-confidence. The Eric- Emily gender equation unfortunately gets lopsided as the woman displays a high modicum of self-reflexive feminine aggression. Emily has well planned agenda to execute Mexico and her interests clash with those of Eric. The choices and preferences of Eric-Emily become totally discordant and incompatible, as the scenes and sights are of no interest to Em. These only attract Eric. The following lines clearly narrate and reflect the fractured compatibility that could have been the soul of their joint experience. In these lines, the author furnishes a specimen to demonstrate the Eric-Emily initial Camaraderie, yet the fractured disinterestedness of their joint experience is also reflected: *When they reached the hotel where the tranquilizing effect*

*of plashing water in marble fountains was cancelled by the shrieking of birds of bright plumage in tall cages, he had to be down, he felt the blood racing in his veins too fast. Ern did not appear concerned(24).* It becomes quite obvious that the Emily-Eric combination is not only mutually antithetical but even their individual identities evolve in totally diverse directions, as do their minds and psyches. One of the basic causes of this discordance between the two could be the "Otherness" of Eric's family. It is his 'Otherness' that befuddles and baffles Emily, perhaps aggravated by the fact that Eric comes from fishermen stock.

Rather than getting involved in the vicissitudes of his research work, Eric gets more attracted toward the enjoyment of creative music. He also has his private quest: to trace his family's history in the ghost town of Sierra Madre. Consequently, the narrative leap-frogs to furnish the spectacle of Eric's family ancestors and their community. It is in this context that the reader is made to come face to face with Dona Vera, the queen Of the Sierra. Eric learns that Dona Vera, is the Austrian wife of a mining baron whose family usurped the land of the miners and made them slaves. Eric feels inspired to tell Dona Vera about his own private quest: *I recognised the name you mentioned in your lecture in Medico city, the one I attended, I told you I attended. That's when I heard that you run this centre for studies of this area, so I thought I'd come here to see what I could find out. I heard your family too had a connection to the mines. (55)*

Dona Vera becomes personification of the Postmodernist Feminism as she entertains radically altered ways and notions about contemporary culture, understood as well as experienced. Emily as well as Dona Vera, become individualistic females with aggressive identities imbued with a firm sense of authority and awareness. Interestingly, Dona Vera opines that Eric has been misguided and misinformed about her relationship with the miners and her own contribution to their welfare. Eventually, she explodes in vehement protest: *Eric, hiding his own hands between his knees, wondered if he should flee but she continued imperviously. 'If it is mines you are interested in, then it is not to me you should come. (56)*

The infusion of the Supernatural in the narrative of *The Zigzag Way*, is handled by Desai so as to make it a stylistic — cum — thematic palimpsest. Even Eric's dead Grandmother Betty Jennings, becomes an enigma of literary change, a supernatural and bizarre episteme. She becomes the extraordinary signifier, the idiolect of human indeterminacy. It can even be said that the Betty Jennings-Eric combination becomes an infallible specimen of the brilliant juxtaposition of the supernatural and the pastoral iridescences. Eric's climactic

meeting with the grandmother Betty Jennings, in the graveyard gets encapsulated with what can be termed as Universal edifices of subjectivity. Eric sees Betty among the tombs in the graveyard as a young lady who phoenix-like seems to have arisen from her grave, assumingly her youthful visage as a young lady. The dialogue Eric holds with his grandmother, Betty Jennings, symbolizes a highly self-reflexive portraiture of a powerful and dominating dead woman's ghost from her youth.

Betty Jennings and Dona Vera, the two most powerful feminine personages in *The Zigzag Way*, one dead and the other living, constitute along with Emily the pyramid of the feminist self. The postmodernist stratagem of detotalized-totalization is applied by Desai in this novel as an instrument of by the roles of characters like Eric, Betty Jennings and Dona Vera. But it is in the abnormal happenings and events connected with the participation of Betty Jennings who comes from beyond the living world to hold a supernatural dialogue with her grandson. Betty's conversation with Eric aptly represents "the languages of the self." (Ihab Hassan, 1973:4) Besides this, the narrative climax which represents the Betty Jennings Eric combination comes as a thematic-cum-structural juxtaposition with the dead self of Betty "as a cognitive principle in the anonymous flow of speech, displaying continually the present...." (Ihab Hassan, 1973: 330) Finally, it can be said that *The Zigzag Way*, presents to the reader a pattern of fiction which is neither tragic nor comic. Eric, the hero becomes "a child of ironies, a mediator of polar claims". (Ihab Hassan, 1973:330) Desai handling of the narrative further heightens the novelistic pattern of presentation and "diffuses insight and fractures the whole truth."<sup>18</sup> Eric's Mexican jaunt in true picaresque style provides him the freedom of action, yet, as an anticlimax, *The Zigzag way*, eventually qualifies as "a parody of man's quest for fulfillment."<sup>19</sup>

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## Social Concerns in the Fiction of Mulk Raj Anand

Dr. Monika Sethi\*

Along with R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand is credited with establishing the basic forms and themes of modern Indian literature written in English. At the core of his writing is a humanist philosophy that incorporates elements of socialist, political and economic theory. Critics argue that his socially conscious works have shed keen insights on Indian affairs and enriched the country's literary heritage.

Anand poses fundamental questions related to the contemporary Indian society and seeks to awaken his countrymen to various injustices, prejudices, and irrationalities that, like a dead weight lie on India's soul and hinder her march to progress. He does not believe in the principle of 'Art for art's sake'. On the other hand, like other progressive writers, he believes in the dictum of 'Art for the sake of humanity'. Anand combines in his novels Tagore's humanism, Bankim's romanticism, Premchand's sympathy for the poor and Sarat Chandra's boundless human sympathy. Describing the theme of his fiction as "the whole man and the whole gamut of human relationship," Anand writes: My conversion to truth in Sabarmati Ashram was not a conversion to Gandhiji's proposition, God is truth. I had been converted to the truth, which I saw in human relations, when he said, 'God is Truth'; I said, 'God is Love.' I wanted to reveal beyond the spent up, redundant systems and categories of the philosophers and beyond organised religions, the intricate, contradictory emotions, feelings, moods and events, so that the experience of my characters may represent some part of the totality of life. ("Why I Write?" 67)

Anand observes life closely and keenly and presents its naked reality in his fiction. Anand's best novels are deliberate attempts to expose the distress of the lower castes and classes of India. They are undisguised in their plea for social change and are motivated by intense anger and pity. Anand, who was associated with Communism, used his novels to make broad attacks on various elements of India's social structure and on British rule in India. His novels are considered important primarily for the social statement that they make.

What prompted Anand to write *Untouchable* was a poignant story about a sweeper boy, Uka, written by Mahatma Gandhi in *Young India*. After reading the story, Anand asked Gandhi if he could come to see him.

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What followed next was the revision of the whole novel which Anand had modified during his three months' stay at the ashram with Gandhi ji. At the Ashram Anand had to clean the latrines once a week. He, thus, discovered that devotion to duty is the highest form of worship. The spells of meditation and reflections in the Ashram were a source of conversion for Anand who began to dream of devoting his writings to the downtrodden and the poorest of human beings.

As Anand himself says, "I began with untouchables and continued with the others rejected, considering even the exalted princes rejected because under Imperialism everyone was untouchable" (qtd. in Verma 94). For Anand life was a political struggle against imperialism. He was an active participant in the nationalist movement and was even imprisoned during the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1921. In his next novel, *Coolie*, he expresses vociferously his disgust at the imperialist forces.

*Coolie* marks a departure from *Untouchable* as the scene now crosses the boundaries of a country to the outside world. One moves into a more complex and treacherous world here. Though Bakha is kicked and cursed for offending the upper castes, he still has a place in the society and is indispensable. A coolie, however, though may be free to move about and select his own work nevertheless has to function under a system which is even more rigid. He has no place of respect in the society; he is exploited, overworked and even underpaid. For Munoo it is not his place in the social structure that is being questioned, what is at stake is his position in the society governed by the laws of money. Anand attacks British imperialism for its callous attitude towards the Indians and feels that the wretchedness of Munoo and his likes is the result of British imperialism. The novel criticizes the British Government as well as the Indian social set-up for denying individuals the fundamental freedom to live with dignity.

Anand here has tried to instill in his readers an understanding of the dehumanizing effect of social evils. He stirs in them the chords of tenderness and humanism so that they may be motivated for the removal of social evils and thus a just and humane social order may be established. Being an overt nationalist and a crusader of the social cause, he exposes with utter truthfulness the shams, hypocrisies and orthodoxies of the people.

The next novel, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, continues the theme of social injustice. The scene here shifts from Bakha, reflecting social evils, and Munoo, mirroring independent labourers, to Gangu who symbolizes bonded labour. Anand points out that due to ignorance and scarcity one can be subjected to unending pain and suffering. Whether it is Gangu of *Two Leaves*

and a Bud or Ranjan of Tagore's *Red Oleanders*, the writers could not go beyond the solution of death for their heroes. In this context one may consider the following extract of Bishu from *Red Oleanders*: As soon as one enters the maw of Yaksha Town, its jaws shut, and the road that remains open leads within wards. Now I am swamped in that interior without hope and without light.... (27)

Perhaps any other solution of liberation would have been fictitious and unreal and the display of which presumably had not been the aim of these writers. Both Tagore and Anand have played their part in their own way in the struggle for an egalitarian society. Fighters they were and the struggle they chose to fight, they knew, was unending at least in their own lives. Hence they wrote so that their writings become an inspiration for others to continue this struggle to bridge the gap between the haves and the have-nots. As a writer and a socialist, Anand strives to achieve not only the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity but also of morality, human dignity, and the discarding of obsolete beliefs and dogmas. In *Two Leaves and a Bud*, he realistically draws a pen-portrait of the immorality that had crept into the Indian society due to British domination. His portrayal of the character of Reggie Hunt is in fact an under-estimation of the actual crimes of the English tea-planters. Anand sharply hits at the false notion of white supremacy when he pictures Reggie Hunt as a lecherous person, leading the life of lust and greed. But the writer's primary concern in the novel is the creation of a just social order.

While *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud* portray the struggle and misery of the protagonists, who have been forced to leave their native places in the face of growing capitalism, *The Big Heart* records the events and incidents experienced by Ananta, a coppersmith, in his home-town, Amritsar. Unlike Bakha, Munoo and Gangu, Ananta is not a silent sufferer. He has the brains to think and fight against the exploiters of the labour class. Though realizing fully well the inevitability of the arrival of the machine, he struggles to find a solution to the predicament. Ananta accepts the advent of the machine in the country as he understands that once it is introduced it cannot be ignored or rejected. This fact becomes clear when Puran Singh Bhagat says: ... the whole world is rent today about whether to use the machine or to scrap it and go back to the age of the spinning wheel. And this quarrel in men's mind is going on in spite of the fact that the machine is here and can't be refuted. (BH 82)

Anand's mind is seen, once again, pre-occupied with the thought of establishing an egalitarian society. Through Ananta he dreams of a non-

violent and bloodless revolution for the emancipation of his brotherhood.

Puran Singh Bhagat, Ananta and Kushal Chand function as the mouthpiece of the author. The demand for skilled workers has become predominant over the demand for unskilled ones. Channa speaking to the coppersmiths states, "There are no jobs here... We are taking on the only man who is some use to us, Mehr Chand, who has been to a technical school" (32). Besides other problems, this demand for skilled workers results in unemployment, poverty and misery. But the illiterate people are not prepared to accept the inevitable. They are unable to distinguish between their illusion and reality. They fail to understand Ananta's mind and on the contrary misunderstand him as a supporter of the machine. This misconception finally leads him to his death, though accidentally.

In *Two Leaves and a Bud* Gangu and his fellow labourers revolt for freedom from bonded labour. But in *The Big Heart* the situation is different. The labourers here are not bonded labourers. They are hereditary craftsmen but because of the advent of machine they are left jobless. In want of employment elsewhere they are left with no option but to work almost as bonded labourers. Here the revolt is a step forward, it is for their rights; Right to live, seek employment, earn bread, not to talk of good clothing and a house.

But whether it is the problem of bonded or free labourers or that of coolies or the untouchables or the slum dwellers, Anand is busy giving expression to the stark reality faced by the persons of these classes. The arousal of sympathy in the reader for them could be the first step towards their emancipation and the writer has achieved this objective to a large extent. A discerning observer cannot miss the presence of a strong bond of socialism that connects all the novels together.

Anand had the experience of living in both the pre-independence and post-independence Indian society. Prior to independence, political freedom was considered as an essential vital pre-condition for wider achievements in economic and social life of the country. This target was achieved. But the target of economic freedom still lags behind. How to wrestle with the problem of poverty and to overcome it has been the task left over for the coming generations.

Today capitalism is eating into the very vitals of society. The economic processes of present-day imperialism are heading towards future intensification of the tyranny of the monopolies. This has intensified political reaction, corruption and the misappropriation of social funds. An ever-

growing proportion of the capitalist class has nothing at all in common with production. Big enterprises are run by hired professionals whereas their owners have developed into typical do-nothings living off the dividends accruing from the money invested in securities. Oppression by a handful of monopolists of the rest of the population is becoming heavier and unbearable. Capitalism today is characterized by economic slackness, deceleration of growth, fading branches of industry and transport, production capacities standing idle, mass chronic unemployment, aggravation of the agrarian crisis and mass ruin of working peasants, sinister instability of currency, inflation and increase of prices. Social transformation requires special, dedicated and deliberate efforts. What was spontaneous with the freedom fighters has to be willed and shaped by social revolutionaries, particularly where the transformation is sought, as in our country, by eliciting the consent of the people, that is, through democratic methods and pressures. The task does demand an intellectual and organizational *tour de force*.

Over the years social and economic revolution in our country has progressed, but not far enough. There are both, a vast potential waiting to be unfolded and also great problems to be overcome. Only the future times will show whether this potential will keep enlarging and asserting or the problems will overwhelm us. The situation clamours for a massive effort at mobilizing the vast energies of the people for sustained and determined breakthrough from one level of life and labour to another, more evolved and enriched.

Presumably, this had been in the mind of Mulk Raj Anand when he wrote his novels to create a feeling of fellowship and companionship between man and man based on equality, secularism, fraternity and dignity finally leading into a classless and casteless society.

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3  
**Portrayal of Indian Peasantry in  
 Mulak Raj Anand's *Gauri***

*Dr. L. S. Gill\**

Although Mulak Raj Anand got his education abroad, India and Indianness always permeates in his writings. Indian socio-economic scene marked by rigid caste system, poverty, superstitiousness and religious orthodoxy peeps through his settings, thematic concerns and style of characterisation. The fact remains that India - an emerging force in the twenty first century as it is called- hasn't been able to fulfil the basic needs of its citizens even after decades of independence. Thousands of Indians still have no access even to drinkable water. Illiteracy, economic backwardness, dependence on agriculture and agriculture's further dependence on favourable climate is still a characteristic feature of Indian economic scene. If it rains in time there are floods, and if there is no rain for a short time the fear of draught lurks in the minds of Indian peasants. It is so unfortunate that we haven't been able to build up any support system to counter the climatic emergencies affecting our economy. There are times when one state is flooded with water and the neighbouring state is in the grip of draught. For good agricultural produce Indian farmer still has to look at favourable climate. Since there is no phenomenal change in the life of a common peasant living in a village, Mulak Raj Anand's novel *Gauri*, though written in early independence era, is so contextual.

Panchi, a major character in the novel, is a peasant with a small holding in Chota Piplan Kalan – a village in Punjab. He has only one acre and a half of land of his own. Whatever Panchi's uncle spends on his marriage is raised from mortgaging his land. Moreover, he has to pawn the only gold ornament in his house even to purchase seeds for sowing his land: "In the absence of rains, the crops fail and life is dull and drab. The only enjoyment is sought is gossip, backbiting and occasional feast during weddings. Life in these villages is reminiscent of the life of the poor peasants ... in the whole of Punjab."

To a farmer his cows, buffaloes and bullocks are his relations as he has none else to share his grief with in bad times. Panchi has named his bullocks as Sona (Gold) and Chandhi (Silver). Metaphorically, Sona and Silver both are the precious metals signifying their material and emotional

value for Panchi. Calling his bullocks his sons, Panchi unburdens the load on his heart thus: 'Han, this land will also have to be mortgaged!...like the other part mortgaged to pay for the wedding... (32) These words not only reveal the mental agony Panchi is passing through but also reflect the dismal state of affairs for the peasantry as a whole. It is so painful for Panchi to mortgage his land just to meet his ordinary daily needs, but there is no other way out for him. He has to send the pregnant Gauri to her parents as he knows that he won't be able to feed the new born. Gauri's parents sell her further for the same reason. Ironically, her mother prefers to sell her but not her cow because they can do without a daughter but not without a cow which gives them milk. Expressing her helplessness Laxmi tells the Sikh officer, "You don't understand, son, ... it was the choice between my Gauri and my cow...(209). How the life of every farmer is devastated in the face of draught is well presented in the words of Rafique Chacha: "This is not happening to one person.. the drought.! Thousands are sufferings the pangs of hunger. Crops, fields, stocks have all gone. People are selling their daughters.... (101)

Like a common peasant in India Panchi's life is marked by illiteracy, superstitions, rumours, hollow traditional rituals and myths. The opening of the novel showing a marriage party headed by Panchi sitting on a mule as a bridegroom marching towards Piplan Kalan to marry Gauri is a wonderful picture of village life in India. The bridal party of forty men is going to wed a poor girl of the neighbouring village and is dreaming to stay for four nights over there hoping for dowry, reminds us how the Indian peasantry is caught in the web of hypocritical social practices. Such showy traditions are pushing the Indian farmer further into poverty. If Panchi has mortgaged his land to meet the expenses of marriage, Gauri's parents are also grappling with the destitute. So both the parties are in a state of penury and are expecting too much from each other due to their traditional orthodox attitude.

The tragedy of the Indian farmer is that he is aware about his exploitation at the hands of money lenders but he is helpless to do anything. Panchi knows that he belongs to a class (of farmers) that despite working hard cannot get rid of poverty. Because he has no regular income, he has to depend upon a money lender that causes his undoing. Panchi's words to Damodar are so significant: "I am not the son of a money lender, who can sit easy on a greasy cushion and live on an interest!". When the soil is dry, I am forced to wait till the rains. And there are months between planting and harvesting, when I have to borrow from your father, the leach... "(52)

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Though illiterate, Panchi is well aware about the nexus between the landlords and the moneylenders formed to exploit the small farmers. Panchi rightly observes, "The wisdom of the landed gentry lay in not killing the peasants directly. They and the money lenders gave even loans on mortgage of jewellery, so that they could suck their life blood up slowly, invisibly... only the humble could be punished for stealing a few mangoes, but the big banias could pile up one storey upon another onto their houses. There must be some justice in the world!" (82). Although Panchi (a peasant), Damodar (son of a village money lender), Rajguru (son of a landlord) are friends since their childhood. Panchi does not forget the divide that existed due to the difference in class. During casual conversation with them he bitterly reacts to Damodar's comment saying, "Straight talk is talk that Bania can't understand . . . A peasant can't afford to smile...the muscular effort is too great".(54) .

In the face of a hostile natural environment and adverse socio-economic realities of life, *Gauri* emerges as a very powerful narrative of the sufferings of an innocent peasant. Indian farmer too has feelings and emotions but nobody bothers. When Gauri is annoyed with him, Panchi wants to please her with some gift of love. As he has no money to buy a love gift for his wife, he decides to steal some mangoes from the field mortgaged to Lala Birbal. Standing on his own land what Panchi thinks is so poignant:"And why, why should he feel such a panic before taking a few mangoes from the estate of Birbal when he knew that the banias had taken this garden in lieu of unpaid interest on mortgages of other people's land-which as a kind of robbery! Strange there could be a big theft and small theft- but the bigger was excused". (79)

These words of Panchi are highly satirical of the Indian socio-economic policies devoid of any supportive banking system for peasants forcing them to borrow money from money lenders who gradually grab farmers' land: the real owners are rendered landless and are made to work on the same land as labourers.

Like every Indian Panchi is not very clever and it is beyond his head to understand the designs of the shrewd village elders. When Lala Birbal publically challenges him to pay him whatever he has in his handkerchief, Panchi stands dumbfounded. Standing before the village elders as a thief he feels humiliated.

Indian peasantry is badly embedded in Patriarchal system where woman is treated as a lifeless thing. She works as a slave in and outside her house but nobody recognises her as a person. She is not only considered

inferior to man but also a commodity which can be sold for money or given away in charity. To Panchi , wife is an object "whom he could fold in his arms at night and kick during the day" (9). Panchi thinks his wife will "adorn" his house and work like a "slave" and help him in his land. When he went to marry Gauri he "felt like a holy bull going off to marry the little cow.." (10). Panchi's patriarchal attitude coloured with religious orthodoxy comes to the fore when he physically assaults Gauri and defends his behaviour "airily", saying, "..But the husband has to chastise his wife if she goes wrong..so says our Dharma". Moreover, Panchi's mother calls her ill-ominous and incarnation of goddess Kali. Panchi also joins his mother in holding Gauri responsible for all the natural calamities inflicting their family.

Indian peasant is a poor man with no banking policy to support him during crisis, remains the major issue of the novel.

When Birbal tries to counter Panchi saying that our own country is our own and there is 'justice' in it, Panchi ridicules his idea saying, "Han, Lalaji India is full of justice!" said Panchi cynically 'It is the fault of the people if they make no use of this great justice. It is theirs for asking...Nobody forces a peasant into debt! To take a loan or not to take a loan is the greatest liberty given to a peasant!..."(68).

Panchi becomes the representative peasant of Mulak Raj Anand not only for his traditional outlook and perpetual exploitation but also for his rebellious attitude. There are many situations in the novel when we can locate the rebel in Panchi. He feels proud to be the owner of the little land he has and is never ready to accept anybody's subordination. When Rajguru calls him a yokel he shouts back: "I will break your head if you don't drop your superior airs. Never mind if your father was a Subedar Major. He only rose to his position by licking the boots of the White Sahibs!" And his words: "There will be talk to decide who are the robbers and thieves and who the hard working helpless labourers are" speak volumes of the sense of dignity Panchi has. Even in the worst circumstances he upholds the banner of hatred for the exploiter and the oppressor whether it was the White Sahib or the Indian Sahib. Here Panchi becomes the mouthpiece of Mulak Raj Anand who was always concerned with the colonisation of India by none else than a handful of Indians.

