

# ROCK PEBBLES



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June 2019 Vol. XXIII No. II

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## Cover Photo

Girish Karnad (1938 - 2019)  
Noted Indian writer, actor & playwright

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**Editor speaks.....**

India is a multicultural and multilingual country. At the same time the creative trend too here is very diverse. The oral and written traditions especially in poetry and drama have their own special influences even in the contemporary writings.

The literary world was saddened on 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2019 with the heartrending demise of Girish Karnad. Though he is chiefly branded as a dramatist in the world of Indian writings in English, he is equally acknowledged as an actor, director in South Indian cinema and in Bollywood as well. His plays are marked with the tinges of history and mythology though those are very modern to the core. His works are marked with local cultures in global sphere and his translation of his Kannad dramas to English has taken him to a greater height with his wide recognition in the literary arena. The translation of his dramas to different Indian languages and direction by the veteran directors like Ebrahim Alkazi, B. V. Karanth, Alyque Padamsee, Prasanna, Arvind Gaur, Satyadev Dubey, Vijaya Mehta, Shyamanand Jalan, Amal Allana and Zafer Mohiuddin measures his success as a dramatist. His active role as a director, actor and screenwriter also has brought this multidimensional personality laurels with different awards and recognitions which include Sangeet Natak Akademi Award and Vathur Navya Award (1972), Padma Shri (1974), Padma Bhushan (1992), Kannada Sahitya Parishad Award (1992), Sahitya Academy Award (1994), Jnanapith Award (1998), Kalidas Samman (1998) and Rajyotsava Award, besides many Filmfare awards in the category of South Indian films as well as in Bollywood along with several Karnataka state film awards.

Gubbi Veeranna Award for his services to theatre (as a playwright) and Honorary Doctorate from University of Southern California, Los Angeles – 2011 and Dr. T.M.A. Pai Konkani Distinguished Achievement Award for Performing Arts of 1996 have brought him recognition worldwide. His services in the leading cultural organisations of the country in the capacity of many prestigious posts depict his love for the national culture and the best that the country can give him.

The Rock Pebbles family condoles the sad demise of such a great personality- and expects rise of such talents to take the rich regional literature and culture of the country to the national and international spheres.

**- Editor**

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## Negotiating ‘Mythical Method’ and ‘Archetypal Pattern’ in the Plays of Girish Karnad

**Bishnu Charan Dash**

Together with Vijoy Tendulkar and Badal Sarkar, Girish Karnad constitutes one of the three invincible pillars of modern Indian theatre / contemporary Indian Drama. Whereas Sarkar and Tendulkar satisfactorily brought to the fore, the anxiety and angst, problems and sufferings of the middle class by virtue of their art of social realism, Karnad not only made drama a social commentary, but also more predominantly tended to fortify India’s cultural heritage and glorious past through dramatic representation. This he did with the help of ‘mythical method’ which entails appropriation of myths and legends, beliefs and historical happenings or revisiting / recritiquing them through an adroit interweaving of mythology, topical socio-political issues, cultural past and contemporary history with post-colonial orientation. Karnad’s creative genius and postcolonial oeuvre is more often than not grounded upon a mythical framework which is clearly evident from his first play *Yajati* (1960) down to *Hayavadana*, *the Fire and the Rain* and *Nagamandala*. Derived from the classical Greek root ‘mythos’ (Muthos), which means a ‘story’ or a ‘plot’, myth is usually defined as a ‘traditional story’ of ostensibly historical events that unfolds the beliefs and practices, history, philosophy,

and religious tradition of primitive people / society. It is in this sense that ancient Greek, Roman, Celtic and Indian myths are interpreted as traditional/historical discourse. Alan Dundes (1984) defines ‘myth’ as a ‘sacred narrative’ which explains as to how the world and humanity emerged out of nothing. Following Dundes the folklorists tend to interpret myth as a narrative that serves to define the ‘fundamental world view of a culture’ by explaining the different aspects of the natural world and by delineating the spiritual aspects, psychological and social practices / ideals of a society. Alan Dundes (*Sacred Narratives: Readings in the Theory of Myth*, University of California Press, 1984), Robert A. Segal (*Theorizing about Myth*, University of Massachusetts Press, 1999) and Mircea Eliade (*Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, 1967:59) strongly argue in favour of myth – religion – ritual relationship. While foregrounding his argument that myth is associated very often with gods and goddesses, spirits and supernatural beings, rites and rituals, beliefs and practices of primitive people, Segal emphasizes the incontrovertible relationship of myth and religion on the basis of the fact that many religions involve myths pertaining to global flood and creation of the world.

Eliade on the other hand strongly argues that myth constitutes an essential foundation of religion, and that novels and epics, beliefs and rituals, customs and ideologies do contain 'mythological elements'. At the same time, in this book *The Sacred and Profane* (1961:100), Eliade not only establishes the efficacy of myth in relation to man and religion, but also makes a very significant remark that human beings derive inspiration and acquire knowledge and models for human behaviour from myths. The more religious a human being is, the more paradigmatic models does he possess as a guide to his actions and attitudes. Much before Eliade, there was Joseph Campbell who in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949:20) hinges upon the significance of old creation myths and offers a perceptive remark that mythology serves at once as an aid or a guide to understand individual lives of people and also as an inspiration, a motive builder and a transformer of civilization (519). At the same time, in his book *Occidental Mythology* (1991:519-521), Campbell locates four essential functions of mythology in the long view of the history of mankind – eliciting awe as to the mystery of being, a view of cosmology supporting social order, organic integration of individuals towards their spiritual realization. Here it is pertinent to mention that myth – religion – ritual relationship experienced a severe jolt with the advancement of science and the concept of Enlightenment that prompted structural anthropologists to develop their perspective on myth on the basis of the innate understanding of the 'scientific approach / process' which tends to split the complex

phenomena into different parts so that understanding of the phenomena through dissection and analysis will be done on the basis of a scientific analysis. Claude Lévi-Strauss in his book *Myth and Meaning* (1978) shows the connection between myth and science and holds that structuralism is based on an innate understanding of the scientific process (5-14). Furthermore, in his *Structural Anthropology* (1963:210), Strauss holds that a myth can be broken down into constituent units which are different from the constituents of language, and that unlike the constituents of language, the constructions of a myth called 'mythemes' do function as 'bundles of relations' (211). The structural approach to myth entails the fact that it necessitates a study of, for example, all versions of Oedipus myth as a whole – a concept that points to a continuous spiral growth of the myth. To Strauss, myths reflect patterns in mind and obviously emphasizes interpretations of those patterns as fixed mental structures and binary oppositions. It is at this point that myth studies is taken in conjunction with archetypal method which was emphasized by such powerful critics as Carl Gustav Jung, Maud Bodkin, Northrop Frye, J.G. Frazer, G. Wilson Knight, Richard Chase, Joseph Campbell and Leslie Fiedler. To them, myth facilitates archetypes as universal symbols with deep significance.

(ii)

Archetypes are as such defined as those persistent images universal symbols, settings character types and story patterns that are deeply embedded in humanity's collective unconscious symbols, settings character types and story patterns that are



deeply embedded in humanity's 'collective unconscious' which constitutes the repository of 'racial memories' Carl Gustav Jung, one of the foremost mythologists of the modern time and a psychological approach by devising his theory of 'collective unconscious' rather than 'individual unconscious'. While extending Sigmund Freud's theory of consciousness – conscious, subconscious and unconscious Jung, in his *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* (1969) maintains that humanity has a 'primeval' collective unconscious' shared by all individual in all cultures. The collective unconscious constitutes the repository of 'racial memories' and primordial images/ motifs and patterns of experience otherwise called archetypes. For instance, primordial myths associated with nature such as water, wind, fire, mountains, rivers, trees do secure permanent seats in human psyche and are as such handed down to posterity in form of deep seated beliefs and ideological constructs down the ages. To take two examples from *The Ramayana* and *the Mahabharata*, Sita and Savitri are mythically narrativized as two symbols of ideal / chaste wife, and as such they remained as permanently fixed archetype of a 'chaste wife' bearing universal significance. These archetypes involve racial memories which not only operate themselves in the subconscious level in form of dreams, but also find themselves persistently expressed in the more consciously constructed forms of myth and literature. Jung's contention is that great literature is an expression of the archetypes of the collective unconscious, and that a great author provides the reader with a narrative based on unconscious racial

memories thereby subconsciously stirring the reader's mind, with powerful psychological effect, to primordial feelings and images of the human race.

To Jung, Structural elements of 'myth' forming psyche ("Collective Unconscious") which are manifest through 'motifs', 'primordial images' or archetypes that 'represent inherent forms of psychic behaviour. (1958:XVI). In his *Psychological Reflections* (1961:42), Jung cogently argues that these psychic instincts are eternally living in man since time in memorial and would continue to shape human psyche all the time in future as well. He further asserts that one can live "the fullest life when we are in harmony with these symbols". (42). Whereas most of the anthropologists tended, to see archetype as 'social phenomena' handed down from one generation to another through very many sacred rites, Jung argues that these are rather inherited forms through the structure of the psyche itself. He further vindicates the point in that myths are not derived from external factors like seasonal and solar. Circles, but are, as a matter of fact, projections of innate psychic phenomena. In his book *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (1968), Jung states:

All the mythologized processes of nature such as summer and winter: the phase of the moon, the rainy seasons, and so forth are in no sense allegories of this objective occurrences: rather they are symbolic expressions of the inner unconsciousness drama of the psyche which becomes accessible to man's consciousness by way of projection – i.e. mirrored in the events of nature (6).

