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## Editorial

Discipline is the key word that introduces regularity, restraint and desired restrictions aimed to protect and produce quality in behaviour, life and work. Discipline along with intellectual honesty has acquired greater significance for research in institutions of higher learning. Not many will disagree that self imposed discipline and natural honesty always pay better dividends than the rules enforced to discipline the unruly and the honesty used as a sham only. These values propagated right from the nursery level seem to demand regular drilling into our grown up minds. In our highly competitive world these two words have lost their earlier attraction but not their real value. Well governed and honest people are still respected in all walks of life. However, we always want others to be more responsible and honest, and rarely think of applying the same rules to our own conduct and work.

These thoughts about discipline and honesty are not limited to our social life and behaviour. Our intellectual life too has to be governed by these values. This idea strikes us with greater vigour when we have a look at the scenario informing research and research writings, especially since they acquired value in material terms concerning higher education. Before succumbing to the tendency of expressing our consent without having examined the things, let's try to relate the need for self-imposed discipline to our research activities.

The people directly or indirectly associated with higher education in India must be aware of the things introduced by the UGC regarding selection and promotion of college and university teachers. With a view to promoting quality research, certain parameters were introduced that required these teachers and scholars to get their works published in research journals and books etc. The

moment these recommendations were out, we saw a sudden spurt in research publications. It was amusing to find research articles of even those 'scholarly' teachers who had never scribbled a single line even in some local daily or institutional magazine. Thousands of books containing irrelevant, useless, and outdated material came out within a span of about five years. In their zest for getting appointments, promotions and rewards, these people didn't hesitate in adopting unscrupulous methods. It resulted in an unholy nexus between unethical publishers and dishonest authors.

It was the result of their intellectual dishonesty and indiscipline that compelled the regulatory authorities to take measures that may or may not prove effective in producing quality research in institutions of higher learning but they have certainly exposed our tendency to be intellectually dishonest and undisciplined.

The whole situation may provide us the wisdom that like discipline, intellectual honesty cannot be enforced. Unless we individually and collectively work in this direction the implied blame of being dishonest in our work and activities will keep on appearing in the form of rules, strict rules and the hard and fast rules. The more rigorous the rules are made the greater pronouncement it shall make about our being dishonest in our previous work.

## Deconstruction and Christopher Norris's "Jacques Derrida: Language Against Itself"

*Dr. N K Neb\**

Jacques Derrida is one of the thinkers who have influenced different disciplines of study. His ideas based on Sussure's concepts about language extend linguistic studies and offer an altogether different perspective that challenges a number of established ideas about language, philosophy, social sciences and the concept of reality. Christopher Norris explores the implications of Derrida's deconstructive approach to language that challenges western philosophy in particular that, according to him, propagates a metaphysics of presence i.e. the thought that ideals, linguistic meanings and reality exist and can be expressed as such through language. Derrida's concepts of difference and arche-writing form the basis of his theoretical perceptions about language and the understanding of reality.

**Key Words :** Deconstruction, metaphysics of presence, arche-writing, binary pairs,

Jacques Derrida is, no doubt, the most influential intellectual in modern academic and philosophical circles. His texts have decidedly put the entire history of Western philosophy under doubt. The philosophical nature of his perceptions is revealed in their challenge to traditional philosophy. The ideas put forward by him have brought a radical change in the understanding of the nature of life and reality. The paper presented by him at Johns Hopkins University Conference in 1966 marked the revolutionary nature of his views that found further extension in his later works including, *Writing and Difference*, *Of Grammatology*, and *Voice and Phenomenon*. The intellectual

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movement produced by Derrida is known as Deconstruction.

An understanding of Derrida's project of Deconstruction does not require a definition of the term. In fact, defining the term goes against the whole emphasis of Derrida's thought. It can be understood only in the way it functions. It involves a way of reading that concentrates on decentring or unraveling the problematic nature of all centers. Now the question arises what does a center mean? According to Derrida a center stands for an Origin, a Truth, an ideal form. In other words it implies the presence of a fundamental, originary norm that guarantees all meaning. All human activities are awarded a meaning in terms of or in relation to this pre-existing, transcendental essence. In such a scheme of things only one basic concept, idea or norm is treated to be the center, everything else is excluded and kept at the margin. For example, in patriarchy man is treated to be the center and woman is supposed to be the marginalized other. A concern for the center produces binary oppositions as the ideas or things and reality are conceived in terms of central and marginal. It results in the formation of concepts in pairs having one term of the opposition central and the other marginalized. For example, man/woman, light/darkness, spirit/matter, nature/culture, in all these binary pairs the term in the left stands privileged over the term in the right. Derrida believes that human mind does not have access to reality. Human mind functions by forming conceptual pairs. As one term of the binary pair is privileged it does not allow multiple forms of understanding to exist. All other views are repressed or understood in relation to the privileged term as the centre. This process of fixing the central term as the only reality has been referred to by Derrida as the freezing of the play of binary oppositions. Derrida rejects this view and asserts the existence of multiple possibilities and forms of reality. And Derrida's major objection against western philosophical thought is that it functions by forming pairs of binary oppositions that freezes the play of the system.

The first step or function of deconstruction is to focus on the binary oppositions within a text and show how the opposite elements in the binary pair are related. It highlights the centrality of the central term. After exhibiting the central position of the element, deconstruction subverts it to bring out the other possibility that tends to make the marginalized term the central. The hierarchy working in the binary opposition is overthrown. It works from within the text it tends to deconstruct. In its last stage both the terms in the binary opposition (after having been deconstructed in terms of central and marginal) are placed on equal, non-historical, unstable state. In their deconstructed state neither of the elements of the binary pair is treated to be more significant than the other.

The notion of deconstruction is opposed to the claims of philosophy that consider it the authority that grants meaning. In the Western intellectual tradition philosophy was treated to be the only form of discourse that provided legitimacy to meaning as it had the sole power over reason. Derrida challenges this view with the argument that reason itself is the effect or product of language. It does not have any independent existence of its own. As a text it is constructed by language. Derrida's understanding of philosophy highlights its textual, and constructed nature. It brings philosophy close to constructed discourses like literature.

Derrida's challenge to the privileged status of philosophy comes out in the deconstructive study of philosophy as a text. The basic assumption of Derrida's writings is that the methods of rhetorical analysis applied for the study of literary texts are to be applied for the study of any kind of discourse, including philosophy. Literature is no longer considered to be inferior to philosophy and limited to imaginary themes. In the Western tradition philosophy has been given preference and a privileged position to literature or poetry. The conflict between philosophy and poetry can be ascertained from Plato's excluding the poets from his ideal Republic and the

apologies for poetry that appeared in response to this. Different critics have presented the defence for literature or poetry in different ways. Here, Norris points out how Derrida's challenge to the Western philosophic tradition is different from the critics who presented a defence for poetry against philosophy. The two major positions taken by earlier critics to contest the privileged status of philosophy have been based either on the arguments philosophically presented in favour of literature. Or they have challenged the relevance of philosophy for literature as the philosophical study of literature marks the working of philosophy outside its 'reach' or limits. Norris brings out the difference between Derrida's approach and the views of F.R. Leavis and the New Critics vis-à-vis philosophy.

Leavis wants literary critics to dissociate themselves from philosophy as he considers them two different fields of study. He thinks that criticism is a matter of expressing deep-laid intuitive responses. These responses can be pointed out or enacted but cannot be explained or theorized about. Literary language is treated to be a medium of lived and felt experiences. A critic depends on his mature judgment to understand this. There is no need of any abstract methodology. On the other hand, philosophy dealt with abstract theory and epistemological problems. It uses logical checks and procedures. In Leavis's views, practical criticism of a text or its close reading to unravel its moral implications become more important than its philosophical understanding. Thus Leavis rejects the claims of philosophy for the study of literature because of their different nature and scope as fields of study.

The New Critics, in their attempt to keep philosophy away from literary criticism used the rhetoric of figure and paradox. The poetic elements of paradox and irony were treated to be the internal part of a poem's structure of meaning. The questions of philosophy here get related to aesthetic elements of paradox and irony. These views simply ignored the significance of philosophic discourse. Instead

of rejecting the relevance of philosophy for the understanding of literature, they simply ignored it by concentrating on the internal elements of literary text.

In the next section of her essay Norris takes up Derrida's deconstruction of the major argument of New Criticism. Using De Man's ideas, Norris points out that the greatest moments of New Critics' 'insights' can be understood in terms of their 'blindness'. In this context, the New Critics' understanding of a poem as a 'timeless self-possessed structure of meaning' is subjected to deconstruction. The New Critics' major thrust always was on 'organic form'. But in the study of this form these critics tended to explore the ambiguities and tensions in it. In the process their criticism turns out to be the study of ambiguity instead of the unity that they propagated. The concept of form there turns out to be a constructed idea of the interpreter rather than an element present in the work of art itself.

At the time when American Criticism and its discontents were struggling to define the nature of relationship between criticism and philosophy Derrida provided a new perspective. His view not only placed the critic on an equal footing with philosopher but also exhibited that philosophic claims were open to theoretical questioning or deconstruction. In order to question the traditional claims of philosophy Derrida shows that their very basis is a form of prejudice constructed in all forms of discourse. In fact, the discourse of philosophy is constructed through language employing rhetorical devices like the construction of literary texts. There is nothing transcendental in philosophy. Therefore, the conventional boundaries marking different disciplines are irrelevant. The claims of philosophy are in fact more deluding than literature as literary texts seem to acknowledge their rhetorical status. Once the constructed nature of philosophical arguments is brought out the traditional bias that puts literature and philosophy in a pair of binary opposition stands exposed. With an interesting turn of situation the claims of philosophy are

deconstructed by literature. In a way, philosophy turns into a reflection on its own destruction at the hands of literature. It means that the strategies that bring out the constructed nature of literature also reveal the constructed frame of philosophical discourse.

Derrida also contests the conventional view that awards a privileged status to literature and a secondary role to the language of criticism. He asserts that this distinction implies that literary texts possess an authentic, stable meaning. The role of criticism is to uncover that meaning. Derrida rejects the distinction between literature and criticism. His ideas also mark a rejection of the New Critics's assertion that considered a close reading of a literary text different from the strategies of criticism. According to this view all forms of writing work against the complexities of meaning, so no kind of writing can be privileged to the other. Derrida treats the view about an inherent difference between literature and criticism as another form of Western philosophical prejudice that tends to associate literary writing with a stable meaning as is associated with speech.

The understanding of a binary opposition between literature and criticism is equal to the hierarchical relationship between speech and writing. Derrida considers such a perspective Logo-centric. It involves the belief that truth is the expression of a central, original and absolute cause or origin. This ultimate origin is assumed to lie beyond everything in the whole universe. It forms the foundation of all rules. All human activities and meanings are understood in relation to this pre-existing, transcendental signified. The words like ideal, mind, divine nature etc., are considered to embody this ultimate signified, meaning beyond all meaning. Such an understanding of reality that treats it already, always there involves a metaphysics of presence i.e. there is an ultimate origin, a presence existing in all times. It corresponds with Saussure's understanding that there is a natural bond between inner meaning and outer sound. The meaning

of speech is always available with the speaker. The speaker forms the source of meaning. Speech, thus, tends to be natural, direct, and present to thought and meaning. Speech is the expression of inner meaning, and writing is the representation of speech only. It implies that writing is twice removed from inner meaning. It forms a binary pair in human conceptual framework as speech/writing.

After establishing the binary nature of the relationship between speech and writing in Saussure's system of language Derrida puts it to a deconstructive study. It challenges the logic of metaphysical presence. Meaning is no longer considered to be present to the speaker. Instead of being a medium of meaning language forms a structure of differences only. There is nothing like a stable, unchanging, originary meaning that language has to represent. How language functions as a play of differences only has been presented by Derrida to deconstruct the hierarchy informing a privileged status to speech and a secondary position to writing which is said to involve the absence of self-authenticated meaning.

Derrida takes up Saussure's system for a deconstructive study and shows the false hierarchy established between speech and writing. It subverts the hierarchy between speech and writing to show how even writing can acquire the central position. In Saussure's system of language the link between sound of a word and its meaning is due to chance, without any logical relationship based on cause and effect. The meaning of different sounds and words is, in fact, based on a network of differences they enter into with other elements. For example, on the level of speech the word 'dog' gains its identity and meaning, as it is different from hog, bog, log etc. There is nothing inherent or essential in the sound 'dog' that relates to its meaning. Similarly, the word dog has no meaning of its own at the conceptual level. It gains significance for being different from other words and concepts. The meaning at the level of sound as well as concept depends on a system of differences.

This system of differences is not stable or fixed. Derrida uses the word difference to show the working of the system of differences that always keeps on moving. The word difference means both to differ and defer. It implies that an element in a text gains meaning through its difference from others. And when an element is related to others to get the meaning, these elements in turn become different signifiers instead of providing fixed meaning. For example, we do not get meaning of the word 'goat' in a dictionary, what we are offered as meaning are other sounds and words and we have to understand these new sounds or words which again refer to other signifiers and this chain goes on and on. It implies that meaning has been postponed or deferred forever. Therefore, there is no natural bond between speech and meaning. Speech sounds gain significance in relation or difference to other sounds, in writing letters behave in the same way. The binary opposition between speech/writing does not hold ground. But Derrida's project does not tend to replace speech with writing. His assertion is that stable, fixed, ultimate, total meaning remains elusive. Both writing and speech are inadequate to represent meaning as they fail to show the play of differences. Derrida defines this as "the non-full, non-unitary "origin", it is the structured and differing/deferring origin of differences. He uses the term Arche-writing to show that speaking and writing are only the spoken and written forms of the play of differences. Arche-writing is actually a non-existent form of writing that shows the inadequacy of speaking and writing to grasp meaning.