Indian peasant works very hard but he remains a non-entity throughout his life. That he is capable of doing everything but is given no opportunity to prove his worth haunts him always. Being illiterate he can't do anything other than cultivating land which he has already mortgaged.

So despite being physically and mentally capable of doing everything he cannot do anything and his worth goes waste. The following words of Mulak Raj Anand not only show Panchi's faith in his strength in the face of the Theory of Karma but also reveal his reaction to the prevalent corrupt govt machinery before which he feels helpless: Bah!- what lies the Brahmin dog told-*Karma!* The white Sahibs were aliens and had sucked the blood of the country, as Gandhi said .The big schemes for giving water and power were making way for bribes, so that by the time all the money was eaten away by the contractors, there were many more mouths to feed- that was Karma.(92)

Being illiterate Indian peasant is easily carried away by superstitions and rumours that make his life a hell. When Panchi's aunt says that Gauri has loose morals as "her head was uncovered while she was working" and she is 'free' with Panchi's friend Rajguru, he readily declares, "I will kill her if she has been free with Rajguru"(39). Due to his superstitious gullible nature Panchi seems to be at war with his surroundings. He does love Gauri but the feeling of male dominance fuelled by his illiteracy spoil the bonding between the two. Panchi's assault on his uncle, on Gauri, and his confrontation with the agents of Amru , shows the turbulent family life of a peasant in India. Poverty and illiteracy together have engulfed Panchi and his Family. Whether it is Panchi's family comprising Kesaro and his uncle or Gauri's family comprising her mother and Amru, both are marred by bickering, mudslinging and fights. Peasant's life, on the whole, is full of challenges and he has to put up a hard fight to survive.

Though the picture of Indian peasantry shown in the novel is so dismal, the novelist is not at all hopeless . If Panchi feels, "A peasant can't afford to smile", Rafique Chacha sees a silver lining when he says: "Never give up faith, son! There is still life in us! ...and there will come good times yet. Don't forget...our land is vast. And, Allah willing, it will yet be green again.(101). The persona of Dr. Mahindra in the story, his influence on Gauri and the resultant change in her is a new ray of hope shown by the novelist. Gauri's statement, "Education will make us master fate."(251) is definitely an optimistic hint towards the solution of problems being faced by the peasantry class.

Thus we see that the narrative is a wonderful record of the life of an Indian peasant. Caught in a strange vicious circle, he starts as a poor man and ends up as a poor man .His entire life is a tale of encounters with his surroundings. He grows every crop with a hope that it will change his life but it never happens. Droughts and floods are his natural enemies against

which he is defenceless. The nexus between the landlords and the moneylenders is a threat to his very existence. Equally disappointing is the callous indifference of the govt which is doing nothing substantial to bail him out of this crisis. It is so ironical that in the face of droughts and famines a food grower (peasant) can't afford food for him and has to look at others for help .If he is illiterate, poor and superstitious venting ire on everything around him, who is responsible for it? The novel is a wonderful commentary on the prevalent agricultural system of India asking for substantial corrective measures to save the food growers.

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## Comedy, Laughter and Psychotherapy

Dr. A. Chakrabarty\*

It is not unusual to hear corporate honchos, regional bank managers, top insurance managers, eminent physicians and surgeons and celebrated judges of high courts and supreme courts all harping on the same nagging problem —stress at work. How many of us realize that bogged down by our work pressures, we forget to laugh unrestrainedly, despite knowing, how much laughter improves our face value. Whether we burst into a guffaw, chuckle, giggle, snicker and snort we indulge in one kind of laughter or the other. These different resonances of laughter emanate from the recesses of our soul and have the power to mitigate stressful conditions of the mind, improve our skills of communication and strengthen relationships.

Stress had invariably been a part of human lives since the beginning of the industrial revolution although the degree of stress in human lives in the past was infinitesimal. It required the wisdom of Sri Patanjali to expound the Yoga Sutras ———— the threads by which he could affect the union of mind, body and spirit. In his book, Patanjali underscored his contention that it is not difficult to attain the yogic experience provided one controls the modifications of the mind. The mind-body exercises act on the psychological state in such a way that the body shapes healthy emotions, instills noble thoughts and help develop positive attitudes. As a result when the mind is afflicted with stress, yogic exercises restore the mind to its healthful state and acts as a therapeutic force.

To think of psycho therapy is to think of yoga. But some of the fine arts like music and painting and the liberal arts like comedy are also excellent tools of psycho-therapy besides yoga. Music therapy is high on the list of expressive therapies. Music therapy has a direct impact on the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, aesthetic and social facets in the life of a person. By using different music experiences like singing, songwriting and listening to good music one can achieve total recovery from sundry maladies of the mind. As early as the ninth century, the music theorist al-Farabi wrote on music as a primary mode of therapy. In his highly discussed treatise, *Meanings of the Intellect*, he dilated on the therapeutic effects of music on the soul of a person and the feeling of usufruct which a person experiences on his listening to good music. Later, in the seventeenth century, Robert Burton in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* stated that music and dance

are effective in the treatment of the malady of the mind and brain, like melancholia.

Another fine art (drawing and painting) is a remarkable mode of therapy. When a person suffers from mental illness, he can busy himself in drawing and painting. Through one's act of painting, one begins to value one's creative expression. Drawing and painting helps a depressed person to discover himself in new ways and in doing so, he gets tremendous relief from stress. Art therapy is not confined only to mitigating pain, tension and anxiety. It can prove beneficial to those who have mental disorders and emotional abuse.

Laughter, as stated earlier, is one of the best ways of reducing stress and the most effective way to do it, is to watch a comedy or read a comedy aloud. Though Aristotle touched upon the therapeutic value of a tragedy (catharsis) yet he was blind to the stress-relieving properties of a comedy. Nevertheless, he wrote in his *Poetics* that comedy is a representation of laughable people and involves some kind of blunder or ugliness which does not cause pain or disaster.

The early Greeks realised the healthful effects of laughter in comedy primarily through the plays of Aristophanes. Aristophanes portrayed Socrates with all his buffoonery in *The Clouds* whereas, in his farce against war in *Lysistrata*, he adopted a feminist stance. In *Lysistrata*, Aristophanes dealt with sexuality in a comic fashion. The audience burst into ungovernable peals of laughter as it watched the Koryphaios of Men (a male chauvinist) being reduced to a fool by Lysistrata and other women. The comic genius of Aristophanes was evinced in *The Frogs* in which he made the god Dionysius echo the croaking of the frogs. Dionysius croaked with the frogs when the frogs refused to stop. Ultimately he flatulated so loudly that their croaking stopped altogether.

The renaissance age in England was famous for its rich crop of comedies, and none could script comedies better than Shakespeare. His comic genius was evident even in his early comedies like *The Merchant of Venice*, when he was learning his craft and even trying to improvise upon it. In Act I Sc. I when Antonio emphasized on the sad role that he had to play in life, Gratiano realized that he had to lighten his mood by saying something that was truly laughable: "Let me play the fool, With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come, And let my liver rather heat with wine Than my heart cool with mortifying groans". (The Merchant of Venice 9) We did burst into a guffaw as we read Portia's portrayal of her Scottish suitor and the way she compared him with the English suitor: "That he hath a

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neighbourly charity in him, for he borrowed a box of ear of the Englishman, and swore he would pay him again when he was able: I think the Frenchman became his surety, and seal'd under for another. (The Merchant of Venice 8-9).

We admire Shakespeare's instinct for laughter in his mature comedies like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It*. In the former play, the provocation to laughter is one of the primary purposes of Shakespeare. The dramatist makes the fairy-queen, Titania, fondle the ass-headed Bottom, the Athenian craftsman. We laugh at the irrationality of Titania's blind love when she not only fondles Bottom but also puts musk roses on his hairy head: O how I love thee! How I dote on thee (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 88)

The stress levels of the audience had reached alarming degrees when Helena and Hermia quarreled over love, indulged freely in abuses and came to a point of exchanging blows. The moonlit night scene, which followed close on the heels of that scene, featuring Titania and Bottom and their blind irrational love did much to relieve the audience of its stress. The psychotherapeutic value of this scene could not be dispensed with

When Jaques states that his deep reflections on his various travels wraps him 'in a most humorous sadness', Rosalind's reply through an anti-thesis makes the contrast truly laughable.

Rosalind : A traveller! By my faith, you have great reason to be sad. I fear you have sold your own lands to see other men's. Then to have seen much and to have nothing is to have rich eyes and poor hands.

(*As You Like It* 204)

Shakespeare's Fool, Touchstone, with his skipping dialogue, his repertoire of quips and cranks acted on environment and transformed it into a comedy. When Rosalind spoke of her wounds in love, Touchstone humorously narrated his experiences with Jane Smile to hint at the follies which lovers commit in love and in doing so, he was able to laugh away the ridiculous behaviour of young lovers in love:

That Shakespeare understood the psychotherapeutic value of comedy was evident in the way he gave a longer tether to his fools than what he gave to his other characters. Feste, the clown in *Twelfth Night* commented on the ever changeable nature of the Duke or the fickle-minded behaviour of many in the audience. Persons who have natures as variable and melancholic as that of the Duke see themselves mirrored in the personality of the Duke, in this remark of Feste. Hence, such persons emerge wiser and happier than before:

A lot of sentimental comedies were written in the second half of the eighteenth century. Fun, delight, innocent mirth and laughter, the characteristics of Restoration drama were replaced by lachrymose situations and impeccably virtuous characters. Goldsmith and Sheridan revolted against the sentimental comedies of his age and revived the romantic tradition of Shakespeare. Sheridan revived the spirit of the Restoration Comedy of Manners. In his anti-sentimental comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*, Goldsmith exhaled the spirit of laughter through Tony Lumpkin who prevented his mother from materializing her wicked plot of misappropriating the jewels of Miss Neville. On the pretext of taking his mother, Mrs. Hardcastle and Miss Neville to aunt, Pedigree, Tony drove them in a stage-coach round and round the house and finally made them alight at the bottom of the horse-pond.

The audience burst into a guffaw when Mrs. Hardcastle failed to recognize her husband and took him for a highwayman. Before Mr. Hardcastle could mumble anything she pleaded him to show mercy to his son, Tony.

Goldsmith certainly revived the spirit of the romantic comedies of Shakespeare and critics had found similarities between Tony Lumpkin and Shakespeare's Puck of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Sheridan, Goldsmith's contemporary, also wrote anti-sentimental comedies like *The Rivals*, *The Duenna*, *The School for Scandal* and *The Critic*. Though Sheridan restored the spirit of laughter of the Restoration dramatists, like Congreve and Wycherley by his witty dialogues, yet there was no trace of sexual implications in them. Mrs. Malaprop and Bob Acres, exhaled the fragrance of humour — the former by her wrong use of words and the latter by his expression of cowardice. For instance, Mrs. Malaprop rattled to an amused Sir Anthony what subjects a girl should learn to create a favourable impression of herself in the eyes of the country folks.

The coward Bob Acres is a source of ceaseless laughter. On his being inspired by the words of valour from Sir Lucius, he says, "*Your words are a grenadier's march to my heart!*" (*The Rivals* 112). But at the sight of two approaching figures, Acres becomes blanched with fear and admits to his friend, Sir Lucius that his valour is "*oozing out as it were at the palms of my hands*". (*The Rivals* 176) The contrast between his assumed valour and his actual cowardice makes us burst into uncontrollable peals of laughter.

So, comedy in every age and clime has had great psychotherapeutic effect, notwithstanding Aristotle's inability to appreciate the nobler elements

in a comedy. In an age of stress, the healthful effects of laughter need to be examined. Our bodies respond in a positive manner when we laugh whole-heartedly and justifies the well-verified truism, a sound mind in a sound body.

Laughter can be equated with physical exercise and its power of mitigating stress; improving our tolerance to pain and stabilizing high blood pressure have been the subject of medical journals in recent years. Norman Cousins, while writing of the therapeutic uses of humour (based on his personal experiences) in *Anatomy of an Illness* (1979) highlights the power of laughter that has enabled him to recover from a crippling disease. Dr. William Fry at Stanford University compares laughter to “inner jogging” and extols it highly for increasing the heart rate, improving muscle activity and blood circulation. The effectiveness of belly laughter was amply demonstrated in the popular Bollywood movie, Munnabhai MBBS. The principal of the Medical College, in that particular movie, unable to withstand the stress caused by the behaviour of his medical student, took recourse to belly laughter as a means of lowering his stress level. Norman Cousins found that 10 minutes of belly laughter enabled him to enjoy uninterrupted sleep for two hours.

Many comedians use farce to enhance the element of laughter in their comedies and a study of the farcical elements in the comedies of Shaw and Synge makes healthy reading. In Shaw’s *Arms and the Man* the dramatist’s primary object of satire is social criticism and it is brought about in the way he pillories Sergius, the conventional, romantic hero. The imposter in Sergius is mocked, when the “*apostle of higher love*”, after his romantic meeting with Raina stoops lowly and flirts with the maid servant, Louka.

The dramatist Synge, takes the figure of an alazon or an imposter, commonly found in farcical plays and makes him integral to his plays. In *The Playboy of the Western World*, the alazon is none other than Christy Mahon. Christy’s bragging of the murder of his father is a big lie that dilates with amazing rapidity. As in all farces the expanded lie reaches a point, explodes and the braggart is exposed. When in Act II of the play, the Widow Quin finds Christy cowering in terror of seeing his father come back ‘alive’, she bursts out laughing and the audience laughs with her too:

Well, you’re the walking playboy of the Western World and that’s the poor man you had divided to his breeches belt. (*The Playboy of the Western World* 141)

Nothing can be closer to the truth than the remarks of a great philosopher: Laugh as much as possible for when you laugh, the world laughs with you, but when you weep nobody weeps with you.

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## Literature of Commitment with Special Reference to George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*

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The modern concept of committed literature emerges from the conflict of 20th century ideologies that have reflected the deep social changes of our times - the domination of Nazism and Communism in Europe, the victory of world Capitalism over Communism, and today the clash between market ideology and the rich world on one hand and on the other the growing rebellion of the impoverished, non-developing four-fifths of our planet.

Commitment to truth is inherent in the act of good writing. It is a moral absolute. To write is to reveal an aspect of the world in order to change it. In that respect writing is and has always been didactic. One will note that commitment and involvement are closely linked; however, though involvement is inevitable for the writer, his commitment does not come about automatically. Not all writers are even conscious of their involvement; but the committed writer is aware of the world around him and his literature is the result of his attitude towards it.

Thus commitment involves the writer's trying to summarize and then reflect through his work a picture of the human condition - which is also social - without however losing sight of the individual. Exponents of committed literature reject the fallacy that art is a thing apart; despite the obstacles politics raises, art, I believe, is part and parcel of the society.

It is also a truism that writing is a social act insofar as it derives from the will to communicate with others and from its resolve to change things - in the sense of achieving something or resolving social questions. The artist wants to remake the world and his passion must be freedom. Authoritarian systems fear the truthful portrayal of reality and rely on compromised writers to portray false images. The writer who practices compromise follows the victors, for conformity and opportunism go hand in hand. Inevitably he sticks to the middle. He avoids saying what he feels for fear of his place in society. He is the conformist per se.

Instead of the radiant future, committed literature depicts the lives of other people, however ugly or illuminating. It contains both human truths and human potential. Fiction will always be a concentrate of many peoples'

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lives and experiences. Since society itself seldom offers perfectly ready characters for fiction, the author's imagination and interpretation of humanity stands at the center of the novel - and in a special way at the center of the committed novel. What the writer concludes and narrates about these lives and experiences can be true - or not. Similarly, I find the depiction of globalization of economy and capital as the spread of democracy, security, and well-being not only absurd but mendacious, immoral and evil. War is not peace. Disasters will always be disasters. And it is insane to call catastrophes victories for mankind.

The road of commitment is lined by the canonical names of literary history. At the time of the French Revolution, Wordsworth wrote his greatest poems like "The Ruined Cottage" and "The Old Cumberland Beggar" - widely considered the most beautiful in the English language - which depict the sufferings of the English lower classes. Shelley - labeled by Harold Bloom the Leon Trotsky of his day - and Keats and Hazlitt, realized Wordsworth's genius for teaching and instilling in others sympathy for all those in distress. The great Wordsworth counted perforce genius and transcendence. Like his characters he was forever the stranger. An aura of otherworldliness marked his genius and rankled his contemporaries because he spoke from the beyond. But through all his strangeness, he also cared.

They all care, the committed writers. Commitment may be expressed also in the writer's search in himself for authenticity, reaching deep into himself to the place where truth lies. For as Saul Bellow writes in his essay, *The Sealed Treasure*, the only thing we can be in this world is human. And we all care about truth, freedom, and wisdom. George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* is one of the important documents of our times. Its manifest subject is a period of Spanish Civil War. It is a testimony to the nature of modern political life. It is also a demonstration on the part of Orwell of one of the right ways of confronting that life. Its importance is therefore of the present moment and for years to come. In a politics presumed to be available to everyone ideas and ideals play a great part. Communism made use of unregenerate force but many of us found it impossible to acknowledge this fact because communism spoke boldly to our love of ideas and ideals. *Homage to Catalonia* is about disillusionment with communism. The moral tone of this book is true and simple. Orwell's ascertaining of certain political facts was not the occasion for a change of heart or for crisis of the soul. What he learned from his experiences in Spain pained him and it led him to change his course of conduct.

The Spanish Civil War began in July 1936 when a group of military commanders led by General Franco, resentful of the growing socialist and anti-clerical tendencies of the Republican Government, organized a revolt against it. Spain at once became an ideological battleground for fascists and socialists from many different nations.

The Civil War was not only a conflict between Republican (socialist) forces and Nationalist (anti-socialist) forces but also between the socialists themselves. The various socialist and communist parties in Spain were deeply divided over fundamental questions of policy, and were themselves torn by internal dissensions of Marxist and Trotskyist theory. The war in its early stages must have appeared as a simple struggle between socialism and Fascism, it was in reality a much more complicated imbroglio than it seemed.

Orwell determined to journey to Spain in order to see the situation for himself. It was not possible to enter the country without accreditation of some kind. He then approached the ILP (Independent Labour Party). ILP was willing to provide him with the necessary accreditation and he was also issued with a letter of introduction to their representative in Barcelona, John McNair.

Orwell arrived in Barcelona in late December 1936, ostensibly as a correspondent for the *New Leader*, the journal of the ILP. With characteristic diffidence he remarks in the opening chapter of the novel: 'I had come to Spain with some notion of writing newspaper articles, but I had joined the militia almost immediately, because at that time and in that atmosphere it seemed the only conceivable thing to do'. (*Homage to Catalonia*, 2) These militias were loosely organized armed groups. Because he was carrying ILP papers he was automatically assigned to the militia of the POUM- (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista: Worker Party of Marxist Unification) – which was the ILP's sister party in Spain. To Orwell, whose political beliefs then and later were completely undoctinaire, it did not seem to matter which militia he joined so long as he was fighting for the Republic. In his innocence he had not realized that Spanish Civil War politics were a minefield of conflicting ideologies, that each militia had its own ideological 'position', and that unwittingly he POUM was increasingly being caught up in an internal power struggle between Anarchists, Socialists and Marxists who disagreed violently over the future course the revolution should take. In 1937 in Spain when Orwell went to fight on the Republican side in the civil war against the fascists and to file reports for 'The New Leader', he enlisted in a Catalan militia organized by the POUM (the workers

party of Marxist unification). He was seriously wounded in the front and sent back to Barcelona to recover. There Orwell witnessed a murderous power struggle between the Spanish communists and Independent lefts which in Catalonia Consisted largely of anarchists and Trotskyists who dominated POUM. During this struggle the communists falsely accused the Trotskyists of plotting with Franco. Orwell's fierce commitment and determination to expose the lie, Orwell gathered documents and took notes for his great book on the civil war - *Homage to Catalonia (1938)*. In this Novel Orwell explores the horror, disaster and banality of the Spanish Civil war in which hundreds of men were slaughtered cattle like. He has deep disgust against the horror and disaster of war. It is one of the elements of dehumanization exposed in his novel. He writes about horrors of war and dehumanizing factors which triggers on. War strips man of his glory and leaves him completely bereft of all myths.

He writes that no one who was in Barcelona then or for months later will forget the horrible atmosphere produced by fear, suspicion, hatred, censored newspapers, crammed jails, and enormous food queues and prowling gangs of armed men. As he also states that the purpose of joining the Spanish war was to fight against fascism and if one asked him that what he was fighting for, his answer would be 'Common decency'. His concern is far from being just a journalist or war correspondent, whose object is primarily to give an authentic picture of what is going on or has gone on in the theatre of action. He firmly states his belief in the importance and sanctity of the past. "*Homage to Catalonia*" opens with an incandescent flash of human love putting beyond question the dignity, the worth and the immortality of mankind. It is interesting in the way form and subjects are identified. The first clue of the nature of the book is to be found in the title itself for what follows is not primarily a description of how Catalonia won Orwell's admiration but for the spirit that prevailed there during the war. It is expressive of a much more personal debt, a personal gratitude for one more voyage of spiritual self discovery. It was Catalonia in war time which provided for him the ideal community in which he could find and come to terms with himself. In one of the longest chapter in *Homage to Catalonia* he marshalled his evidence of communist treachery with the painstaking thoroughness of a prosecutor at the bar of justice knowing as he later conceded that he ran a risk of turning an otherwise lyrical piece of writing into a tedious exercise in Journalism. He explained that he could not have done otherwise, he happened to know what very few people in England had been allowed to know, that innocent men were being falsely accused. If he had not been angry about that, he should never



have written the book. He felt that his obligation of factual triumphed even his unrelenting preoccupation with the style of his prose or for that matter his loyalty to any particular political cause. The experience left him with an admiration for the independent left and a hatred for the communists.

Orwell claimed every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written directly or indirectly against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism. (George Orwell, *Why I Write*, 9) His literary and political commitments deepened with the passage of time. Orwell could not join the army as he was declared, medically unfit. Anxious to lend his talents to the war effort, he took a position at the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) in 1941. He submitted himself to Government censorship in order to make a contribution to the battle against fascism. He wrote news scripts and broadcasted his sophisticated blend of political commentary and allied propaganda. During the war he served as a literary editor and columnist for the *Tribune*. At the core of his writing, was, his obsessive concern with factual truth. 'Good Prose is like a window pane' he once declared. As war went on he developed a first hand understanding of the difficulty in conveying facts and political ideas to the largest possible audience. For his war time work he knew fully well that the critics would accuse him of being an intellectual snob who wants to talk down to the masses or suspect him of plotting to establish an English Gestapo. But he was certain that he was on the right path. As he said that someday we may have a genuine democratic government, a government which will want to tell people what is happening and what must be done next and what sacrifices are necessary and why. It will need the mechanism for doing so, of which the first are the right words and the right tone of voice.