Following the footsteps of Jung, Northrop Frye his *Anatomy of criticism* (1957) developed the archetypal approach besides vindicating myth nature relationship to him, myth – nature relationship is primordial precisely because right from the very inception of creation, myths have been created/constructed around Nature and her various elements. Frye developed the archetypal approach by grounding – in the cycle of four seasons four organic cycles of life and literature. Whereas he locates ‘comedy’ in the mythos of spring, ‘romance’ is located in the mythos of Summer, ‘tragedy’ in the mythos of ‘Fall’ and ‘irony’ in the mythos of winter thereby justifying myth – man – nature relationship within an archetypal pattern. Frye correlates four seasons with four literary genres that correspond to four organic stages of human life through literary representation. While so doing, the learned critic tends to vindicate the point that “myth is a structural organizing principle of literary form” (341), and that mythology provides, through archetypal pattern, an imaginative survey of human situation as a whole. There are many archetypes which act as universal symbols of life and cultures in different mythologies. Being rooted in cultural environments of people, myths also serve cultural function and bind people with profound sense of feeling and action and communal unity that points to cultural cohesiveness as well . It is now evident that myths and archetypes have become ‘dynamic factors’ everywhere in human society and that myths transcend time uniting the past with the present and reaching towards future with ‘spiritual and cultural aspirations’(Guerin ,1992:160).

(iii)

At once an actor, publisher and a film maker, Girish Karnad was destined to shine bright and to carve a niche in the field of Indian theatre. And during the 1950s and 1960s, India experienced a clash between the colonial culture and western thought process on the one hand and a powerful plea for preserving native tradition, cultural glory, heritage of India on the other. Knowing it fairly well that the ‘colonial past’ had almost devoured the ‘cultural past’ Karnad tended to receive the ancient glory and cultural heritage of the country and the best way to do so through drama is to vivify Indian myths, legends, traditions and folklore. With this objective in mind , he wrote *Yajati*(1961) in which desire for perpetual youth by Yajati remained an archetype for eternity and immortality signified by perpetual youth and beauty.

An analysis of the play *Yajati* reveals that Karnad has revisited the Yajati – Puru myth as narrativized in the epic *The Mahabharata*. The epic has characterized king Yajati as an embodiment of both love and marriage. Where as he married Devayani ,the only daughter of Sukracharya, the guru of demons, he also fell in love with Devayani’s maid Sharmistha and out of their adulterous affair was born the devoted son Puru. King Yajati was cursed by the divine world for his adultery with Devayani’s maid and experienced unwarranted old age. Yajati’s prayer for mitigation of his suffering was granted on the condition that the king can get back his youth if anyone is willing to exchange his youth with the king’s old age. Puru , Yajati’s son from Sharmistha, exchanged his youth with his father’s old

age – the reason why his wife Chitrlekha felt offended and ended her life by taking poison. Yajati realised the pathetic condition of his son and took back old age from him. However, the play ends with the tragic death of Chitrlekha. Now, viewed from the perspective of mythical method and archetypal criticism, it is worth noticing that Karnad did not blindly appropriate the Yajati – Puru myth, even though his primary objective was to revive the cultural past and ancient glory of the great Indian tradition. In the first place, what is noteworthy is the fact that Karnad has revisited the epic myth by exercise his imagination and freedom so as to make it more effective and acceptable to the contemporary audience/ readers. No doubt, the epic myth is revisited to highlight primitive culture but the dramatist differs from the epic plot by characterizing Puru not as the son of Yajati and Sharmistha, but as one born to Yajati's earlier – marriage as superior to adultery thereby vindicating the fact that myths and archetypes are foregrounded upon a morally ordained universe. At the same time, Karnad gives a clearcut message to the Indian readers / audiences that myths are not irrelevant, and that these are strongly charged with lessons of morality which is characteristic of great epics also. In this connection, we are reminded of Kathryn Morgan's observation that myths can be critically analysed through philosophical lens and moral values (2000:2). While so doing, Morgan draws a distinction between 'philosophical myth' and 'poetic myth'. Whereas the former attempts to appropriate myth proper without literary ornamentations and serves as a powerful form of 'philosophical 'self-identification' at the

exclusion of the mythological word of the poets, poetic myths have proliferation of meanings. Whereas philosophical myths are intrinsically universal, poetic myths emphasize the role of imagination and the privileged relationship between poet and the 'Holy Muse' signifying divine inspection. The Greek philosophers such as Plato, Xenophanes and Parmenides maintained that myth and morality are inseparable from each other. To them, myth has the capacity to communicate to the audience the transcendental character of the cosmos.

Viewed from the aforesaid theoretical perspective, Karnad's *Yajati* myth culminates in several archetypes and the dramatist experiences a satisfactory negotiation between 'poetic myth' and 'philosophical myth'. Yajati is an archetype that stands for longing for regaining the lost paradise – precious youth and beauty. Puru, though a product of adultery in the epic, archetypally points to an ideal and devoted son of self – sacrifice really rare in the postcolonial society. Chitrlekha, like Sita and Savitri, is an archetype for a chaste wife who prefers suicide to compromise with her husband's old age. On the whole, Yajati's brilliant study in mythical method and archetypal criticism in which the epic myth is revisited with novelty. As in *Yajati*, Karnad has also banked upon myth partially in three other plays such as *Hayavadana* (1972), *Naga – Mandala* (1988) and *The Fire and the Rain* (1995). In these plays, Karnad has achieved remarkable success by virtue of reworking of myths, history and literary representations.

The very titles of the plays mentioned above show that Karnad derives

his source from ancient Indian traditions by powerful use of archetypal myths. Karnad subscribes to Alan Dundes' view that myth is "primitive religious narrative". At the same time, he banks upon Carl Gustav Jung's view that myth has significant impact on human psychology and the myths helps explore the unconscious types and are preserved as archetypes in the collective unconscious or cultural psyche of people. Regarding mythic consciousness, Karnad recalls how he has grown up in myth in a village where civilization was in its blooming stage: "So myths, to me, were a part of life . I just love myths and I know them , and now I keep forgetting, but I knew my *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana* backwards". (The Hindu, October 21, 2015). To him, epics, puranas and folklore furnish plenty of myths to narratives them in terms of dramatic representation . The play *Yajati* and *The Fire and the Rain* bear true testimony to this point and vindicate the fact that the grand epic constitutes the fountain source of all narratives and contours of life . The credit goes to Karnad for his appropriation of the *Mahabharata* myths with modernist and topical relevance. For instance, in *Yajati*, he teaches the modern readers/ audience the relevance of self – sacrifice , self realisation, efficacy of marriage as against adultery , responsibilities of son, father and wife in the contemporary society . Similarly in *The Fire and the Rain*, through the myth of Yavakri (Yavakrita), which is taken from chapters 135 to 138 of the forest canto (Vana Parva) of the *Mahabharata*, Karnad has highlighted how myths express certain archetypal, social relationships – of father , mother, son , husband and wife – which have secured permanent seats in our

'collective unconscious' and 'cultural psyche'. Myths may be false and fictitious or far removed from reality and history. Nevertheless, as Northrop Frye has rightly stated in "Myth, Fiction and Displacement", myth is a drive towards verbal circumference of human experience" (165). In Karnad's scheme of things , myths are eternally present in the human psyche ("Collective Unconscious")as archetypes.

That mythology has been his favourite Muse stands vindicated in Karnad's play *Tughlaq* in which history is mythicized . The story of Haya – Vadana signifies the fact that life is essentially imperfect and that Devadatta and Kapila are sacrificed to regenerate Padmini. But , their metamorphosis back to their original selves is in obedience to the laws of Nature. In order to vindicate the fact of imperfectness in life, Karnad has capitalized the myth of *Hayavadana* which corresponds to the age old Indian myths of Vakra – tunda and Hayagriva which are used as sure archetypes to characterize the imperfections of modern and post – modern man. The play *Hayavadana* has also accommodated the archetype of a big banyan tree (Kalpavriksha) which stands for supreme spiritual fulfilment. One is here reminded of the Kalpavriksha standing within the temple of Lord Jagannatha which fulfils all the desires of the devotees. The giant tree extending its branches to the sky is an archetype that symbolizes vaulting ambition and glory. Karnad seems to have subscribed to Northrop Frye's criticism that nature provides primordial archetypes thereby vindicating cordial man – nature relationship. In the play *Tughlaq*, the tree in

the woods under which the Sultan wished to be buried is a powerful archetype of peace and ecstasy which is really rare in the cacophony of the modern world . Surprisingly, in *The Fire and The Rain*, the reader locates the big ‘banyan tree’ under which the tribal elders of the village assembled to witness the vowsof a man to remarryatribal girl ,which is a symbol of solemnity, chivalry and majesty. Interestingly, banyan tree which stands as a veritable archetype in Karnad’s dramatic corpus has remained a part and parcel of the “collective unconscious” of the Indian people. It stands for patience, endurance, peace and also represents Lord Siva . In the play *Naga – Mandala*, which exploits the serpent (naga) tradition in the Hindu thought, there is a reference to a big banyan tree under which cobra lives in the anthill, and where the village council assembled to pass verdict on the chastity of a woman . Significantly, the cobra (naga) is fashioned in this play as unique archetype of marital bliss and power, authority and divinity. It is now evident that Karnad appropriates Indian myths and archetypes for a satisfactory negotiation between rural ecology and postcolonial human situation demanding dynamics of power and authority. In Karnad’s scheme of things, the sacred and the profane are satisfactorily wedded together within the archetypal framework of Indian mythology.