Derrida's challenge to the speech/writing hierarchy further deconstructs structuralist system based on Saussure's programme about linguistics. The two major points that form a basis for structuralism are Saussure's preference for synchronic approach. It treats language as a network of relations existing at a particular point in time. Secondly, the difference between parole, isolated speech act, and langue, the general system, which pre-exists any

possible sequence of speech, forms the fundamental principle of structuralist thought. But Derrida questions the role of linguistics in providing methodological priorities of structuralism. He points out the paradox that other structuralists ignore. In Saussure's system the priority given to speech (*parole*) does not seem logical as the system produced by Saussure indicates the prior significance of (*langue*) language as system. Derrida's concept of *arche-writing* overthrows the hierarchy between speech and writing. As *arche-writing-writing* becomes a precondition for speech.

In his rejection of Saussure's view of priority of speech over writing, Derrida does not negate the significance of the whole of Saussurian project. His attack on these ideas, in fact, is a matter of taking them to their ultimate conclusions. Derrida's project rather works to challenge the conventional basis of Saussure's ideas. In Derrida's model, structuralism functions as a necessary basis for the working of deconstruction. As Norris has presented, Derrida's deconstruction is not simply a reversal of categories that form the elements of binary pairs. It implies that in his concept of deconstruction, the hierarchy between speech and writing is demolished instead of being reversed. It implies that a deconstructed form of this hierarchy does not project writing to be more basic to speech. Deconstruction, in fact, is a reading that remains tied to the texts that it seeks to question. It resists any stable, fixed meaning and asserts the differential features that Saussure considered a precondition of language. In order to convey his understanding of the working of language Derrida uses the term *differance*, which means both to differ and to defer. Both these elements constitute the textual force of the word *differance* without being able to capture its meaning. In Saussure's system language depends on difference of the elements of a structure. Derrida marks a shift from this view in taking into consideration to the extent *differ* shades into *defer*. It means that meaning is always deferred. Derrida deploys this understanding to challenge the concept of the

existence of an ultimate meaning. In order to show the working of Derrida's concepts Norris examines their application to the ideas of Rousseau and Levi Strauss.

Derrida subjects Rousseau's thoughts about the binary understanding of speech and writing to a deconstructive study. Rousseau regarded speech as the originary form and writing a mere derivative, hence secondary. It corresponds with his views about human nature. He believed that mankind has degenerated from a state of natural grace. Language, in the form of writing, is the index to show the degree of corruption that nature undergoes due to culture. Derrida turns this argument upside down. He brings out the contradiction in Rousseau's assertion by showing how his own arguments confirm priority of writing and false nature of the ideas of an origin. Rousseau treats writing as the supplement of spoken language. In the sense that it is secondary to speech as speech is at a distance from what it depicts. Derrida here deconstructs the whole argument by concentrating on the term *supplementary*. The word *supplement* means adding something on to something already complete in itself. At the same time it also means adding on something to complete a thing. If writing is a supplement to speech it implies that speech is not complete in itself. It marks the absence of something and falls short of being fully present. Moreover, the supplement that has to be added to speech is not originary. It is not present in language as speech. It is supposed to be there in language when it is treated to be a system in its prearticulated stage. It implies that a system of writing exists prior to its spoken form.

Derrida extends his argument to Rousseau's thoughts about music. Here again his ideas develop into a general theme of speech versus writing. Rousseau prefers vocal or melodic style to harmonic. The primacy of melody is associated to its closeness to song, which comes closer to the concept of the origin of speech. Harmony enters music as a supplement like writing comes to speech. Music is

not possible without the supplement of harmony. It makes the progress of music possible. Derrida argues that if song is treated to be a modification of human voice then it cannot be considered an 'absolutely characteristic modality'. It means that a pre-existing, autonomous, pure origin for speech or song is not possible to think about. The quest for an 'origin' of language has to assume the existence of an already articulate movement of production to which a supplement has to be added for the articulation of language. Derrida treats Rousseau's distinction between natural and artificial language as a myth. He asserts that what Rousseau considers a threat of writing, which corrupts speech, is actually the process of articulation that facilitates the extension of the communicative grasp of language. In order to make progress a displacement from origin and leaving behind all those elements that keep language limited to speaking individuals or communities is necessary. It implies that language, after it has passed the stage of primitive cry, is always, already inhabited by writing in its extended sense. Thus speech is disrupted at its very source by the supplement of writing.

Derrida finds the issues pertinent in Saussure and Rousseau prevalent in Claude Levi Strauss's structural analysis of myths. Here again the major concern thus turns out to be the relation between nature and culture. Levi Strauss tried to apply the insights related to structural linguistics to other signifying practices. His analysis of myth is based on the view that behind all the surface varieties of world's culture a certain all-pervasive pattern can be traced. Derrida considers this view biased and a craving for origins and presence. The nature/culture opposition is present in Levi Strauss's view of an innocent culture or language associated with a tribal community uncorrupted by the evils of civilization. Levi Strauss gives the example of the Nambikware tribe to show how the introduction of writing or culture brings degeneration, politics and competition to their innocent lives. For him the themes of exploitation and writing and writing and

violence go together. In this context, Levi Strauss's argument deconstructs itself. Derrida points out that this tribe is already engaged in a system of differences (The leader of the tribe, it is mentioned in the example, has three beautiful wives). The members of the tribe may not be able to write in the usual sense but their unequal relations are already written in their customs, taboos, codes etc. Derrida shows that this theme of lost innocence is just an illusion. Levi Strauss takes another example in which some children reveal the other's names as a way of having revenge. He argues that this tribe strictly prohibits this exercise of revealing proper names; it becomes symbolic of the violence that results when the language of preliterate tribes gives way to promiscuous exchange or writing. Derrida asserts that their names were in fact appellations not proper names. Here again a system of differences is involved. It does not entail the prohibition of any personal right rather what functions as the proper name. It implies that there existed a tribal order of hierarchy even before the introduction of written language. Writing, in its non-traditional forms, was always already there as a part of the social existence.

The discussion of different arguments in Norris' essay on Derrida's views about the nature of language highlights the following points:

1. All forms of discourse including literature and philosophy are constructed through language. Therefore, no form of study can be privileged over the other.
2. The Western philosophy, according to Derrida, emphasizes a belief in the presence of ultimate or pure and self-authenticated form of ideals like truth etc., against which all forms of human experiences are to be judged.
3. Derrida calls this view metaphysics of presence—that believes in the prior existence of certain norms and ideals— and challenges their pre-existence. He argues that there is nothing

originary or transcendental. All forms of knowledge are constructed through language.

4. The constructed nature of different disciplines of study rejects the priority of one over the others. Hence the claims that philosophy is primary to literature stand contested.
5. Derrida's challenge to the claims of philosophy or its relevance for the study of literature is different from F.R. Leavis's rejection of the use of philosophic discourse for the study of literature and the New Critics' position in this context.
6. Leavis considers philosophy a different kind of discipline from literature. The New Critics concentrate on the internal elements of the text instead of philosophical interpretations.
7. Derrida challenges the relevance of philosophy for the study of literature as he believes that the elements outside a text have nothing to do with the text. Moreover, literature and philosophy use rhetorical devices to construct their text so it is futile to apply one kind of constructed arguments to study the other similar in nature.
8. The same argument rejects the privileged status given to literary writings over the language of criticism.
9. Derrida contests the privileged status given to speech over writing. He argues that writing is a system that works like speech. Both of them function on the basis of the differences in their elements. In speech the difference between one sound from the other forms the basis of meaning. And in writing the same pattern of differences in the written form of these sounds forms the basis of meaning. Apart from this, Saussure's awarding significance to langue, which can be considered a kind of writing as it forms all the underlying norms of a language, implies the priority of writing over speech.
10. Derrida uses the term arche-writing to show neither speech nor writing, in its traditional sense, carries meaning. Meaning,

in fact, always depends on a system of differences and stands eternally deferred or postponed.

11. The concept of differance and Arche-writing are the basis of Derrida's project of deconstruction. It brings out the contradictions in the claims of the ideas based on the presence of meaning in speech.

In all his arguments Derrida attacks the notion that treats writing as external to language. It is considered a threat from outside and should be countered with the force of the stabilizing presence of speech. Derrida tends to show the emergence of writing within speech itself and deconstruction highlights how writing remains repressed.

Derrida's challenge to the Western philosophy, which he calls metaphysics of presence, has brought a major change in the understanding of life, literature and reality. According to his deconstructive approach nothing can be understood on the basis of pre-existing, originary, fundamental, transcendental, stable norms. As meaning and reality are not accessible to us in their complete form we cannot claim to understand anything in totality. It implies a direct challenge to the view that tries to explain life in terms of some stable norms. Similarly, literature being an expression of reality no longer holds any relevance. The implications of Derrida's views have brought a major change in the study of language and literature.

Language is no longer considered an expression of reality. Instead of expressing reality language marks the construction of reality in provisional and contextual terms. Apart from this, language is no longer considered to carry meaning in itself. Meaning is treated to be always elusive and deferred. It indicates the fictional nature of all human constructions including philosophy, literature and art. This view finds greater relevance in postcolonial and feminist approaches to literature. In these systems of literary criticism the traditionally ascribed norms are treated to be constructions that result in a biased

presentation and understanding of art and life.

The view expressed by Derrida also finds an echo in the destabilization of established literary canons that provided certain basis for the evaluation of art and literature. If, as Derrida has projected, everything is constructed and fictional how can one fiction be better than the other. And these ideas have resulted in the destabilization of the understanding of literature and culture in terms of low and high. Instead of evaluating a work of art, a critic's role here involves the deconstructed of the work, that highlights its constructed nature.

Moreover, what has been expressed in a work of art is not more important than what remains unexpressed. The presence of certain elements in a work of art gains significance in relation to the absence of the others.

Another aspect of the impact of Derrida's conceptions can be observed in the creation of different art forms. The arguments forwarded in his theoretical proposals have provided certain ground for the inclusion of different elements that were earlier kept on the margin for being unfit for inclusion in works of art.

Derrida's views have, no doubt, added to the critical perspectives for the study of literature and art. But the implications of these ideas do not provide any broader framework and stable system for the study and evaluation of literature.

A work of literature is not mere project of deconstruction.

Derrida's views may highlight what and how a work of art deconstructs but it fails to explicate the aesthetic value of a work of art.

This approach to literature does not take into consideration the personality, of the author and the social factors that go in the making of the author's personality or for that matter a work of art.

Apart from being indifferent to the role of the author's personality it does not provide any framework for the evaluation of art and to trace its social relevance.

Similarly, this approach cannot be applied to differentiate works of art on the basis of their aesthetic qualities related to the use of different artistic devices. The comparative study of literature also seems irrelevant in this framework.

A work of art has its appeal not because of its deconstructive nature but there are many other factors like diction, style, language as a source of literary embellishment, and the use of symbols etc., used to enhance the artistic appeal of the work. Derrida's ideas about the study of literature seem indifferent to all these factors.

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## Prof. Kalam's Wings of Fire: The Story of His Experiments with Countdowns

Dr. Ashok K. Saini\*

Missile Man, Prof. Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam — a man of versatile genius and one of the most celebrated writers — enjoys a conspicuous and unassailable place in the history of Indian rocketry programmes. Prof. Kalam's autobiography *Wings of Fire* occupies an important place in Indo-Asian autobiographies and ranks very high with the greatest autobiographies of the world. It reveals significant, interesting and educative aspects of the writer's life. *Wings of Fire* contains inspirational material and scientific information that add to its aesthetic and social significance. The details about a number of scientific projects and technological achievements that Kalam introduced makes his life a story of several achievements in India's success in scientific and technological research.

**Keywords:** autobiography, research, scientific, personality, action.

Autobiography has been the literature of self-revelation. In this a large part of the interest resides in conscious or unconscious self-portrayal by the autobiographer. Autobiography though the term is often used as if interchangeable, is properly distinguished by the relative emphasis placed on character and on external events. As Joseph T. Shipley further explores: Autobiography customarily gives some prominence to personality and actions other than the writer's own; some are more than the narration of historical occurrences that have come directly within the view of their recorders. Thus autobiography properly is a connected narrative of the author's life

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with main stress laid on introspection or on the significances of his life against a wider background. (Dictionary of World Literary Terms, p.123)

Prof. Kalam's *Wings of Fire* is one of the autobiographies which are distinguished to have gone into more than twenty impressions and which has so far been translated and published in more than 13 languages including Gujarati, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Oriya, and Marathi apart from Braille. Written in the decade of seventy of his life, it is an account of an intensely humble, spiritual and brilliantly insightful man. He has written *Wings of Fire* in order to reveal and to recapitulate the past events. He looked behind in order to join the threads of the past to the future. The innermost desire of Prof. Kalam was to peep into the secrets of India's heart and mind. He writes : Of the straitened circumstances of my schooldays, the odd job I did to pay my school fees... They tell something of the story of modern India, as individual destiny and the social matrix in which it is embedded... seem germane to include the accounts of my frustrated attempt to become an Air Force Pilot and of how I became, instead of the Collector my father dreamed I would be, a rocket engineer. (xiv)

*Wings of Fire* is a wonderful piece of self-introspection. Prof. Kalam has revealed in it very vivid, sincere and truthful account of his life. The art of autobiography consists of frankness and candor and so Prof. Kalam also has been successful in narrating his life story most faithfully and candidly. Many and various are the motives which can inspire autobiographical writing: sheer vanity, as in the case of Colly Cibber, Benvenuto Cellini and Lord Herbert of Cherboung, the urge for unbuttoned self-revelation as in that of Rousseau and Gandhi. Among others, as Cardinal Newman's beautifully written *Apologia Pro Sua Vita*, a nostalgic desire to linger over enchanting memories, as Selma Lagerlof's *Marbacka*, beliefs that one's experiences may be helpful to others, as Helen Keller's