At the core of Orwell's writings was his obsessive concern for factual truth which he could see was an infinitely fragile thing, forever susceptible to the kinds of lies favoured by those who were in power. He was staggeringly successful in reaching to the largest possible public in a way, that very few 20th century writers have been, is indicated by a few simple facts. As Paul Berman has rightly summed up in one long sentence, 'The writer who coined 'Hate Weak', 'Thought Crime', 'Thought Police', 'Vaporize', 'Newspeak', 'Double Speak', 'Some are more equal than others' and 'Big Brother is watching you' has sold more than 40 million books in sixty languages which is more than any number of books by a serious, committed, popular post war author. His writing was a product of his commitment to equality and an end to injustice, set against the shadow of Stalinism and war that loomed over life. Just as did writers in totalitarian

societies - Fascist, Nazi, Communist, Fundamentalist - also today writers in uncontrolled Market economies ineluctably face the choice between compromise and freedom. For art is choice and I think true art will always be the 'result of a choice. Art cannot be the superstructure as per former Soviet Socialist Realism; it might resemble the structure on which it exists but it does not derive from it. Yet, art does not need a revolution to be real art. It does not even require political freedom, for one can't tell real writers what to do. For true art, party ideology or party discipline or political correctness do not exist. What art does need as its terrain, committed writers believe, is a vital society. And it needs ideas. We turn up our noses at the word extreme. We don't trust it. It is a dangerous word. Extreme provokes displeasure and doubt, for extremism is hovering nearby.

The last paragraph of Camus's essay, "Helen's Exile", still rings as a paean to the unchanging role of artists: "Admission of ignorance, rejection of fanaticism, the limits of the world and of man, the beloved face, and finally beauty - this is where we shall be on the side of the Greeks. In a certain sense, the direction history 'will take is not the one we think. It lies in the struggle between creation and inquisition. Despite the price artists will pay for their empty hands, we may hope for their victory...."

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## 6

## The Quest For Identity in Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence!* *The Court is in Session*

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Written originally in Marathi in 1967, the play, *Silence! The Court is in Session* was later translated into English by Priya Adarkar. Like Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal* and *Kanyadaan*, *Silence! The Court is in Session* too, attracted much controversy as well as several awards, on the contrary, for its bold depiction of issues pertaining to sexual-morality and the quest for identity for marginalized gender. These questions in India were largely treated as taboo when the play was first written and staged. Tendulkar was labelled a rebel against the socio-cultural norms, which have for long been dictating the lives of men and women, especially in a country like India. The playwright gives a strong jolt to the patriarchy with his portrayal of the unjustifiable prejudices of these self-conceited men. Tendulkar lambastes the very edifice of society which is hostile towards women and treats them as the inferior gender. His outburst against the dictatorship of the male -gender through this play, has been branded by some critics and readers, as too aggressive. Such an outpour against the play from the largely male-dominated bastion is nothing surprising. It rather goes on to further underline the import of the play- - the subjugation of women, as also of those who wish to bring her at par with the egoistic males of the species. Such an iconoclastic and difficult task as this could not have been accomplished by a lesser dramatist. This work required an uncanny insight into the entangled webs of orthodoxy and traditions which strangle the very fabric of society. The playwright uses irony and satire as handy tools to unravel the plight of the marginalized gender gaping for a breathing space. Banerjee in the "Note on the Play" states, "He [Tendulkar] had already acquired the epithet of 'the angry young man' of Marathi theatre, but now he was definitely marked out as a rebel against the established values of a fundamentally orthodox society."<sup>1</sup>

The play ridicules the rotten middle-class urban society which crushes the women with its inflexible values and norms. Tendulkar also seems to be loathing as well as indicting the legal system for being inclined to favour the men. Without a shred of a doubt, he emerges as a past master in presenting the subtle nuances of the bruised female psyche, as is forcefully exemplified by the portrayal of Leela Benare, the protagonist of the play.

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The title of the play beginning with the word "Silence" speaks volumes. It denotes the "silence of the lamb" associated largely with the female-gender. "Silence" may also refer to the tight-lipped silence maintained by the self-styled social guardians who only watch and ensure the marginalization of their female counterparts. In the play, any attempt by Benare to raise her voice against her own exploitation is sternly silenced by her persecutors. The actors enacting the court -scene drawn from the various segments of society, in fact represent the microcosm of the composite society as a whole. In the world represented by the court room the Benares have no voice- - seems to be conveyed by the title.

Leela Benare is marginalized in all her roles as a woman- - as a girl child, then as a beloved, as an employee, as a part of the theatre group, as a single mother and as a social being. The various manifestations of her marginalization are being analyzed in detail. Lively, agile, vibrant and ebullient, Leela Benare, 34, believes that life is to be enjoyed to the full. Laughter should be the seasoning of our life.

BENARE. We should laugh, we should play, we should sing! If we can and if they'll let us, we should dance too. (*Vijay Tendulkar's Collected Plays in Translation CPT 60-61*).

A margin that she happens to be by virtue of her being a woman, Benare is unaware of the fact that "they"- - the self-styled societal guardians- - would not allow her to live peacefully and be happy, forget laughing, singing and dancing. But why? The answer is obvious. Leela is not a "man" in this male-dominated society. She finds the social norms suffocating but refuses to give in to the societal pressures. "Who are these people to say what I can or can't do?" (*CPT 58*). In voicing her rebellion, Leela Benare is, tragically, not aware of the power of society. How it can crush a woman who deviates from the inflexible code of conduct laid down by the socio-cultural guardians - - is something which she fails to realize. Nevertheless, she raises her voice against her marginalization towards the end of the play. In doing so she falls in the category of Dattani's Alka and Dolly of *Bravely Fought the Queen* insofar as she at least dares to speak up against the social order which treats the women as mere objects. She is also a "Queen" in their mould. She braves every onslaught with an indomitable spirit. The use of the element of reversal in the play is discernable to a keen eye. Benare who previously ran after the men for a catch, is badly caught by the men in the end.

Benare has not had a normal childhood as if deprivation of all sorts has been the very lot of this luckless woman. She has been a victim of sexual abuse by her uncle when she was just in her teens. Her sexual-assault makes her indulge in self-accusation, which is a common outcome of such heinous acts on the victims. But even the harrowing experience in the childhood cannot batter her. She is able to rise above her traumatic experience to come to terms with life- - to live each moment fully. Her offer to marry her abuser- uncle is snubbed by her mother as a scandalously incestuous proposal. But Benare leaves the nightmarish experience of her teenage behind, to move on. She refuses to capitulate. She completes her education and becomes a teacher by profession. When we compare Benare to a similar victim of child-sexual abuse, Mala in Dattani's *Thirty Days in September* we feel that the former has more viable coping strategies which enable her to get over her scorched past.

In her later life Benare is victimized once again by the man whom she loved to the degree of virtual deification. Being an academic, she has thorough interest in sharing knowledge. Prof. Damle, the apostle of knowledge impresses her no end. But the master-mind Damle who is already married and has five children, exploits her emotions and uses her as a sex-object. Ironically, she has to pay a heavy price for her love. He leaves her in the lurch when Benare tells him that she is carrying his child. A man can enjoy physical relations with an unsuspecting lady but ditches her as soon as she demands legitimacy for the relationship. Thereafter, her life becomes a long concatenation of tragic events.

BENARE. This love is intelligent. It is love for an unusual intellect. It isn't love at all—it's worship! But it was the same mistake. I offered up my body on the altar of my worship. And my intellectual god took the offering- - and went his way. . .(CPT 118).

This reminds us of Gauri in *Ghashiram Kotwal* who is jettisoned as useless lumber by Nana Phadnavis when she conceives a child by him. Men like Nana or Damle do not want to reap what they have sown.

Those chauvinists who are persecuting Benare let the man behind her predicament, Damle, go scot-free. Since he is a man, he is above any societal norms which relegate a woman to a margin. This "intellectual god" fails to deliver justice to his disciple, his abject follower. He is conspicuous by his absence through out the play. Contrary to her declaration that she doesn't bother about social norms, Benare is worried to death for finding a father surrogate for the child she is bearing. Benare may try hard to show

her indifference to society, yet in spite of her ostensibly devil-may-care attitude, she knows that she has to get married to someone to procure fatherhood for her child. It is an inordinately pathetic situation for any woman with her predicament in India, even today. Benare reduces herself to a mere speck of dust submitting before worthless men to agree to her marriage proposal. This well-educated lady with all qualities to get a befitting partner for her has to plead the men of the sort of Rokde or Ponshe who are no match for her. After Damle washes his hands off her, Benare requests Ponshe to marry her and save her from disgrace But he has no feelings of compassion for Benare and declines her offer. Then she yields before another failure Rokde to accept her proposal. Even this good-for-nothing fellow has the audacity to decline her proposal. Not only this, the twosome even make her proposals public. She is derided as a fallen woman by the men who are all Damles in different forms- -sadists who enjoy tearing a woman's dignity to pieces.

She is just left with only one life-support - - her passion for her teaching profession. For Benare, teaching small children is an extremely gratifying experience as it keeps her close to the children who are far better human beings than the adults. Her feeling for the school children as being "much better than adults" shows her contempt for the treacherous ways of the grown-ups. "At least they don't have that blind pride of thinking they know everything. There's no nonsense stuffed in their heads. They don't scratch you till you bleed. . ." (CPT 57) The adults with their superficial values try to overpower the weak. Their world is full of deceit. In her school Benare commands respect, whereas, in the company of the bedeviled men, she is completely shattered. The adults are the living antonyms of the innocence of childhood which she talks about every now and then. Even this devoted teacher is being forced to quit as the authorities have found out her pregnancy. Nature doesn't let one conceal the growing state of motherhood. She says, "I've put my whole life into it- - I've worn myself to a shadow in this job! Just because of one bit of slander, what can they do to me. Let them ! I haven't hurt anyone" (CPT 58). All her justifications and examples of her competence fall on deaf ears. "I cried inside, and I made them laugh. I was cracking up with despair, and I taught them hope. . ." (CPT 117). Her ignominious dismissal from her job is on the cards. Even Mr. Kashikar feels that it would be immoral to allow such a woman to teach. He gets wind of the same and breaks the news to the court. This public disclosure acts as a last straw to her confidence and self-esteem. She can no longer gather herself till her final outburst in the

form of her monologue. The protectors of society would not allow a fallen woman to teach in a school in spite of all her commitment and dedication. Maybe, teaching is also a mania with her. Whatever, she loves, must be loved to the extreme. Her love for Damle is also crazy. She has been damned by her Dam-Le. Perhaps in the society where falsehood rules the roost, such true devotion is out of place and unrewarding both in professional as well as personal life. In such a vitiated set-up of imperfections and flaws, it doesn't take long for Benare to learn that an unblemished loyalist can never be allowed to live peacefully.

Benare has an infallible sense of judgement when it comes to judging the members of her team. But how she stoops in assessing Damle is not explicable. She has no qualms in exposing the false ego in others. She has the courage to call a spade a spade. She opens up before Samant, a native from the village, in which the drama troupe would perform shortly. She tells him the peculiar traits of her team which is yet to arrive. Mr. Kashikar is described as Mr. Prime Objective (CPT 59). She addresses Mrs Kashikar as "Hand- that-Rocks- the-Cradle "(CPT 59). Sarcastically she refers to Sukhatme as an "Expert on the Law" (CPT 59). Ponshe is referred to as the "Scientist: Inter failed!" About Damle she says, "And we have an intellectual too. That means someone who prides himself on his book learning. But when there's a real-life problem, away he runs! Hides his head" (CPT 59). She at times openly ridicules the others, much to their chagrin. She laughs at the society but the tragic irony is that society has the last laugh at her. The members of her troupe who are unsuccessful in their respective lives feel humiliated and let down. Each, when given a chance in the form of the mock-trial, strikes her back with a vengeance. However, Benare's victimization is not to be regarded as an apt poetic justice for her harmless pranks. Benare is not malicious. Whatever she says about those people is in a lighter vein. But the monsters hidden beneath the docile veneer of the troupe members cannot allow a woman- - a mere woman to dare make fun of them. The moment they get a chance to set things even in the name of socio-cultural paradigms, they lay bare the demons in them. The price Benare has to pay for exposing the hypocrisy of the male-chauvinists is indeed tragic. The once "full of life", Benare loses all her interest in life and utters, "Life is a poisonous snake that bites itself. Life is a betrayal. Life is a fraud. . ."(CPT 116).

Her tragic anagnorisis makes her weak. The piquant trauma of Benare comes through in the process, once her trial starts. She tries to run out of the door but due to some fault the bolt is stuck and it would not

open. As if even the circumstances turn hostile towards a marginalized woman and join hands with the self-styled societal custodians to aggravate her persecution. Her escape-routes are blocked and her wings are clipped by the society to ensure that she remains caged. This disallows Benare even the privilege to escape from her virtual prison. Her predicament brings to mind the condition of Mitra in Tendulkar's *A Friend's Story* who after being brow-beaten by a hostile society which marginalizes the lesbians, kills herself. Benare also attempts to kill herself twice in the face of severe antagonism by society- - first after her rejection by her abuser-uncle, second in the court room when her harassment becomes unbearable to her. Leela Benare's story represents the callous attitude of the society which corners her badly. The fault with Benare is that she has failed to estimate the power of the firmly rooted socio-cultural norms of a society which are strong enough to kill the desires and aspirations of a weaker segment of society- - women. Yet we cannot but appreciate her spirit and assertion.

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## Manufacturing Nationalist Historiography and Consent Through Newspaper in Rohinton Mistry's Novels

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Mistry's novels *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance* are scathing in their attack on the self-serving politics of the national as well as the regional parties and political classes and the failure of the administrative and justice systems to safeguard the political and civic rights of the poor and the marginalized in the post-Independence India. The representation of the political and social life in postcolonial India is mainly carried out from the Parsi perspective, as visible in the political stance and the narrative perspective in the texts as well as in the implicit views of the writer and the portrayal of the characters. However, Mistry's fictional world is not limited to a particular community and in these two texts the critique goes well outside the world of Parsi families and enclosures. The reasons for this vituperative disapproval of the postcolonial socio-political society can be traced to several factors like the perception of politically unjust regimes, persecution mania in a climate of religious fundamentalism and communalism, socio-economic changes in Parsi community, political corruption, political appropriation of the idea of secularism and continuance of chronic forms of class and caste based discrimination.

A notable aspect of Mistry's fiction; as the work of a diasporic writer critiquing his native country's politics and nationalist ideologies and practices is the intriguing relationship of his texts with the newspapers. It is worth noting that the newspaper is not only a resource for obtaining information and 'factual' detail for a migrant and diasporic writer but is also integral to his schema of critiquing the categories of nation and nationalism. Newspaper reportage and memory are the two most important resources from which he rebuilds the social and political scene while being at a distance from the actual site of socio-political and cultural space that forms his subject. This paper sets out with the intention of forming a better understanding of the problematic of journalistic and fictionalized alternative historiographies and the complex relationship between the two.

Mistry, in all his novels, studies how the personal space inhabited by the Parsis is invaded by socio-political forces inimical to their existence. He records the suffering of Parsis, their claustrophobia and discomfiture at

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existential and social levels and also makes his texts challenge official, received and journalistic versions on nationalist/national political developments. The charge against Mistry, and other writers like him that their authenticity can be doubted on the grounds that they obtain information from newspapers cannot be taken at face value and has to be subjected to deeper critical scrutiny. Keki N. Daruwalla is almost dismissive of Mistry's critique of Indian political system. According to him, "Politically, Mistry is a novice" (85). For Daruwalla, the newspaper provides the expatriate novelists the sole means of access to indigenous reality. He writes, "Rohinton Mistry emigrated to Canada in 1975, the year Mrs. Gandhi promulgated the Emergency. His imagination is still arrested in that time zone. He was just twenty three years old, an impressionable age, in 1975 when the double trauma of the Emergency and his emigration took place" (84).

It will not be wrong to say that the newspaper acquires tremendous importance and a very deep significance in the economy of Mistry's narratives but certainly not merely in its direct and unproblematic transmission of information about the political developments in the national context. Its importance lies not only in the sense that newspaper is a means of building a discourse on the nation which the author is in critical dialogue with, but also in the sense that, within the text, the newspaper acquires importance in its exceedingly intricate relation with the characters both as the main connection that the shrunken and estranged world of the Parsis has with the mainstream political life and as a discourse which invites their belief and disbelief. The perfunctory consumption of a national Daily is the first essential of one's identity as a national subject. The Parsis construct their impressions of the goings on of national politics from the pages of the newspaper and it is as though the nation steps across their threshold through the language of the newspaper. Or, to put it differently, newspaper lends cohesion to the idea of the nation in an individual's consciousness.

*Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance* are replete with instances where reading a newspaper is shown to be an exercise which confirms one's status of a national subject and as a subject of nationalist historiography. This applies more to the two texts mentioned above than to *Family Matters* as with his last novel Mistry shifts his focus to the Parsi family set up. *Family Matters* involves a paradigm shift: rather than focusing on an encounter with national socio-political realities, a major part of the text restricts itself to the representation of a single Parsi family. It is a more poignant novel as although there is a realization that the almost tragic circumstances surrounding this family are not entirely of an endogenous nature but are a result of maladjustment, alienation, paranoia and altered relationship of the Parsi

community, as a whole, with their socio-political context; yet these things are more tacitly stated as compared to the first two novels. An almost tragic poignancy arises from its elegiac tenor. His last novel, as if deliberately, avoids framing its characters in the national context at an explicit level by not involving them directly or indirectly with national politics in the post Babri Masjid India. Instead, issues like old age and isolation in a numerically dwindling community receive greater emphasis.

It has been acknowledged in contemporary theory that the print media as an important manifestation of capital/capitalism is generally coterminous with the category of nation and almost characteristically rouses the nationalist sentiment at the time of war with an 'enemy' country. There is obviously an element of the melodramatic in all reporting about the developments in Bangladesh, war with Pakistan and the role of Indira Gandhi as a national leader who led the country to victory. In this sense the newspaper itself acquires the status of a discourse which is supportive of the nation. It appears to be a part of the objective of Mistry's fictional narratives to get engaged with this discourse and to understand and deconstruct it. At a theoretical level, particularly in Benedict Anderson's thesis about the rise of the concept of nation as an imagined community, the newspaper has been understood to be an integral part of print capitalism which contributes in giving form and justification to the amorphous territorial, social and historical mass that has assumed the status of a culturally, economically and politically bound nation. Newspaper builds the national context and becomes the forum for debate on national politics. The newspaper cannot be expected to be historicist in its narration. It is more like a custodian of nationalist/regional historiographies. At a more critical level the relationship between language and nation can also be explored through an exploration of the idea of the newspaper in the postcolonial novel.

Particularly in *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*, newspapers act, at one and the same time, as resource of information, as myth generating stereoscopic material which provides viability to the idea of nation by building and sustaining a discourse around it and also as public forums of discussions on the subject of nation without being seriously subversive. Neither Mistry nor Rushdie, as diasporic writers, conceal their reliance on the newspaper and print media for information but this reliance is not a simplistic and credulous one. The narratives are finally poised to transcend nationalistic underpinnings and historiography of journalistic writings as counter/alternative narratives of nation and nationalism. There is greater scope for subversiveness in such narratives.

The literary artist, particularly conscious of the crises in the semantics

of democratic and secular histories (both in the sense of their disjunctive origin in the colonial times and their appropriative use in the postcolonial times) is bound to display a sense of scepticism about the complicity of journalistic reportage with major national/nationalist discourses making the dependence of the migrant writer on the newspaper a deeply problematic one. In fact, the postcolonial writer betrays an almost contumacious disrespect for the very category of history. One instance from *Such a Long Journey* can be cited as example here. The same newspaper that gives uninhibited expression to patriotic fervour and nationalist triumphalism after the victory over Pakistan, in the war for the liberation of Bangladesh, carries an unassuming piece of report about Major Bilimoria's death as a result of heart attack. It is ironical that Gustad's own participation in the shared feeling of national pride after the momentous victory over Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh is truncated as a result of his glancing at the utterly false news item. He had been savouring every little bit of the information in the newspaper about the details of Indian victory when he comes across the news of Billimoria's death. His reluctant patriotism gets, as if in a trice, soured and converted into disgust. The news falsifies his feeling of national pride.

Mistry's strategic inclusion of the newspaper in the problematic of the relationship of the Parsi characters with the idea of nation clearly establishes the role of the newspaper in sustaining and promoting the idea of nation, nationalism and patriotism even for estranged communities. The nationalistic fervour of newspaper reports particularly during the war is certainly not faithful to factual detail because the times of war are seen as a national crisis and require a heavy dependence on whole-hearted public support as a collective. Often, the politically manipulated coverage of the war is used for artificially generating feelings of patriotism and nationalism. The press become a part of the political program and instrument of propaganda. Mistry, as a critical observer, unmasks the underlying complexity of motives and conduct at such a moment: "Stories about the demoniacal occupation of Bangladesh were balanced by the accounts of the Indian Army's gallantry. Of course, in the newsreels, no mention was ever made of dutiful Shiv Sena patrols and motley fascists who roamed city streets with stones ready, patriotically shattering windows that they deemed inadequately blacked-out." (*Such a Long Journey* 297-8). Mistry appears to be portraying what Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, in their well-known work *Manufacturing Consent: the Political Economy of the Mass Media*, discuss theoretically. Chomsky and Herman provide a detailed exposition of the way media is controlled and manipulated by the

political and economic powers. It is our view that, among their other functions, the media serve, and propagandize on behalf of, the powerful societal interests that control and finance them. (xi)

In *A Fine Balance*, when Maneck returns from Dubai after a gap of eight years and in a period of personal crisis due to the death of his father and his own existential dilemma about remaining in India with his mother or going back to Dubai – he begins to scan the newspapers of past years stacked up in the cellar. The scanning of the newspapers brings his crisis to a kind of a climax further reinforcing the inescapable gridlock in which personal existence is determined by larger political developments and making human tragedy more a consequence of political realities than personal choices.