In *The Fire and the Rain*, Karnad’s treatment of myth takes a practical and somewhat multi-dimensional turn by encompassing several colonial and postcolonial issues such as social stratification, caste based politics, human

imperfection , bondage of religion, hidden jealousy for power and complexity of human relationship. Yavakri’s journey for acquiring self knowledge, his frustrated relationship with Vishakha and his meditation to obtain knowledge of the Vedas directly from gods – all these can be archetypally interpreted as man’s quest for knowledge besides his hidden jealousy in mind which ultimately leads to destruction. Girish Karnad subscribes to the theory that myth and morality are inseparable, and that the hidden jealousy of Yavakri and his attempt to take revenge against Parbasu and Raibhya stands for the condition which is archetypally stated through the symbol of ‘fire’ (jealousy), the most primitive symbol of human life which is signified by the fire of jealousy, anger , hatred and revenge. The highest moral lesson that the dramatist tends to offer in this play in that mere knowledge without love of / for human beings , society is incomplete and that real bliss signified by rain is really rare in a complicated society that bedevils humanity. ■

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# Spatial Analysis of the Select Fiction of Joseph Conrad

Anuradha Chaudhuri

The spatial analysis of Conrad's fiction is definitely going to open up a new area of studies in the field of critical studies in literature at the present juncture, particularly in the field of Conrad Studies. As a postcolonial reader, it has been pertinent to discuss the literary stalwarts of the past from newer perspectives with a view to bringing out certain unexpected and unexplored facts regarding their creative treasure for lending further momentum to the active and vibrant academic world of the present times when there has been the explosion of knowledge all around. Interestingly the period of Conrad happened to face certain crucial spatial problems as the world turned out to be a disenchanted one throwing the author himself in ambivalence as to how to respond and react to the tendency of rationalising the over-exploration of the earth and the act of materialising space. In his 1918 Speech titled "Science as a Vocation", Max Weber points out that the fate of the time is characterised by rationalization and intellectualization and also by the disenchantment of the world. Being a close observer of the whole process of colonialism, being a victim first and then a participant in its execution over the years as a Master Mariner of British Merchant Marine, Conrad has worked to develop the

concept of space through his fiction under consideration, *Lord Jim* and *Nigger of the Narcissus* to redirect the readers from a sense of remoteness, strangeness and enchantment to that of immediate surroundings, familiarity and actuality as such. As Weber argues that with the fast progress in science and technology throughout the centuries, people found new, rational explanations for the inexplicable past demolishing the concept of the existence of incalculable, mysterious forces as rationality and science had disenchanted the world by technical means and calculation. But a spatial analysis of Conrad's fiction shows an effort on the part of the author at the re-mystification of space as well as incomprehensibility and obscurity, a kind of ambivalence seems to be pervading his fictional domain facilitating the emergence of third space, a space for negotiation and adjustment and all these have become possible because of Conrad's utmost belief in humanity and human relationships despite all the disintegrating and contrary forces present in the human world. By the time Conrad started documenting his variegated experiences, gathered from his eventful travels across the globe in the form of fiction, both the notions of the expansion and constriction of globe captured the attention of the enlightened

circle creating an upsurge of thought-provoking discussions and deliberations. The Post-Renaissance period made the Europeans conscious that they occupied only a small place among many as navigation and exploration brought out the vastness of global space. This acted as a stimulant for more and more adventurous voyages. But by the late nineteenth century, significant developments in cartography and unprecedented advancements in transportation and telecommunications gave rise to the concept of global village, the world being defined as a smaller and more tightly-networked place, absolutely within the reach of human knowledge. Conrad's fiction demonstrates his ambivalent response to spatialization. While focussing on colonial myths and realities, Conrad moves beyond geographical spatiality. Colonial situations as defined in the novels under consideration experience acute spatial problems between 'them' and 'us', if Saidian binaries become the focal points. The in-between spaces between the lived one and the socially created one are being represented by Conrad in his fiction as his travelling gaze could capture the social reality and cultural space of various exotic lands-the real dramatic settings which can be identified with Foucault's heterotopias, a meeting place of contesting cultures involved in social relations maintaining the axiomatic proposition of Henri Lefebvre that "(social) space is a (social) product (POS 26). The concept of social production of space developed by Edward Soja suits Conrad's demonstration of the spatiality. Soja, influenced by the French Philosopher Lefebvre for the first time identifies the centrality of space arguing

...that all social relations become real and concrete, a part of our lived existence, only when they are spatially 'inscribed' that is concretely represented in the social production of space...(POS 46).

In-fact, Foucault's contention that "the present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space" and that "[we] are in the epoch of simultaneity [...] in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed" (Foucault, *Of Other Spaces* 1) gets befitting representation in both the novels, *Lord Jim* and the *Nigger of the Narcissus*. In both the works, the protagonists pass through various phases of perceived, conceived and lived spaces in the process of appropriation of space in the territories of the Other which, on the other hand lays bare the complex human psychology; disappointment, frustration and disillusionment being the ultimate truths of their life. Jim in *Lord Jim* betrays his profession and the natives also in the process of colonialism and being uprooted from their own land, climate and socio-political environment, the white colonisers fail to create their own space in their coveted lands of plenty, the irony of Renaissance Ideology. The presence of the only nigger James Wait, a devil incarnate in the novel, otherwise dominated by the whites turns the voyage from Bombay to London a purgatorial experience. The struggle between the 'self' and the 'other', the 'centre' and the 'margin', the 'dominant' and the 'dominated' has been an eternal issue, remaining unsolved till date. Both Soja and Lefebvre, however,

emphasise the dynamism involved in space in the process of production of social, historical and ideological relations. Space and society are interrelated as there is no 'unsocialised space'. Mind can conceive spaces to any number of dimensions and the terms like literary cartography, mapping, literary topography and heterotopes of literature play significant roles in dealing with spatial analysis. The discourse of postmodernism has specially emphasised the importance of space, geography and cartography while geocriticism regards all writing as a map and Conrad, as a great observer of human situations and ironies has been able to conceive, perceive and experience the space in his fictional world rather vividly. The white colonisers including Lord Jim struggle to come out of the conflict between imagined and lived spaces facing utter disillusionment at the loss of imagined space in the occupied lands. In *Lord Jim*, Conrad shows the significance of the individual space in relation to the social space-the reciprocity of the both. Jim has been portrayed to have a refinement to show an intense awareness of the social environments, recognise, accept and play his part sincerely. Thus the space which has been lost because of his momentary mistake has been regained by him through his sincere effort as he believes in the ethical vision of life. Jim's sense of duty and fidelity to certain moral principles, on which human solidarity is based is badly disturbed after his 'jump' from the ship 'Patna'. He considers himself responsible for the sorrow of 'the body of men held together by community' (50). But then his later decision to go to the Settlement of

Patusan has been an attempt to reinstate himself with another social group, redeem himself in his own eyes, establish fresh human ties to be recognised as 'Tuan Jim', beloved, respected and relied upon fully by the natives, a further attempt in ensuring his space among the natives as well and draw a kind of negotiation between the two opposing worlds of colonising self and the colonized other . In *Nigger of the Narcissus*, both Wait and Donkin, inspite of their racial dissimilarity are found the same, quite selfish and have a common motive to enjoy easy passage by emotionally overpowering the officers and the crew but the irony is that they cannot make a special space for themselves in each other's heart. They do not cultivate or retain human ties. Conrad's novels constantly reiterate that in a universe devoid of meaning, man has to create his own values. The diasporic situation of Conrad's protagonists creates a very complex spatial problem causing a lot of mental agony, physical suffering, psychological abnormality and moral conflict, a sense of guilt and expiation to absolve themselves of all the evils they had to share being the indispensable parts of colonial enterprise. The heterotopic realities of the lives of the protagonists make them struggle with space to be appropriated. Spatial realities as experienced in the occupied lands cannot negate the strong memories stored in the mental space, defying any concrete definition which creates an identity crisis providing scope for a new identity whatsoever. Thus there is a sharp passage from Foucault's utopia to his heterotopias in the fiction of Conrad studied in this paper. ■

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# Productive Class-room Business Time: An Integrated Perspective on Teacher Development in ESL Contexts

**Krushna Chandra Mishra**

*The thrust in this paper is on making teacher education more properly geared to making ESL Class-room Business Time Productive for all practical purposes. With insight culled from reported research and on-going practices in the field of second language teacher training and its emphases on various aspects in ESL contexts, some suggestions have been worked out here towards making teaching of the English language result in actual learning outcome at the end of any given classroom business time.*

This paper presents an integration of perspectives to help make class-room business time in Indian ESL contexts more productive. The practices in our class-rooms are on the changing from the teacher centred to the learner centered modes. Teachers as researchers of the class-room activities and where they lead (Martinez:1993) have come to make great use of the learning that come to them from their learners. Commitment to making ESL class rooms successful is on the rise due to the awareness brought to the teachers of English in India courtesy in-service training programmes and short term orientations. Attitude over the years in all sections of the Indian society has changed in favour of retaining English in our system

of education as one un-wish-away-able teaching subject. Globalization has made our economic opportunities and fortunes inalienably tied up with English. And English as a veritable might-is-right kind of additional qualification has convinced the prospective job seekers in India that gaining competency in this skill-based subject is something always worth striving for in the days of active and regular pursuit of various educational courses and programmes. It is here where the question of how best class-room teaching-learning time could be made productive acquires a rare urgency and begs to be properly addressed.