The Story of My Life, an earnest attempt to orient self amid a world of confusion, as The Education of Henry Adams, the urge for artistic expression, or the pure commercial desire to capitalize on fame or position. But so far as the motive behind writing the autobiography by Prof. Kalam is concerned, he has narrated it to occupy himself with certain hard work, patriotism, passion, motivation, and inspirations for rocketry technology and the history of Indian Aerospace Programs, as well as to review India's achievement in space science and missile technology as a global power that is what India celebrates today. Thus, his purpose, further more, is to ascribe the devotion, opportunity and inevitability of the various research projects, and events in which he was a prime participant. He writes: 'This story is an account, I hope, not just of my personal triumphs and tribulations but of the successes and setbacks of the science establishment in modern India, struggling to establish itself in the technological forefront. It is the story of national aspiration and of co-operative endeavour. And, as I see it, the saga of India's search for scientific self-sufficiency and technological competence is a parable for our times. (xv) He has further explored: I do not wish to set myself as an example to others, but I believe that a few souls may draw inspiration and come to balance that ultimate satisfaction which can only be found in the life of the spirit. (177-8)

The central hypothesis of this autobiography is the edifice of a scholar's acumen, and it is the recitation of a susceptible author's edification. Prof. Kalam has revealed his verve and divided it in his autobiography according to various phases of his life. One of the distinctive characteristics of this autobiography is that it covers the story of Prof. Kalam's life up to the successful launch of Agni — his long cherished vision, and has not only given Prof. Kalam enough span to present a full picture of both the growth of his mind and his early milieu but it has also endowed a large part of *Wings of Fire* with an exceptional vividness and immediacy, because of all human

imitations it is perhaps those of early days and teenage years that are the most deeply felt by the him, and hence he can conceivably correspond them with far superior recall than any others. Consequently, *Wings of Fire* is further elaborated, illuminating and encompasses greatly superior pustule of incidents. It attracts the oddity for being the accustomed version of his derivation and upbringing however with an elaborated portrayal of the places where he lived in his early days. The revelation is carried on chronologically. Being vastly exploratory and having so numerous deviations, the sequence of events does give the impression to progress on and incredibly frequently the series of events is in order, hence the revelation is made extremely intriguing by Prof. Kalam's extraordinary domination of estimation and psychoanalysis. However, as with most of the other autobiographers so with Prof. Kalam, the psychological compulsion to express oneself and to highlight one's achievements cannot be a less motivating force. Infact, Prof. Kalam himself has been too much conscious about the psychological urge when he was writing his autobiography.

It reveals several dimensions, such as vision, leadership skills, planning, management, failure, hope, integrity, perseverance, modesty. He writes:

I am a well in this great land  
 Looking at its millions of boys and girls  
 To draw from me  
 The inexhaustible divinity  
 And spread His grace everywhere  
 As does the water drawn from a well. (177)

Prof. Kalam has given short but sweet pen-picture of the role of visionary Indian scientists, such as Dr. Vikram Sarabhai and beautiful descriptions of the creation of a coordinated network of research institutions in his autobiography, which is written in a language

that is simple and a style that is direct. He further explores: It is also a tribute to the unflagging enthusiasm and efforts of my young colleagues who helped to realise our collective dreams. The famous words of Isaac Newton about standing on the shoulders of giants are valid for every scientist and I certainly owe a great debt of knowledge and inspiration to the distinguished lineage of Indian scientists that include Vikram Sarabhai, Satish Dhawan and Brahm Prakash. They played major roles in my life and in the story of Indian science. (xiv)

*Wings of Fire* commences with the very lucid revelation of Prof. Kalam's early years which played vital role in shaping his mind and character. This narration is arranged in accordance with the phases of the author's life. It begins revealing with characteristic humility. Prof. Kalam has tried to reveal himself through those incidents which cast light upon his moral, intellectual, character, and personality development greatly. He writes: My story — the story of the son of Jainulabdeen, who lived for over a hundred years on Mosque Street in Rameswaram island and died there, the story of a lad who sold newspapers to help his brother, the story of a pupil reared by Sivasubramania Iyer and Iyadurai Solomon, the story of a student taught by teachers like Pandalai, the story of an engineer spotted by MGK Menon and groomed by the legendary Prof. Sarabhai, the story of a scientist tested by failures and setbacks, the story of a leader supported by a large team of brilliant and dedicated professionals. (177)

*Wings of Fire* is a record of the mental growth of Prof. Kalam and is written with too many scientific perspectives. Modern scientific developments and events have been revealed at length and the personal factor recedes into background. This is undoubtedly present in almost all the autobiographies, but Prof. Kalam has totally identified himself with the cause of India's rocket technology and aerospace research programmes. He has jumped into the struggle

for countdowns headlong and every narration bears the stamp of his great involvement. But on the whole, *Wings of Fire* is a wonderful piece of the literary craft which reveals Prof. Kalam completely. Really, *Wings of Fire* is an attempt at discovery — the discovery of inner self. It is of inestimable value because it offers insights into the 'life' and 'work' by making available a rarer dimension of one of the most notable figures of contemporary history of India's space science. From its pages Prof. Kalam emerges as a man of high culture and sophistication with keen intellect and poet's sensibility, very human and great patriot. A man of wide interest, he had great passion for life and greater for motherland. He could lead a life of luxury and ease but he preferred the open sea, with all its storms and tempests. Prof. Kalam has never married. He writes that he found, to maintain relationships was more difficult than rocket science. So all you married folk can pat yourself on the back! It does though beg the question, to have that kind of passion and dedication does one have to give up worldly life as we know it and take up "sanyas" from everything but work? (.....) *Wings of Fire* reveals clearly how Prof. Kalam had no other mission in his life than that offered by his profession and how efficient has he been by utilizing the minimal of resources (for survival) and giving back in exponential proportions.

Prof. Kalam was born in 1931 into a middle-class Tamil Muslim family dipped and steeped into the depths of Muslim culture and religion at Rameswaram — a small pilgrim town in Tamilnadu. The famous Shiva temple, which made Rameswaram so sacred to pilgrims, was about a ten-minute walk from his house. His locality was predominantly Muslim, but there were quite a few Hindu families too, living amicably with their Muslim neighbours. There was a very old Mosque in his locality where his father used to take him for evening prayers. His keen and sensitive mind observed the religious acts of ritual performances, prayers, worship of images in temples in day to day social life in Rameswaram that had left an indelible

impact upon his growing and developing personality. His personality is woven into the well knitted fabrics by the Muslim and Hindu civilizations and by the thread spun out of the wheel of the external environment and the inherited inner urges. About his cultural enrichments he further writes: We used to go for long walks...every evening...I talked mainly of spiritual matters. The atmosphere of Rameswaram, with its flocking pilgrims, was conducive to such discussions. Our first halt would be at the imposing temple of Lord Shiva. Circling around the temple with the same reverence as any pilgrim from a distant part of the country, we felt a flow of energy pass through us...I would...look towards the large groups of pilgrims around the temple, taking holly dips in the sea, performing rituals and reciting prayers with a sense of respect towards the same Unknown, whom we treat as the formless Almighty. I never doubted that the prayers in the temple reached the same destination as the ones offered in our mosque.(6-7)

Thus, Wings of Fire reveals his life starting with an account of his genealogy in 19th century in a middle-class Tamil family in the island town of Rameswaram, his early schooling at Schwartz High School, Ramanathapuram, his undergraduate education at St. Joseph College, Trichy, completion of a degree course in aeronautic engineering from Madras Institute of Technology in 1958.

He worked at the Langley Research Center (LRC), NASA, in Houston, Virginia, USA, and at other facilities in the USA, including the Wallops Flight Facility at Wallops Island in East Coast, Virginia. He writes about a sculpture he saw at NASA where he was initiated into Rocket Engineering, "a charioteer driving two horses, one representing scientific research and the other technological development, metaphorically encapsulating the interconnection between research and development." (37) Prominently displayed in the lobby, this painting depicted a battle scene with rockets flying in the background. On closer examination, he found that the painting

depicted Tipu Sultan's army fighting the British. Prof. Kalam felt happy to see an Indian glorified in NASA as a hero of rocketry-warfare. He further writes:

I went to the Wallops Flight Facility at Wallops Island in East Coast, Virginia... Here, I saw a painting prominently displayed in the reception lobby. It depicted a battle scene with a few rockets flying in the background. A painting with this theme should be the most commonplace thing at a Flight Facility, but the painting caught my eye because the soldiers on the side launching the rockets were not white, but dark-skinned, with the racial features of people found in South Asia. One day, my curiosity got the better of me, drawing me towards the painting. It turned out to be Tipu Sultan's army fighting the British. The painting depicted a fact forgotten in Tipu's own country but commemorated here on the other side of the planet. I was happy to see an Indian glorified in NASA as a hero of warfare rocketry. (37-38)

Prof. Kalam joined India's Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) upon graduation to work on a hovercraft project. In 1962, he moved to the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), where his team successfully launched several satellites. He made a significant contribution as Project Director to develop India's first indigenous Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV-III) which successfully placed the Rohini satellite into near earth orbit in July 1980. He has worked under Dr. Sarabhai (yet another top-class scientist of INDIA), with scientists from countries like USA, USSR, Japan, Germany, France etc. He has worked in TERLS (Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launch Station) and worked with INCOSPAR (Indian Committee for Space research) too, and has worked on SLV's (Satellite Launch Vehicles), hovercrafts and many more such projects.

In 1982, Prof. Kalam returned to the DRDO as Director, focusing on Indigenous guided missiles. He was responsible for the

development and operational success of the Agni and Prithvi missiles. This earned him the sobriquet "India's missile-man". As chief of the country's defence research and development programme, Prof. Kalam demonstrated the great potential for dynamism and innovation that existed in seemingly moribund research establishments. He also helped in the formulation of healthcare products using technology developed for missiles. Through sheer grit, determination, hard work, and a brilliant mind, he transformed the Indian defense research establishment, and went to hold some of the most sensitive jobs in government. In the process he made his mark as a visionary and project manager par excellence, while leading the development of the Integrated Guided Missile Program that resulted in the development of all modern Indian missiles. Developing and mastering indigenous technologies that were denied from the West, Prof. Kalam showed that even in the depth of despair, there is hope, and tremendous technological achievements are indeed possible with the right mix of talent, hard work, fair play, and motivation.

In July 1992, Prof. Kalam became a Scientific Advisor to India's Defense Minister. As the Principal Scientific Advisor to the Indian government, he held the rank of a Cabinet Minister. His work led to the successful Pokhran-II nuclear tests in 1998, which reiterated India's position as a nuclear weapon state. Prof. Kalam was also the Chairman, Ex-officio, of the Scientific Advisory Committee to the Cabinet (SAC-C) and piloted the "India Millennium Mission 2020". He has the unique distinction of having received honorary doctorates from at least thirty universities, as also India's three highest civilian honors: the Padma Bhushan in 1981; the Padma Vibhushan in 1990; and the Bharat Ratna in 1997.

Thus, *Wings of Fire* reveals very lucidly Prof. Kalam's own rise from obscurity and his personal and professional struggles, as well as the revelation of Agni, Prithvi, Akash, Trishul and Nag - missiles that have become household names in India and that have

raised the nation to the level of a missile power of international reckoning. (ii) This is also the saga of independent India's struggle for technological self-sufficiency and defensive autonomy. Prof. Kalam ends his autobiography on a note of somber contemplation. "This story will end with me. I have no inheritance in the worldly sense. I have acquired nothing, possess nothing — no family, sons, daughters." (177) But he should have by now realized that in his "end" is a new beginning, for the river of life never stops flowing.

*Wings of Fire* reveals a comprehensive picture of the scientific verve of India but Prof. Kalam's personal life is so intimately blended with the verve of the nation that it is impossible to distinguish them as disparate. However, it is remarkable more for the relative privacy and reserve that he maintained in it than what he could have confessed and revealed. It would be hard to say that which part of it reveals the more fascinating story — the early chapters which describe his school days, his adolescence, and his life as a student in the various distinguished institutions, or the absorbing narrative of his moral development and his struggle in pursuit of vocation. Accordingly he is a humanitarian, secular, democratic, simple and inspirational. He truly gave India a position and voice of 1 billion people to be heard which was otherwise neglected by the west even though it is a great secular peaceful democracy. He has given the country an inspiration on how to dream and realize the dreams.

Prof. Kalam thought straight of his contemporaries, of his near and dear ones, as well as of the events influencing contemporary scientific history of India, and recorded the bang of men and events, the subtle influences of places, the fascination of nature, and the overwhelming force of rocketry countdowns in soothing prose marked by rare purity. The sudden farewell of the autobiography disappoints. The experiences related in this autobiography reveal his triumphs and yet they are only a prelude, for greater ones followed in the next phase of century when he lived even more intensely. That

chronicle could have been better told and our only regret is that narration of his accomplishments after his sworn in as the eleventh President of India — the largest democratic country of the world — is totally absent.

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## Dynamics of Social and Moral Disenchantment in Indian English Fiction with Special Reference to Khushwant Singh's Novels

*Dr. Barinder Kumar Sharma*

Indian English Fiction is replete with multiple themes where Social and Moral disenchantment is a major constituents of novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan etc. Khushwant Singh's many novels too concentrate on this major aspect of moral, social and psychological aspects of human nature. Singh's major focus was on social, cultural and political dynamics of disenchantment of Indians who were fully engaged in freedom struggle. The novelist endeavors to reflect on the psychological dilemma of very energetic directly or indirectly engaged persons in the freedom movement who feel utterly exhausted and pessimistic when they find their goals coming to shatters. *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* and *Train to Pakistan* are the major studies on human behavior of those who feel disenchanted in the course of their actions for fight for the freedom of India.