The old newspapers become Maneck's window to the history and politics of India during the period of his absence. By reading the reports, he has a peep into the experiences of the nation - excesses and human rights violations during the Emergency; the post emergency electoral loss of Indira Gandhi and her party; the unsuccessful and brief tenure of the coalition government which fell due to internal contradictions and conflicts of individual egos and aspirations; the return of Indira Gandhi to power and finally the picture of Avinash's three sisters hanging from the ceiling fan. The juxtaposition of major national events with the news of mysterious deaths which, the reader knows, have a direct/indirect relation to political persecution also acts as an indictment of the limitedness of newspaper as an informant and links the poignancy of personal anguish to the national history. The suicide of Avinash's sisters is actually not a suicide as it can be logically linked to the problems that the family must have faced after Avinash's political murder but this can at best be a conjecture. The newspapers attempt to show the political as apolitical and historical as incidental and individual.

Mistry's narratives highlight the fact that the political discourses are in an intimate and intricate relationship with the media and it is the former that set the agenda for the latter. The journalistic rendering of the national history and politics remains biased, superficial and sensationalistic, incapable of reading the invasions of the private lives by invasive political forces. By this logic, it is only the literary text that is capable of exploring these personal spaces devastated by the political state machinery. In this way, the reality of life as shown in the text is, in a way, negated on the pages of the newspaper.

The mention of Valmik a minor character in *A Fine Balance* who has an extensive experience of political life after having worked as a proof reader of The Times of India for a period of twenty four years can be

made here as concluding evidence of the complicity of the newspaper with the nationalist status quoism. Valmik's character becomes a metaphor for the attitude of resignation and cynicism which is facilitated by interventions of the kind made by the various components of media. Unlike other characters in the novel Valmik is an insider from the world of newspapers and during his years as a proof reader he had become familiar with the turpitude of the political leaders. He spent his professional days going through stories of "corruption, the natural calamities and economic crises...of misery, caste violence, government callousness, official arrogance, police brutality" (*A Fine Balance* 229). After retiring from the job of the proof-reader due to an ailment of the eyes, Vasantrao Valmik used his experience to establish himself as a freelance "morcha" producer (231). This included working for political parties and leaders of all kinds – designing banners, writing speeches and shouting slogans. He admits that he often felt disgusted with the state of affairs but when Maneck broaches the idea of collective resistance he shows his distrust of such measures by saying that it could lead to complete chaos. His philosophy is expressed in these words, "What can anyone do in such circumstances? Accept it, and go on. Please always remember, the secret of survival is to embrace change, and to adapt" (230). He concludes his social philosophy in a personal precept, "You cannot draw lines and compartments, and refuse to budge beyond them. Sometimes you have to use your failures as stepping-stones to success. You have to maintain a fine balance between hope and despair" (231). Valmik's identity as a former proof reader of newspapers and his apathy about reality form a conjuncture on expected lines – one with which Mistry's text has an open disagreement. His attitude is one of indifference and lack of belief in any possibility of change.

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## 8 The Social Realist in Shashi Tharoor's Short Stories

*Priti Deswal\**

Shashi Tharoor makes the purpose of his writing limpidly clear in his preface to *The Boutique*, one of the short stories in his collection of fourteen short stories entitled, *The Five Dollar Smile*. He goes on to comment thus: “*The Boutique* depicted an ambience I had felt at first hand, and it is practically social realism ——— I had a very specific basis for every image, every face, every article of clothing, every character in the story.” (*The Five Dollar Smile* 27) Besides he also wrote for a limited audience: “I wrote essentially for a specific audience ——— the readership of Indian magazines in English language. Most of these stories do not aspire more than to entertain” (*The Five Dollar Smile* 10)

In the spirit of a social realist, Tharoor writes short stories or novels which give the illusion that it reflects life as it seems to the common reader. As a social realist, Tharoor is deliberately selective in his material and prefers the average over the rarer aspects of the contemporary scene. So, his characters are usually of the middle class or the working class. Such characters, live through the ordinary experiences of childhood, love, marriage and parenthood and in special circumstances display heroic qualities.

Tharoor's characters, very much like the characters of R.K. Narayan's fiction and short stories belong to the middle class. Whereas the characters of Narayan hail from small towns adjoining the villages, Tharoor's busy men and women are rooted to the soil of urban India. Some critics are critical of Tharoor for his tendency to ignore poor farmers and school teachers in rural India as most of them constitute the real India. Tharoor advances some convincing reasons for his neglecting rural India and his choosing characters from urban India:

“I am surprised to still hear suggestions that there is something artificial and un-Indian about an Indian writing in English. Those who lend this charge (usually in English) base themselves on a notion of ‘Indianness’ that is highly suspect. Why should the rural peasant or the small-town school teachers be considered more quintessentially ‘Indian’ than the pun dropping collegian or the Bombay socialite who is as much a part of Indian reality?” (*The Five Dollar Smile* 12)

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In his first story, *The Five Dollar Smile* the writer concerns himself with a global issue of international aid to the poor children. Tharoor's work in the United Nations gave him an opportunity to work for the pressing need of children. Joseph Kumaran, the principal character in the short story is the representative of the community of the internationally poor children. His type could be found anywhere in Indo-China, Latin America or in the African continent. His poor nutrition has made him incredibly weak, considering his age. His mother's life is cut short at the time of his birth. But somehow this ill-fed boy does not suffer from any permanent physical damage. What moves even the most non-chalant of readers is his uncontrollable hunger. His pitiable condition wrings an extra tear from the reader as he learns that Joseph is famished and is eager to consume his share of food:

*There would be no food left for him: it had happened before. And today was his favourite day, with crisp papadams in the Kanji gruel. He had watched the cooks rip up and fry the papadam from behind the kitchen door, and he'd tried to get to the table early so he wouldn't miss out on his share. (The Five Dollar Smile 15)*

One of the most engaging short stories is *The Boutique*. The principal character in this short story is the son of an employee of the biggest newspaper in the city. Tharoor's father had also worked as an executive in the newspaper office in Calcutta. So, he knew the people in this profession closely, thoroughly and intimately. The readers are pained to see the discrimination made by the lowest strata of the society to the members of the lower middle class. The mother and son (hailing from the low middle class) are treated indifferently by the waiter and the liftman, the girl at the sales counter and finally by the sophisticated mob. It is the day of inauguration of a boutique called Plaza Longue and nobody is denied admission to it. But on account of Amma's traditional mode of dressing and his own old-fashioned clothes and ill-shorn chin, they are treated slightly. The scornful and unimpressive looks of the lift man told it all:

*From his manners it was clear he wasn't very impressed. Amma in her plain cotton sari with her slightly greying hair done up in a traditional way at back, clutching the initiation card as if for security and looking very plain in narrow trousers. That vent of fashion five years back, sporting an unshaved underchin, looking more unkempt than dashing (The Five Dollar Smile 27)*

The discriminatory attitude of the girl at the sales counter is brought under the strict censure of Tharoor. The sales girl forbids Amma from



taking off a leather jacket from the hanger despite her keen desire to purchase it. When Amma's resentment against the salesgirl's attitude of discrimination is loud and bold: "Here", she was saying in a loud shrill voice of complaint. I thought we weren't supposed to touch the clothes." (*The Five Dollar Smile* 31)

The writer's experiences as a student of Delhi University finds apt expression in stories like 'The Professor's Daughter', 'Friends' and 'The Pyre' and in all these stories, the writer displays his skill at mystifying the readers. Tharoor is downright in stating that these stories are far removed from actual life, but a close reading shows that his experiences as a college student are unmistakably present in them. His remark is a significant pointer to the fictional element in them: "In its depiction of the preoccupations, ribaldry and callow obsessions of collegians, it also risked being quickly ascribed to real figures on Delhi University Campus, though in fact every occurrence and line of dialogue in the story is wholly fictional." (*The Five Dollar Smile* 70)

The character of Professor Chhatwal manifests the writer's dexterity in portrayal of character. The Professor is an odd mixture of idiosyncrasy and conservatism. As Professor, he does not care to revise his class lectures which he delivers in the form of notes to his students year after year. This enables us to peep into the laziness of the man. He flies into a rage on seeing his daughter Jasvinder holding the hands of Harbhajan Singh. He vents his spleen on his daughter to such an extent that he beats his daughter in a ruthless manner and breaks his ruler in the process. His tyrannical conduct reveals that he is a man who respects patriarchal mores and does not believe in the freedom of women.

The writer's reminiscences of his college days in Delhi resurfaces in 'Friends' and 'The Pyre'. The theme of death occupies the thoughts of Tharoor in 'The Pyre'. In this grave short story, the writer walks down memory lane and conjures visions of his two bosom friends. Their lives were unfortunately cut short by an accident. The short story is marked by the bleak pessimism of the writer.

'Friends' is the story of the two friends. One of them is PM and the other is Vicky Vohra. A large part of the short story gives the reader the impression that their ties are indissoluble. Just as the dark lady of the sonnets spoils the relationship between Shakespeare and his friend, similarly, a girl named Rekha, brings about a rift in their relationship and they eventually part ways. The short story undergoes the harsh reality that had their friendship not been built on flickering foundations, it would have stood the test of time.

Readers in search for elements of fantasy and imagination find Tharoor's short stories like 'How Bobby Chatterjee Turned to Drink', 'The Simple Man', and 'The Other Man' replete with such elements. With the avowed idea of paying his tribute to novelist, P.G. Wodehouse, Tharoor has divested the first of these tales of reality. Tharoor's comments in this connection are significant:

*"How Bobby Chatterjee Turned to Drink is consciously different in style and infant. It is also deliberately, as divorced from reality as lives of its protagonists are from the world around there a charge laid frequently at Wodehouse's own door"* (*The Five Dollar Smile* 33) *The Simple Man* is Tharoor's attempt at portraying the life of the novelist, Southey. The dejection in the life of Southey caused by his frustration and failure to become a novelist par excellence is rendered feelingly by Tharoor. Tharoor successfully weaves the fictitious story of Mamta and Kiran into the narrative. It is amusing to find that Meera in *How Bobby Chatterjee Turned to Drink* and Mamta in *The Simple Man* are like exhalations. The theme of jealousy is worked out wonderfully in *The Other Man*.

Tharoor's interest primarily lies in the depiction of urban life, but two of his short stories, *The Death of a School Master* and *The Village Girl* resound with his nostalgic memories of Kerala. They are full of the autobiographical touches of the writer. *The Death of a School Master* in particular, recalls his childhood associations with his maternal grandfather:

*For all that it is fiction, however, the story is firmly underpinned by my own family history. The Schoolmaster of the story is largely based on my maternal grandfather, a gentle and sensitive man I knew as 'Papa'. I recall him sitting on the front porch in his spotless, white mundu with a copy of *The Hindu* in his hands, oblivious to the squabbling children around him, of whom I was probably the loudest* (*The Five Dollar Smile* 143)

The villages of Kerala spring to life in *The Village Girl*. Kerala exhales its aroma through its green paddy fields, its palm trees, its tasty food and giggling girls. The music and beauty of Kerala seems to evoke the worship of Tharoor. He revels in the description of Kerala:

*In depicting such a character I felt out much that this world really evoked (and still invokes) for me ——— green paddy fields and unpolluted air, endless card games, succulent idlis and dosas that never tasted the same elsewhere, laughing girls cheerfully picking voice out of each other's, hair swaying palm trees against a twilit sky.* (*The Five Dollar Smile* 43)

Sunder is the male protagonist whereas Susheela is the female

protagonist. Sunder's annual visits to Kerala have been humorously described by Tharoor as visits of 'the migratory birds. Tharoor holds the female students of Delhi University to gentle ridicule. Even their mode of dressing has been described with a note of amused contempt:

At Delhi University the term of its members was *behenjis* (respected sisters), and ironic reference to the fact that no one in his right mind would try to flirt with one. They wore floral-patterned *salwar-kameez* with nylon *dupattas* and scarlet polish was forever flaking off their nails. They also chatted in the buses in Hindi or Punjabi and spoke English, if at all, in an accent you could have ground *dal* with. (*The Five Dollar Smile* 43)

Tharoor's description of the rural life of Kerala, makes the short story, *The Village Girl* highly readable. The writer's ability in making a contrast between urban society and rural society becomes perceptibly clear even to a lay reader. The backward thinking of the womenfolk of Kerala has not been overlooked by the writer. Women like Narayani Amma's thinking is narrow, insular and retrogressive and this is true of many womenfolk of Kerala:

*It's all this education these girls are getting these days. All they know about right and wrong is what they need to pass their exams. Nothing else I tell you, Kamla, it is all the fault of this communist government. The comment they insisted on free and compulsory education, I could see it coming ..... (The Five Dollar Smile 47-48)*

The thought process of Susheela's father is no different. Grounded in patriarchy, he thinks that the right place for a girl is her hearth and home. So, he shuts out the idea of Susheela's higher education from his mind altogether. He prioritises the education of his son, though the son has dashed his hopes to the ground by his having "failed twice". A similar situation can be seen in Subhadra Sengupta's short story entitled '*The Fourth Daughter*' in which the parents of Mini send her to attend a non-descript school and sends her brother to a reputed public school where he fails miserably.

When Sunder asks Susheela about her plans of higher education, Susheela's replies have frustration written about it:

*'I —— no, I am not going to college', she replied in a low voice looking down at floor as is ashamed of the answer. 'I did well in my SSCL, but my father —— he does not believe in college education for me'. She shook her head violently. 'It is not his fault, he can only afford the fees for one child and my brother is more important, he is doing B.Sc. in*

*agriculture. Everyone says the future is in that, it is costing a lot, my brother has failed twice already, and there are the hostel fees and all. What is a girl going to do with a college degree anyway, my Amma says, will it help me make better idlis for my husband?'" (The Five Dollar Smile )*

Susheela, registers signs of growth with the progress of the plot. Sunder compares her to the *behenjis* of Delhi in the earlier part of the story. But as he draws closer to her, he begins to think of her in a different manner. After Sunder touches her breasts unconsciously and co-habits her, he is tormented by a sense of guilt. This sexual escapade instead of making the woman in her cribbed and cabined, makes her see dimensions in her personality, which she had hitherto not seen. Tharoor describes the bold, intrepid, emergent Susheela in a language full of dreamy languor and redolent of images from nature:

*"She had taken the first step from the yard to the porch and the moonlight suddenly bathed her face. It was lit up in the radiance of dreams fulfilled, and her smile was no longer that of a nervous girl, but of woman who had touched happiness she had not expected to be hers." (The Five Dollar Smile 55)*

*The Village Girl* is a remarkable short story as Tharoor's treats multiple themes in it. The theme of religious tolerance is one important theme. The daughter of Gopan Nair discloses her love affair with a muslim boy. On learning this, the sons of Nair instead of allowing their love to attain fruition, beats the muslim boy, black and blue. The theme of mismatched couples and dowry come within the limit of Tharoor's caustic observation. Susheela is engaged to a drunkard and repulsive looking man (who has a two-year old girl) because he does not demand any dowry.

In his childhood and boyhood, Tharoor was an atheist. But as he grew to sensitive manhood, he held tenaciously to Hinduism. At the same time, he was critical of the evils of Hinduism like casteism and social discrimination. He expressed his opposition to the evils in Hinduism clearly:

*"But I could not reconcile my beliefs with the venality and irreligiosity of much of organized Hinduism, nor with many of its cultural manifestations, in particular the caste system." (The Five Dollar Smile 56)*

*'The Temple Thief'* is a short story that shocks our beliefs on the adherents of Hinduism. Raghav, the temple thief steals idols from the temple in order to provide food for himself. But his thievishness does not make him an atheist. On the contrary it fortifies his religious beliefs:

*Not that Raghav was or ever had been, an atheist; religion had been*

in his blood stream ever since he could remember. But crime was an economic necessity... If God could fill his belly by divine action, Raghav was surely justified in using God to fill his purse – and his belly.... (56). After every act of stealing, he would pray to Lord Shiva to absolve him of his sinfulness.

The hypocrisy inherent in Brahminism has been held to gentle ridicule by the writer. The writer shocks his readers by giving a strange ending to the tale. One day, Raghav leaves the sack containing his stolen idols, whereas the Brahmin who poses to be pious and honest disappears with the sack under the cover of darkness.

Tharoor's prose style is marked by clarity and lucidity. Every line smacks of the freshness and verve of drawing room conversation. The reader feels as though the prose-writer were a friend talking to a friend. Complex sentences are used only when the occasion demands. The prose writer takes recourse to satire and understatement only when the need arises.

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## Multiculturalism in Anand's *Untouchable*

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Multiculturalism stands for social harmony and mutual respect. It further ensures that every citizen is granted equal opportunity, enjoys rights and is equally protected. But the impression that one gathers on a careful perusal of the novel *Untouchable* is that the untouchables do not have any democratic right and are under the thumb of the people who have the social power in their hands. *Untouchable* is a touching saga of an outcaste boy who is made to confront the sinister side of the Indian caste system. The injustice that is meted out to him is too horrible to be put to words. Though Bakha and his family clean the lavatories of the upper castes in order to maintain their health and hygiene yet their work hardly gets the appreciation that is due them. On the contrary they are familiar with shouts such as these: "Oh Bakha! Oh Bakha! Oh, you scoundrel of a sweeper's son! Come and clean a latrine for me! Someone shouted from without". (*Untouchable* 7)

Multiculturalism does not oppose the culture of the minority section. On the contrary, it recognizes its existence. At the same time, it does not encourage the members of the dominant culture to exploit the members of the minority culture. Anand describes the episode at the public well to expose the hypocrisy and exploitative tendency of the upper caste Hindus. The lecherous priest Pundit Kalinath is mesmerized by the beauty of Sohini, the sister of Bakha who is patiently expecting her pitcher to be filled by the priest. Though Sohini is not in the first row, yet Pundit Kalinath shows her extraordinary favour by pretending to be benevolent to her. He has lustful designs written all over him when he fills her pitcher and asks her to clean the courtyard of the temple.

Sohini does not suspect the hideous designs of the priest and goes to clean the courtyard as per his instruction. When Sohini reaches there she finds the caste Hindus fully immersed in religious activities. After some time, Bakha goes there to clean the premises of the temple. The rhythm of the devotional songs has such a strange effect on his thought process that he joins his hands in "worship of the unknown God" (*Untouchable* 52). His momentary devotion receives a rude jolt when the voice of Kalinath reaches his ears. Anand brings out the psychological

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reaction of Bakha on the incident: '*Polluted, polluted, polluted*'. A shout rang through the air. He was completely unnerved. His eyes were covered through darkness. He couldn't see anything. His tongue and throat were parched. (*Untouchable* 52)

Pundit Kali Nath shouts that Sohini had defiled him and the motive behind his shout is his fear of being found guilty. Most people in the society look upon Kali Nath as an upholder of religious principles but his duplicity is evident in his lecherous moves towards Sohini. Sohini tells furious Bakha how Kali Nath "came and held me by my breast" (*Untouchable* 54) In his infuriated state of mind Bakha abuses the Pundit "The son of a Pig" (*Untouchable* 55) When Bakha tries to trace the Pundit in order to beat him black and blue, Sohini tries to mitigate his rebellious spirit thus: *No, no. Come back. Let's go away*" (*Untouchable* 55)

Tolerance is one of the corner-stones of the principles of multiculturalism. Bakha, who enters the precincts of the temple with the "worship of the unknown God is thoroughly dejected owing to the Pandit's attempt to molest Sohini. He is about to raise a word of protest against the wicked priest, when he finds himself victimized by the intolerance of the upper castes. The Pandit had merely raised the false alarm by reiterating the word 'Polluted' three times. The other caste Hindus who associated their high castes with purity and the low castes with pollution spoke in a language bereft of any sign of tolerance: '*Get off the steps, you scavenger! Off with you! You have defiled our whole service you have defiled our temple! Now we will have to pay for the purificatory ceremony. Get down, get away, you dog!*' (*Untouchable* 53)

Multiculturalism recognizes the uniqueness of culture and underscores that it is necessary for every member of every cultural group to respect the cultural diversity of the other group. But in *Untouchable*, the unaccommodating attitude of the upper caste Hindus towards the members of the minority culture evinces the absence of the principles of multiculturalism. The upper caste Hindus are always on the tenterhooks about the 'uppishness' of the untouchables: '*Don't know what the world is coming to! These swine are getting more and more uppish!*' said a little old man. '*One of his brethren who cleans the lavatory of my house, announced the other day that he wanted two rupees a month instead of one rupee, and the food that he gets from us daily.*'(39)

The hockey match in which Bakha plays in the team of Ram Charan is marred by rivalry and casteist feelings. Ram Charan injures a caste-Hindu boy of the rival team. Bakha, out of compassion for the bleeding boy, lifts

him in his arms and takes him to his mother who rails at Bakha before he is even able to utter a syllable. She scolds Bakha for his having defiled their house. J.Bjeemaiah in his book, entitled *Class and Caste in Literature* is not far from the truth when he remarks: *Bakha carries the yoke of insult meted out to him by the caste Hindus.* (*Class and Caste in Literature* 19)

Lakha, is a victim of caste-prejudices like Bakha. But what distinguishes Lakha from Bakha is that the former cannot utter a word of protest against the caste-Hindus for their insulting behaviour towards him whereas the latter shows the seed of revolt sprouting in him when he is maltreated by the caste-Hindus. Bakha's feelings show that he is not prepared to be insulted by the caste-Hindus and he would like to chuck this job of cleaning the lavatories. As he reports to Lakha on all the insults that have been heaped upon him since the morning, his mental graph becomes clear: *They insulted me this morning; they abused me because as I was walking along a man happened to touch me. He gave me a blow.... 'But father, what is the use?' Bakha shouted, They would ill-treat us even if we shouted.* (*Untouchable* 70)

Bakha's sufferings are indescribable throughout the day. Small wonder his exasperated cry is "Unlucky, unlucky day! What have I done to deserve all this?" (*Untouchable* 110) Though his anger is directed against the caste-Hindus, yet he remains passive on the whole. At this moment when he is in a vacant mood, Colonel Hutchinson of the Salvation Army puts his hand round his shoulders and asks him questions like "What has happened? Are you ill?" (*Untouchable* 114) Bakha is completely embarrassed by the kindness of Hutchinson. When he asks the Colonel in an innocent manner, "Who is Yessuh Messih, Sahib?" (*Untouchable* 116) he is informed that he is the God of everybody. With the avowed aim of converting Bakha to Christianity he says "He sacrificed himself for us, for the rich and the poor, for the Brahmin and the Bhangi" (*Untouchable* 120). Bakha is perceptive enough to realize that no religion will liberate the minority culture and so he does not wish to be converted.