Class-room business being productive is a multi-faceted idea. It is basically a relationship of various factors and forces and agents that come into play to make certain goals achieved in real and concrete terms. The organizations or schools which have a name in all our major cities or townships / locations sail well because they are wedded to visions of the future and ensconced in the needs and pressing urgencies of the present. They have top orders of management skills and ask for commitment from their service-providing skilled work force. Constant market analysis makes them update their courses and

curricula and in good time their personnel are trained up at regular intervals. Their clientele as a result works under stringent conditions where only one principle holds – targets first and nothing else.

Meenakshi Sharma, in her “Commitment among Teachers – Some Issues” (University News, 39(1), Jan 1, 2001) recommends : “There has to be a humanistic approach to the teaching learning process. Teachers are to imbibe a high level of commitment to learning ...” (p.12) O. Rally (1991:247-251) wants that “When top management not only says that something is important but behaves in ways which support this message, we begin to believe what is said ...”(in Meenakshi Sharma as above )

In lines of the above, ESL classroom business time to be productive would require committed teachers, involved and dedicated students, well-planned syllabus, choicest methods of teaching and to coordinate the whole thing a determined vision-bound strategist as top educational administrator or manager. It is then that things will fall in line. Rule of discipline will decide all results. This needs be clarified here that rule of discipline refers to self discipline at all levels once democratic set up within the class rooms explains to one and all as to what voluntarily, and yet with all accountability, every one must do as their share of the project work. Let’s make it further clear. The teacher within the learner-centered classroom still holds the key. As the advanced players in the language class room with mastery of all the skills of language in all the changing situations as in real life, he / she has to

manage the transition over a class time satisfying that every learner in the class room gets their due bits. It is here against the challenging new classroom atmosphere available to us now that we have to envision a training in strategies and procedures whereby our new-era ESL learners would get the maximum out of our daily routine exercise and enterprise.

Let’s consider the following: 1. What do we know of our learners? 2. What do we know of ourselves as teachers? 3. What do we know of our requirements in terms of the expectations of our job as ESL teachers? and 4. How do we make the three knowledge areas above combine to make class room time used productive?

### **1. What do we know of our learners?**

As ESL teachers in India we know of our learners a few such important things as their age, parentage, socio-economic background from which they come, stage at which they negotiate the challenge posed by learning English as a school subject – testable and, hence, valuable , the kind of problem they face as a collectivity or as individuals etc. We also perhaps know what interests our learners – both text-wise and teaching-wise. Content-wise either texts are difficult or easy, interesting or not so interesting. Difficulty of the content is either due to an unreasonable load of new words (vocabulary) or due to certain idea which ranks as not previously introduced or as not presently easily linked to the old and acquainted ones. Teaching-wise either the method of doing the text has a problem to be investigated and addressed or testing, evaluation and grading make things appear difficult. We know, however, that productive



class-room time always is time actually leading to desired levels of learning outcome accruing at the accounting auditing time. In order to make class business schedules productive, we know to reach out to learners in all the ways desirable and practicable. We make learning-centered business transaction planning the whole thing in advance. We unitise the syllabus and further sub-divide texts into easy delivery modules. We devise ways to link up sub-divisions of texts so as to offer a taste of the whole unit. We put into use speedy revision-oriented questions to set up links with past or previous classes and to introduce freshly arriving hitherto undone parts of a selected text which may be in progress. We know by taking recourse to in-built repetition-cum- revision questions how much the class taught has actually become consumable for the learners. It is based on such knowledge of how definitely productively the class work is moving ahead that we finally proceed to draw out an over all text evaluation plan which in its turn keeps us armed with the feed-back on whether or not a class taught has proved its due worth.

## **2. What do we know of ourselves as teachers?**

Of equal importance to us in matters of finding out ways to make class-time used productive is our knowledge of ourselves. We know if we are acquainted with the text to be done. This text acquaintance suggests we are able to identify the level of difficulty the content-material could pose both thematically (in terms of idea presented) and vocabulary-wise (Nunan: 1988). This knowledge of the text perhaps also asks us how to make the presentation part effective.

This presentation planning involves asking us to break the whole matter prescribed to be done into parts which must show up their easy linkability when in phases these are individually taken up. Also an inbuilt exercise to sum up as well as to deal with the significant details of the contents presented is to be kept ready before we enter the classroom and make the class venture into and brave the course. What could be called constant firming up needs be guardedly provided using the instantly grasping more advanced sections of the class on a routine change-over basis such that the living sparks from every corner could be seen throughout the class. Also, as per need and promptings of the situation, the level of confidence with definite boosting sense of achievement to march through the course needs be made available to all with the teacher on a basis of full alertness moving the spotlight of questions on content, comprehension and vocabulary in appropriate directions to effectively cover everyone eager to be invited to participate in the classroom mega feast of exchanges of prowess and proficiency. The central job for us as teachers is to make sure that at every individual class level we must pitch the text prescribed making it simplified for presentation to the class first in bits and then in the best-linked form possible to achieve the goal of content continuity in terms of consistency, cohesiveness and textual unity. Further, the text presentation has to have all the skill areas of language teaching distinctly and proportionately properly considered with evaluation of them equally carefully planned to make use of relevant activities and tasks. The feed-back available at this stage in every class and in every phase of

dealing with a certain context must make us spot-rearrange the whole thing keeping in view the basic planning of knitting together pieced subparts and parts of the text. The purpose is that the class time spent is realisable well spent and desirably productive and this very fact could be subsequently verified with claim-confirmation tests for reinforcement and also rehabilitation. Re-teaching and remedial teaching provisions must be made to follow well within a phase any small part of the text is being done to prove that the part, in its minimal due saved, allows for avoiding the total wastage visible at the end of the course when so many teaching periods have already gone. We could say: let's stitch one at a time and in time to save nine. The code here is to watch, but not wait - to find as and when a stitch comes into demand and to promptly provide for the same.

### **3. What do we know of our requirements in terms of the expectations of our job as ESL teachers?**

The National Council of Teachers Education (NCTE) of India in its 1998 document (NCTE competency based and commitment oriented teacher Education Initiation Document, 1998) has listed five commitment areas to form an integral and essential part of the teacher education: commitment to the learner, commitment to the society, commitment to the profession, commitment to achieve excellence and commitment to basic human values ( as in Mridula Bhadauria, "Emerging Demands as Teacher Education", University News, 38 (51), December 18, 2000, p.9). Further, Bhadauria (Ibid) feels that "Professionalism for a global society

demands teachers to be innovative in their attitudes, flexible in their approach and reflective in their minds..."

As far as ESL teacher education is concerned, its efforts in line of the NCTE position now should be to make ESL teachers committed to bringing about learning in their English teaching classes with innovation and with flexibility in approaches to teaching while reflecting over what has been done and achieved. What is called action research should guide the ESL teacher in conducting his class. In its learner centered set up , an ESL class room requires that the teacher as facilitator, organiser and manager of learning has to constantly use the achieved command and confidence of the ESL learners to lead him to new learning goals. This means that the teacher on an on-going way keep has to keep track of his learners' successes and achievements and uses his success areas as a basis to lead them to new areas as well as areas where the command and mastery are yet to be substantially satisfactorily gained. All things – text quality selection, text presentation using all four skills of LSRW in mind, text administration to ensure and assess level of comprehension of text presented, evaluation of responses, personal feedback using easy and specific comments, learners' feedback on where gaps in attainment could be bridged, use of advanced learners both as models and as course guides for the successfully covered texts etc. — are to be done by the teacher in an unobtrusive and inspiring and supportive way with advance planning already carried out keeping the text quality and the learner quality in proper focus.

The teachers have to realise the seriousness of their undertaking. They must recognize that “Learner development is the responsibility of the teacher” (Kathy Bird, “Learner Development, Teacher Responsibility, in English Teaching Forum, October, 1993, p.27). In realising this responsibility, the significance of the class-room needs be properly emphasised. Prof. Shivendra K. Verma’s remarks on the need to develop courses in the effective teaching and learning of ESL considering the multilingual settings of the interactions carried out in Indian ESL class-rooms and using data emerging from our classrooms to help learners in rural vis a vis urban settings to use English with confidence in a variety of situations (Verma: “English language teaching programmes in India : focus an Evaluation”, University News, Vol. XXXI, Dec.27, 1993, p.1) appear to set the directions in which our specialist concern in ELT training programmes are to move. Verma holds: In the context of teaching English as L<sub>2</sub> in the Indian setting, the class room acquires a special significance. It represents a complex set of socio-physical features and human factors. Individual learners bring with them their own native languages and culture, proficiency level, individual styles and learning, motivation and attitudes towards ELT, and also their creativity. Indian teachers bring with them their own native languages and their distinctive style, competence in English, and a variety of methods and materials. The system also has its marked properties: organizational, academic, linguistic and socio-cultural. In planning ELT programmes we must keep these factors in view and develop strategies for harnessing the

linguistic resources that learners and teachers bring with them ... in designing our new projects and programmes in the field of ELT, we must keep in view the fact that we are teaching and learning English in India and the expression in India represents a domain which is marked by plurality of languages and culture”. (Verma, Ibid, p.9)

Learning from the classroom is an aspect the importance of which in teacher development programmes can hardly be undermined. In learner-centered classrooms teachers are always in a position to gain new and valuable experiences and insight into how learning takes place with definite and meaningful participation of learners in most situations where needs to involve them appear urgent. It is to use the occasions of such needs that the teacher has to plan the class work / course work in advance. Before that he has to figure out what those needs are, why they must be demanding in nature – demanding for involvement of learners in learning achievement projects. He has to figure out when those needs are to be raised and used, and how they would be modified to prove more effective in future classroom business. Martinez (1993) observes: “we believe that becoming aware of ways in which to learn from our learners will make us better teachers”. He holds that students’ response could keep teachers informed usefully in matters of attitudes towards English and the English class, their motivations, their preferences for teaching materials, their preferences for teaching activities, their preferences for different forms of classroom interaction, their views on the four language skills, their preferences regarding the assessment methods/system, their views on the roles of the teacher and

the learners, their use of learning strategies and study skills, etc.( Martinez,Ibid.)