**Key Words:** disillusionment, patriotic, disenchantment, pessimistic

Indian fiction gained prominence at world literary arena during the freedom struggle, especially under the guidance and inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi. Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and many other novelists showed the patriotic frenzy of freedom fighters and the Gandhian craze for the amelioration of social evils. Along with the delineation of uprising of freedom struggle of Indians against the British rule, the major thrust of the pre- partition novelists was also to reveal the disillusionment and resultant psychological

pain of the protagonists who encountered social, moral, political upheavals in their respective fields of struggle. Bhakha of *Untouchable*, Murthi of *Kanthapura*, Raju of *The Guide*, Maya of *Cry, the Peacock*, Valutha and Ammu of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* visibly felt utterly disillusioned and underwent tremendous disenchantment during their journeys of life. Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, Chaman Nahal, Anita Desai many more descendants of trio of Indian fiction too presented the mental and social suffering of Indian beleaguered society.

Khushwant Singh too represents those eminent novelists of Indian literary personalities whose tremendous contribution transcended the Indian fiction to the world standards. Besides his being a versatile writer-great historian, columnist, auto biographical essayist and story writer, Singh proved his literary mettle by bringing out some widely acclaimed novels which manifest his imaginative potency and literary strength. His world famous novels, such as *Train to Pakistan* (1956), *I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale* (1959) and *Delhi* (1990) are the fictional creations which brought out the vistas of disillusionment, physical and mental sufferings and painful experiences of the Indian people who had to face numerous hardships because of the religious bias, physical lethargy, mental passivity, legal and political ignorance and lack of good leadership. As Khushwant Singh never minced his words while expressing his emotions he had to a lot of criticism but he continued his writing journey without changing his style and language.

Like Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Khushwant Singh was equally aware of the social upheavals, political struggle, economic and moral crisis of Indian people before and after the Independence of the country. He was equally vigilant of the religious under currents of the communal phenomenon of Indian society. Unlike Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* which concentrates on the pre-partition times of Gandhian struggle for political freedom in the

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1930 's, Khushwant Singh's novels of *I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale* and *Train to Pakistan* are concerned with the violence and bloodshed which also form an integral part of the history of the struggle for political freedom. Singh's novels reveal that he was deeply influenced by the terrible events that overshadowed the cleavage of India. In fact, his decision to become a writer was precipitated by the tragic happenings associated with the division of India. For him "It was a period of disillusionment," He accepts this in one of his talks:

The beliefs that I had cherished all my life were shattered. I had believed in the innate goodness of the common man. But the division of India had been accompanied by the most savage massacres known in the history of the country. I had believed that we Indians were peace loving and non-violent; that we were more concerned with the matters of the spirit, while the rest of the world was involved in the pursuit of material things. After the experience of the autumn of 1947, I could no longer subscribe to these views. I became angry middle-aged man who wanted to shout his disenchantment with the world I decided to try my hand at writing.<sup>1</sup>

It should not be surprising that Singh's novels *Train to Pakistan*, *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* and *Delhi* are concerned with the turbulent times of India's struggle for political freedom and the subsequent partition. Though written after *Train to Pakistan*, *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* is concerned with events and their impact on the psyche of Indian people which took place earlier than those described in the former novel. It is located in the ambiguous and disturbed pre-partition period and concentrates on the inner tensions and external movements of a well-to-do Sikh family in the Punjab from April 1942 to April 1943.

*I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale's* action takes place in Amritsar from April 1942 to April 1943 which reflects the pessimistic implications. The novel revolves around the benefits of the struggle

of the people who ready to do their utmost sacrifice for the freedom of India. But still they have some questions to be answered. When Sabhrai questions her son, Sher, how will India benefit and what she will gain with Independence his response rhythmically optimistic. " Then when Sabhrai dies, she says, " I Shall not Hear the Nightingale, my son", a remark which appears a pessimistic pronouncement upon the result of Independence. The emphatic symbols of new India are Buta Singh and Sher Singh and their characterization is so condemnatory of the sycophantic is so condemnatory of the sycophantic administrator and the political up-start respectively, that there seems to be no doubt that as far as the struggle for freedom is concerned, the novel's tone is mainly bitter.

The dynamics of disenchantment are revealed at the personal as well as social levels in *Train to Pakistan* and *I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale*. It was the period of the 'Quit India' conflagration, because of which the relations between the bureaucracy and the ordinary people were strained. While Buta Singh, the Indian bureaucrat, is anxious to be on the right side of the British government, his son Sher Singh is deeply engaged in the activities of a terrorist group of students. Sher Singh is apparently a believer in the revolutionary creed aimed at driving the British out of India through terrorist means. However, he has neither the mental strength nor the masculine vitality to counter the consequences of his actions and consequently "the lofty patriotic ideal of violence is reduced to a sordid murder which Sher commits to save his neck."<sup>2</sup> His basic target all the times seems to be to benefit from his father's position of authority and also from the new likely sources of political domination. Khushwant Singh describes this, "He had somehow believed that he would muddle through, getting the best of the best of the two worlds - the one of security provided by his father who was a senior magistrate and the other full of applause that would come to him as the heroic leader of a band of terrorists."<sup>3</sup>

As Khushwant Singh hails from the segment of the home society, he comprehensively understands the levels of variables which occur due to generation gap. The difference in Buta Singh's and Sher Singh's attitude and approach to the freedom struggle is made explicit by Khushwant Singh through several incidents. One such instance is appears in the novel when Sher Singh uses the Jeep given to Buta Singh by the British Government for war-efforts in order to undermine that very effort, and plan the destabilization of the British Empire. However, these differences go only skin deep. Both the father and the son seem to be swayed by apparent self-interest. Since loyalty to the British Raj could no longer be the perennial source of power, position and money; alternative sources had to be tapped. Buta Singh, who represents personal gain, offers this advice to his son in the straight words, "... don't say anything which may cause trouble. Remember my position. I do not mine your hobnobbing with these Nationalists as a matter of fact, it is good to keep in with both sides but one ought to be cautious".

Therefore, *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* is set in a period during which India was in the throes of its birth as an independent nation, it lacks a deep merger and sincere commitment to the movement for freedom, because its author has already tasted the fruit of freedom and had found it to be sour. All the nationalist characters revealed such as Madan and Sher are full of nauseous bravado and Fascist conceit, which can hardly be said to be the traits that characterized most of the heroes India's freedom movement. Because of his disillusionment with freedom, Singh portrays only a vague revolutionary strength and a sentimental attachment to the idea of political freedom. There is little trace of ideological content in this novel as Vasant Anant Shahane says, "it appears as if it was not Khushwant Singh's intention to face up to the stimulating political challenges of his times."<sup>4</sup> In one sense it can be ascribed that *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* is a failure, because it does not portray

the zeal and enthusiasm which fired the Indians, a few years before the attainment of freedom.

The novelist, in *Train to Pakistan* seems much more successful because, he presents a graphic picture of the nation in its most painful and brutal process of partition which came with the fulfillment of the country's long sought objective of political freedom. It is fact that India got it long cherished goal after so many sacrifices and undergoing ups and downs but it too brought many realizations of which many of the national leaders, political fighters and social thinkers were not aware of. Along with political freedom, Indians learnt other lessons too. The partition of India was not merely a political event, but also an all-pervasive emotional experience for all Indians and it provided a number of Indo Anglian novelists, the basis of their literary creations. Some, like Manohar Malgonkar in *A Bend in the Ganges* manipulated it as a background to the main plot, whereas others like Raj Gill, Chaman Nahal, S. Rushdie, and Khushwant Singh grabbed this event of unique significance as a theme.

Khushwant Singh has revealed a picture of the bestial horrors and savagery, generated by atrocities enacted on the Indo-Pakistan border region during the horrible days of partition, when India was dissected into two. After the formal announcement of the birth of new nation known as Pakistan, there was no limit of the disillusionment of the nationalist leaders who had never imagined that their own land would become alien to them. The mad act of partition uprooted millions of masses of humanity. Communal venom that had seeped into the minds of people found expression in the massacre of innocent men, women and children. Inner feelings and past relationships were forgotten and revenge became the order of the day, reverberating scenes of bloodshed and rioting. C. L. Khatri rightly sums up the mood of the nation at that time in his words, "the whole atmosphere was filled with reactionary and vindictive temperament"<sup>5</sup>.

*Train to Pakistan* focuses on the events of a small village,

Mano Majra, which is a microcosm of the violent upheaval in the days following the partition. The whole of Northern India was in terror with the exception of isolated villages. All the villages on the border side were in turmoil except Mano Majra. It was a small rural world where the Sikh and Muslim communities had lived together with brotherly accord for centuries before the nation wide separatist - hatred "divided Mano Majra into two halves as neatly as knife cut through a butter". Suddenly and unexpectedly, a small world is invaded by a larger world of Indo-Pakistan division or Sikh-Muslim conflict. The symbol of the invasion was the train carrying dead bodies from Pakistan to India. Catastrophic events in Mano Majra influenced the destiny of the innocent people of every kind may be lovers, neighbors and business men living there. The arrival of a ghost train created a commotion. Until the trainloads of corpses arrived at the station, the villagers were not even aware that the British had left and the country cut into two in a very mechanical and surgical manner. The novel alludes to the fact that the destruction as a result of the communal hostility was on both sides. Singh remains detached and makes it quite clear that on the score of massacres, no side was less guilty. He writes in very dexterous manner, "The fact is both sides killed, both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured, both raped." It is noteworthy to see that the novelist, in spite of being a Sikh who suffered a great deal because of the creation of Pakistan, continues to maintain his objectivity and dares to blame both the communities for violence and bloodshed equally. In the words of Haydn Moore Williams who emphasizes this objectivity, "Singh's novel is stripped off any vestige of propaganda, special pleading or anything but a cold analytical treatment of rationalism and communalism. The Muslims of the village are shown as similar to their Sikh land lords. Ethically, if not ethnically, there is no distinction"<sup>6</sup>

Khushwant Singh, in both the novels, describes the rise of

passions which hurt people to the core. These passions affected the unlettered ignorant masses, as well as, the educated middle classes. The Muslims and the non-Muslim vied with each other in degrading themselves to the lowest degree of barbarity. The Sikhs living in Mano Majra were also reminded of the atrocities committed by the Muslims not only at the time of Partition but also during the Muslim period of Indian History, when two of their Gurus were executed, another was murdered and his infant children were butchered. Hundreds of thousands of Sikhs were out to sword for refusing to accept Islam. The lack of faith and trust become the first causality and the whole world takes new turn.

The novelist unfolds that the working of mind takes very negative turns and animalism become uppermost part of human psyche. While describing the massacre of people, Khushwant Singh exercises artistic restraint. Ghastly sights, blood-stained limbs are not described directly. The massacre of the people in the ghost train is first heard through rumours and then in Hukum Chand's nightmare. Gruesome nightmare is simply hinted at, when the people of Mano Majra are ordered to be fuel to burn the corpses. The truth when presented indirectly becomes even more horrifying and effective. A terrifying description is given of Hukum Chand's nightmare, after he had seen the ghost train which came from Pakistan, "There was a man holding his intestine with an expression in his eyes which said, Look what I have got; There were women and children huddled in a corner, their eyes dilated with horror, their mouths still open as if their shrieks had just then become voiceless. Even lavatories were full of corpses of those who might have escaped there for comparative safety. And the smells of putrefying flesh and urine were unbearable." Madhusudan Prasad rightly sums up the situation, "The very expanse and enormity of violence that attended partition has tended to produce an overlay of savagery and violence- a routine of the approaching murderous hordes, attacks and butchering,

conversion, abduction and rape of raging fires and wagon loads of corpses- the endless inventory of ingenious bestiality”<sup>7</sup>

The hallmark of Khushwant Singh lies in the fact that he has recorded the gruesome events of the Partition with the objectivity of a historian. The novelist has allowed the infiltration of sentimentality and economy of words and phrases have prevailed to the tune of the situation. The tone is utterly detached and controlled. As Stephen Ignatius Hemenway observes, "Objectivity is crucial to this kind of novel."<sup>8</sup> Khushwant Singh has given a similar account of the communal hostilities and bloodshed in the Punjab in *A History of The Sikhs*. He writes that on August 15, 1947, as India celebrated its Independence, nearly then million Punjabis were at each other's throat. "Never in the history of the world was there a bigger exchange of population attended with so much bloodshed."<sup>9</sup> There are some writers who find some justification in the massacre of Muslims in the East Punjab. There were of the views that had Hindu and Sikh retaliators not risen to defend themselves (the) East Punjab would not have existed at all. Perhaps proper response was the necessity of that time. Mere silent witness and waiting the god to appear to help the victims could have disastrous and an act of cowardice. To create a fear in the mind of the enemy and cruel, one has to rise but that too is inhuman and a debatable point.

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## Of Beauty and Truth: Deciphering the Manifold Images of London in Select English Poetry

Goutam Karmakar\*

Over the ages, the city will remain as one of the major themes for the poets not only because it enkindles in them antonymous feelings but also it delimitates their relation to cultural and literary tradition. London is one of those cities which with its admiring singularity and unnoticed commonality catches the attention of the poets, and personas like Amy Levy, William Wordsworth, Louise Imogen Guiney, Samuel Johnson, F.S. Flint, William Blake, Robert Bridges, Louis MacNeice, Arthur Hugh Clough, Oscar Wilde, Katherine Mansfield, Aidan Andrew Dun, Carol Ann Duffy, Matthew Arnold, George Eliot, Christopher Logue and many others. They not only describe the streets, buildings, natural surroundings, the landscape and people of London but also show how the cultural, historical, political and economic background of London cast a lasting impact on the imagination and the psyche of the people living in London, and thus the dialectical images of London come to the fore.