After that Bakha learns that Mahatma Gandhi is going to deliver a speech at Golbagh and he proceeds in that direction. (*Untouchable* 126)

Mahatama Gandhi's popularity as a social leader could easily be gauged by the assembled multicultural crowd. Anand, by his close contact with Gandhiji at Sabarmati Ashram has known that Gandhian philosophy is the true panacea against social ills such as discrimination, untouchability, injustice and social marginalization. The Mahatma's first utterance strikes Bakha: "I regard untouchability as the greatest blot in Hinduism."

(*Untouchable* 137) But Gandhiji's sense of identifying himself with the lot of the untouchables has an immediate impact on Bakha: If I have to be born, I should wish to be born as an untouchable, so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and the affronts leveled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from their miserable condition. (*Untouchable* 138)

The Mahatma implores the caste Hindus to open all public things and institutions to the untouchables: wells, temples, roads, schools and sanitoriums. At the same time, he exhorts the untouchables to cultivate habits of cleanliness and purify their own lives. Bakha feels that the Mahatma is blaming the impurity of the untouchables. Once again when the Mahatma underscores the moral responsibility of the caste Hindus to rehabilitate them in the society, Bakha ruminates on the maltreatment of the caste Hindus on his person. Though the Mahatma suggests a change of heart on the part of the caste Hindus to rehabilitate the outcasts, yet his speech does not contain any practical solution to the problem of untouchability. That solution is provided by Iqbal Nath, the young poet who disapproves of the more philosophical and less practical views of the Mahatma: *When the sweepers change their profession, they will no longer remain untouchables. And they can do that soon, for the first thing we will do when we accept the machine, will be to introduce the machine which clears dung without anyone having to handle it ——— the flush system.* (*Untouchable* 145-146)

It is difficult to find a better example of multiculturalism than the speech of the poet. Multiculturalism, apart from promoting the value of social and cultural diversity takes into cognizance the equality of rights and privileges.

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## Lakshmibai Tilak's *Smruti Chitre* : Tussle Aligning Social Bigotry

Dr. Deepti Sharma\*

Lakshmibai Tilak's autobiography under the title *Smruti Chitre* which presents the account of her husband and her life together turned out to be a great masterpiece in Marathi Literature, published in four parts between 1934-1937. Each part shows the transition of little girl into a married woman and a perfect life partner to her husband. This transition was not easy for Lakshmibai, rather it was very painful for her to tear herself from the roots of her family and adjust to the life of being a wife of a convert and gradually embracing her husband's religion. The analysis of her autobiography *I Follow After*, 1950 (English translation by E. Josephine Inkster) is a focus on her critique on the orthodox religious and family systems, her struggle with her ancestral beliefs and that of the society on religious conversions, after the conversion of her husband Tilak to Christianity. It explores Lakshmibai's fight against the institutionalised Church practices of caste discrimination and the power relations within and outside the society after her own conversion. Her transformation can be seen also from a lowly high-caste Hindu wife, to a pillar of hope for the poor and depressed around her.

Brahmans have been among the dominant groups of the society all over traditional India but particularly in Maharashtra they held a position of unrivalled prestige under the Peshwas. Brahman power in general and Chitpawan (to the Brahman group Lakshmibai belonged) power in particular has been summed up as follows, of the significant concentrations of power in society, namely the institutions of religion, the administration, and the ownership of land, the Chitpavans virtually controlled all three. (*Rewriting History*, 5)

Coming from such lineage, Lakshmibai's family considered themselves staunch blue-blooded Brahmans. However, they had a lenient view on the social customs of their times. Lakshmibai's fight was against the institutions of religion, caste system, family, colonial system and the Church. Both Tilak and Lakshmibai fought against the power structures within these institutions, to bring about the change in the social structure of the Maharashtra society. When Lakshmibai was eleven years of age, she was married to her friend's elder brother who was famous in Nasik as a poet and an eloquent speaker. 'The marriage of a girl of a high caste-

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family involved an expenditure of about six hundred rupees at the very least' in the nineteenth century and luckily for her, Tilak married for no dowry and the expenses of the marriage were met by her uncle Govindarao who had adopted her. Tilak with his education came in contact with many learned people from different religions, and was caught in this wave of social reform. From the late eighteenth century, the missionaries had begun to attack a range of 'degenerate' Hindu practices, majority of which were directed expressly against. The aim of the missionaries was to contrast Hinduism to Christianity.

However, before Tilak's conversion to Christianity, Lakshmibai as a woman with no mother-in-law, in Tilak's house, had to deal with patriarchy and caste prejudices in the guise of her complicated father-in-law. Tilak's father consider it Lakshmibai's fault that his eldest daughter died immediately after their marriage. It is said that goddess possessed Tilak's father every Friday and the entire household was present to witness it. Hindus in general and the Maharashtra upper class in particular distinguished the Vedas and other mythical books as the canonical scriptures. They believed in the immortality of the soul and in 'karma' and 'rebirth' as directed in *Vedas* and the *Puurans*, that a man is rewarded or punished according to his deeds in his next birth. He undergoes existences of different descriptions in order to reap the fruits of his deeds in the previous birth. Explaining this concept of 'moksha', Pandita Ramabai says that it is "just as a river ceases to be different from the ocean when it flows into the sea" (*Rewriting History*, 132). According to this doctrine, a man is liable to be born eight million and four hundred times before he can become a Brahman (first caste), and except one be a Brahman he is not fit to be reabsorbed into the spirit, even though he obtains the true knowledge of God. If any man transgressed the law of religion, he'd again be subjected to being born eight million and four hundred times. Even a small transgression of the social or religious rules may render him to the degradation of perpetual births and deaths. This was the belief of the Hindu creed of the nineteenth century India.

Tilak finding comfort in Christianity, he had to do all the readings and discussions in secret. This made Lakshmibai suspicious of his doings. Once she came to know what was happening, she was incited by the neighbours to burn the *Bible* on his desk but she restrained in doing so. Tilak being a high caste Hindu, chose to become a Christian, betraying his 'religion' and thereby his 'nation' in the eyes of the nineteenth century Hindu Brahman society. As the wife of Tilak, during the time of conversion, Lakshmibai went through a lot of agony. For her, dealing with this new development in her life was a traumatic experience. Living in such a century

where there was no independence for high-caste women, her's was a pitiable condition but later she also got converted. Tilak and Lakshmibai were well known for their service for the poor and the marginalised people until the end of their life. Her process of conversion to Christianity was a rejection of the ingrained ancestral upper-caste prejudices against the lower-caste people, and liberation of the upper-caste woman from the shackles of caste and patriarchal domination.

Lakshmibai fought against any injustices she saw in the Church. Once, a man was excommunicated from the Church for unseemly behaviour. However, he mended his ways and wanted to be taken back into the Church but his fellow Church-members, instigated by the officer of the missionary refuse to take him in until he gave a public apology. So Lakshmibai talked to the missionary lady to forgive him but she did not relent. So she went to the Church and read a chapter from the *Bible* where Jesus Christ says: 'he that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her'. Lakshmibai made a distinction between Christ and his Church. The Christ was who was compassionate to the needy, the poor, the destitute, the fatherless, the widow, and the Church officers who shunned all these qualities of Christ to the background, and lived in pride and selfishness, rejecting to help the poor and the needy. This bold stance against the Church won her disapproval and rejection from the Church. She took the bold step of accepting Christian faith even though she came from the highest bracket of the Maharashtra Hindu social order.

Lakshmibai Tilak went from being a lowly wife to a pillar of hope to the oppressed in the Maharashtra society. The independence and integrity of her character is clear when it is realised that she carried throughout her life a simultaneous battle against the Hindu and the Christian religious hierarchies as well as Hindu and Christian patriarchal social norms. Her memoirs vividly describes her struggle not only cross caste and family barriers to join her husband but also to realise her own potential in the new, unfamiliar world opening up in front of her and spotlights the changes *Smruti Chitre* or *I Follow After* has brought about in Marathi literary conventions, cultural perceptions and philosophical underpinnings of autobiography as a genre.

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## Sindi's Journey from Detachment to Involvement in *The Foreigner*

*Dr Sandhya Bharadwaj\**

In this novel, Joshi shows how the absence of meaningful relation becomes the greatest curse in Sindi's life. It deals with the protagonist's loneliness and feeling of anguish emanating from his estrangement from the environment, tradition and his true self. He harbours the desire for clarity from the mysteries of this world but he is confronted with darkness and confusion which leads to detachment from self and the world. In other words, conflict arises between his awareness of death and constant desire for life, his detachment transcends barriers of geography, nationality and culture. The novel, assumes the dimensions of an authentic record of the extrinsic indication of the human existence generated by a deep rooted quest for knowledge and belongingness.

Born of an English mother and a Kenyan-Indian father, Sindi is a child of mixed parentage. Since both his parents died in an air crash near Cairo, Sindi is brought up by an uncle settled in Kenya. He took his academic education in London, then moved to a nightclub in Soho where he worked as a dishwasher and barman, to Scotland where he worked at a small village library and discussed religion, God and mysticism with a catholic priest, to Boston where he studied for six years and met June and Babu, to Delhi where he ultimately settled down. This fluidity of his background emphasises his alienation and his being a foreigner from birth. He suffers from a disturbing sense of meaninglessness, which may be apparent.

Initially, Sindi has a purely detached business-like attitude towards life and people. He is totally unaware of the happiness provided by emotional bonds. While engaged in an amorous sport with June, Sindi marks the sudden fall of a spider from the ceiling, and attributes it to his "exploring his inverted universe" (90). This ordinary and almost negligible incident becomes for him a symbol of man's mysterious position in this universe. According to Sindi, life is short lived, unreal and inescapably painful. He broods over his loneliness in the hall of International Students Association which is intended to bring foreigners in contact with the Americans: Except for the bartender and me there wasn't a soul in the room who wasn't dancing or talking or beating his feet to the music. It is remarkable how

you can be in a crowded room like that and still feel lonely, like you were sitting in your own tomb. (22)

As a student he grows utterly indifferent as to what he studies and what profession he opts for. The job which he takes in Soho is not for the sake of money but was, "to sort my ideas out" (142) as he says. At London he has had a brilliant academic career. At Boston, he takes a doctorate in mechanical engineering, but he has no importance for it and he says, "I cared two pins for all the mechanical engineers in the world" (14). From his lectures at Lords, "... he wanted to know the meaning of life" (63). His professor offers him a position in the college faculty but he opts for a job in New York, from where he comes to Delhi. When Mr. Khemka asks him what kind of job he is looking for, he says, "it should be something that would make me forget myself" (14). He feels that one should be able to detach oneself from the object of one's love and this would enable him to meet the challenges of life. Sindi's emotional and mental predicament doesn't permit respect for the society or religion. His life turns a new leaf when he meets June Blyth, a beautiful, affectionate American girl at a foreign student's party in Boston. She is free, frank, uninhibited and generous with a Christ in her heart, craving to be of help to someone. Initially, June helps Sindi in overcoming his illness. Slowly their relationship grows and she likes him and Sindi loves her. She gives a lot of her time to him as "she wanted to be of use to someone" (19). Her love for Sindi is more than sexual gratification. Time and again she requests him to marry her but Sindi is afraid of possessing and being possessed by anybody and marriage means both. Sindi says, "... marriage was more often a lust for possession than anything else. People got married just as they bought new cars. And they gobbled each other up" (60). Sindi tries to identify his life with that of the broken marriages he has closely seen, and he is rather apprehensive about getting into any kind of relationship even though he loves June and the thought of losing her to Babu is very unsettling. He believes that most marriages end up in hatred: "The hand that so lovingly held mine would someday ache to hit me" (63). He doesn't want to get involved with other women so as to merge completely with them and get bound by the institution of marriage in which he doesn't believe. He loves June but does not want to commit, with his belief in 'detachment' he alienates himself from her physically but mentally he can never get her out of his mind. Sindi's withdrawal from life, love and marriage ultimately leads June to Babu.

Sindi's obsession with the ideas of detachment makes him shrink from his responsibility. Sindi wants to move away from his past, to a place

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where he can continue his experiment with life trying to find the meaning of life. Sindi's sense of detachment turns out to be a mental disaster to him. He confesses, "All along I had acted out of lust and greed and selfishness and he had applauded my wisdom. When I sought only detachment I had driven a man to his death" (8). He could no longer stay in America and decides to leave the country. To avoid being in Boston Sindi had accepted a job in New York, but he returns when he receives a letter from June, seeking his help as she was four months pregnant with Babu's child and was on the brink of despair and completely at a loss. Unfortunately when Sindi reaches June's place he is heartbroken to learn from a neighbour that June died after an abortion. He goes to the river bank and breaks down over the dark water. Here he receives his second insight into the mystery of existence, "Detachment consisted of right action and not escape from it" (162). For the next few weeks he engages himself in the excruciating process of self-examination and self-purification (195). One by one he has lost every one, his parents, his uncle, his lovers, Babu and June, their parents, and finally himself.

Sindi knows that he is responsible for his suffering. Thus, instead of self-pity, he now engages in self-analysis. With June's death Sindi reaches the nadir of his benighted existence. But it is not without a ray of hope. Sindi's alienation is most acutely felt in these sorrowful moments and firmly guided by his characteristic cynicism when he decides to head to India by flipping a coin to find his spiritual home. He must come to grips with the world as well to find his true identity. The "pathlessness" of road to New York reminds Sindi of his own pathlessness. The experience of Boston teaches him the fallacy of his concept of detachment. The Indian part provides him with new insight and a direction to follow as well as an opportunity to commit him selflessly to the world.

In India, Sindi accepts a job as personal assistant to Mr. Khemka, but is not happy with his lifestyle. Here too he finds himself a stranger to both the corrupt rich and the poor exploited labour. Sheila, Babu's sister, is the only person who tries to understand Sindi. She belongs to many worlds at the same time, a daughter, loving sister, a shrewd businesswoman, a friend, and finally a partner to Sindi. In the beginning, she pesters Sindi with questions about her brothers' death and shows him all the letters which Babu had written before his death, but by the end of the novel her attitude softens towards Sindi, she goes to him for help when her father is in jail, and also agrees with Sindi when he tells Mr. Khemka that evading income tax was a dirty thing. She says, "A dirty thing is dirty whether somebody knows about it or not" (178).

Sindi believes that one must accept the responsibility of one's actions as his past experience has taught him that putting the "consequences of my actions on others or presumed to take over their actions as my own had done more harm than good" (175). This is the moment of his self-awakening. His visit to Muthu's home, changes his whole attitude towards life and others. The small fortifications of detachment that Sindi had built around himself all his life are shattered to pieces when the redeeming episode of the crumbling of Khemka's business and the appalled spectacle of the "bundles of soggy humanity" (43) comes to fore. When Sindi says he does not want to get involved, Muthu replies: "But it is not involvement Sir, sometimes detachment is in actually getting involved" (188). Sindi realizes that "Detachment consisted of right action and not escape from it" (204). Sindi is so moved by the plight of Muthu and his people that he finally decides to stay back and take it as his moral responsibility to help them. In this context, Mohan Jha remarks: It is the nature of human distress and suffering of which Muthu among others is a living image, that drives him from detachment to involvement, from indifference to participation, from neutrality to commitment, and as Muthu says and Sindi sees, detachment consists in getting involved with the world. (Mohan Jha 168)

With the reorientation of his life, he even changes his name from Sindi to Surrender Oberoi. This self-transcendence is made possible when he recognizes the problems which man fails to see in his ignorant pursuit of worldly pleasures like a truly detached person. Sindi now sees life steadily and as a whole, and smiles at its absurdities. It brings about a moral growth in Sindi. "All the incidents in the novel like, academic success, breach of trust in love and friendship, suicide, death and downfall of Khemka's business contribute to his wisdom" (Pandey 64). He is no more afraid of love, commitment, freedom, growth, change, of the unknown, he becomes himself. This transformation is the result of a deep seated belief in a metaphysical view of life. As Usha Pathania remarks: In order not to feel utterly isolated which would condemn us to insanity, we need to find a new unity: with our fellow beings and with nature. (Pathania 141)

Thus the novel emphasises through the travails of Sindi the mysterious and incalculable nature of life. Given his track record, it is a sea change in him as it shows his stubbornness to meet life on his terms. He plunges himself into the battle of survival which the workers of factory could not have won without his help, co-operation and guidance. He finds relief from his agony when he shifts the attachment from the self to the world. The sense of guilt which has oppressed him since Babu committed suicide is erased by this realisation that Babu's father is a cheat. The journey



from the West to East symbolises Sindi's spiritual quest. He is constantly aware of the objects of sense and of inexorable law of death that levels everything. It explains to some extent, his reluctance for involvement. This awareness is made more painful by his perception of a reality beyond time and change, a reality characterised by whole-ness, stability and peace.

*The Foreigner* safeguards strong assertions: detachment and meaningful action, conflict with evil and corruption, humanitarianism and love of the people, faith in the process of destiny and a quest for peace, fulfilment and salvation within one's own cultural parameters. Sindi recognises that involvement with culture, language, and citizenship is a precondition for interpreting the world; at the same time he endorses the view that involvement imposes a partial perspective on social life which can generate fateful oppositions in social orientation and human relation. He finds freedom as he could identify his roots in India by being able to help and do positive action where he lives and not being detached from it as was the case in America. His scorn is for the kind of life he has lived and for Mr. Khemka and his style of working, but freedom comes to him in India in the form of choices, which he has in transforming the office and looking after the business with the arrest of Mr. Khemka. Sindi's quest ends with the understanding of detachment, integration of his self with self and the world and his approach to life for love and unselfish work.

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## Narogin's Poem, 'Harijan': The Reading of Australian Identity in Contemporary Australian Poetry

Anita Hooda\*

The poem, 'Harijan' opens up the world of the indigenous races in Australia and in doing so, it seeks to challenge the mainstream culture. It evinces the harsh reality that though such people are marginalized on the basis of their race, class or gender, yet they are capable of making radical representations of their society. Their pride in their indigenous culture makes them re-script the history of Australia. Though the real name of Mudrooroo Narogin is Colin Johnson, yet he prefers to use his pseudonym from a purely personal and cultural standpoint. By opting to be nomenclatured as Narogin, Johnson's primary aim is to privilege indigenous experience and identity and to assert, the superiority of his identity over the anglicized or Caucasian Australian identity. The untouchables of India also referred to as the Harijans are a marginalized section and their deplorable plight moves even the stoniest of hearts. In his poem 'Harijan', Narogin's solidarity with the outcastes becomes limpidly clear through his diction. Narogin finds some grounds of similarity between the aborigines or indigenous races of Australia and the Harijans of India. Just as the indigenous races of Australia have to put up with all the social and cultural discrimination in the land of their nativity, in similar fashion, the Harijans of India have to face maltreatment at the hands of the caste Hindus in the land of their birth and origin.

Narogin's implication is that though the geographical distance separates the Harijans of India from the indigenous people of Australia, yet it is possible to forge a unity for a common cause ——— to raise the voice of protest against social and cultural discrimination.

In the poem 'Harijan' the first stanza brings out the difference between appearance and reality in the lives of the Harijans. Narogin directs his satire against the caste-Hindus of India whose words are not in consonance with their deeds. He exposes the shams of the caste-Hindus who glorify the outcastes at the first instance but banish them from their native land in the second instance. So they are cheated of the paradise that is promised to them. There is no facile or cheap rhetoric as Narogin states the harsh reality of the untouchables. His utterances are marked by a naïve crudity:

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Naming us the children of God  
 Refusing us paradise  
 Exiling us from the kingdom  
 Oppressed by those who fear our touch  
*Afraid to touch the children of God. (Harijan 76)*

In the lines that follow, the poet gives a graphic picture of the atrocities heaped on the untouchables: It is too horrible to be put to words. They are brutally murdered, their women are raped and to cap them all, their guts and entrails thrown to fertilise the land: *Murdering us — our blood and guts fertilise this land: Raping our women — their tears and saliva are our sacrifice* : (Harijan 76) The depressing picture does not sag the poet's spirit and he grows optimistic about the future of the untouchables. The promised land which had been eluding the untouchables for ages, is no longer a distant reality: *"God will give us our promised land. (Harijan 76)* The basis of his hope is the faith in the collective labour of the untouchables: *"Earned by our sweat and the labour of our hands Our paradise created by our own efforts."* (Harijan 76)

The poet envisages an age in which the stigma of defilement attached to the Harijans will be wiped out. They will never be hounded by fears any more. They will inhale the air of freedom and equality or to put it plainly, they will savour the real fruits of democracy. The world 'No' is reiterated in the beginning of the three lines of the next stanza. The poet's wonderful use of anaphora underscores the poet's belief that on the psychological plane the untouchables will have made substantial gains. They would be free and equal to the caste-Hindus: *No more will our touch pollute — no more, no more No longer will they fear our touch — our touch no longer (Harijan 76)*

The poetic diction of Narogin has the effect of everyday conversation, but certain stylistic devices sets the poem apart from its genre. For instance, the stanza begins with the phrase 'No more' but the poet's idea becomes assertive when the line is rounded off by the same phrase. The next line is a wonderful instance of Chiasmus in which the inversion of words gives a strange force to the deep-rooted conviction *"No longer will they fear our touch — our touch no longer"* (Harijan 76) The last stanza gives vocal expression to the poet's hope in the unity of the untouchables. It is their unity which will help them in their freedom and secure their dignity. It is not Gandhiji's identification of them as 'children of God' that will help them to attain their liberation. It is in the fitness of things to read into the social context of the poem. That the poem is integrally

connected with the pitiable condition of the outcastes, is something that is borne out by the title of the poem. The outcastes were labelled unclean and polluted till the first quarter of the twentieth century and Bakha's suppressed feelings in Anand's *Untouchable* veered on untouchability and pollution: *"They think we are mere dirt because we clean their dirt (Untouchable 70)*. The untouchables were not only confined to a set of menial jobs but also made to suffer many social prohibitions in total silence.