Many other issues could be included in the above list, depending on the situation and the teacher objectives. Certainly, the issues listed should be taken into account as they will lead to a better understanding of what our students want and need. This should result in a general improvement of teaching and learning. . Furthermore, through this process teachers may become researchers of their own classes and this may bring about a form of teacher self development without the teacher having to leave the class room (Martinez, 1993, in English Teaching Forum, April,1993, pp 44-45)

The above input is of immense consideration value in contexts of ESL teaching class rooms in India and more so with reference to Arunachal Pradesh , a state of more than 26 indigenous tribal communities with their individual unique dialects, culture and value systems. The state, it is important to put on record, has introduced English as the medium of instruction at all levels of education.

This paper roughly analyses the ESL teaching learning scene in Arunachal Pradesh in general with an eye on possible lines along which ESL teacher education may have to orient itself to make the English language classrooms more productive in real terms. The state policy of English medium education could be most practically turned to advantage to benefit the prospective educated employable youth in times when the state is set to gain form a boom in the tourism industry.

#### **4. How do we make the three knowledge areas above combine to make class room time used productive?**

Teachers in all class-room business need to ensure learners being actively involved to reach the goals of language learning and to make the most of the time they spend doing any text use piece or practical bits of exercise. The fact has to be appreciated that the involved teacher finds growing as researcher of his own class-room situation as he analyses his method in use and the results it has led him to in his class where his handling of the contents and his learners is either successful or demanded new priorities and changed limits on quantities of matter to be dealt with in a particular class-time, and changes in his feedback utilization and management procedures.

Uma Joshi and Sasmita Manadal in their “Academic and Non- Academic problems related to English , faced by the Home Science Students of Baroda” (University News, Vol. XXXI, Decm,27, 1993) have stressed that the Indian ESL learners need help in areas of confidence and competence in English (p.10). They need to be freed from ‘Stage fright’ in co-curricular activities like Debate and Drama and from the hesitation and fear of talking to highly professional persons (p10). They need be given exposure to a variety of learning experiences requiring them to communicate in English (p11). Since, rise in the level of study decreases the problem on academic and non academic fronts (p11), learners with every marked rise in the levels of their achievement in specific class based tasks need, in present author’s opinion, be shown, told and encouraged to build upon their achieved success to meet higher levels of

performance challenge and reap success therein. Another very significant data their study has revealed is that parental consciousness on their children's need to cope with English better through arranged extra efforts, and schooling with provision for more years of exposure to English (p11) are helpful in making learners achieve from their English classes and from social situation where English to them is freely available or comes to them as in a formal and compulsive way.

### **Concluding Notes**

The foregoing sections in a limited but significant way serve us the insight on how our teaching classes and teaching time spent with ESL learners could be productive in the expected lines. To sum up, ESL teaching in India will have to make class time used meaningful. Every class and every teacher as a rule has to be engaged in an intensely rewarding action research involving the class-room, the learners, the texts being done, the methods being put into employment, the tests being designed and administered, the evaluation being carried out, the feedback being provided for improvement on analysis of achievement vis a vis performance, the clarity of communication in giving and receiving feedbacks on an on-going basis (Mishra:2005) etc. Learning goals will have to be linked with and constantly updated and upgraded with teacher analyzing this data on the progress of his class from time to time and re-assessing and re-casting his strategies and methods to make learning occur with the active and keen involvement of the learners. Parts individually and in small bits being minutely and meaningfully taken care of would make smooth passage for the

learning goals to be achievable in actual practice over any given academic session. ■

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# Translating Gopal Bulhub Das's Odia Novel *Bhima Bhuiyan* (1908) into English: An Abstract-cum-Review

Jagneswar Badhei

“**B**hima Bhuiyan” is one of the earliest novels of Odia literature written by Gopal Bulhub Das on tribal people, their customs, traditions; particularly of the Bhuiyans of the district of Keonjhar, Odisha. Published in 1908, it is perhaps the first fiction on tribesmen written in any modern Indian language.

This moderately voluminous book consisting of nine chapters is set in a tribal locality in the midst of forests and hills. The story is simple, but handling of the theme is complex through masterly art of fictioning. Portrayal of characters is superb. The novel opens with two tribal sardars namely Tila and Sadhu seen enjoying the Changu song and dance as part of Maghapoda festival being celebrated with much joy and excitement by the tribesmen. Tila has one daughter Chinamali; Sadhu has two sons, Banasura and Bhima; all are young, unmarried. Towards the end of the opening chapter, the proposal for marriage of Chinamali with one of the two sons of Sadhu is presented to the readers.

In the next chapter, Trilochan Mahapatra, the Bebartha and his wife with their intense desire to make money by evil means in the name of the king are introduced. Bebartha's house, with its architectural designs, provides a vivid picture of Bebartha's household and belongings. The couple deludes the king into waging war on neighboring kingdom, where King Harichandan Mardaraj reigns.

This follows the description of Bhima, the protagonist of the novel, who joins the king's army after getting frustrated with his love for Chinamali. Marriage of Chinamali with his brother leads him to mental agony and indecision as to whether to live or to die. In this chapter, Bebartha's personality is revealed of his ability to solve the problems and settling the disputes among the subjects; punishing or rewarding them just as a king does. The whole chapter shows the importance of the Bebartha, his past and how he acquired the post of Bebartha.

The next chapter is all about the defeat of Bebartha Trilochan Mahapatra and king Jagaddev at the hands of king Harichandan Mardaraj. There is a hustle and bustle everywhere among the subjects with the detention of the Bebartha. Bebartha is put to trial and sentenced to death. On the other hand, Bhima wins the credit for war and is entitled as Ranajeet.

The sixth chapter is all about the execution of King Harichandan Mardaraj's order to decapitate the war prisoners; among whom are Bhima's elder brother Banashur and his father old Sadhu sardar. Bhima applies his mind and musters all his courage to save them and succeeds in doing it. The chapter ends with a family reunion and rejoicing.

The seventh chapter shows the readers, King Harichandan Mardaraj's acute suffering due to some unknown ailment.



Bhima, with the help of his father, cures the King. In the meanwhile, Bhima is emotionally bent towards Rajajema, King Harichandan Mardaraj's only daughter. Rajajema is also inclined towards Bhima. But, both are reluctant to share their feelings with each other; Bhima suffers from inferiority complex and the princess her social status and prestige.

The eighth chapter deals with the disclosure of Bhima's deception to the King by disobeying his command in order to save his father and brother. The King orders to behead Bhima. But, on the request of Rajajema, he was forgiven and awarded. Here, the readers catch a glimpse of Jema's inclination towards Bhima.

The final chapter in a climatic turn, opens Jema's love for Bhima before the king. The King remains silent, non-committal to Rajajema's decision. The chapter closes with the departure of Bhima from the palace to prove his purity in love towards the princess and the princess, too, decides to move to Brindaban to practice yoga as a celibate till Bhima's return.

The issue of closeness and intimacy between the tribal and non-tribal, the subject and the king is of great significance in the novel. However, the author appears not be in favour of such intimacy, which might explain why the story terminates in a timeless zone. The last paragraph of the original text gives proper justification to this by showing Jema heading to Brindaban and Bhima leaving the palace. The narrative does not indicate any attitudinal change in the mindset of the upper class. The tribal continues to stick to the earth, where as the non-tribal sees him through a different perspective from an advantageous position. This perhaps the reason why the writer

remains the silent about the reality of the wedding between Bhima and Jema.

Broadly, the novel is, at the same time, down to earth and romantic. One of the chief features of the novel is the archaic use of language, picturesque in form, characteristic of the 19th century Odisha. And this, perhaps, makes it extraordinarily presentable. Another remarkable feature of this text is that this is the only book which contains an introduction in English by the author himself.

In the process of going through the text, I could see that there are certain situations and utterances which are untranslatable and inexplicable. On this score, the only way out is to find the most suitable and approximate equivalents to them. The text is replete with complex words and phrases. It also lacks a specific tense pattern. There are also grammatical and tense fluctuations found in the text.