**Keywords:** City, Culture, Society, Night, History, London

*The city resists nostalgic forms of poetry that have been handed down to us in various traditions. There is this energy and aggression and speed in a city that lends itself to poetry. We are surrounded by language, whether its place names, digital signs, advertising hoardings or the voices of market traders – it's everywhere. Cities are built with language. (Spinks n.pag).*

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From the nineteenth-century onwards cities become a complex and important theme for the poets, and poets in writing about the cities attempt to readdress their relation to cultural, economic and social tradition. The city is a source of inspiration for the poets and often this source elicits the poets' contradictory feelings. Sometimes, the alienated modernist attitude proves to be a product of the city because cities can generate states of alienation, thrill, confusion, exhilaration, shock and anonymity. Through their compositions, poets want to portray the glories and frustrations of the cities they live in. Their compositions not only make cities speak but also provide a way to experience and understand the cities in better ways. Not only the buildings, towers, monuments, streets, brooks, train tracks, smog, bridges, brambles and fields attract the poets but also the cities' impact on the human self, imagination and psyche compel the poets to express their views. The cities evoke various images in the mind of the poets and after perceiving those images, poets attempt to respond, and there one can find how the images interact with the actual cities. Their poems become the medium through which the culture, society and history of the cities are delineated, but apart from these their poems also respond to the moral, political, economic, religious and psychological outlook which the cities bear and epitomise. With their poetic techniques and structures, poets portray the fragmentary and transient images of the modern cities. The cities not only give rise to new poetic experiments and techniques but also compel the poets to solve the issues posed by the cities.

London is one of those popular cities which allure the poets to write on this city. This city is explored and seen from various perspectives. Through the various poems on London, readers are confronted with an uncountable number of 'London' that antagonise or co-exist with each other. Different poets come up with different images of London, and thus poetry plays a crucial role in creating different images of this city which is one of the first metropolises in

its proportion. The poets want to make people aware of the darker side of this city which is always in movement and the process of self-transformation. Many poets choose this city as the medium of their inspiration and expression. They seek to “revive the city as a cultural concept. Some of these poets developed an interest in London as a social, cultural, and historical space, and this tendency contributed to the rise of ‘literary London’ as a distinct academic field” (Renninson 2). From the middle ages to the modern age, poets have written poems on London and among those a few notable ones are William Dunbar’s To the City of London, Samuel Johnson’s London, William Wordsworth’s Composed upon Westminster Bridge, William Blake’s London, Amy Levy’s A London Plane tree, Louise Imogen Guiney’s The Lights of London, F. S. Flint’s London, Oscar Wilde’s Impression du Matin, Carol Ann Duffy’s Woman Seated in the Underground, 1941, Louis MacNeice’s London Rain and Aidan Andrew Dun’s Vale Royal.

## I

William Wordsworth’s Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802, a sonnet, written in 1802, depicts the beauty of London in the early morning light. Wordsworth is touched by the beauty of this city in the early morning. At that time, the whole city remains calm and quiet. He describes that there is nothing more beautiful in this world than what is visible from the Westminster Bridge in the early morning. The person, who cannot stop there to enjoy the scenic beauty, is dull of soul and the beginning lines show all these:

Earth has not anything to show more fair:

Dull would he be of soul who could pass by

A sight so touching in its majesty:

This City now doth, like a garment, wear.

(The Collected Poems of William Wordsworth 320)

Various sights of landmarks like the church, Tower of London, domes, theatres, temples and ships are seen in all their grandeur in the bright daylight of the morning. All the things are opened to the fields under the open clear sky. Here, the picture and the poetry are harmoniously blended. The poet’s vivid descriptions of the city and his thoughtful emotions raise the poem in its excellence. The sun is so bright that everything is shining clearly with its rays. The first rays of the sun fall upon the valley, rock or hill and brighten the beauty of nature elegantly. The Thames also gets a life and is flowing without any hindrances to dominate over the sleeping city. The heart of the city is lying still. So in this poem, Wordsworth exclaims with a strong feeling and emotion that London juxtaposes the scene of the early morning as motionless and still and in the working hours as noisy and busy.

Louise Imogen Guiney, an American poet, essayist and editor, in her volumes like *London: Twelve Sonnets*, and *England and Yesterday*, portrays various images of London. In her ‘The Lights of London’, one of the many poems written on London by her, she depicts the evenfall over the city. She tries to capture the smoothness and suddenness of the transition into the night. She begins the poem like this: “The evenfall, so slow on hills, hath shot/Far down into the valley’s cold extreme, / Untimely midnight; spire and roof and stream / Like fleeing spectres, shudder and are not” (The Lights of London n.pag). The nineteenth-century London can be seen by the readers here. The gradual starting of the night with the lighting of the gas-lamps is worth mentioning. The evening and the cloudless sky of London can mesmerize anyone. The poet shows here: “The Hampstead hollies, from their sylvan plot / Yet cloudless, lean to watch as in a dream, / From chaos climb with many a sudden gleam, / London, one moment fallen and forgot” (ibid. n.pag). The streets, doors, windows and boots begin to flare and the setting is full as a marsh of winking light and mist. The poem captures one of

the most beautiful moments of the night of London where “Heaven thickens over, Heaven that cannot cure/Her tear by day, her fevered smile by night” (ibid. n.pag).

F. S. Flint’s ‘London’ can be taken as one of the greatest Imagist poems about London. This short lyric, written in imitation of the French verse libre style, is one of the best poems of Flint. Here, London is seen as a woman and her beauty doesn’t lie in the sunset. Sometimes, the overall beauty moves the poet so much that he becomes unmoved by any other external beauty. He says: “it is not the hopping /of birds / upon the lawn, / nor the darkness / stealing over all things / that moves me” (London n.pag). But, when the moon begins to display her beauty, the poet starts to enjoy the night more and more. Like the trees and the stars, the poet only witnesses the beauty of the night. The concluding lines show the poet’s eagerness to capture this beauty. He doesn’t want an end of this night and he utters: “London, my beautiful, / I will climb / into the branches/to the moonlit tree-tops, / that my blood may be cooled/by the wind” (ibid. n. pag).

Amy Levy, “a New Woman poet with Sapphic interests” (Ledger 126), is a woman poet who writes many poems based on feminist issues and urban sensibilities. “Her poetry is distinguished by a variety of forms and themes, including dramatic monologue and intense confessional lyrics, which depict a female persona overcome with a brooding pessimism about the nature of human existence and human relations. Some of her lyric poems were influenced by the poetry of Heinrich Heine and German Romanticism. They speak about disappointed love and suicide thoughts” (A brief introduction to the works of Amy Levy n.pag). She has written extensively on London and two of her noteworthy pieces are A London Plane tree, A March day in London and London in July. In her A March Day in London, she beautifully narrates the nature prevailing in London during March. While the first stanza attempts to point out a missing

meeting and the tempest of love, the second stanza ends with a positive note. The third stanza portrays picaresque images of night and the last stanza not only glorifies the future of London but also points out a secret meeting between the lovers and this meeting measures a hope in their future. The poem ends like this: “And o’er, at last, my spirit steals / A weary peace; peace that conceals / Within its inner depths the grain / of hopes that yet shall flower again” (A March Day in London n.pag). Her A London Plane-Tree denotes a double meaning: on one hand, the tree is known as a London plane, and on the other hand, such a tree is found in the city of London. This poem not only makes people aware of ecological issues but also depicts the lifestyle of non-human agencies. The trees in London should be preserved. While some external forces decide to stay in London for the purposes, the tress in London helps the city to live in a shelter and the gentle breeze. The poet says here: “Here from my garret-pane, I mark / The plane-tree bud and blow, / Shed her recuperative bark, / And spread her shade below. / [...] Others the country take for choice, /And hold the town in scorn; / But she has listened to the voice/On city breezes borne” (A London Plane-Tree n.pag).

## II

Robert Bridges’ ‘London Snow’ gives the readers an impression of snowfall in London. The poet here not only defamiliarizes London streets with a perfect observation of the perception but also delineates the transformal effect of the snowfall. The first part of the poem describes the snowfall in London during the night. While all are asleep, snow falls softly, slowly and continuously. The beginning of the poem shows this: “When men were all asleep the snow came flying, / In large white flakes falling on the city brown, / Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying, / Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town” (London Snow n.pag). The snow not only fills in gaps and horizontal outlines but

also makes quiet the movements of the vehicles during the night. The snowfall continues till the snow reaches a depth of seven inches. The silence of the city is worth noticing and the sounds of the vehicles and human voices are quieter than usual. The poet shows here: “The eye marvelled — marvelled at the dazzling whiteness; / The ear hearkened to the stillness of the solemn air; / No sound of wheel rumbling nor of foot falling, / And the busy morning cries came thin and spare” (ibid. n.pag). Then the poets give us the images of schoolboys who enjoy the snow. The concluding lines show how the city responds to the bright sunlight when the snow begins to melt. Overall, the poem not only portrays the unaccustomed beauty of the snowy morning but also upholds the human’s view that by walking through the snow, they break the beautiful spell. The poem ends with this understanding only: “The daily thoughts of labour and sorrow slumber / At the sight of the beauty that greets them, for the charm they have broken” (ibid. n. pag).

Arthur Hugh Clough’s ‘In A London Square’ is another poem which describes the seasonal changes occurred in London. Here, the poet vividly describes the summer season. The poem’s beginning lines show this when the poet says: “Put forth thy leaf, thou lofty plane, / East wind and frost are safely gone; / With zephyr mild and balmy rain / The summer comes serenely on” (In A London Square n.pag). The poet shows how earth, sun, air and sky promise a bright day ahead. The poet urges humans to be like the bright day of London. Humans should be kind and honest. Apart from the summer season, the winter is also described. After the dull, desolate and cold winter, spring comes. Spring is followed by the summer season and in this way, the process of rebirth and regeneration is started. Like the seasons, people of London should wait for their best time. The ending lines are apt symbolic: “Spring never would, we thought, be here. / The leaves that burst, the suns that shine, / Had, not the less, their certain date: / And thou, O human heart of mine, / Be still, refrain thyself, and wait” (ibid. n.pag).

Oscar Wilde in his Impressions du Martin shows the city of London in a general way. In the first stanza, the night is shown and the street lamps come to reflect on the Thames like ‘a harmony in grey’. The Thames rests in a chilly cold way. The poet shows: “The Thames nocturne of blue and gold / Changed to a Harmony in grey: / A barge with ochre-coloured hay / Dropped from the wharf: and chill and cold” (Ford 452). The second stanza shows how the poet can see the houses, walls, the bridges and other objects of the city. In the third stanza, the daily activities of the city come before the readers. The streets become busier and “then suddenly arose the clang / Of waking life; the streets were stirred / With country wagons and a bird / Flew to the glistening roofs and sang” (ibid. 452). The fourth stanza brings before us the image of one pale woman. She is lonely and she seems to be the symbol of the dialectical aesthetics of London. She wanders and her lips seem to be as red as a flame. Her hair is wet, although she is kissed by the sun and this poor nameless woman in Wilde’s poem is just a visual representation. Like all other visual objects in London, this pale woman “can be identified with any other visual objects in London, under the gaze of the narrator and the viewers, as the richness of the external visible world comes to be the opposite of her internal world” (Lin 5).

One of the greatest modernist writers of the 20th century, Katherine Mansfield also writes on London, and Mansfield’s poem ‘Spring Wind in London’ proves to be one of her greatest creations. In this poem, the wind becomes the narrator. The wind blows across the world and brings with it some rosy memories of the poet’s childhood days. The wind utters: “I drive the clouds across the sky / I huddle them like sheep; / Merciless shepherd-dog am I / And shepherd-watch I keep / If in the quiet vales they lie / I blow them up the steep” (Poems 5). The poet is in London and the wind comes from New Zealand. Mansfield’s childhood memories become a place where she returns with rising frequency later in her life, but

her present stay in London seems to be a good one because like the wind, she is also gratefully welcomed by this city. The following lines of the poem are worth mentioning in this context: “O stranger in a foreign place, / See what I bring to you. / This rain—is tears upon your face; / I tell you—tell you true / I came from that forgotten place / Where once the wattle grew” (ibid. 5).

Aidan Andrew Dun is one of the visionary British poets and he writes in a complex way to delineate the concepts of the contemporary city in his poems. His ‘Vale Royal’ is a poem where the modern condition of the city of London finds the best expression. Vale Royal, the name, describes the valley of the lost Fleet River in Kings Cross. This poem not only expresses Dun’s spiritual vision of the modern city but also emphasizes on the impact of the metropolis on the human mind. One elaborate passage from the appendix of this poem is worth mentionable because this will sum up the poem’s plot and major theme: “The valley of the lost Fleet River in Kings Cross is surrounded by the old hills of London, the high Places. Vale Royal is a geographical vessel, a symbolic container of the quiet mind, a perfect place to realize the vision of oneness. Kings Cross has exerted a magnetic attraction down the centuries. The artists, the poets have made this forgotten place royal with their presence. And they themselves are royal, because they are visionaries, in rebellion against the human condition and its suffering. In the poem Vale Royal the cosmic lifecycle of the Sunchild, the Mighty Youth, born with a vision and dying an early death, reflects the exiled life and redemption of the artist. Chatterton and Blake play his role in the work’s two movements” (Vale Royal 95).

Carol Ann Duffy’s ‘Woman Seated in the Underground’, (1941) presents the dialectic image of London in a vivid way. The inner and the outer spaces mix with the positive and negative aspects of the poet as well as of the city in general. The narrator of the poem is a nameless woman who represents a sense of nothingness in this city.

London is here not a place of aesthetic beauty. The dull, dirty, dark and smoky sides of London are presented here. Here, London underground is a place which comes to represent ‘the violence of death and the fears associated with it’, as one can see in ‘ruins’. Apart from death, there are some “other kinds of loss: national pride, social solidarity, self-belief” (Scott 167). At the same time, the woman’s phrase ‘Dear God’ shows the burden of survival and heavy weight of life. The war takes away everything from the humans and the woman seems to be a victim of war. The last stanza of the poem shows the city of London and how the people are living here in hellish and visionary ways: “Nothing. A child is crying. Mine doesn’t show yet. / Baby. My hands mime the memory of knitting. / Purl. Plain. I know how to do these things, yet my mind/has unravelled into thin threads that lead nowhere. / In a moment I shall stand up and scream until / somebody helps me. The skies were filled with sirens, planes, / fire, bombs, and I lost myself in the crowd. Dear God” (Ford 690).