They were not permitted to take water from the public wells and "depend on the bounty of some of their superiors to pour water into their pitchers" (*Untouchable* 14-15). They were not allowed to admit their children to schools or permitted to worship in temples. After Gandhiji started the freedom struggle of India, he had in mind the emancipation of the Harijans. Gandhiji regarded "untouchability as the greatest blot on Hinduism" (*Untouchable* 137). In his emotional appeal to the caste-Hindus he wanted all public wells, temples, roads, schools, sanatoriums to be opened to the untouchables. With the desired aim of restoring their dignity and giving them a fresh identity, he himself practiced scavenging so that they could understand the true worth of their name. In post – independence India, the Constitution grants them equality of opportunity, and the principles are carried out in theory and practice. But oppressions against the outcastes still continue unabatedly. It is not unusual for us to read newspaper headlines highlighting cases of dacoity, religious persecutions and assaulting of women. Gandhiji's holiness of the affections of his heart once evinced in his nomenclating the outcastes Harijans, has proved to be a delusion:

We, the children of God  
 That great man named us.  
 Going out to free a nation  
 In which we remain slaves,  
 Now, no more, no more,  
*Mahatmaji, no more! (Harijan 76)*

Even a casual reader of the poem is able to read into the paradox which is central to the poem. Gandhiji not only termed the untouchables 'Harijans' but also treated them as a chosen people. Small wonder he wanted to remove all the social discriminations practiced against them. But the irony of their situation is that they can neither enter into any paradise which they can call their own nor think of any inheritance which is blessed. So their future prospects are bleak indeed. In order to make the paradox clear, Narogin borrows several concepts from the annals of Jewish history. The Pharaohs of Egypt ruled over Moses and the Israelites. But they were

sanguine of their freedom and chosen land, Canan; finally they got their chosen land. But such was not the case with the Harijans. Though Gandhiji termed them as the chosen people of God yet he could not lead them to the path of liberation in as much as Moses in Jewish history. The Harijans will have to attain their freedom by their collective effort and not by the social reforms of Gandhiji. The freedom of India was not synonymous with the liberation of the Harijans. Now Harijans have every reason to believe that their freedom and dignity is not of Gandhiji's making, it is their own.

Narogin finds a parallel between the social discrimination faced by the indigenous people of Australia and the Harijans of India in his poem 'Harijan'. In this way Australian poetry may relate directly to Indian poetry in English in the foreseeable future.

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### Vikram Seth's *From Heaven Lake: Travels Through Sinking and Tibet: a Critical Examination*

Reena Chaudhry\*

Seth's *Heaven Lake* starts with "Turfan" which happens to be the first chapter of the book. Seth becomes a member of a party of organized tourists of Nanjing University and proceeds on a journey that lasts three weeks. Seth and his foreign companions set out from Turfan, a nondescript town in the province of Xinjiang. It being a conduct tour ——— Seth and his companions have thrown all their cares and anxieties to the winds and do not bother about guides, transport and accommodation. But the stringent time schedule in a conducted tour has its drawbacks as Seth points out. He has to move "from sight to sight, savouring nothing". (*Heaven Lake* 5).

Seth desires to have a unique experience of hitch-hiking influences his decision of dissociating himself from his fellow tourists of hitch-hiking. So, at the next stop Urumquai, he parts company. As an itinerant traveller, he is aware of the restrictions which the Chinese authorities impose on the travel plans of foreign students. It is incumbent on the part of every foreign student to carry travel pass for every place of visit. Nor do the Chinese savour the idea of foreign students hitch-hiking here and there.

Readers of *Heaven Lake* (Chapter Two of the book) are appalled by Seth's descriptions of the picturesque beauty of the place. They linger long in our memory. But it is the narrative. Seth introduces the anecdote of the cap-seller to impart a story-telling interest in his travelogue. The ethnic population of Xinjiang are primarily Muslims, who speak the Uighur language. It becomes well-nigh impossible for Seth to communicate with them as neither of them understands the other's language. A schoolboy who understands the Mandarin Chinese of Seth acts as the interpreter between the cap-seller and Seth. Seth scribbles the word "Hindustan" in Urdu script which closely resembles the Arabic script in Uighur language. The cap-seller is so delighted to read this word that he charges Seth a price lesser than its market-price. He gladly re-stitches the cap to strengthen it. (27-28)

Seth is a post-colonial writer but he is never bothered by questions of identity in as much as other post-colonial writers. Small wonder his interest in delineating the geographical, socio-economic and cultural facets of a region

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never flags. The narratives of several of his contemporaries like those of Naipaul, Frank Delaney, J.M.Coetzee and Michael Ondaatje make heavy reading owing to the post-colonial elements in them. But the lightness of tone of Seth's narrative make him stand apart from his contemporaries. He envisions the world as a global village and such a magnanimous vision brings him close to one of his contemporaries, Amitav Ghosh.

In the travelogue, Seth does not draw any dividing line between a traveller and a tourist. In his connection, we must do well to remember that most writers of travel, view tourism as something below the par of travelling. Since the objective of Seth is not to toe in line with his predecessors in travel literature, he wants to enrich his travels by his experiences and perceptions and get the true feel of the country of his visit. Writing a book about travel might have been the goal of Addison, in *Travels in Italy* or Smollett in *Travels through France and Italy* or Stevenson in *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes*. Small wonder, one finds his manner and style of writing extremely fresh. As we read after page, the spirit of a true traveller shines out in the pages.

In his essay *Of Travel Bacon* underscored the advantages of a traveller who is acquainted with the language of the country of his travel. Seth truly capitalized on his knowledge of Chinese. His ability to communicate with the Chinese both by way of mouth and by his writing speak volumes for Seth as a traveller. Seth did not have any foreign tag as he journeyed across China; neither did he savour the idea of moving from one place to another in groups or moving under the protective cover of a guide. In the absence of guides, Seth was able to move from one place to another without any inhibition. Whether he was looking at the medley of different people in the market-place, sauntering on the road or entering into a mosque, Seth was able to befriend people with great alacrity. His sojourn of Tibet became problematic as the Tibetans only understand the Tibetan language and do not have even a smattering of Chinese.

Our reading of *Heaven Lake* makes us infer that it is a true reflection of Seth's personality. Though his poetry is diffused with his personal emotions and observations, yet it is not so revealing as this piece of travel literature. It does not resemble an autobiography; nevertheless, we get a peep into different facets of the personality of Seth. We may wish to concur with the views of D. Maya on the subjective expressions, the tone of the discourse in travel-writing is determined by the persona of the travel-writer: the land is transformed according to the perceiving, narrating self (*Narrating The Self* 20)

The area near and about the Lake is so breath-taking in its beauty that Seth grows euphoric in its praise. It is "an area of such natural beauty that I could live here, content for a year." Seth's idea of bliss conforms to that of the Chinese sage Confucius. Confucius underscored that the only way by which he could attain supreme bliss was by taking a dip in the river, Yi. He would then follow it up by chanting poetry and walking homewards. The vividness of Seth's description of Nature deserves kudos. The glory of the sunset which ravished Keats and stimulated Shelley has a similar effect on Seth. The Kaleidoscopic changes in the sky are partly reminiscent of Hardy's description of nocturnal sky in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Seth's description of the sunset, of the deserts of Dunhuang reads like a picture gallery. Then exultant Seth makes a passionate outburst on stretching the sunset but he is also capable of depicting the experience as an event. For instance he says: *The sunset tonight in this vapid flat-roofed town is beautiful-tufts of pink and bands of yellow at the close, and the freshness of skies washed by rain.* (*Heaven Lake* 49)

Even Stevenson who described his walk in lyrical passages in *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes* does not create the verbal magic which Seth does. Stevenson writes:

*The night had come; the moon had been shining for a long while upon the opposite mountain; when on turning a corner my donkey and I issued ourselves into her light* (*Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes* 25)

Seth brings an element of novelty and contrast when he describes a lake in Nanhu, "the lake is cool, but warm bands stretch sensuously across it". (*Heaven Lake* 69) Seth is so mesmerized by the landscape about the Chaidam basin that he makes a frank admission of his lapse: "*The landscape is so spectacular that I seem hardly to have noticed our more mundane activities today*" (*Heaven lake* 75)

The Potala palace in Lahasa under a sunlit afternoon sky is so captivating that it hold him speechless: "In this late afternoon light it is so beautiful that I cannot speak at all."

The true traveller, as Bacon would have us believe, is who avoids people of choleric complexion on the one hand and befriends people during one's sojourns. Seth seems to have understood the significance of Bacon's observation for he regards friendship as something precious, if his observation on it is anything to go by. At one place in the travelogue, Seth bares his heart to his friends. China and friendship are synonymous to each other; at least in Seth's thought process: "*When I talk of China, I think*

first of my friends and only then of Qin ShinHuang's tomb". (*Heaven Lake* 36) Throughout the travelogue he runs across strange people, but he never fails to stop and talk to them. He mixes so freely with them that it is difficult to conjecture whether he was on terms of familiarity with them in the past or not, Seth loves to delineate the caprices and whims of the people that he comes across on his way. Through he is ever eager to make friends, yet he does not lose sight of his genial sympathy.

Seth's ability to bond with human beings irrespective of their nationality, ethnicity or creed is evident in several incidents mentioned in the travelogue, but the incident which still remains green in my memory is Seth's observation about the truck-driver Sui who gave him a lift. He is also reminded of two other fellow companions on the way and all these evince his innate capacity to bond to treat human beings as individuals and highlights his attitude, Devoid of all cultural superiority, he actually takes sidelong glances at himself: "*He has a way of treating people as individuals rather than as representatives of types that precludes any sense of cultural superiority*". (*Heaven Lake* 74)

The human face of Seth is conspicuous in several observations in the travelogue. He does not think on questions pertaining associations of race. On the contrary, he prefers to regard himself as a human being who has outsoared geographical, national and cultural boundaries and one capable of seeing eye to eye with humanity. Nothing can be more touching than the sentiment expressed by Seth: nationality has no connection whatsoever with the solidarity of human bonding. His description of a night which spends in the company of Sui, Xio San and Gyanseng in the truck of Sui bears ample testimony to his love of human bonding:

Here we three, cooped, alone,  
Tibetan, Indian, Han,  
Against a common dawn  
Catch what poor sleep we can,  
And sleeping drag the same  
Sparse air into our lungs,  
And dreaming each of home  
*Sleep talk tongues* (*Heaven Lake* 98)

Seth's prose is full of the milk of human sympathy. He minces no matters about the denigration of the cultural legacy of China by the totalitarian rulers of China, notably by Chairman Mao and his successors. His overwhelming sympathy shines out in his description of major political events: the fight and the massacre of the peaceful, student demonstrators

at Tiananmen Square at Beijing (in the foreword of the 1990 edition). Seth's diatribes against Chinese imperialism and the desperate predicament of the native Tibetans are clearly conspicuous in the travelogue. He is critical of the lack of amity between India and China. On subjects such as these, his musings exhale the aroma and internationalism: *If India and China were amicable towards each other, almost half the world would be at peace. Yet friendship rests on understanding; and the two countries, despite their contiguity, have had almost no contact in the course of history [...]* (*Heaven Lake* 178)

*Heaven Lake* is particularly delightful to lovers of prose and his style is certainly in keeping with a book of travel. Seth's pages are redolent with the descriptions of the landscape, the people, the culture, the customs and the language of the land of his sojourn. These descriptions are not merely objective; they are always coloured by his subjective perceptions and experiences. All the places described in his travelogue are not extraordinary, but in passing through the prismatic imagination of Seth they become altogether new and unique.

Seth uses short sentences and common words. His lucidity is worth praising. In his moods of heightened awareness, he composes poems that evince his poetic sensibility. He steers clear of foreign words and allusions from other writers to make his travelogue readable. But his brevity should not be interpreted as his lack of vocabulary. He never fights shy of using difficult words, if the context so demands of him. As an illustration of his use of unfamiliar words, we have this line from the text of *Heaven Lake*: *The tall green hills are riven by serrated ribs of red rock.* (*Heaven Lake* 96)

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## The Author as Protagonist in Norman Mailer's *The Deer Park* (1955)

Dr. Ravinder Singh\*

*The Deer Park* (1955) is Mailer's most sensational and controversial novel. When he was writing *The Deer Park*, it was period of spiritual trail as the preceding years and the years involved in writing this novel were dominated by sensuality, drugs, confusion, and above all unsettling and disturbing insights into his own violence. *The Deer Park* becomes a virtual mirror reflecting Mailer as the destabilized American Adam, a typical American hero whose eccentric and almost schizophrenic individualism form the autobiographical-cum-novelistic enhancement of the author's tryst with the Hollywood Californian movie industry. Though this novel flopped as a work of fiction, yet "Mailer's polemic theory of repression in America was to be embraced by radical youth almost twenty years later, during the American cultural revolution of the late 1960s and early 1970s" (Hilary Mills, 141)

Not only this, but at time of writing *The Deer Park*, Mailer also brought about a shift in his mind-set from middle-class values to underground leanings. It was the beginning of a new experience for the author, something which would lead him to hot sex and hot jazz, even marijuana for inspiration and personal transmogrification. While writing *The Deer Park*, Mailer also took to drinking for lease along with barbiturates for sleep. As a Harvard-trained writer of conventional prose, Mailer was attempting "an entrance into the mysteries of murder, suicide, incest, orgy, orgasm and Time". (Hilary Mills, 142) This type of an aesthetic eclipse became Mailer's excruciating rite up passage, which had its genesis where Mailer crafted a plan as a road-map for the plot of *The Deer Park*.

The hero-narrator of the novel, Sergius O'Shaugnessy, is a young would-be writer with no roots. Sergius is a six-foot Irishman with blond hair and blue eyes who has the build of a light heavy weight and the looks of a movie star. Sergius had been a decorated first Lieutenant in the air force, but he suffered a nervous breakdown when he realized he had been killing hundreds of people with his bombs. Images of the burnt flesh of his victims has left him sexually impotent – a classic Hemingway device-although his prowess is duly restored with the help of a blond movie star, Lulu, which is evident in their sexual encounter.

Sergius, ironically, is not a real Irishman. O'Shaugnessy is just an assumed name and as he says, "There is nothing in the world like being a fake Irishman". But after enough fights with the boys at the Orphan home

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he knew he had a right to call himself Sergius O'Shaugnessy. Sergius's tale is linked with Mailer's own sense of himself as somehow being Irish, even to the point of affecting a brogue on occasion. Mailer is proud of this Irish alter ego- a tough, barroom image that hides the nice Jewish boy from Brooklyn.

Sergius O' Shaugnessy becomes something of a hard- drinking stud in the novel after regaining his potency, paralleling Mailer's own emergence as a drinker and a lover. Although Sergius is clearly intended to speak with Mailer's voice in the novel, the dramatic focus quickly shifts to Charles Eitel, the once- successful movie director who has been black listed. In a deep depression over his lack of work, Eitel begins an affair with an unlikely woman: an uneducated sensuous Latin named Elena Esposito who has recently been rejected by producer Collie Munshin. Collie is the son-in-law of the head of Supreme Pictures, Herman Tappis. Eitel's affair with Elena increasingly occupies centre stage in the novel. Although Elena is unschooled and somewhat coarse, she wants to learn from Eitel. She will change herself for him and do what she thinks pleases him, including experimenting sexually with other couples. Eitel knows that Elena is intellectually his inferior, but her potent sexuality and primitive understanding as well as her essential human dignity supports his ego at a time when he is creatively frustrated. Desert D'Or as a Southern Californian town, becomes a welding syntagm to mingle the outer and the inner landscape of Mailer himself. Like the typical novel of the American West, the outer geographical landscape or locale of action and narration commingles with the inner metaphysical landscape of the writer: the landscape of the mind and the soul. Ostensibly, in such a narrative scenario in a novel like *The Deer Park*, the reader can easily discern a'la' Ernest Hemingway that there is little to differentiate the novelist from his hero or heroes.

In "Chapter Three" of the novel, the reader is introduced to a woman named Dorothea who is a night club singer and had been married to a man called O' Fay, "a vaudeville hoofer on the Crest of a Vogue" (16). Dorothea becomes attached towards Sergius, but her son from O'Fay named as Marian O'Fay becomes a pimp at the age of twenty-four. Marian, too, lives in Desert D'Or, but not at his mother's house. Dorothea feels deep regret and sadness for her son becoming a pimp in spite of her best efforts to make him a better man. Marian O'Fay becomes the mirror reflecting the basic character of Desert D'Or and the people inhabiting this resort town.

Whether it is Sergius O'Shaugnessy, the movie director Eitel, Dorothea or Eitel's tender woman Elena, it is the Californian movie industry,

the dream –dump called Hollywood which becomes the thematic blood circulation and narrative matrix in *The Deer Park*. Mailer dissects and anatomizes the frontier impact on American culture as a desire of the people to escape from the complexities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mailer himself inherited unique traits which penetrated into American society, creating the distinct revelation that diversity is perhaps the most fundamental trait of all.

The frequent quarrels between Eitel and Elena fully confirm to the gamut of the virtually dehumanized relationship between a man and a woman in 20<sup>th</sup> century American fiction. Mailer's own relationship with women were no different and as already pointed out the plethora of incidents mentioned in the narrative of *The Deer Park*, bear the typical Mailer stamp of autobiographical intrusion: the overlapping of internal and external fiction. In other words, any intelligent reader fully conversant with the personal life and the highly eccentric multidimensional personality of Mailer, can easily comprehend the various strands and streams with which the novelist (Mailer) wheels his creative narrative matrix in his novels, *The Deer Park*, being no exception.

Mailer's portraiture of various film actor and actresses especially Sergius O'Shaugnessy, Lulu, Eitel and Elena, Dorothea, to say the least just become the novelistic reflections of all those numerous personages whom Mailer encountered in his personal life during his liaison with the American movie industry. Joseph J. Waldmeir has rightly pointed out that most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century American novelists, including Mailer, and their novelistic heroes, depict a quest for redemption and affirmation. As such, what emerges in such novels is a social disaffiliation based on the assumption that morals are social, "hence, are at best relative, and at worst illogical." (Joseph. J. Waldmeir,54) In *The Deer Park*, Segious O' Shaugnessy's return to sexual potency constitutes his redemption "through the medium of Hollywood-nik sexual experiences" (Joseph. J. Waldmeir,55) O' Shaugnessy's sexual escapades, with a little politics mixed, get infused with a touch of the-motion-picture-as-art discussion. In incident after incident, involving O'Shaugnessy and other men and women in all the parts of *The Deer Park*, what we encounter, is the energy, the often unconscious yet meticulous wit, "above all the easy and totally unexpected power of concrete visualization are curious because Mailer is able to make more of a world out of his obsessions than other writers are able to make out of the given materials of our common social world" ( Alfred Kazin,128)

In Part-Five, the last part of the novel beginning with "Chapter Twenty-one," Sergius again talks about a stay in Desert D'Or and the information he receives regarding the happenings about the other personages, with every sentence bearing the unmistakable stamp of Mailer himself. By

making Sergius O'Shaugnessy, the central protagonist in *The Deer Park*, though the focus throughout is maintained upon Eitel and Elena, what Mailer exactly does is to make Sergius, a mirror through whose consciousness all the essential details of different situations are conveyed to the reader, yet from the very First Chapter of the novel to the Chapter Twenty Eight, we have the typical Mailer's stamp on every character and every situation. It seems that what Norman Mailer does in *The Deer Park* is to sequester his personality and his persona not only through the portrayal of Sergius O'Shaugnessy, but through other characters as well. The narrative, eventually ends with Sergius talking to Eitel and the latter thinking about Elena.

Sex for Mailer, becomes a hope which salvages a human being out of the quagmire of despair, hopelessness and meaninglessness. What Sergius thinks about sex and so does Eitel regarding Elena or even O'Shaugnessy relationships with Lulu, it is the two sides of the same coin. Mailer's understanding of the Absurd view and "American Humor" lies at the centre of the major questions that have always been posed by American writers. The assumption that men guided by faith can counter the absurdity of a fallen world, was an assumption which made Mailer himself an innocent, problematic hero exposed to a series of events, "which awakens him to a sense of meaninglessness in nature and lack of moral direction in people." (Richard Boyd Hauck,13)

Mailer in all his novels including *The Deer Park*, becomes the American Sisyphus, who possesses the ability to see the absurd in all situations which may liberate a man from his environment, a debased environment which otherwise would tailor his conscience and consciousness, including his hero's into conformity with itself. Indeed Mailer, in *The Deer Park*, displays the ability to see all sides to every question, with the awareness that the absurd view "is both progressive and destructive, serious and hilarious, yet the only possible view, permeates American humor." ( Richard Boyd Hauck,13)

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## Marx, Hegal and Feurbach Views on Alienation

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The English word “Alienation is derived from the Latin word ‘Alienatio.’ ‘Alienatio’ is a ‘noun’ which receives meaning from the ‘verb ‘alienare’ which means — to make a thing of other, to snatch, to avoid, to remove, etc. The root of Alienare is the word ‘Alienus, which means — to relate a thing of anyone to any other. Moreover, behind the origin of this word ‘Alienus’ is the word ‘Alieus’, the meaning of its adjective is ‘other’ and its noun is ‘Some one else’s’.”(Klien Ernst,1966 ).In the French language Alionare and Alienation, are used in the same sense as the English words Alienate and Alienation.

Alienation is a part and parcel of human condition. Man is alien to himself because he is an instinctual man underneath all his civilized trappings. He who is not alienated in some area and to some degree is not human and he who does not recognise the psychic foundations and social conditions which this alienation makes inevitable will never get on the way to overcome it. Marx was alienated; Freud was alienated; Alfred Tennyson was alienated. Philosophically speaking alienation means man’s estrangement from the absolute Spirit, as Hegel appraises inauthentic existence as Heidegger says and according to Jean Paul Sartre, it is self-objectification or where the status of man is reduced to that of a commodity. Sociologically alienation is a produced human condition through imposed, forced labour. Psychologists consider it as a conflict within the self. Man is at war with himself. Thus philosophers, sociologists and psychologists have considered the concept of alienation either to explain the ills of modern capitalist society or the mechanized consequences of science and technology. But the primary focus of almost all of them has been with the increasing loss of self, community and group identity and the resultant situation as manifested in the increasing depersonalization, dehumanization, estrangement, social deviance and rebellion.

The origin of the concept of alienation is often traced (though erroneously) to Karl Marx.of course, Marx used it to better effect than previous philosophers did. He did not use alienation in the same sense in which Hegel and Feuerbach had done. He retained the word, but changed its meaning almost completely. It would be incorrect to consider that simply a transfer of terminology from either Hegel or Feuerbach to Marx will result

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in a transfer of concepts. The newness of Marx’s internationalization of this term — both as a concept and as a theme would be more clear in case we shortly retrace the history of the concept through its various changes. Theme of alienation was latent in much of Christian religious literature. Of course, it may be a mark of all religious literature. Religion after all could not escape it, for its constant theme was the unfulfilment of humanity of men. Often it noted the fact of unfulfilment of human aspiration in existing societies with sensitivity. In this respect, religious ideology was sometimes more humane than later bourgeois ideology. But this elementary humanity of the religious theory pushed it into contradictions. Religious thought was totalistic. Its fundamental principle was the principle of a circle — completion of the human potentialities and aspirations — God’s society, the divine order.