The original text was authored during a period when Odia novel was in a nascent stage. This novel has not received the critical attention which it so richly deserves. The fiction, while very wittily shows the loyalty of the tribesmen to the king, has also revealed the author's allegiance to the British. The author, perhaps, did not want to disturb the tribal identity. This was the general mind set of that period which might explain the continuance of the usual condition of the tribal people even after a century. They were and still are the "Children of nature". Another noteworthy aspect of the novel is that the author is not critical of the war. About the violence of war, he is silent throughout. War is destructive, but the author has not shown his concern; rather has taken it in a normal way. ■

## A Review of the Article Titled “Basanti” by Brahmananda Singh Published in Kalinga in 1975 August Issue

**Krishnaprada Dash**

**B**rahmananda Singh, in his article titled “Basanti”, writes that on the request of Annada Shankar Ray Basanti which was written by thirteen members of the Sabuja Sahitya Samiti. Being inspired by the Bengali novel Baroyari which was written by the joint authorship of twelve writers and was a great success, the members of the ‘Sabuja Sahitya’ Samiti decided to write a novel with joint authorship. A chapter of the novel Basanti appeared for the first time in the journal titled Utkala Sahitya in May 1924 and the thirtieth chapter was written in November 1926. After five years, in 1931 it was published as a novel by the Sabuja Sahitya Samiti. But only the names of nine authors have been mentioned in the book and “Shree and Shreesa” is taken as the pseudonym of Sarala Devi.

He further adds that the ‘Sabuja Gosthi’, a group of writers, appeared just after the First World War. And it was a difficult task on the part of these writers to establish and produce their effect. Not being able to overcome this situation the writers hid their own identity and used pseudonyms.

Before the publication of Basanti the freedom struggle was continuing in India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Being inspired by the ideology and principles of the Mahatma the Indian youth

were fighting against corruption and for woman emancipation.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the missionaries had objected Idol worship and casteism of Hindus just to promote their own religion and culture. After that the ‘Brahma Samaja’ had also fought against the evils of the Hindu religion. So being motivated by the ‘Brahma Samaja’ the young educated mass of that era tried to be a part of ‘Brahma Samaja’.

Many a Hindu writers like Gobinda Chandra Mohapatra, Sribaschha Panda and Jai Krushna Mishra had also published their writings against casteism just to create a social awareness. Nilakantha, the social reformer of ‘Satyabadi Gosthi’, has revolted for women emancipation and against casteism which are reflected in the novel Basanti.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Indian society was greatly affected by superstitions. Both the educated and the uneducated were affected by the blind beliefs of the society. As the authors of Basanti were all young and rebellious and were inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, they decided to free the society from superstition and corruption and to impart equal position to the female with the male in the so-

ciety. Basanti is one such effort in this direction. In the novel the marriage of Debabrata and Basanti has been arranged in a simple way without any grand celebration. Further inter-religious marriage is also shown and accepted in this novel through the characters of Suniti and Ramesh. Even being a Christian, Suniti is not forced to leave her religion after her marriage with a Hindu male and being a Hindu Ramesh is not forced to accept Christianity after his marriage with the Christian lady.

Another element of this novel is that it is a mixture of traditional thoughts with the modern. Being a typical country woman Debabrata's mother does not agree to accept Basanti as her daughter-in-law, because Basanti is not well versed with the Puranas and the Bhagabat, and being brought up in a modern family she is educated, reads news-paper, wears shoes and gives priority to woman emancipation and liberation. Debabrata suffers a lot as he marries Basanti against his mother's consent. At the time of the cremation of Nirmala Devi – Basanti's mother, Debabrata faces a lot of troubles when he is asked to arrange a grand feast or else her soul would not rest in peace. The characters of Basanti portray both traditional and modern – beliefs in them, so much so that it leads to the separation of the two central characters in the novel, leading to the breakdown of their marital life.

A study of this article reflects the Indian freedom struggle and its effect on the younger generation. During this period the writers' main aim was to create a feeling of national brotherhood and social integration, and to extricate them from the western influence, which is reflected in the character

of Nirmala Devi. The two central characters that Brahmananda Singh has discussed in his article are Basanti and Debabrata. Being inspired by modern thinking they both suffer a lot in their marital life. Before marriage Debabrata was a rebel and was always coming forward to reform the social evils and corruptions. But he goes through a complete change after his marriage. He cannot bear his wife's advanced attitude and development in life. He regrets for his marriage, saying "I am cheated, I am cheated" (Basanti 96. translation mine). He laments saying, "the society has discarded me, my mother has left me, my wife has abandoned me and now I am all alone" (Basanti 142. translation mine). According to Singh this is not only the statement of Debabrata but also of the whole 'Sabuja Yuga'.

The plot of this novel is well constructed and simple. The story runs smoothly by joining the incidents in a proper sequential way. The characters are imaginary but they are very lively and realistic. The characterizations in Basanti are not that strong and effective like the ones we come across in Fakir Mohan Senapati's novels. Rather the plot dominates the characters in Basanti.

The main focus is given to the love relationship of Basanti and Debabrata like Fakir Mohan's Saria Bhagia, Bagula Baguli but, the love of Basanti and Debabrata is more pure and real than those characters of Fakir Mohan Senapati. Singh considers Basanti as a descriptive social novel.

At that time, it was a tradition to title the novel in the name of the heroine. That is why the novelists of Basanti have titled their novel as *Basanti*.

Singh has compared the characters of Fakir Mohan Senapati with Basanti because Fakir Mohan Senapati and the writers of Basanti deal with social issues and woman emancipation. Fakir Mohan's characters like Champa and Saraswati Dei dominate his male characters like Ramachandra Mangaraj or Najarata Natabara Das. In Basanti also the same concept is portrayed.

As *Basanti* is a novel of joint authorship its way of presentation and description vary from the other great writers of the contemporary era. During that period both Fakir Mohan Senapati and Madhusudan have gained popularity in the field of prose and poetry respectively. They use the colloquial language of Odisha in their writings. But the writers of Basanti differ from the above two great writers as they produce rustic proverbs and Sanskrit words in their cre-

ativity. They have not blindly followed the language of Fakir Mohan or Madhusudan. This novel has gained immense popularity as it has created a revolution in the history of Odia novel by introducing a new way of writing. ■

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# Utopia and Indian Imagination: Revisiting *Gitanjali*

**Kalikinkar Pattanayak**

In 2019, the politicians in India promise utopia to the voters to win election, for utopia is an eye-catching word that arrests the imagination of Indians. It is much more than a political concept; it is an imaginary construct. In ancient India Valmiki wrote the Ramayana and conceived of 'Ramrajya' as an ideal political system, freed from exploitation and corruption. Such a term is considered to be equivalent of utopia as Thomas More expounds. But there is a distinction between Valmiki and More in the formation of the idea. Ram the protagonist of the Ramayana is a benevolent ruler; he is the personification of heroism, compassion and unbounded love for the subjects; he steels his heart against any kind of temptation: pelf, power and position. Hence for the formation of utopia – human virtues of the ruler, specially, exemplary self-sacrifice gains utmost significance. But Thomas More's utopia is an imaginary land that is inhabited by citizens who possess highly desirable and nearly perfect qualities; More shifts the focus from the ruler to the ruled.

Master Poets in Indian literature: Valmiki, Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore have been preoccupied with the idea of perfection and ceaseless striving to attain it; hence their imagination turns utopian.

The play of Indian imagination lies in the search for the True, the Beautiful and the Good which is rooted in utopian idealism. The significance of utopian imagination lies in the holistic development of the humans. *Gitanjali* that won the Nobel Prize for the inherent idealistic tendency- 'tireless striving' for 'perfection', reads like the finest pieces of poetry that manifest Indian imagination. The aim of this paper is to highlight the quality of Indian imagination that dwells upon an ideal socio-political and religious order that a mystic like Tagore could visualize and reflect it in between the lines of *Gitanjali*. Unlike More the centre of his literary imagination is God, the governor of the universe whose helping hand can transform the existing world order into a better one, that is, utopia.

Key words: utopia, perfection, Indian, imagination, self-sacrifice, God.

Utopia, as defined in the Wikipedia or standard dictionaries, refers to an imagined society in which the citizens are gifted with highly desirable or nearly perfect qualities. Indian seer poets like Valmiki, Sri Aurobindo or Tagore have imagined a perfect world order which is the equivalent of utopia. Imagination is the superb faculty in the humans to form novel and exciting

pictures in the mind which drive him along the line of adventurous career. Shakespeare holds that imagination gives to airy nothing, 'a local habitation and a name'. Hence utopia becomes the natural offshoot of imagination. What distinguishes the Indian imagination from that of the western is the dominant image of God as omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent in the psyche of the Indians. Many westerners attach more importance to reasoning rather than intuition but Indians focus more on intuitive perception of reality than understanding through reasoning. Self-sacrifice rather than self enjoyment acquires more meaning in context of what is essentially Indian.

Utopian imagination as pictured in Gitanjali is one of the pertinent reasons why it won the Nobel Prize. The highest award for any masterpiece in world literature is usually attributed to the idealistic tendency of the author. In such pieces of master Indian poetry Tagore imagines an ideal Bharat where the Indians will be fearless, rational, progressive in outlook and act tirelessly for perfection in any arena of human endeavour. They will shun regionalism, dogmatism and fanaticism of any kind. Tagore, the mystic, inspired by the ideals of Indian seers aspires for a world where all will live blissfully. In Gitanjali God is at the centre of the universe. He is good and kind to all. The poet perceives harmony in God's scheme of things. But for harmony no utopia can be visualized.