With his more than 30 volumes of poetry, Christopher Logue makes a notable contribution to English literature. His London Airport, as part of the ‘Poems on the Underground’, is featured on the London Tube in the 1980s. In this poem, he throws light on the destiny of the human being in general. By asking questions on existentialism, he puts forward many burning issues of the day. London is one of the richest cultural places in the world and the city should preserve its culture until the end of the world. Poetry is one of the best mediums to preserve it and this poem makes an effort to do so this only. The poet says here: ‘Last night in London Airport / I saw a wooden bin/ labelled UNWANTED LITERATURE/ IS TO BE PLACED HEREIN/ So I wrote a poem/ and popped it in’ (London Airport n.pag).

### III

Samuel Johnson’s London, a representative poem of 18th century English anxieties, depicts the decay and degeneration through the antithesis of the city and the country. Here, Johnson employs

pastoral images to invoke an alternative space to the oppressive atmosphere of London. The corruption of the city is portrayed by the reasons lies beneath Thales' leaving for London and exploring foreign lands. Thales leaves London and seeks shelter in Wales. This shows how London becomes an unpleasant place for its people. The beginning lines of the poem show all these: "Tho' Grief and Fondness in my Breast rebel, / When injur'd Thales bids the Town farewell, / Yet still my calmer Thoughts his Choice commend, / I praise the Hermit, but regret the Friend, / Resolved at length, from Vice and London far, / To breathe in distant Fields a purer Air" (London n.pag). Ambition leads to crimes and bribes. The ambitious people are the worshipper of wrongdoings in this poem. London is in a rotten state. Nothing is going on in the right way there. Everyone is corrupted and virtue is punished. Materialistic greed captures the human heart. The exploitation of the lower classes becomes a daily affair. The poet says: "Since Worth, he cries, in these degen'rate Days, / Wants ev'n the cheap Reward of empty Praise; / In those curst Walls, devote to Vice and Gain, / Since unrewarded Science toils in vain; / Since Hope but soothes to double my Distress" (ibid. n.pag). The political decisions, taken by the government, are condemned by Johnson. Robert Walpole's administration makes Johnson sad and depressed. The corrupt political system is shown by the poet to critique the condition of London. For securing political support, Walpole gives favours to men, and this outlook comes under scrutiny. Johnson imitates Juvenalian satire to depict the long lost glory of London. Replacement of manual labour by machinery leads people to resort to violence. Unemployment destroys the peace of the city. So it can be said that Johnson's London not only combines the energies of satire with Neo-classical stress on harmony but also demands the need to preserve England's integrity.

William Blake's 'London' protests against all constrictions of his time. Institutional, social, political, economic, sexual and religious

conditions of the city come under his scrutiny. The poem depicts a society where all souls and bodies are in pain, misery, anxiety, and trapped. Poverty, oppression, prostitution, disease, suffering, helplessness, death of innocence, economic, political and religious corruption, war and prostitution are shown in this poem. The poem begins with the narrator's encounter with charter'd streets and a charter'd Thames: "I wander thro' each charter'd street, / Near where the charter'd Thames does flow, / And mark in every face I meet / Marks of weakness, marks of woe" (Songs of Innocence and Experience 150). Simon Korner opines in this context: "The word charter'd is loaded with a critical sense, repeated to sharpen the ironic point to suggest the oppressive nature of early capitalism. This meaning would have been easily understood by Blake's contemporary readers. The following repetition of the wordmark, highlights how 'Londoners are branded with visible signs of sickness and misery'. It also brings the narrator closer to these people with the introduction of I" (qtd. in Diesel 2). The second stanza depicts the incarceration and depression prevalent in society. London is under spiritual, psychological and physical imprisonment. The lower classes are exploited by the upper classes, and materialism and capitalism break the harmony of the society. The downtrodden people are in no position to criticise the unfair system of London. The denigration of the human imagination and the poet's perception of self-limitation find expression in these lines: "In every cry of every Man, / In every Infant's cry of fear, / In every voice, in every ban, / The mind-forg'd manacles I hear" (Songs of Innocence and Experience 150). The church exploits the children and compels them to become criminals. The images of the crying children not only portray the despair of London but also depict the blindness of the church to social injustice. The soldiers belong to the lower classes, are helpless. They are forced to sacrifice their life for the society which is controlled by the upper classes. The following lines show all these: "How the Chimney-sweeper's cry/Every black'ning

Church appals; /And the hapless Soldier's sigh/Runs in blood down Palace walls" (ibid. 150). In the last section of the poem, the poet shows how the city is affected by a sexually transmitted disease. The concluding lines depict the effects of rampant harlotry and a sinister atmosphere of London: "But most thro' midnight streets I hear / How the youthful Harlot's curse / Blasts the new-born Infant's tear / And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse" (ibid. 150).

Matthew Arnold's 'East London and West London' keenly observe the people and contemporary London of his time. East London expresses the value in faith. Faith can help people with an ever-changing world. People's faith declines when science and rapid modernization seize the day. Society is exhausted and overworked and the dispirited weaver in the poem represents this. The preacher in the same poem manages to survive in the world as his faith inspires him to keep a cheerful attitude. To live life peacefully, one must have to keep faith in Christ and the poem suggests that one can see the same physical world in various ways. Tough time will be followed by good time and when joy and success come, one must attribute such good things to the faith that one carries. Arnold says here: "O human soul! as long as thou canst so / Set up a mark of everlasting light, / Above the howling senses' ebb and flow, / To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam - / Not with lost toil thou labourest through the night! / Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home" (East London n.pag). His other poem West London offers a criticism of society. Here, he tells about the world's lack of response to poverty. With modernization, people are alienated from each other. The inequality of wealth becomes prominent and this poem throws light on this issue. West London is one of the wealthiest areas of the city, but there is a contrast between the people living in this area only. Not everyone is wealthy in this area and the poem underscores the sense of people's separation from one another due to wealth. Arnold demands a change in the society

of London and people living here should enjoy equal happiness, pleasure, joy and wealth. Through a family of beggars living in Belgrave Square, Arnold shows how poor people crouch on the street to occupy a little space for them. The daughter begs from the working-class men, but she doesn't expect any money from the upper classes because they are selfish, greedy and indifferent. The poem ends by saying that the daughter reminds the onlookers of a better time, in which rich and poor are not at all completely alienated from each other, but they live in mutual empathy: "The rich she had let pass with frozen stare. / Thought I: Above her state this spirit towers; / She will not ask of aliens, but of friends, / Of sharers in a common human fate. / She turns from that cold succour, which attends / The unknown little from the unknowing great, / And points us to a better time than ours" (West London n.pag).

George Eliot's 'In a London Drawing Room', a single stanza poem, depicts the dreary and dark atmosphere of what one sees outside of his/her London drawing-room. The first section of the poem describes the landscapes seen from the speaker's window and doorway. The speaker sees only the dirty, dark and ragged images of London. The sky is cloudy and the industrial revolution causes a rampant uptick, and the amount of pollution pumps into the city. Smoke is all around and London exists in the shadow only. The speaker observes: "The sky is cloudy, yellowed by the smoke. / For view there are the houses opposite / Cutting the sky with one long line of wall / Like solid fog: far as the eye can stretch / Monotony of surface & of form/Without a break to hang a guess upon" ((In a London Drawing Room n.pag). The thick layers of smog and smoke cover the city in such a way that the sun can't even penetrate it. Birds can't cast any shadow over the city as they can't fly properly due to the smog and smoke. People search for some break in their dull, monotonous daily routines. The speaker's eyes search something interesting beyond the dark surroundings of the city. The speaker says

here: “No bird can make a shadow as it flies, / For all is shadow, as in ways o’erhung / By thickest canvass, where the golden rays / Are clothed in hemp. No figure lingering/Pauses to feed the hunger of the eye / Or rest a little on the lap of life” (ibid. n.pag). The last part of the poem sees busy people walking along the streets. They don’t pause for anything and they don’t care for anyone. They make no effort to communicate with others. It seems that the people of this city commit the crime and deserve punishments. The dull monotonous life they get as punishment and the poems ends with this observation: “I’ll hurry on & look upon the ground, / Or glance unmarking at the passers-by / The wheels are hurrying too, cabs, carriages / All closed, in multiplied identity. / The world seems one huge prison-house & court / Where men are punished at the slightest cost, / With lowest rate of colour, warmth & joy” (ibid. n.pag).

In the concluding lines it can be said that the city of London within the works of William Wordsworth, Louise Imogen Guiney, F. S. Flint, Amy Levy, Robert Bridges, Arthur Hugh Clough, Oscar Wilde, Katherine Mansfield, Aidan Andrew Dun, Carol Ann Duffy, Christopher Logue, Samuel Johnson, William Blake and Matthew Arnold, goes through a process of imagination and re-imagination. These poets attempt to reflect the cultural, social, political, economic, visionary, aesthetic and intellectual changes and challenges which the city embodies. While a few poets’ London seems much calmer and peaceful, other poets’ London points out the shameful marks of misery, social, political and religious corruption and hypocrisies prevalent in the city. While few poets view London romantically, few view realistically. All these poets attempt to contribute to the many layers of London created during the centuries. Their descriptions of London present before the world a city everyone knows and visits even without being there physically. The poets discussed here not only depict the beauty of the city but also read the city against its earlier social, historical, and cultural paradigms. In

a nutshell, it is worth mentioning that poetry gives an imaginative reality to the city which in turn not only questions the boundaries between imagined and real spaces but also looks at the city in terms of its impending future. Cities shape poetic conceptions of urban life and in return poetry portrays the contemporary situation of the cities, and thus the reciprocal relation between the poet and the city is maintained.

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## Siti Ruqaiyah: A Malaysian Poet Envisioning World Peace

*Dr. J. K. Shah\**

Indian scriptures – the Ramayana and the Mahabharata greatly influenced the Malay literature of early days. After the Japanese occupation of Malaysia (1942-45), in the Second World War, the Malay writers focused on the glorification of the Japanese Army and its achievements. However, the fact remains that Malaysian literature in English showed a significant improvement during the occupation. The poet of pioneering importance in post-independence Malaysia is Siti Ruqaiyah Hashim from Kuala Lumpur. For her, extremist policies as well as military actions are totally incapable of solving the acute problems of the world communities. As a peace activist she wants to stop conflicts, wars and puts forward the importance of peace in the world.

**Keywords:** Malay, Poetry, War, Oppression, Peace, Humanity.

Literature of the Malay peninsula aims to reflect the various aspects of the culture of Malaysia. In the early days there was the tradition of Oral literature in the country. This Oral tradition incorporated legends, myths, tales, proverbs, stories, epics and histories. It flourished among the native people such as Orang Asli and some other ethnic groups of Sabah and Sarawak. Indian scriptures – the Ramayana and the Mahabharata greatly influenced the Malay literature of this time. Malay poetry in this period was especially in the form of syair, pantun, seloka, and gurindam.

The Oral literature was replaced by script writing in the Nineteenth century. Later on, the literary works were produced in

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anyone of the four dominant languages of the country like Malay, English, Chinese and Tamil. After the Japanese occupation of Malaysia (1942-45), in the Second World War, the Malay writers focused on the glorification of the Japanese Army and its achievements. However, the fact remains that Malaysian literature in English showed a significant improvement during the occupation. When the Japanese surrendered to the Allies in 1945, the writers exhorted their fellow countrymen to protest against the British colonial power. Pauline Fan is of the view that the “Angkatan Sasterawan 1950, better known as Asas ‘50, was the first registered literary movement in Malaya. Championing ‘art for society’ over ‘art for art’s sake’, Asas ‘50 writers and poets published in newspapers and magazines...” (2).

Malaya got freedom from the British colonial control in 1957. However, the euphoric note of new nationhood could not last long. It gave rise to racial tension between Chinese and Malay communities in May 1969, just after general elections in the country. Awang, a prominent poet, composed a poem “Sahabatku” (My friend), about his friend Rajakumar who was detained for security reasons:

My friend  
the free nation we dream of  
Feels distant from reality  
My anger turns to bitter sorrow  
As they divide us  
The chasm widens further  
I am called a ‘son of the soil’ and you are not.

(quoted in Fan 3)

Another poet of pioneering importance in post-independence Malaysia is Siti Ruqaiyah Hashim (b. 1953-) from Kuala Lumpur. Prior to writing she taught culture, literature and theatre in a Teachers

College for twenty years. She became a full-time writer at the age of 45 after her early retirement from the teaching profession. The prominent literary magazines and newspapers regularly provide space for her poetical works and short stories. In addition to poems, she is one of the most prolific film and theatre critics of Malaysia. Major national dailies such as *Harian Metro*, *Utusan Malaysia*, and *Berita Harian* publish her theatre, film reviews and opinions on various art issues. She has been writing a column named “Variasi” (Variation) in the national daily since 2007.