The concept of alienation was fully secularized only with Feuerbach. For him, it was not an isolated or incidental concept. In fact, Feuerbach had to do two things he had to secularize the concept and to give it a precise materialistic meaning. In his opinion, the source of alienation lay in the institution of Religion. Overcoming alienation required a humanistic religion of man, not of God. Feuerbach observed that man had no master but himself, the true religion consisted in surmounting the religious alienation and realizing the essence of man. Man got alienated from himself when he created and put above himself an imagined alien higher being and bowed before that being as a slave. He got alienated when he transferred his attributes to a superior being that he called God. Both in early religious theory and in Rousseau alienation was present as a theme, not as a rigorous concept. It was used as a concept by Hegel, of course, in a spirit keeping with idealist philosophy. The concept of alienation was materialised by Feuerbach. Feuerhach’s theory of alienation was to have important consequences for later philosophy, particularly for Marxism. For Feuerback, religion was the classical process of alienation on the level of’ ideas. The image of God was merely the alienated image of man. It was a wish-fulfilment on a massive scale. Feuerhach also thought of two levels; the level of the empirical reality, and an ideal, normative level of wishes and aspirations, frustrated, beaten back by lire. The relation here also was an inverted relationship, a relationship of alienation — the poverty of real life, its misery, measured in exact proportion to the abundance, satiety and peace in heaven, everything man wanted to have here, in vain. Alienation in Feuerbach pointed to this tension between the two sides of life, what men were and what they could have been.



In the modern intellectual context, alienation has come to mean two things. They are distinct yet related. We might call them the structural fact of alienation, and the psychological reflex of alienation on the level of feeling emotion and affectivity. Of course, the feeling assumes the structure. The structure causes the feeling. But it is necessary to differentiate the two under the labour contract on the condition of receiving wages for his labour, a man determines his labour for others. In this way man entrusts his production or property, which is the part of his personality, to others. By giving right on his labour to others, "man becomes alienated from his personality and his substantial base."

Before Hegel the word alienation was used in political reference particularly in relation to 'Social Contract' Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) the Dutch jurist & statesman used it in the same perspective and laid down that to give one's own supreme right or the right to analyse the works of anyone was equal to the right to transfer property. Grotius wrote, "As the alienation from other objects may occur in the same way alienation from the supreme rights is possible." (Thomas Hobbes, 1951:108) He further said that this type of alienation provided a basis and propriety for the political power. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), the English philosopher wrote "By renouncing his right a man takes him away from his freedom." (Rousseau, 1964:257) Hobbes makes it clear that a man enters into a social Contract, when he renounces his rights. He gives his rights to other with this intention that 'That Other' will save his life in the same manner, as he will. According to John Locke (1632-1704), another English philosopher, "That can be a political society where people intentionally entrust their natural power in the hands of any community." Though Locke also used words like 'entrust', 'renounce' etc., yet he only means the alienation from the supreme.

Luckacs was the only scholar who while studying the early manuscript of Marx, pointed out the Alienation-Philosophy of Marx. This reviewer of Hungary gained reputation in all the western world in comparison to other Marxist scholars. Before this in third decade Luckacs was insulted by Russia as he had turned to Hegel, leaving the true path of Marxism. This way a great injustice was done to Luckacs.

In the real sense Luckacs never turned to Hegel. Perhaps his aim was to trace the alienation from its origin and therefore the study of Hegel was necessary. For the study of alienation, perhaps the importance of Luckacs is more than that of Hegel and Marx. The inclination of Luckacs towards Marx shows his humanitarian approach. Existentialists also realised

this humanitarian approach. Heidegger has clearly accepted that he was inspired for authentic and unauthentic Existence-principles from Luckacs. Luckacs was influenced by Weber and George Simmel and those philosophers also influenced the Existentialist philosopher Karl Yaspers. This statement of Walter Kaufmann about Luckacs is absolutely right, "Luckacs had never wanted to renounce his roots, and humanism of young Marx provided, at long last, a desperately needed bridge for some rapprochement between Marxism on the hand and Existentialism and humanism on the other." (Walter Kaufmann, :XX.) In this way Luckacs was the first exponent of Hegel's approach about Alienation-Philosophy, creator of Existentialism and in the sense of promoter of Humanitarian approach was a coordinator of Marxism and Existentialism.

Erich Fromm introduced the early works of Marx to the American people. He explained that this philosophy was like existentialist thinking. It represented protest against man's alienation, his loss of self and man's transformation into a thing. In this way, in America, with the inclination towards Marx, Mills notion too got popularity. This notion was supposed by the discovery of Marx's 'Philosophical Manuscript'. Before that it was found impossible to trace philosophy in Marx and thinkers were more attracted towards Engels than Marx. Moreover, at that time in the communist countries no affection for man was seen. At this time Marx's philosophy was discovered in the form of a liberator of man. In his manuscripts the glimpse of new philosophy appeared and it was established that these early works of Marx more than the later works of Engels are in real sense the inaugurators of his philosophic image. Under the influence of his recognition in France, Germany, Poland, Yugoslavia and other countries discussions related to Marx invariably referred to alienation as the main topic. In America Alienation after knowing the real meaning of these words used for Alienation it became popular in different forms. Erich Fromm in one of his essay wrote that the meaning of alienation in atheist language is the same which is of 'Sin' in the theist language. Mostly, all the philosopher-interpreters of alienation talk ill about alienation and they consider it a curse for modernisation. Whenever it is expounded that alienation was present in the past also, they immediately clarify that it is in excess in our age. In real sense, neither Marx's dream of society without alienation can come true nor can it be proved that circumstances were not bad in the past than today.

In the study of Hegel's book 'Phenomenology' thinkers and reviewers did not pay any attention to the part of 'Self-alienated Soul discussed in

this book, Marx was the first thinker who discussed this part and also the concept of alienation on this basis in his early writing 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts'. Marx for the first time has explained alienation in detail in the Socio-Economic context. In his interpretation he reviews the earlier thinker Hegel also. In clear words he felt indebted to Hegel and he has condemned Hegel only because of difference of views. While studying Hegel, Marx was influenced by Feuerbach, the chief member of Young Hegelian Group, of Berlin University. Feuerbach was not in favour of seeing the achievements of this world in the form of Hegel's Social substance and objectification. He considered the materialistic achievements of the real world to be true. He refused to accept this concept that human soul is a part of Supreme Power. According to Feuerbach, "My doctrine in brief is as follows: Theology is anthropology, i.e ; which reveals itself in the object of religion ... is nothing other than the divinised essence of man." (Irving L., Horowitz, 1966:215) He says that man has created God and not that God has created man. Man has vested his best virtues in God and declared himself a sinner and indigent. In this way man has wrongly interpreted his nature. Man has become alienated by vesting his virtues in God and neglecting his basic nature. Feuerbach by his logical conclusions has condemned Hegel's views related to unworldliness, religion and God.

Marx was deeply influenced by Feuerbach. Feuerbach laid the foundation of secular, Godless, and materialistic philosophy; it facilitated Marx to erect the edifice of Socio-economic philosophy. Marx condemned Hegel's views on alienation pointing out that, (they are) "merely the thought of alienation, its abstract and hence vacuous and unreal expression."<sup>18</sup> In his early book 'Manuscripts' Marx has expounded the concept of alienation while in his book 'Communist Manifesto' he considered alienation a prattle. The question arises whether there is any influence of the early thinking on the later thinking of Marx. There are two groups of scholars of Marx. One group does not accept any relation between the two forms of Marx's thinking while the second group does not think so. According to Sidney Hook, "Aside from the specific sociological doctrine of the fetishism of commodities ... the central notion of self-alienation is foreign to the historical, naturalistic humanism of Marx." (Richard Schacht p.66). On the other hand Robert Tucker thinks, "Alienation is the main concept of Marx, but it has hidden behind his concept of society." (Richard Schacht p.66) In his early book 'Manuscripts' Marx has referred to 'Alienated Labour' also. The scholars of the second group will have to accept that in all his mature books after 'Manuscripts' Marx has not used

the word 'Alienation' anywhere; and in 'Manuscripts' he has discussed alienation in the main form. In this way it becomes clear that as an early thinker Marx was an Alienation-critic and though as a mature thinker he did not discuss alienation, yet his thoughts about alienation cannot be ignored.

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## Amachya Ayushyatil Kahi Athawani : Ramabai Ranade's Flight From Darkness to Illumination

Dr. Ritambhara\*

*Amachya Ayushyatil Kahi Athawani* is a book of reminiscences by Ramabai Ranade, published in 1910 in Marathi and translated into English as *Ranade : His Wife's Reminiscences* by Kusumvati Deshpande. Although she does speak a little about her childhood, a major portion of her autobiography deals with the life which began at the age of eleven when she got married to the well known scholar, jurist and social reformer Mahadev Govind Ranade.

After he lost his first wife, Ranade wanted, in keeping with his commitments to the ideals of the social reform movement, to marry a widow. His father, however, would hear nothing of it and arranged his marriage to Ramabai. It was agonizing for Ranade as he was torn between his father's wish and his own social commitment and finally had to give in to his father's wish. In Ramabai's words: "Two principles were sacred to him – never to go against the word of his father, and never to disturb the peace and well-being of his family. For this, he gave up a view which he had accepted as correct over a long period of time, the principle of the justice of widow remarriage. He gave up his valued friendships. He even flung away his self-respect and the esteem arising from it. For the sake of his principle of devotion to the parental word, he faced the ridicule and lasting calumny of society." (*Ranade : His Wife's Reminiscences*, 32)

Ranade, probably in protest, even on the day of his marriage did not take a day off from the court. He returned from the courts before the hour of the wedding. He did not allow the customary social ceremonies at all. After the wedding she was left in her new home in Poona. The day her father left she was summoned to the terrace by her husband. He wanted to know if she knew her husband's name? He also enquired about her family and whether she knew to read and write. She could do neither. "So that very night I was given a slate and a pencil and the first lesson of seven syllables, "Shriganeshayanamah". It was my first chance to handle a slate and a pencil and my first glimpse of the alphabet. It was decided to denote two hours every night to teach me. "

(*Ranade: His Wife's Reminiscences*,37)Her studies at home were

not welcome. Women of her family were very much against her education whereas men were encouraging and favourable. "My father-in-law had taught his wife and daughter to read, write and keep accounts. And the women too felt proud of this achievement ..... yet they were never sympathetic to my learning. On the contrary, they hated it and used to get very angry with me."

(Memoirs of Our Life Together, 283)

There were in all nine women in her house who never wanted her to study. They would create a subversive atmosphere. While she had to learn the slokas and chant the poems loudly according to the specific tunes of different metres. They would tease her the next day.

"If I chanted them in a soft, low voice, "he" would get angry; and if read them loudly, some woman or other in the house was bound to be eavesdropping, standing either on the staircase or at the door. They used to memorize the tunes and stanzas I had sung at night and mimic my singing the next day. They used to make faces at me, tease me, mock me and put me to shame in front of the other women in the house." (*Memoirs of Our Life Together*,283)Ramabai would never answer back and would just listen. They would keep creating troubles for her. Sometimes they would say:"Why do you unnecessarily invite the wrath of these older women by reading books? We too feel sorry for you, you know ....They may ask you a hundre times to read, but you can very well choose to ignore it. And that would solve the whole problem!"(*Memoirs of Our Life Together*,284)For Ramabai these exhortations were never a deterrent. She would never argue with them and would follow her own resolve. After a few months passed like this she was done with her studies of Marathi and her husband started to teach her English. This demanded more time which further infuriated the elder women. It was an everyday ordeal which she could overcome only because of the encouragement of her husband. He would say,:

"Try to endure it. Just don't say anything to them, that's all. Your mother-in-law doesn't scold you, does she? Why should you be so upset if somebody else scolds you ?"(,284)

Her husband's transfer to Nasik came to their rescue. When in Nasik she says:"Once again my studies began according to "his" plans. (, 63)Her English lessons were going on well. After finishing the two English readers she started reading Aesop's Fables and also the New Testament as they were written in simple words and short sentences. To give her practice

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in accountancy her husband asked her to jot down the daily expenses. He used to give her enough practice in all the subjects.

Ramabai first entered public life in 1878, at the age of sixteen, when she began the practice of inviting women in different towns for the ceremony of haldi-kunku. The actual purpose of these gatherings was to convince the women of the need to educate their daughters. At Bombay and Poona, in 1881, she visited women who were in favour of social reform and persuaded them to join the Arya Mahila Samaj which was founded by Pandita Ramabai in association with Prarthana Samaj with only a handful of women. Together they would organize meetings and lectures on various topics but only few ladies would attend these meetings. Even Ramabai had to face stiff opposition from the women of her house for these meetings. They would ask her not to attend these meetings and would say. " You should really not go to these meetings. You should not touch Panditabai even if she comes to our house. Even if men want you to do these things, you should ignore them. You need not say no; but after all, you need not do it."

She was well set in English by this time. She would accompany her husband for various tours and most of the time women gathering was addressed by her. For the first time she read the address in English in a large meeting before the Governor, Sir James Ferguson, pressing the need for a High School for girls in Hirabagh. This address of hers instilled immense confidence in herself but back home she had to face strong opposition. Even her husband was not spared by Tai Sasubai: "Were you not ashamed to see your wife reading out in English in the presence of two thousand people? How did your *pugree* not fall off! In the old days people valued their good name above all. Now things are all changed. I suppose you were greatly pleased ..... " (,89)

Her husband's call for patience were the only soothing and motivating words for her - "I can quite understand how painful it must be for you to swallow everything without a word in your defence. But the endurance we acquire today will be life-long asset to us. " (,90)

She worked untiringly and courageously in popularizing women's education through the High School for Indian Girls at Poona where even educated men argued that the best school for a girl was the home of her in-laws. Their objection was that education "makes women unruly, callous and immodest." So Ramabai urged the girls to see that they gave no scope for such a change.

Ramabai's powers of organization found a wider scope in Bombay from 1893 onwards, where her husband was now appointed as a Judge at Bombay High Court. As the president of the Arya Mahila Samaj her work gained momentum. Later with the help of some ladies she founded the Hindu Ladies' Social and Literary Club and started educational and industrial classes for women. Ramabai grew in stature with each year that passed. Her achievements symbolize a glorious transition in the life of Indian women- from the shattered virtues of the past towards an ideal in which women would be an equal partner with man in all fields of activity.

Justice Ranade died in 1901 after a short illness and Ramabai plunged in sorrow and desolation. She closes her reminiscences with her husband's passing away, referring to him as: "The bright radiance of that sun of married bliss, in whose effulgence I basked with pride and joy continuously for twenty-six years, was suddenly engulfed in darkness ! Those sacred feet, which accepted my homage all those years suddenly faded away." (, 219)

But though the sun had set physically, the inner world of her mind was still alight. After a year of overwhelming grief, she composed herself and resolved to dedicate her life to the service of humanity and the uplift of women. Her work during the twenty-three years of her life after the passing away of Justice Ranade was a brilliant sequel to the period of her life spent in his companionship.

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**Unspoken Words: An Analytical Study of Silence  
in Anjana Appachana's *Bahu, Incantations*  
and *Listening Now***

*Kiranpreet Baath\**

Anjana Appachana is an author who truly interprets and represents Indian middle class women and their lives through her writings. She makes her characters speak about everyday life of Indian culture and society. Their concerns, desires and dreams form the dominant issue of Anjana Appachana's works. Her protagonists are often seen choked by the domestic, traditional and social confinements; they are ever seen struggling for the survival. In revert of all the duties, responsibility and devotion she extends to society, she is given to exploitation, oppression, suffocation and ultimately, silence. The heart filled with pain, the parched saliva and eyes gleaming with tears need to be out poured but these are always halted in the name of shame and ignominy.

Anjana Appachana's capturing of the apparent silence of her women characters highlights her concern for women's problems and provides them a voice in a different way. Her stories "Bahu", "Incantations" and her novel "Listening Now" provide the reader with disturbing accounts of sexual harassment and exploitation. All the three works deal with the subdued world of females in the name of social obligations and taboos. The females keep on getting exploited at the hands of patriarchal society but could not dare to speak a word due to fear of being called "shameless". This unveils the truth of Indian society which tends to blame the female for everything, no matter if she is a victim or a convict; she has to pay in one or the other way. Even the most pious institution of marriage does not fail to victimize woman. Rather it provides the society a more legal platform to violate woman. All the stories are based on oppression of woman and her exposure to the choking confinements and suffocating male oriented traditions and cultures of Indian society, ultimately leading her to "silence".

The short story "Bahu" is a story of oppression and silence, imposed by a woman who is an exploiter of daughter in law; woman is exploited here by another woman and not any man. The authority and domination of mother in law is society itself in microcosm. "Bahu" being a story of unnamed daughter in law becomes a story of almost all the households of

Indian middle class families. The protagonist of the story is unnamed and therefore, she is called as 'bahu' only. This is an evidence of loss of her identity as human being. She is given importance in household as bahu only which is nothing more than a tag given to her for accomplishing some homely duties. Under the name 'bahu', the protagonist loses her actual name which is indicative of the fact that her name does not matter at all. She is seen as daughter in law, wife, mother, sister in law but her own self is dissolved somewhere. She is shown always living under the controlling presence of her mother in law. Mother in law, if seen from broader perspective, is the representative of dominating society which always keeps a check on the females and to confine them in boundaries, certain rules are introduced for females which are always violated by society itself.

In "Incantations" the insensitivity of society towards women and more rigorous exploitations at the hands of society in the name of marriage is highlighted. In the story Sangeeta the protagonist is shown being raped by her brother in law 'Abhinav' before marriage and Sangeeta is forced to keep quiet by her conscious self as she is well aware of the fact that she will be the sufferer ultimately. Unable to speak and revolt against this torture, she relegates herself to the torturing world of silence. Abhinav is a representative of society in which to be a man means to be able to exploit and oppress his victim to no end. For him Sangeeta's silence either means her acceptance or her fear and in both the cases he is victorious as he may continue with his behaviour. He never understands or even tries to understand the actual reason behind her silence, her pain and her virtual death every day.

However, in her novel "Listening Now" She amalgamates the attitude of whole society towards females. The novel successfully speaks about the society as unsafe for women. In the novel, rampant acts of sexual assaults are casually or callously inflicted on females by men. The men involved in this are father's boss, brother's friends and strangers on street hence they point towards the irresponsible and oppressive attitude of society towards women. The entire novel becomes a showcase of suffering, pain, shame, and silence running ubiquitously through it. The novel is a narrative of different stories of oppression and exploitation of women at the hands of society. It is the story of Padma who is an English professor raising her daughter Mallika, alone in Delhi. She is alone as she has no husband, but she has the support of her sister, her estranged mother, and her close-knit set of friends. She is ostensibly a widow, even to her closest friends, who are perfectly and silently sure of her goodness. One of her friends thinks she is a divorcée and the other correctly identifies her as unmarried but they

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do not discuss this with anyone, including each other. The mystery of the love affair that produced Mallika propels the plot, but the story is much bigger than that. Each section is from a different perspective: Mallika; Padma; Padma's sister: Shanta; Padma's mother: Rukmini; Padma's friends: Anuradha and Madhu; and finally Mallika's long-absent father. Each person focuses on their own life, conveying a cross-section of personalities and situations in a complex network of relationships and feelings. The different voices, the different characters, the sense of the women's histories and daily lives form the theme of the novel. The novel evokes a strong sense of the cultural context and quiet desperation that characterized these women's lives in a variety of ways. It also evokes a strong sense of the constant, minute, wearying denigrations of women, the threat of violence, and the violence that goes unacknowledged and unrecognized, sometimes even by the victim. Perhaps it is known by the victim but her inability to speak is generally taken as an attitude. The story of outraging women's modesty does not go unnoticed even in this novel. Several times women characters are spotted retelling the tales of such mental agony. Mallika mentions how she along with her friends was teased by two men passing by on a scooter who hit her in chest, one of the most frequent acts of violence against women marked in Indian society. They roars "loud and triumphant" after grabbing Mahima's thigh and Prabha's breast. Madhu reveals a horrifying incident in which she escaped a rape narrowly while she enjoyed an evening outing with her other friends. Neither could they speak a word nor were they encouraged to do so as policemen standing a few yards away "stood grinning". The novel goes a step further in identifying another form of oppression which is almost witnessed and silently taken by every woman of Indian society and this is their inability to explore the areas of their interest, personal pursuits. Anu, Padmini's friend, become a representative of females with subdued passions or hobbies as she has to snub her talent as classical dancer for the sake of her family, the fact, however, is well known to her family. She is a sufferer at the hands of her mother in law and whenever she tries to tell this to her husband she is convicted for misrepresenting his mother's actions. The theme of men's ignorance towards the desires and wishes of their wives becomes more prominent when Shanta's husband gives her a sari of grey colour, the colour she neither likes nor wears. This proves that her husband does not even know her likes and dislike, whereas she is shown taking care of all his minutest likes and dislikes. She must wear whatever is given to, shows an attitude that further hides her identity. She is a wife and for wife whatever is given by husband is excellent, this attitude shouts at its highest

pitch through this unconscious gesture. The agony further worsens when Anu recalls her sexual relationship with her husband, which ends up being very mechanical. She longs for his tender embrace but cannot tell him her desire. With the words unspoken her wish and desire is deep buried in the name of shame as "such things could never be uttered". Incident of repeated pregnancies of Madhu shouts for the insensitivity of husbands and certain things which are taken for granted in the institution like marriages and the body of woman is seen as something to be a continuous sufferer in order to cater to the needs and desires of the more powerful in such institutions. The novel testifies the presence of desires, passions, urges and longings of Indian women which despite of being present in their conscious are left unsaid due to certain obligations and taboos such as "shame" "sacrifice" "tradition" "culture". The filth keeps on piling up and women suffering the deep rooted pain at the hands of society is made to suffocate and die in that situation without even uttering a word. The silence, when voices itself, becomes violent

The stories set in Indian middle class deal with the oppressed and plundered world of females. The obligations imposed on women by the society are merely the tools at the hands of society to ease the exploitation and legalise the torture. Anjana Appachana, through her stories explores the unsaid and unheard world of Indian middle class females. Her characters speak of the oppression through the language of silence. Their unspoken words are their language of narrating the story of their traumatised world. All the three stories speak about different mediums of exploitation but the end result is same in all the cases and that is "silence". It is only in "Incantations" that the protagonist raises her voice after undergoing series of exploitative events, and that raised voice is nothing but murder of her own woman hood. In nutshell, all the works are true representations of the unsympathetic behaviour of society towards women who have been considered as "weaker sex" or "second sex" by the patriarchal society. The silence in the narratives speaks at its highest pitch about the fallacy in modernising the nation without abolishing the barriers of gender.