This article has been divided into five sections: the opening section is the

introduction which introduces the topic; it focuses on the source and play of Indian imagination in context of utopia with special reference to Tagore's Gitanjali. The second section dwells upon socialist utopia or an egalitarian society that Tagore imagines. The third section focuses on ecological utopia; here Tagore emerges as an instinctive environmentalist. The fourth section throws light upon spiritual utopia; Tagore is pictured as a spiritual man whose aspiration for the communion with the spirit of the universe is intense. The fifth section is the conclusion in which utopian imagination of Tagore which is essentially Indian is brought to light.

## II

The tension between the ideal and the real is one of the themes of major poetry in English; John Keats and W.B. Yeats have dealt with it in a dexterous way. Tagore deals with it in an innovative way. In his scheme of things God is the Governor of the universe; it is He who can bridge the gap. Thus for an ideal social order Tagore bows down before the Almighty and prays to Him to transform the existing pattern. Yeats discovers the roots of social malaise in his famous lines, "the best lack all conviction; the worst are full of passionate intensity". But Tagore looks for the panacea and prays to God, the father of the universe to elevate the consciousness of Indians so as to make India a utopia. The song no. 35 of Gitanjali embodies one sentence that contains seven subordinate clauses –the subordinator is 'where'. The poet is searching for a place



where freedom, truth, reason and good sense will prevail. In the real world it is almost an impossibility; in an ideal world which corresponds to a utopia Tagore's search for values hold good. A critical analysis of the song in between the lines will give a picture of Tagore's dreamland which is virtually a socialist utopia as conceived by Thomas More. Utopian ideals are based upon the egalitarian principle of equality. Utopia derived from Greek *Eu* (good or well) and *Totto* means good place .

The song no. 35 reads as follows:

Where the mind is without fear  
and the head is held high;  
Where knowledge is free;  
Where the world has not been  
broken up into fragments  
by narrow domestic walls;  
Where words come out  
from the depth of truth;  
Where tireless striving stretches  
its arms towards perfection;  
Where the clear stream of reason  
has not lost its way  
into the dreary desert sand  
of dead habit;  
Where the mind is led forward  
by thee into ever-widening thought  
and action-  
Into that heaven of freedom,  
my Father,  
Let my country awake.(P.49)

Tagore holds that Indians should be fearless and they should walk with heads raised high; knowledge should be freed from biases, prejudices and dogmatism. Each citizen

should be a free thinker. Tagore is dead against regionalism, provincialism, jingoism and all kinds of parochialism. Hence he uses an epithet 'narrow' and metaphor 'domestic walls' for dividing the humanity on the basis of language, region, religion and so on. Here he corresponds to the ideology of an Oriya named Kumar Bhai who launches a movement called International Indecency Prevention Movement. Kumar Bhai proclaims one religion that is human religion, one culture that is human culture and one party that is human party. Tagore is doubtless a humanist and he longs for a better humanity. His longings and aspirations to improve the conditions of humanity lie rooted at the vision of a utopia. Tagore values truth; truth is not superficial; it is essential for our survival in a dignified way on this planet. Doubtless, Tagore is a perfectionist. He holds that in his dreamland, 'tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection'. In such a world the reason is just like a clear stream that flows in the 'dreary desert sand of dead habit'. The word 'dreary' is associated with cheerlessness, gloom which go with outdated customs, traditions and practices. The indirect advocacy of broadened outlook and action is a plea for realization of utopian ideals. The poet prays to God the Father to raise this country to the state of a utopia-an ideal state which a great visionary visualises.

The concluding line of this lyric is 'Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, / Let my country awake' .(P.75). The poet uses the word 'heaven' which is an ideal place and that place is virtual utopia. Thus the

country that is dreamt of by Tagore in the Gitanjali is a utopia in conception. It is an ideal place-a place which exists in the imagination of sensible thinkers, reformers and activists. Thus utopian vision is a must to improve the conditions or situations of humanity. A human of this world faces strifes, struggles, turmoils, trials and tribulations but a dweller of utopia does not encounter them. In this sense utopia is desirable even if it is not possible.

### III

Ecological utopia advocates new ways in which society should relate to nature. The writers who dream of ecological utopia decry the modern western ways of living that destroy nature which is the beautiful creation of an invisible power which may be designated as omnipotent God. Tagore the sensitive poet is aware of environmental hazards and believe in the core of his heart that a surrender before God and resolution to know His ways is the solution to the environmental problems. Many of the songs that Gitanjali embody have been written on beauty, bounty and mystery of creation that arrests attention of the sensitive ecologist. Tagore delights in creation and strives to conserve it. Hence unlike other environmental activists he does not issue warning to those who destroy the environment but pictures the environment in his poetry in such a magical language that the readers become unconsciously aware of the urgency and necessity of protecting the ecology. The song no.57 of Gitanjali celebrates harmony, joy and life in the lap

of nature which make it an ecological utopia. The poem reads as follows:

Light, my light, the world-filling light,  
The eye-kissing light, heart-sweetening  
light!

Ah, the light dances, my darling,  
At the centre of my life;  
The light strikes, my darling  
the chords of my love;  
The sky opens, the wind runs wild,  
Laughter passes over the earth.  
The butterflies spread their sails  
On the sea of light.

Lilies and jasmines surge up  
On the crest of the waves of light.  
The light is shattered into gold  
on every cloud,  
My darling, and it scatters gems in  
profusion.  
Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling,  
And gladness without measure.  
The heaven's river  
Has drowned its banks  
and the flood of joy is abroad.(P.78)

This passage abounds in images of light, life, laughter and love. It is a unique poem in which Tagore the instinctive ecologist discovers harmony in relationship established between creatures, creation and creator. Light can symbolically represent life or God who has created it. The poet uses many compound epithets like 'world-filling', 'eye-kissing', 'heart sweetening' before light which is an invaluable thing. The poet immediately passes over to other natural phenomena like wind, earth, sky, cloud that is condensed body of water which

are the constituents of life on this planet. He dwells upon things of beauty like jasmine, lilies, leaf, river which lend grandeur to the creation. In modern times man is at war with nature; he tries to control the flood, cut off the trees, prevent cyclone and thereby losing intimate contact with nature but here is a world in which man is in harmonious relationship with nature. Here light dances, wind runs wild, lilies blossom, butterflies move and thus an atmosphere is created in which nature is glorified. Here Tagore poses a contrast to Tennyson, the celebrated Victorian English poet. Tennyson holds that nature is 'red in tooth and claw'; it means nature is violent not beautiful. Tagore's perception is different. Here he perceives like Wordsworth- 'a motion and a spirit that impels through all things' and the outcome is mirth, laughter and love. The repetition of the expression of 'my darling' corresponds to his silent communion with God-the acronym for governor, the operator and the destroyer of ecological system. The concluding lines that reflect on the heaven's river and the flood of joy relate to divine ecology in which everything is at the right place. God is the supreme ecologist whose ingenious invention is light that is at the centre of life. The poet chooses 'butterflies' to represent the world of birds who have undergone the process of transformation. Thus the catch words in context of ecology is formation and transformation rather than destruction. Thus Tagore is unconsciously an environmentalist who puts on the dress of a poet. The word light is at the centre whose radiation is a must for survival of

creatures and plants. The 'heaven's river' is a metaphorical expression; it gives the impression of ecological utopia which the poet dreams. The poet omits the names of the rivers that, in reality, flow on the earth or underground but pictures the imaginary rivers or ideal rivers that shows his obsession with ecological utopia.

#### IV

In his article Swamy Vivekananda's Concept of Utopian Society M. Suresh Kumar holds that Vivekananda "devised a utopian concept which is an amalgamation of Indian spirituality based on Divinity of everyone and everything of the universe and the western concept of social equality and democracy" (Rajagopalachary: 246 ). Tagore conceives and perceives what Vivekananda does. When Karl Marx holds that religion is the opium of the society he hints at the formation of religious utopia. Religion is such a subject that it is attached to ideals and thereby it enkindles imagination for the formation of religious utopia but spirituality is the essential aspect of religion; rituals and others are the superficial aspects of religion. Tagore makes it clear in Gitanjali that God the creator of nature is at the centre of religion. Tagore believes in eternal principles of religion and God. God is the servant of the devotees; the stronger the devotion the closer is the tie between the devotee and the God. The song no 49 focuses on Tagore's relationship with God or the spiritual utopia the poet builds. In Gitanjali the song no 49 reads as follows:

You came down from your throne  
 and stood at my cottage door.  
 I was singing all alone in a corner, and  
 The melody caught your ear.  
 You came down and  
 stood at my cottage door.  
 Masters are many in your hall,  
 and songs  
 are sung there at all hours.  
 But the simple carol  
 of this novice struck at your love.  
 One plaintive little strain  
 mingled with the great music  
 of the world,  
 And with a flower for a prize  
 you came down  
 and stopped at my cottage door. (P.66)

The above song highlights the poet's communion with God; in fact such a silent communion which begets joy unspeakable has formed the theme of spiritual utopia. Religious utopia is built not merely around the dreams of God-His goodness, kindness, generosity or creativity but around the devotee's experiences-illuminating, rapturous, miraculous, because of Him. In this song Tagore depicts that God descends from His throne and stands at his cottage door. He visualises the masters who are mystics are many in his hall

But he is so courteous and humble that he comes to the cottage door and listens to the sorrowful song sung by him. The poet offers to his creator two things with due humility-song and flower: one is sweet to hear and other is lovely to look at. Thus Tagore builds an atmosphere in which the

soul communes with the super soul. The term communion is much deeper than communication. Music is the food of soul and flower does more than an appeal to human heart; it thrills the entire being. The term utopia is associated with imaginary experience and idealism. The term religious has connection with experience with the divine. In this sense the picture that Tagore gives in this song is one of veritable utopias.