For Ruqaiyah, peace in the world is an integral part of her writings. As she confessed in an interview that, “...peace and anti-war issues were very much in my DNA and they affected my writings...” (2). It is noteworthy that her father was in a special military unit under the police field force. In order to combat armed revolt, he had to move to different parts of the country. She, therefore, missed him greatly in the formative years of her childhood. The end result was that she developed a profound hatred of war. In a poem “News From Strasbourg”, she expresses great sadness:

They said till now  
 More than 10,000 had perished  
 Washed to the shores  
 Greece, Italy, Libya and others  
 Also those  
 Had not been found  
 Their names not known  
 Little AylanKurdi from Syria  
 Amongst them (qtd. in Fekt 2)

This poem was composed in a major disappointment as Ruqaiyah heard the report of the EU Parliament that nearly ten thousand Syrians drowned in the sea. These unfortunate civilians were trying to reach the European countries by escaping from the

war zones of the Middle East in 2016. In an interview with Tatjana Debeljacki's, Ruqaiyah memorizes the incident when she was introduced to Professor Ernesto Kahan of Argentina in 2013, at World Congress of Poets held in Ipoh, Malaysia. Kahan was the Vice-President of Doctors International for the Prevention of Nuclear War and this organisation received the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize. “Prof. Kahan is a prominent peace...activist”, as she reminisces, “and [he] inspired me a lot to do more into becoming an anti-war, peace activist seriously through poetry” (2). In a poem “We Are Rakhine”, which was written in December 2016, it was a grief to her as Fekt notes:

Our brothers killed  
 Our land stolen  
 .....  
 We are chased from our ancestors land  
 We are Rakhine  
 Not Bengali  
 Not Bangladesh  
 Arakan was our original land (5)

The poem reflects the inhuman oppression of the civilians of the Arakan (later named as Rakhine) region in Myanmar which is infamous for painfully sharp ethnic divisions. In his article Habib asserts that “Whatever compulsions Myanmar may have, the military crackdown is seen as a clear case of ethnic cleansing...” (59). According to Ruqaiyah, the feelings of hatred is the root cause of all kinds of conflicts, wars, persecutions and genocide. In her poem “Where Does Hate Come From”, she discloses the tragic consequences of intense hatred: “When hates engulfed the soul/ Considerations gone/ Compassion thrown away/ Humanity buried” (Fekt 7). As a peace activist, she wants to stop conflicts, wars and puts forward the importance of peace in the world. In the same poem she suggests:

Hatred is crime  
Hatred destroys  
Throw it away  
Lets cultivate permanent peace  
Lets nurture love forever  
Lets spread love to the whole world  
To the whole world! (7)

Ruqaiyah is, thus, too much worried about the lack of peace in the world. For her, extremist policies as well as military actions are totally incapable of solving the acute problems of the world communities. The peace poems, as she contemplates, are the most powerful medium to reflect the political instability, armed conflict, and traumatic experiences of the world population. It is through her poetry that she preserves the elements of love and humanity, and with these potentialities she wishes to defeat all wars and cruelties.

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## A PLEA

Don't kill me o' my mother  
You save me o' my father  
I am your unborn daughter

I fear the tools clatter  
A sneer and hollow laughter  
And why, you know it better

I fear the tools clatter  
I plead you uncle doctor  
Don't close my life's chapter

I want to tell you mother  
Not wife mother or sister  
You too were first a daughter

Don't kill me o' my mother  
You save me o' my father  
I am your unborn daughter

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## Armah's *The Healers* : The Panacea to Psychological and Moral Crisis

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Ayi Kwei Armah, the brilliant Ghanaian novelist, is an articulate spokesman of the colonial and post-colonial history of Africa let alone Africa's identity. He is best known for five novels: *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), *Fragments* (1970), *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972), *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973) and *The Healers* (1978). His fictional creation reflects his sustained efforts to dismantle colonial and post-colonial structures. In *The Healers*, he brings out the way psychological and moral issues are addressed by presenting the characters as manipulators and inspirers. In the process, it becomes an exploration of the conflict between the cultural values of the colonizers and the colonized. The writer seems to show the effective role of the natives in solving basic problems of human values.

**Keywords:** Colonizers , natives, manipulators, inspirers, healers, panacea.

Armah's concern with fundamental human issues has appeared in his different works regularly. His unnamed protagonist in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is an inheritor of traditional ideals and values but the irony of his situation is that he lives in Ghana which is ruled by Nkrumah. When he was in his adolescence the Nkrumah regime in Ghana was full of promise but as he attained sensitive manhood the Nkrumah regime slid into an abyss of corruption and degeneration. Armah presented him as a man of sensitive perception who could closely observe men and manners and this helped him in his judgement of the beautiful and

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the ugly. His perception also enabled him to make the moral choice between good and bad.

In *Fragments* Armah concentrated his latent faculties and energies in projecting the life of the protagonist Baako, a scriptwriter in Ghanavision (the state television). All his study in journalism and media in America was reduced to nought when he became a scriptwriter in Ghanavision. His inability to toe in line with the Head of the State shattered his career as a journalist and wounded his psyche immeasurably. The protagonists in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Fragments* cherished their value systems but they had to wage a lone battle for their cherished value systems in a distorted society of fragmented vision.

In *Why Are We So Blest?* Armah took up the distinction between the whites and the blacks. He was able to probe the social and psychological factors which demarcate the distinction. The oppressor and the oppressed are portrayed in husband-mistress relationship. The coloured Modin shows his attraction for his white mistress Aimee. In presenting this relationship Armah shows Africa's contact with Europe which had left a weakening impact on the minds of the natives and this impact was at the back of their psyche.

In *Two Thousand Seasons* Armah was able to bring into broad relief the baneful effects of colonization: the colonization of the Arabs and the colonization of the Europeans on Ghana. As soon as the colonization of the Europeans drew to its finale, a group of powerful women had the helms of government under their control. They tried to clean the Augean tables but they had no answer to the spiritual malady which afflicted most of them. So, they journeyed two thousand years back imaginatively and rediscovered their mythical past. In this way they could work out their panacea for their spiritual ailment.

Armah was occupied with the thought of liberalizing the mind of the colonized Africans that had been crabbed and cabined

as a result of colonization and post-colonization of Africa. To his dismay Armah found the collective psyche of the African race in a totally battered state. In the earlier novels of Armah, the narrative was fragmented but in *The Healers* the reader came across a narrative that was carefully ordered. Robert Fraser in his book, *The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah* traces the historical background of *The Healers* thus: The historical episode on which Armah chooses to concentrate is one which has been subject to a peculiar amount of misrepresentation by European historians. Seen from the Western point of view, the history of the late nineteenth century has often been seen as a process of rapid expansion of colonial frontiers, the bringing of the light to 'darkest Africa' being but a benign offshoot of his development. In this scenario, the final humiliation of a remote African people during the Second Asante War features as a minor, though piquant peccadillo, an obscure and often ignored sub-paragraph in school text-books. (*The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah*, 85)

The Second Asante War figures as an obscure event in the books of history but the alchemic power of Armah's mind transforms this obscure event into a viable paradigm for the historical places which could have taken place anywhere in Africa and not in Ghana or Nigeria in particular. Armah's implacable faith in the artist figure of the healing community is something which lifts the book from the mundane level to the spiritual level. The Ghanaian society trapped in the quagmire of colonialism needs a therapeutic change and this change can be wrought by the healing community of Ghana. Armah traces this healing community to the pre-colonial period. In this way, he is able to bring about a change in the socio-political scenario of Ghana. The healers who provide a healing touch to the psychologically and morally distressed persons in the society occupy a position of paramount importance both in the literal in the symbolic sense. An avid reader of Armah could see similar thematic concerns of the novelists in both

*Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers*. In *Two Thousand Seasons* Isanusi was projected as the master healer. He guided the core members of the revolutionary group by showing them 'the way' and by giving them the much needed spiritual health. We see the multiple functions of *The Healers* in the novel at different levels: physical, psychological and moral. At the psychological level, the healers prepare the African natives for the long and arduous struggle.

The healers live in forests because they know that if they join hands with the townsmen they will have to participate in the process of disintegration. They are rudely shaken by the invidious and moral bankruptcy. They are desirous of recreating the ideal in the society which they fondly cherish. The healers have the missionary zeal of social reformers. It will not be wrong to regard them as true representatives of social reform. The core of the revolutionary imperative and the quintessence of the social change is brought about by the therapeutic value of the healers. The restorative process of healing is slow and as good practitioners of the art the healers know it better than the others. The master healer in the novel is Damfo. Armah introduces a healer initiate who wants to master the art of healing. He is Denso. Damfo, the master healer strikes an optimistic note when he tells Denso: "there will be always work for healers, even when the highest work is done. That highest work: The bringing together again of the black people, will take centuries." (*The Healers* 83).

Armah presents the problem of the conflict between good and evil. What shapes his moral vision is his handling of the problem of good and evil. He categorises the society as 'manipulators' and 'inspirers'. The manipulators annex the freedom of the natives and initiate the process of colonization. Ababio is the best example of 'middlemen'. He acts as a go-between of the British generals and the African natives. Governor Glover, General Wolseley and the other generals of the British army belong to the category of

manipulators. The inspirers belong to a higher category, both spiritually and morally. They make the people participate in the process of regeneration. The principal healer is Densu who is portrayed not only as a healer but also as the protagonist of the novel. Besides Densu there is Damfo the master healer. The people who are committed to the restorative process include persons like Asamoah Nkwanta, the General of the Asante army Araba Jesiwa, the princess of Esuano and several other healers. The two conflicting attitudes represented by the manipulators and the inspirers is brilliantly scripted by Armah. We see something of Densu in several protagonists of Armah. Densu embodies the inviolate vision of the unnamed protagonist in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, the ideological passion of Baako in *Fragments* and the revolutionary zeal of the militant group in *Two Thousand Seasons*.

Densu does not care for his personal laurels. He commits himself to the welfare of his community. Throughout the novel we see him making a continuous search for a social order in which communal welfare is above everything. With his great qualities of head and heart he could have easily become the king of Esuano. But he holds individual glory meaningless as it does not carry the ethics of the community with it. Densu has no respect for the 'ceremonial games' which the members of his community hold in high esteem. In such games, a single person is chosen the victor. He is isolated from the rest so that he can be regarded as an object of adulation of the spectators. He is raised to such a height that he becomes the object of envy of the vanquished competitors. In enacting his personal and social drama he lays maximum importance to ethical considerations: What sense was there in excluding the whole community from the centre of the field, leaving only a few grim battles? Why should everything have to end in a senseless victory for one isolated individual? What meaning could such a ritual give community turning as it did into a defecated mass, all worshipping a

lone victor? (The Healers 39) When Densu makes his entry into the healing profession he has to face some obstacles. He has to do not only self examination but also meticulous analysis of the objective world. What adds to the complexity of the objective world are events such as deceit, escape and murder. His ethical motives are highlighted by Armah when he openly rejects the offer made by the guardian of his childhood Ababio. By making Densu reject the offer of Ababio, Armah upholds Densu's choice of moral imperatives. In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Why Are We So Blest?* We see the protagonist becoming passive witnesses to the total disintegration of their cherished values. Densu faces all obstacles and retires to the interiors of the Eastern forest to fulfill his ambition of becoming a healer.

Densu's mission of becoming a great healer is not an easy one but Armah does not make him a lonely missionary. He is fortunate in enjoying the companionship of Anan. Anan not only proves to be a worthy associate but also his true friend. In the house of Araba Jesiwa he learns from Damfo the meaning of the healing touch: 'I can't tell you what it is, just so,' said Damfo. But for a beginning he would be a healer must see great value on seeing truly, hearing truly, understanding truly, and acting truly.' The healer laughed at himself. 'You see why healing can't be a popular vocation? The healer would rather see and hear and understand than have the power over men. Most people would rather have power over men than see and hear' (The Healers 80-81). Ababio motivates Densu to win the games at Esuano but Densu is totally unfazed by his harangues. Densu's moral vision makes him visualize a society where 'there would be no competitors only participants'. He thinks of a community in which the members 'would be free to work together' in the cool of the morning; they would be free to run, swim, jump, play, to celebrate health and strength in the late afternoon; they would dance to their own songs in the quiet of evenings.' (The

Healers 39) When the victory celebrations reach a pinnacle, he does not participate in them. Densu was eager to see the healer Damfo and that was the psychological motivation for his moving away from the competitions. Armah says that 'he was eager to make the journey to the eastern forest. He was eager to see the healer Damfo again, 'eager to talk to him about the future he had already chosen in his mind, a life spent devoted to the work of healing.' (The Healers 46) Appia was found mysteriously murdered on a path leading from Asuano to the eastern forest. The strategy of Abibio was to eliminate Appia on the one hand and on the other hand his game plan was to nail the suspicion on Densu. But Densu took refuge in the forest and put paid to Abibio's plans of accusing him. As Densu threaded his way into the forest he was deluged with memories of Ajoa, daughter of Damfo, his first meeting with Damfo and the aborted marriage of Araba Jesiwa.

Armah has shown the therapeutic value of the healing vocation in the case histories of both Araba Jesiwa and Asamo Nkwanta. Araba Jesiwa was forced to marry the aristocratic Bedu Addo though she was in love with Kofi Entsua. Social customs acted as a stumbling block and prevented her from marrying Kofi. She remained childless with Addo and had to endure many miscarriages. She therefore approached Damfo for treatment. Damfo advised her to marry Kofi; her marriage with Kofi resulted in the birth of a robust male child. But she got the rudest psychological jolt in her life when she witnessed the murder of her son, Appia. She remained unconscious for an indefinitely long period. She recovered slowly under the caring eyes of Damfo.

Asamo Nkwanta had a different problem. Whenever an Asante king died, one of the nephews of Nkwanta was offered as a sacrifice. The relentless killing made Nkwanta reluctant to serve the Asante Royal Army. In order to find mental peace Asamo came to Praso which had earned the reputation for being a place of healers.

The healers at Praso thought that Damfo would be the right choice for Asamo's psychological therapy. Damfo was doubly sure that he could root out Asamo's psychological malady. Damfo began to look upon Nkwanta as an instrument of a new social order. The team of healers led by Damfo and Densu travelled across the river Pra and reached Praso. The psychological therapy of Damfo had a soothing and benign effect on the mind of Nkwanta. Damfo spoke to Nkwanta feelingly: 'Have you thought of the future? The past steals energy from your soul because it forces you to think of a loss you're impotent to prevent. The future may bring you energy – if it can show you ways to work against that kind of loss' (The Healers 178). What is conspicuous in the words of Damfo is the moral vision of Armah. We notice a positive radiant energy in these lines. Nkwanta had been forced by circumstances to throw himself into the abyss of despair but he gradually became optimistic on account of the psychological healing of Damfo. He began to sense a feeling of elation which he had not felt hitherto.