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## 18

## Mimicry in Literature: A Study of Naipaul's The Mimic Men

Parveen Kumari\*

Mimicry in literature is the art of imitating someone or something, typically in order to entertain or ridicule. The concept of Mimicry in English literature was introduced by Homi K. Bhabha, a postcolonial critic. According to him, mimicry is a slightly alien and distorted way in which the colonized either out of choice or under pressure will repeat the colonizers ways and discourse. In mimicry, the colonizer sees himself in a mirror that slightly but effectively distorts his image and unsettles his own identity. Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul is a novelist who himself has experienced colonialism. V.S Naipaul in his novel *The Mimic Men* describes the problems faced by the colonized people. The major themes that emerge in his work are sense of alienation, identity crisis, the paradox of freedom etc. Naipaul emerges as a novelist of post-imperial crisis.

V.S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* (1967) is a form of fictional autobiography. It leads to conclude that Ralph Singh and Naipaul are in fact one. Like Singh, Naipaul too had considered London to be the centre of the world and he too suffered the same disillusionment. Like Ralph in *Isabella*, Naipaul too suffered from identity crisis in Trinidad. Naipaul was academically capable and was looking for an opportunity to escape from the limited society of Trinidad and this opportunity he got in 1950, when he gained a scholarship that enabled him to travel to Oxford University. Singh's marriage with Sandra is a failure. Similarly, Naipaul's marriage with Patrick French was not a happy one.

In *The Mimic Men*, Ralph Singh is the representative of displaced and disillusioned colonial individuals. The very title of the novel suggests the main theme of mimicry- mimicry of the First World by Third World. In the first page of the novel, Ralph gives the illustration of the mimicry of colonizer by colonized "... I thought Mr Shylock looked distinguished, like a lawyer or businessman or politician. He had the habit of stroking the lobe of his ear and inclining his head to listen. I thought the gesture was attractive; I copied it." (Naipaul 5)

The colonizers were very well aware of the fact that if they wanted to sell their goods or clothes in the colonies, first it was necessary to make

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them view their nakedness through the perspective of Western cultural norms of decency. So that they would have employers that would be black in skin but English in mind and morals- a false copy of English man. But this process of mimicry is still prevalent in the ex-colonies because of inferiority complex, lack of self-confidence and very mind set up of the people in colonies. They out of their will, copy and adopt the Western ways and values. Every society has its own culture and values and the dominance of one culture over another, leads to the suppression and extinction of the latter and leaves the colonized confused and without any identity and home, 'an island in the air'. Thus *The Mimic Men* depicts the socio- political and the psychological effects of imperialism.

In *Isabella*, every child lives a dual life. The school and the home remain two separate hemispheres. In school every boy lives with a fantasy of his own and conceals the real life of the home. Singh attempts to escape his shipwreck by maintaining his connection with the Aryan past. He creates an ideal and heroic past which is in conflict with the real life conditions in *Isabella*. Like him, Browne also fantasizes his African origin and his room is full of pictures of black leaders. Singh starts calling himself 'Ralph' rejecting his real name 'Ranjit Kirpal Singh' as if change of name would make him a different person. These instances tell about the nature of society which drives even children to such deception.

Everywhere Ralph sees 'taint' and 'corruption'. History itself is corrupt. The inhabitants of *Isabella* compose "a haphazard, disordered and mixed society" (Naipaul 55). The history of Trinidad confirms that for decades the East Indian community suffered discrimination due to their initial economic situation as bonded servants and to their desire to adhere to their tradition and religion, and they still economically lagged behind all other ethnic groups on the island. Ralph speaks of his success as a gift that is tainted, that "sets us apart, it distorts us" (Naipaul 61) and the name of the land development, Kripalville, is "corrupted to Crippleville" (Naipaul 59).

Ralph is not able to construct any positive meaning out of his political experiences. His slogans are 'borrowed phrases'. He was one of the faceless politicians 'made by distress and part of distress' (Naipaul 240). But the eventual hollowness and futility which Ralph discovers in business and politics are mere reflections of a much more personal and deep emotional emptiness. Ralph's life echoes with the complexities and contradictions inherent in decolonization and post- colonial nationalism. English culture and history made him feel that his own culture is inferior and always

encouraged him to imitate the colonizer. Therefore, he resolves to leave Isabella and make a fresh start in London. But in London, he experiences a deeper fragmentation and greater confusion when he gets a peep into his landlord's secret life of pleasure. He finds in London each person concealed in his own darkness.

In Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*, relationships are broken mirrors. Ralph's incapability to adjust and sense of inadequacy and dislocation strains his relations with others. Ralph is aware of his own conflicting feelings in his childhood friends like Hok and Browne. Like Ralph, Hok and Browne also have the conflicting feelings of shame and inadequacy regarding their racial and cultural origins. Like Ralph, Hok also reads ravenously and also dreams of being anywhere except Isabella. Browne also becomes politically active but he also internalizes the same feelings. Browne enters politics in order to eventually help Isabella to achieve independence. But Ralph says he too become a prisoner of his role. It is quite clear that all the characters in the novel accept slavery. In that way, the plot of the novel also resembles *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; or, *Life Among the Lowly* by Harriet Beecher Stowe in which an escaped slave returns willingly to slavery and death.

Ralph tries to identify with Britain and the West which affects him psychologically in a number of interrelated ways. When he considers his origin, he is descended from a line of "the unimaginative, unenterprising and oppressed" which is a cause for deep, silent shame. Ralph's sense of shame leads him as a child to withdraw more and more from the people around him and he looks forward to escaping to London and European landscapes that are his proper backdrop. He sees himself as protected by the West, since he thinks he belongs to the West. But Ralph's this perception slowly begins to sap his sense of will and engenders the feeling of helplessness that troubles him more as he grows older. Ralph finds that London does not welcome him. He is not at the right place and he has failed to integrate into the ideal culture presented to him through books. Memmi discusses Ralph's situation as a common experience among colonized persons who copy the colonizer. The colonizer responds with contempt and makes clear to the colonized that his efforts are in vain. Ralph feels alienated from both cultures and experiences, a crisis in identity from which he is not able to recover. The result is persistent emotional emptiness. His identity has no culture to center around and he becomes the hollow hybrid colonial subject that Homi Bhabha examines in *Sign Taken For Wonders*. Ralph loses a feeling of place and he equates placelessness with loss and disorder. His primary experience in London leads Ralph to emotional

distress, loss, and growing sense of helplessness and futility that also affect his adult experiences.

The image of 'shipwreck' dominates the noble conveying the sense of abandonment and dereliction. The colonial set up is empty and hollow which compel the people to pose as 'the mimic men'. These men live in the memory of past or in fantasy of future and cultivate an ambivalent personality and are caught between order and disorder, authentic and inauthentic, the old and the new. The sense of placelessness in the novel is not a geographical but spiritual and internal one. Naipaul is a bigger critic of Third World society whose lack of history makes them insecure and they become copiers and borrowers, not producers. He describes colonial resistance as a form of mimicry and believes that change can come in the postcolonial society only through self-decolonization. According to Frantz Fanon, The black man stops being an actional person for only the white man can represent his self-esteem. (Cooper et.al 126)

Naipaul has been successful in conveying the after-effects of colonialism on the culture and psyche of colonised in the novel *The Mimic Men*. Fragmentation at the individual level leads to the split of personality and loss of their sense of solidarity. Due to the loss of the sense of self, they resort to mimicry of European one in attempt to experience a sense of wholeness.

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## The Symbols and The Motifs in The Psychological Biopic of Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in The Rye*

Ujjal Jeet\*

The *Catcher in the Rye* is a first person narrative told by the protagonist, Holden Caulfield, a young, confused, lonely, alienated and rebellious teenager. It is a Bildungsroman showing psychological and moral growth of Holden in the face of his struggle against death, sexual maturation and growing up.

Salinger weaves together a web of intricate symbols which bring forth the psychological conflicts of Holden Caulfield. The framework story is like that of Adam and Eve. It is Holden's psychological crisis during his journey from innocence to knowledge. This is the eternal change which he is fighting against as it confuses his half adult – half child mind. His brother Allie's undeserved death directs him to side along the pure innocence which he falsely considers to be at counter poles with the adult world. He fears the transience and mortality of life and relationships therefore he builds a wall of cynicism around his loneliness. Even though he needs love and closeness in order to reinvent and renew himself after Allie's death, he keeps driving himself away from it. He shuts down his emotions in order to avoid suffering again.

The symbolism of the novel, in fact, proclaims itself right in the title of the book. Holden admires Robert Burns' Scottish Song "comin' thro the rye" but he likes the misheard version. He likes the line "if (gin) a body catch a body" and interprets it in line with his theory of saving the purity and innocence in children. Phoebe corrects him because actually the line is "if (gin) a body meet a body" Poor O, Jenny's a' weel, poor body, Jenny's seldom dry: She draigl't a' her petticoatie, Comin thro' the rye! Comin thro' the rye body, Comin thro' the rye, She draigl't a' her petticoatie, Comin thro' the rye! Gin a body meet a body Comin thro' the rye, Gin a body kiss a body, Need the warl' ken?

The song has a clear sexual theme where a village girl called Jenny comes out of the wheat field after making love with her paramour. The poet questions the taboo against such lovemaking in the fields. When Phoebe asks him what he wanted to do with his life he replies with an image from his own interpretation of the lyric. He imagines a field perched high on a

cliff, full of children romping and playing. He says he would like to protect the children from falling off the edge of the cliff by catching them if they were on the verge of tumbling over. Unconsciously Holden wants to stop children before they fall out into the knowledge of the adult world including the knowledge of sex.

Holden is fighting against his own elemental self. He defends himself against the adult world and wants to become a saviour for others also. He calls the adult world 'phoney' but that is just a counter reaction because his entire mind is in sort of a flux when it comes to the perception of the new found realities of the adult world. His body is growing and shows the needs of the adult life but his mind refuses to mature. The conflict goes on and he finds himself unadept to resolve it. Holden must face the fork in the road of adolescence. This is the time when one realizes that maturity entails a loss of innocence; a greater knowledge of oneself and others but it comes with a price. This is an allusion to the biblical story.

The fundamental conflict in Holden's personality is between the life instinct and the death instinct. These both are symbolized by his two siblings; Phoebe, his ten year old sister and Allie, his dead younger brother respectively. Sigmund Freud theorized that the duality of human nature emerged from two primal instincts: Eros and Thanatos. He saw in Eros the drive for life, love and sexuality in its broadest sense and in Thanatos the instinct of death and aggression. Eros is the basis of attraction and fertility while Thanatos results in death and repulsion. Allie is not present but his presence is felt throughout the book. His unjustified death has shaken the faith in love and relationships in Holden. He is depressed and withdrawn. His aggression is directed inwards. He is unable to retaliate to Stradlater. His death drive has taken over his love drive. The only hope is his little sister Phoebe who is his guiding light. Leslie Fiedler calls it an Orestes-Iphigenia story. Like the Greek legend the fury-haunted brother is redeemed by the priestess-sister. Orestes kills his mother Clytemnestra and her lover to avenge his father, Agamemnon's murder. He is haunted by the persecutions of Erinyes, the three netherworld goddesses of vengeance. Iphigenia his sister helps him in the atonement of his sin of matricide. The metaphorical significance of the character of Phoebe is in helping the process of final redemption of Holden. She is the only reminder that Holden still has the capacity to love. Though Holden thinks himself as her protector and saviour but actually it is Phoebe who saves Holden from his self destructive cynicism which in itself is a defence against his break off from reality and truth.

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Holden wears the persona of his dead brother Allie on himself. He believes that the adult world is 'phony' and unconsciously defends himself against all signs of maturation and growing up. He has taken up the defence mechanisms of Denial and Regression. Thus he lives the age at which Allie died and refuses all characteristics of adulthood. He resists all kind of love and human relationships which are hallmarks of a healthy mature life. He perceives that the reality of this world is its very irrationality. He labels everyone phony excepting Allie, Phoebe and perhaps himself. The red hunting cap is a symbol of this denial and regression. Allie 's mitt also has the same symbolic significance. It symbolizes innocence and purity. It connects Holden with the Allie- experience. On one hand the red hunting cap gives him his identity and uniqueness and on the other it isolates him from the rest of the world because it is a misfit in the fashionable world of New York City. Holden is self conscious about it but at the same time he asserts it as a symbol of his individuality. This is the reason that he never forgets to talk about it when he wears it and he always removes it when he is in public space. Jane Gallagher's keeping the kings in the back row is also symbolic of playing safe. It is a strategy of an amateur player. Holden is concerned to know that if Jane is still innocent and childlike and it infuriates him when he gets the suspicion that Stradlater has seduced her.

Holden admits that he likes the Museum of Natural History because it is frozen and unchanging. This further reaffirms his Regression. He fears change and believes that change, maturity and knowledge are the harbingers of adultery. It is his Denial to reality and truth, the symbols of the life instinct. The ducks in the Central Park Lagoon project the truth is change and the change is temporary and cyclic. Holden's constant interest and curiosity leaves a room for the resolution of this conflict between Eros and Thanatos. Eros must emerge victorious in order to restore sanity. It is this curiosity under the guidance of Phoebe which finally leads Holden to self realization.

Holden believes that he is an ephemeral presence that will instantaneously vanish. Not only does he feel that he cannot relate to anybody, but he doesn't know how to deal with adult encounters, because they don't fit neatly into the worldview he has constructed for himself. As a result, he makes the only decision that seems logical in such a situation: He decides to run away. Unable to deal with the world around him, and realizing that his cynical view of the world is not grounded in reality, he decides to leave. Phoebe also packs a suitcase thinking stubbornly that she'll go out to West somewhere with Holden and not come back. Actually

Phoebe isn't keen to run away, she just wants to be with Holden, and it's rather likely that she's doing so because she feels – probably not consciously – that he needs someone to care for him.

In the Carousel Scene there is a coming of age finality of the Bildungsroman. All the children try to grab the gold ring while riding the horse and rotating on the Carousel. Phoebe also tries to grab it. Holden is afraid that she will fall off but he does not stop her. Here Holden seems self integrated when he remarks, "the thing with kids is ,if they want to grab for the gold ring, you have to let them do it and not say anything. If they fall off, they fall off, but it 's bad if you say, anything to them"

At his core Holden is a deep sensitive soul unable to sublimate his feelings of deep sorrow. During his final stay in the Sanatorium he seems to have found the loose end of his troubles. He is telling his story which is both introspection and sublimation of conflicts in his mind .He has finally begun to wean himself away from the regressive defences, he was sheltering under, all through the book. By narrating his story Holden is actually undergoing a process of self integration through self expression or the talking cure. By exposing the repressed urges of his personality he is bringing forth the solution of reinvention.

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## The Lowland: A Review of the Revolutionary Zeal

*Anuradha Bhattacharyya\**

“At a certain point during the hour, he told her, a policeman would walk past the house, crossing the window from left to right. She was to jot down the time he passed by, and observe whether or not he was in uniform.” [p. 292]

Udayan and Gauri participate in the Naxalites’ plot to kill a policeman. Clearly this is a terrorist activity such as the Talibans, the Bodos, the LTTE or the Indo-Pak threats. The commonest reaction of the Government is to suppress them by military force. Udayan, after his brief stint with the Naxalbari Movement, is killed in a mock encounter by the paramilitary. Gauri saw the sight, escaped conviction by marrying Subhash and tried to bury her past.

The guilt of robbing a son of his father haunted her forever. She could not be sincere in any of her relationships. This is a saga of a breach of family allegiance. Although the young man Udayan is a representative character of the Naxalite Movement of the 1970s, he also appears as a traitor to the people he loved most – his parents, brother and wife. In the end he also betrays the baby in his wife’s womb.

With a Maoist at its centre, the reigning consciousness in the novel is that of his saner elder brother, Subhash. The young mind is likely to be swayed by a revolutionary consciousness during a particular historical period. Udayan is only 20 years old when he first encounters the city as a city, a unit with its own personality. He loves his city and envisions a better tomorrow for it. This love is reinforced by his love for Gauri, a product of the city and someone who loves the city as much as he. But the Naxalbari uprisings were problems of the rural people, the proletariat and had aimed its brunt at the government in Calcutta. The rebellion is an offshoot of extreme idealism and takes the city’s young under its spell. Someone as intelligent as Gauri supports her husband’s underground activities merely because she cannot distinguish between love for him and love for the city, the apparent cause of his terrorist activities. “He began to ask her to do certain things. And so, in order to help him, in order to feel part of it, she agreed.” [p. 291]

The narrative lends itself to two opposite interpretations. Apparently,

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the Naxalite movement is sympathized with. But ultimately, it denounces that kind of extremism which the Naxalite movement represented. Gauri and her lover get involved in an aimless murder of a young policeman, only to get him out of the way so as to be able to hide political activists. In doing so, they render his son fatherless. The orphaned family is a disgrace for the cause. The night following the murder of the policeman, night before the police killed him, Udayan in fever, says as much: “I can’t become a father, Gauri... Not after what I’ve done.” [p. 322]

In a way the novel is a warning, a mature overview of the period that it describes. Its depiction of the family life of Udayan forms the explicit metaphor of the unhappiness that extreme idealism can bring in the society. Subhash “was critical of the party’s objectives, disapproving, in fact.” [p. 337] It is Subhash who sacrifices for a good cause. He raises up a family with love.

There are other elements in the novel that make it a social critique. What with half a western eye and a philosophical approach to the previous decade, the author weaves a medley of social injustices around the lives of the six people she intimately describes. The father’s hopes and aspirations about his sons are betrayed. The mother’s dream home is shattered by the wayward actions of her sons. The brother’s education and future prosperity is doubly jeopardized.

The wife’s happiness and desire to live are ruined and the life of a promising young mind is taken away by a revolutionary zeal which is nothing more than a man’s way of employing his fecund faculties.

In all this we can see the rulers of the state at fault. Neither should the state allow any discrimination between the rich and the poor, nor should it act as an authority that suppresses individuality. But any sensible Indian knows that the government is far from perfect and such discrepancies do call for some action involving sacrifice of lives and family happiness.

With the beginning of the new millennium, the actions of the revolutionists could be compared with that of the Taliban. The author compares them with the Black movement and the Feminist movement. One cannot forget the Bolshevik Revolution either. As so movingly described by Maxim Gorky in his novel *Mother*, the Russian Revolution, which was a movement of the proletariat, was geared by the intelligentsia, the young journalists and students from the city. It describes how personal relationships are formed and guided by the same zeal, an identification of ideals and aims that bring two throbbing hearts together in matrimony as

well. The intimacy of two men may have been friendship but if a woman is equally involved the sexual impulse is also fulfilled, as if on the go. This jeopardizes both family and the cause inadvertently. There are tales of men who had given up their heartthrobs to pursue the Independence movement in India. There are stories of young men and women who had sworn celibacy for the cause. There were people who did not want to give birth to children until India would be free. The novel alludes to this sentiment and compares Udayan's act as a kind of treason. He is unable to focus as it were. He is also an imposter and a swindler. He hides in his own house to escape the police, under his mother and wife's petticoat, so to say. The whole expertise in which he is nervous and agitated, and in which he is totally inept and careless, goes waste.

However harsh the political context of the novel may be, the story is narrated sympathetically, pausing at every moment to highlight the innermost struggles of a man, here Subhash the timid brother of the vibrant Udayan. Subhash is a sensitive character. He watches his brother's actions with awe and apprehension. He is his brother's keeper in the strictest sense. When he protects his wife and child from the atrocities of his parents, he is acting out of an instinct to protect what Udayan loved.

After a futile affair with Holly, a divorced American woman, Subhash has all the more reason to feel lonely. The Gauri enamours him most. She is the girl whose photograph itself was so compelling to him. When he sees her in person, he immediately falls in love with her. All his resolution to not disappoint his parents by marrying without their consent or to complete his education and come back home to support them or any other thought that had been very genuine and sincere at first, all these views vanish as soon as he begins to feel for Gauri. This love is far stronger a bond than the carnal love he had shared with Holly. The remarkable astuteness of the girl and her simplicity is gracefully portrayed in the novel. She comes alive when she first betrays her husband before the police and since his death she maintains a subdued restlessness that marks her as brave and sincere.

The revolutionary attitude is inherited by Udayan's daughter even though he was dead before she was even born. Bela grows up in Rhode Island. She has watched her father, Subhash and her mother, Gauri remain steeped in studies and decided to work in the farms, cultivating fresh seasonal vegetables rather than spend time in libraries. It is a national cause in which Bela finds personal satisfaction. Instead of terrorist activities aimed to topple the government, the author suggests a more holistic and productive method

of doing good. Instead of adopting violence as a means to a social end, Bela's deep involvement with the threats that face mankind such as ecological imbalance show how a young mind's revolutionary attitude can be channelized productively.

The social theme of the novel, however, does not limit it to the repetition of Udayan in Bela. Subhash is at its centre. He is the one who did not get involved in the political atmosphere of the city he lived in. He got involved in the family matters in a crucial way. He lost his brother and in order to restore his family, he brought the pregnant widow to America and gave the duo a home. In this way his actions have also been more beneficiary. It is Gauri, rather than Bela, who goes the Udayan way when she drifts away from her husband and daughter and pursues a single life only to fall prey to her basic instincts from time to time. When she confronts the fact of the loss of a permanent relationship she contemplates suicide and fails in that too. [pp. 323-4] She searches on the internet for Udayan's name as may be mentioned as a martyr to the cause of the Naxalite movement but there is no record. [p. 277] The brief life that had been so thoughtlessly lost has no value compared to the enormous sacrifice and endurance with which Subhash carried on his dedication to the child. Gauri fails as a mother only because she could not forget that Udayan and she had plotted in killing the father of another child. She is unable to love anyone except Udayan. Bela finds her unforgivable.

Gauri escapes the atmosphere of Calcutta, shoves aside Udayan's zeal and takes up another kind of interest which is totally selfish. She loved philosophy, but she was never philosophical. Although the novel never questions her aptitude for philosophy, a reader cannot but help asking if she ever learned anything from her books. Did she ever learn how to lead a healthy and accountable life from her philosophy lessons. She pursues her Descartes and Hegel like a bookworm and like a snob rather than like a human. By contrast, her daughter learns to respect life and lead a responsible life from her father, Subhash who has taken care of her all her life. It is no wonder that the novel ends with a reward of love for him at the age of seventy.

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