The members of the healing community at Praso show their unbridled joy on their noticing the physical and psychological recovery of Araba Jesiwa and Asamo Nkwanta. The community becomes euphoric in its praise of Damfo the master healer. The power of speech of Araba Jesiwa had declined alarmingly but when Damfo began his treatment with love and care she began to regain her speech gradually. The members of the healing community of Praso was greatly concerned with the bruised psyche of Asamo Nkwanta but the alchemic power of the healing of Damfo could be seen clearly on the mind of Nkwanta which began to grow from strength to strength. He was fully cured by the psychological treatment of Damfo and one day, to the satisfaction of all the members of the community he decided to resume his duties as the General of the Asante Army. Nkwanta spelt out his clever strategy of detaining the British army in the forest for an indefinite length of time. He was

doubly sure that the British army could not withstand a long detention in the forest. There were several intrigues in the Asante Royal Camp. Asamoia Nkwanta was totally unaware of those intrigues. It was a plan of the Asante army to drag the British army deep into the forest but the royal camp of Asante made some last minute changes in their strategy and Asamoia Nkwanta was not apprised of those changes. Nkwantawas kept in the dark about the plans and this resulted in the fall of the Asante army.

Armah's fictional imagination as well as his moral imagination transforms the oral method into a novelistic medium. By highlighting the healing touch and meditative processes, Armah is able to convey a sense of justice, duty, human relationship and connectedness to his novelistic medium. Armah's moral vision encouraged him to provide a different order for the society. The social order which Armah envisages transcends the simple story line of the novel into a significant cleansing mechanism.

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## Patricia Grace's *Potiki* A Narrative of Indigenous Life

Aman Preet Kaur\*

Spread across the one-third of the globe, the Pacific is the largest ocean on earth. Rich in natural resources, it comprises most heterogeneous groups of cultures and languages. After the era of colonialism, a new era of development and globalization is hitting the indigenous societies of the Pacific region. The paper includes the examination of Patricia Grace's novel *Potiki* using ecocritical theory. The Paper will aim to explore the ways in which the novel portrays the survival of the indigenous communities through a reciprocal relationship between human and natural community. Under European and global influence, many indigenous people have lost their land, and connection to their culture and natural world. The writer of the selected text emphasizes the role of ancestral lineage and natural environment as a strategy to resist the ideologies of the dominant Pakeha culture. In *Potiki*, the narrative is concerned with the struggle of an aboriginal tribe to regain control over their ancestral land. Various techniques that Grace uses, for instance her use of native voices, the plot structure, and the method connecting past with present can be seen as tools of building a strong indigenous identity. The paper concludes with the reflection the way nature plays a dynamic role in indigenous communities and indigenous literature, and the way environmental issues are paralleled with cultural issues.

**Keywords:** cultures, environmentalism ecocriticism, neoliberalism, colonization

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The field of 'Ecocriticism' emerged in the mid-1990s as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty xviii). The term 'ecocriticism' was first coined by William Rueckert in his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecology" (originally published in 1938) and defined it as the "application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature" (Glotfelty 107). It has been derived from the unification of two Greek words *Oikos*, meaning 'household', and *Kritis*, that stands for 'critic' who "judges the merits and faults of writings that depict the effects of culture upon nature, with a view towards celebrating nature, berating its despoilers and reversing their harm through political action" (Glotfelty 69). It focuses on an earth-centred approach towards literature where nature works not merely as a setting or as a background but as an active agent that affects and is being affected by the human community. Various components of ecocriticism such as environmental ethics, deep ecology, and postcolonial ecocriticism challenge the very idea of anthropocentrism. Cheryll Glotfelty states: Ecocriticism is the study of a relationship between literature and physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies. (XVIII) Therefore it impels an egalitarian attitude that includes equal respect, not only for humans but for all the identifiable entities such as trees, rivers, landscapes, oceans and animals that obviously cannot hire a lawyer who can fight for their rights. Therefore time has come to establish what Christopher Manes calls, "...a refined sense of human limitation and respect for otherness..." (The Ecocriticism Reader 26). A variety of critical insights such as environmental ethics, deep ecology, postcolonial ecocriticism help to analyse the root causes of environmental degradation and to devise new ways of existence in which humans and nature can flourish.

The Maori share a vital connection with the natural world. For years they have been struggling to protect their land, ethnic identity and natural resources from the constant onslaught of colonialism and globalisation. Therefore, themes of globalisation and its subsequent challenges, national identity, cultural integrity and racial issues are central to many New Zealand literary texts, including Maori writing. Arrival of Europeans in the Pacific region during the eighteenth century led to various environmental, political and cultural crises. By the nineteenth century, Christianity had spread all over the islands of the Pacific with its major centres in Tonga, Tahiti and Hawaii. Michelle Keown cites Albert Wendt's essay "Towards a New Oceania" in which he accuses Christian missionaries of "killing Pacific islanders and their traditions" (37). Various colonial practices in the region, precipitated crises like uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources, land grabbing, erosion of traditions and religious practices, spread of new diseases and heavy foreign debts. A forced assimilation was taking place in the schools. This kind of assimilation undermined Maori culture and traditional way of living, which further led to the disintegration of families and communities. Maori beliefs and traditions were negatively reinforced as there was apparent agenda of reinforcing the negative associations of Maori culture.

Even after the era of colonialism, Maoris were subjected to the hegemonic impact of neoliberalism. Some indigenous discourses of resistance consider neoliberalism as another form of neo-colonialism, a process by which the multinational companies came to replace colonial powers in third world countries (Huggan and Tiffin 36). The era of globalisation, apart from involving economic and political push and pull factors, has also reshaped people's subjectivities, their sense of self, their sense of agency and their identities. Under neoliberal globalisation, "Production and circulation of commodities-cultural and otherwise - across the Earth are under the overwhelming dominance of transnational corporations that are

careless of local, environmental and social costs” (McGuigan 3). Globalisation, by altering the traditions, conditions and sources of identity making, has made it difficult for indigenous people to follow traditional subsistence patterns.

In the postcolonial state, the indigenous people continue to be affected by problems such as marginalisation of local cultures, exploitation of natural resources, environmental degradation, and rapid erosion of traditional beliefs and values. Patricia Grace's *Potiki* is a text from the Pacific region that portrays the ecological values, and plays a crucial role in acquiring a “troubling awareness that we have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet's basic life support system” (Glotfelty XX). It is the Maori community in the novel where nature comes in contact with human beings as represented by the characters. The text portrays the ethnic conflicts of indigenous people and their ethnic claims advanced in opposition to the processes of globalization.

One of the major themes in Maori writings is the portrayal of the harmonious relationship between human and natural environment during precolonial culture and the deleterious effects of neoliberalism and development on the indigenous cultures in multiple contexts. Placed in a postcolonial milieu, *Potiki* portrays the struggle of a Maori family to protect their ancestral land, spaces and way of life with which they identify themselves. First published in 1986 in New Zealand, the novel follows the family of Roimata and Hemi, which includes their oldest son James, their younger son Manu, their daughter Tangimoana and their youngest son Toko. Roimata, mother of four children, leaves her native land for better opportunities. But later she feels alienated in Pakeha society (the term used for New Zealanders who are of European descent) and return to her ancestral family. She looks to Hemi to reconnect to her ancestral land. She says of him, “Only Hemi could secure me, he being as rooted to the

earth as a tree is. Only he could free me from raging forever between earth and sky which is a predicament of great loneliness and loss” (23). Her husband Hemi is the agriculture figure who sticks to the mould of being Maori and encourages his family to look to the land and traditions. Together, as a family, they try to keep wealthy developers off their land who try to infringe upon their ancestral land. Tangimoana, their daughter, is a social activist and a law student who tries to protect the wharehau (meeting house) through her knowledge and modernised ways. Patricia Grace's characters look to their ancestral lands for sustenance as Hemi keeps on telling his family that “everything we need is here (159).

Land for Maori community is not a vehicle for monetary gains rather it is something that sustains life. This indigenous belief can be best comprehended by applying Arne Naess's idea of “deep ecology”. Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess along with American environmentalist George Sessions introduced the philosophy of deep ecology to literature in 1973. It implies that all living and non-living beings have intrinsic value in themselves regardless of their instrumental utility to human society (3 *The Deep Ecology Movement*). It underscores the idea that all entities are interconnected, therefore human species do not exist in isolation. Humans and all other species exist in a network where everything is interdependent and interconnected. Grace explores how the community members are engaged in a reciprocal relationship with the earth. As one of the characters in the novel states, “these days' people were looking more to their land. Not only to their land, but to their own things as well. They had to if they didn't want to be wiped off the face of the earth” (60). However this harmonious relationship appears to be under threat by a big corporation in its ambition to establish domination over the community. Despite being ravaged under the colonial regime for years, mythical beliefs and customs have managed to reinforce the idea of a balanced ecological system where humans

cannot be separated from nature. The novel explores how ecological consciousness is inherent in traditional Maori worldview, and it emerges from their relationship with nature. As Johl De Ishtar states, "Because we are so close to Papatuanuku(earth) we feel the crushing torment as industrial, hazardous chemical and nuclear wastes are disposed into her womb and other wastes dispersed into the waterways and atmosphere" (De Ishtar 11). The connection between past and present is also made possible through Toko, the handicapped and talented child. Grace recasts Toko, as Maui, a Maori Mythological figure. In an interview Grace says, "Maui was a demi god, I suppose you would say, who inhabited the earth as well as the spiritual world, and who brought from the spiritual world gifts to the people of the earth" (Tausky 95). Maori people nurture the worldview that blurs the solid lines between human and non-human world. When Mr. Dolman, trying to convince people to sell their land, exclaims that they are looking to the past rather than looking towards a new future, a member of the tribe says, "Wrong, we're looking to the future. If we sold out to you, what would we be in the future?" (93).

The whareniui(meeting house) works as an important voice for mythical stories. "In the surface text it is recognized that the whareniui is an important cultural site for storytelling but, as we shall see, it is also arguable that the entire narrative of Potiki is told from and by the walls of the whareniui. . . . the voice of the house is the voice of the people; any narrative originating in such a "text" will have the community as its protagonist" (Knudsen 187). Although the colonial era made the traditional customs and practices undergo a change, yet the community members believe that their land will protect them in a quickly evolving world. Roimata expresses her belief in natural world as she says, "And the watchers know it, waiting, and believing that what is not seen will one day be seen. The waiters know that the earth will give its gifts, and that the sky will too. I am

an ever-watcher of the sky,' she said, 'a patient above-all watcher'" (174). Similarly Hemi believes that even if people have gone away in search of new opportunities, the land and the sea always care for them and he hopes to bring his people together through their connection with the land.

In the entire novel, the importance of storytelling, visual arts and oral tradition is emphasised. The tropes of wood carvings, the whareniui (meeting house) and theurupa (burial grounds) all work as alternative narratives which spiral through time: as an entity and as narrative time. Throughout the text, Grace aligns oral story telling narrative with written narrative, thereby marking a divergence from traditional Western narrative structure. Roimata and Toko are the first person narrators who narrate their tales. Roimata reminds the readers, "we could not help but remember that land does not belong to people, but that people belong to the land" (110). She teaches her children the stories that are not taught in school. Roimata's stories of resistance and resilience help her children understand their own identity. While talking about Manu's resistance against the Pakeha schooling system, Roimata states that the land, the sea and the shores are their books. They are "our science and our sustenance" (104). After feeling hopelessness while living in city, Roimata returns to her family and realises that "there is freedom on the shore, and rest" (18).

Traditional Maori values are contrary to a growth-oriented capitalist economy. Reciprocal relationship that Maori people have with the earth is important for the survival of their culture. In a rationalistic and materialistic world, the relationship of human beings with nature is based on anthropomorphic instrumental approach where nature exists only for the benefit of humans. On the contrary, the Maori belief system encourages those economic activities which do not distance Maoris from their land. For Mr. Dolman, making zoos and circuses or to have restaurants, factories, places and castles, is

considered as progress. On the contrary for Hemi and Roimata, maintaining their ties to the land, ancestors and traditions is progress. They explain to Mr. Dolman, "nothing wrong with money as long as we remember it's food not God. You eat it not worship it." (94).

The novel can be seen as a successful attempt by Grace at staging environmental awareness on a local platform. The Maori tribe is shown to be fully aware of their bond with the ancestral land that defines and protects them. As Michele Kewon emphasize "the importance of land to Maoris, not only as a material source of sustenance and subsistence, but also as a locus of personal and tribal identification" (142). Their connection to the ancestral land can be seen as an alternative view of participating in a modern world without relinquishing the indigenous ties as a source of identity. The ideas of identity in Maori world originate from the belief that they are dependent upon earth and all its life forms for their survival. Thus, understanding the traditional Maori worldview can help in gaining a deeper understanding of environmental concerns that are inherent in many indigenous communities.

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## Meet the Author at Khalsa College, Amritsar (Autonomous) A Report

Novelist Dr. N.K. Neb Interacts with Students in “Meet the Author” Programme Dr. N.K. Neb, a novelist and Associate Professor of English at DAV College Jalandhar was invited to talk about his novel “The Flooded Desert’ in “Meet the Author” Programme organized by Khalsa College Amritsar. Dr. Mahal Singh, Principal of the college, welcomed him and Professor Sukhmeen Bedi, Dean Academic Affairs and the Head of the English Department formally introduced the novelist to the students. During the discussion, Dr. Neb told that his novel explores the journey of a traditional middle class woman and traces her transformation into a new woman. The novel is set against the background of trouble torn days of 1980s in the Punjab. He also answered the queries of the students and explained the techniques and style used in his novel.

After the discussion Dr. Neb gave away the prizes to the student members of the Literary Society for their achievements in different fields.

Prof. Anupam presented the vote of thanks, apart from the member of the P.G. Department of English about 150 students participated in the function. Prof. Sawant Manto conducted the stage.