## V

Susheel Kumar Sharma, gifted with Indian imagination, depicts the predicament of Indians. In his poem A Poem for My Country in such a heart-touching language that he instils a feeling in sensible people for dreaming utopia because in adversity the humans fall in love with utopia- an imaginary perfect world. Sharma writes:

Am I an Indian and my country India?  
 ... The land offers you a sight  
 of your choice-  
 A weeping child, destitute mother,  
 naked faqir  
 Hungry farmer, homeless engineer,  
 Drug-addict father, free boarding  
 house,  
 Free langar beseeching an empty belly,  
 A discourse on self and soul,  
 this world and that world. (P.62-63)

Sharma raises a point about the betterment of conditions and human relations in India. He drops the clue that a discourse on self and soul can open out the avenues. In this context he indirectly advocates the reading

of Gitanjali because in such a master literary piece Tagore displays the penetrating insight into a discourse on self and soul which will set the guide lines for the formation of a utopia which Sharma calls 'that world'. Tagore writes:

If you cry  
because the  
sun has gone  
out of your life,  
your tears  
will

PREVENT

You from seeing the stars.

(front page of Pictorial Biography:  
Rabindranath Tagore)

The 'sun' and the 'stars' are the metaphorical expressions for energy and excellence. Tagore's optimism is robust; he never allows any kind of depression or helplessness or hopelessness. God is the supreme doer, helper, saviour of the humans- this imagination is essentially Indian. To conclude, Gitanjali is the poetical construct of a utopia that is multidimensional:

socialist, ecological and spiritual. The experiences of Tagore are imaginary. Tagore is a multi faceted personality and Gitanjali is a unique creation. It pictures the dreams of Tagore the visionary. The poet is dissatisfied with the real; hence he travels to the realm of the ideal. His vision changes; his dreams fortify his poetic soul and the entire work Gitanjali is read in the light of interrelated utopias which makes the reading interesting and thought -provoking. A reader with critical sense may hold Tagore as a social reformer or an instinctive ecologist or a mystic. ■

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# Essence of Feminism and Women's Revolt in Anita Desai's Novels : A Study of *Cry the Peacock* and *Fire on the Mountain*

**Rashmi Rekha Saikia**

With the upsurge of new women's movement initiated in the early 1960s, feminist literary studies become a theoretical issue in analyzing the literary texts. Feminist movement across the globe has revolutionized the women consciousness with an intense awareness about their self and identity in the male authoritative society. Feminist consciousness which emerged as a global phenomenon has certainly added freshness to the literary texts of the post-colonial period.

Since 1960, feminism emerged as a powerful means to recognize women's cultural, social and political rights. The study of female tradition in literature as opined by Toril Moi "an urgent political necessity" (Rastogi 152) has transgendered the traditional boundaries both theoretically, politically and literarily.

The contribution of the women novelists in contemporary period to promote the position and status of women in every sphere of life is immense. Their writings lend a revolutionary shift in the sensibility of women and reconstructing the dominant ideology of women in the mainstream male dominated society. For such writers, the experience of women is the prime focus and through their writings they try to transmute

these experiences. Women have travelled a long journey to reach the present complacent phase. The voice of the female since the ages has been silenced in the male chauvinistic world.

One of the leading luminaries of the post colonial women writers, Anita Desai has carved a niche in the corpus of Indian writing in English with her significant literary outputs. Often hailed as a socio-psychologist novelist, Anita Desai's masterpieces deal with families in the transitional society in the post colonial set up, making her female characters as the central focus. The novelist's concern for women gets reflected in most of her literary corpus ranging from traditional and marginal to the modern and new woman in her later phase of novels.

Historically, women have been silenced both in the past and literature. Indian societies is chiefly patriarchal in nature and the role of a woman in such societies is essentially passive and silenced. Essentially a woman centric novelist, Anita Desai has wielded her pen to project the oppression and the women's suffering as a victim of male domination and patriarchal domination.

One may come across the various shades of Indian social life and culture



depicting the interplay of human relations in the novelist's writings. *Cry the Peacock* and *Fire on the Mountain*, Desai's two illustrious novels have established her worth as a novelist of significance. Both the novels illustrate the traumatic life of the two protagonists Maya and Nanda as victims of patriarchal subjugation. The mental upheaval and psychological trauma in both the females spring from the marital imbalance and dissonance that exists between the couples. *Cry, the peacock*, Desai's outstanding novel portrays the inner emotional world of a hypersensitive educated woman of upper middle class, pitted against a reticent husband. Temperamentally, Gautama and Maya are poles apart and present the polarities of emotion and reason which govern human existence. Maya like all married women fantasies with the expectation and aspiration of a happy conjugal life. But reality presents her a different picture when she discovers that marriage proves nothing worth but just an illusion. Maya becomes a victim of emotional as well as physical depression. Torn between the practical world of her husband and the psychological world of her inner desire, Maya turns into an existential character. Her psycho-neurotic urge and compulsion manifests in the killing of Gautama and ultimately she commits suicide by giving a logical end to the passivity of life. The novel makes a fine exploration into the disturbed psyche of Maya's world and becomes an endless saga of craving for love and sympathy in a loveless married life with her rational husband, Gautama. In *Cry the peacock*, Desai has created an unforgettable who struggles for a meaningful life amidst the callous world.

A woman however dutiful and responsible she may be, has to passively submit to the dominance of the male chauvinistic society. A woman's urge, her needs and aspirations hold no significance to the patriarchal norm. Simone de Beauvoir has rightly remarked that "the situation of woman is that she is a free and autonomous being like all creatures, nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the other." (Beauvoir 391). Patriarchy delimits the position of women where they have to act and accept a secondary position under the male bastion. Indian patriarchy glorifies the traditional image of woman as wife, motherhood and caretaker of family. Maya's interest, hopes and aspirations are directly ignored by her husband who is mostly busy in his vocation. Similarly, Nanda Kaul is no exception to such husband's indifferent attitude. Age is not a deciding factor of measuring the yardstick of women's happiness. Nanda Kaul too is frustrated and humiliated and denied of any right and freedom under her inconsiderate and insensible husband. Even after years of sacrifices in discharging responsibilities of the household, Nanda is humiliated and neglected, denied of her wifely status. As a wife of a top class executive of a renowned University, Nanda receives nothing but humiliation and negligence and the relationship was only a socializing pretence. Every creative act reduces to self destructive act in the absence of pure love and emotion not only with her husband even her children too who are different to her. The pervasive male hegemony does not allow women to grow as an independent being and curtail every freedom within the marital

framework. Being a victim of social construct, their sufferings, and exploitations manifest itself both at the emotional and mental level. Both Maya's and Nanda's relationship with their husband was nothing beyond duties and responsibilities that are involved in the process of maintaining the bond. The protagonists, Maya and Nanda had their little say in the matter of familial matters and decision making.

Confinement is a major issue in Desai's novels and the novelist has brilliantly portrayed the domestic slavery of the housewives where the women have to sacrifice everything for the sake of the family responsibility. What patriarchy demand is the total subordination of women in all aspects of life – whether it is familial, social or economic. But still the women in Desai's novels are denied of any freedom and respectability. The women in Desai's novels either succumb to or survive the existential problems within the familial and social spheres. The women in Desai's novels are placed in such a position not because they are part of society but because they are chiefly women.

On a close reading of Desai's novels, it is observed that the dominant male psyche continues to campaign the same temperament of superiority practised by their forefathers. Societal norms infused with patriarchal influence make women to lead a circumscribed life. The allegedly inferior position pushed women to display the role of a happy homemaker with no scope to fulfil their potential as human beings. Since the past, women are expected to carry out the responsibilities with the domestic affairs, reduced to a secondary

position where they have to accept the hegemony of male counterpart. Sylvia Vatuk comments;

The good wife is submissive and obedient, accommodating her husband's most unreasonable wishes, patient, forbearing and preserving even in the face of excessively harsh and unjust treatment. No matter what the provocation, she does not talk back to her husband, speak badly about him to others, or allow knowledge of their private disagreements to spread beyond the four walls of their home, even to her own parents. (Vatuk 213)

Deprived of all good things of life and an independent identity, women in Desai's novels are destined to lead a captive life. It would be wrong to assume that Desai's women characters are meek and docile and submit silently to the forces of patriarchy. Women in Desai's novels register their protest by revolting against patriarchal forces, though they fail in their attempt to resolve under the weight of the so-called traditions of patriarchal society.

The roles of modern women have extended and changed dramatically in recent times. The increased global exposure of knowledge and education confronted women to locate and formulate their identity. Women writers have a different perspective on literary experiences and thus demanded to create literary piece wherein they can reveal the essential feminine issues. The upsurge of the feminist movement has influenced Anita Desai's writing with an intense awakening of the consciousness of woman's self. Desai too projects a new vision of Indian women in her fiction. Desai infuses an assertive spirit in the women to

question the existing norms which imprisoned them by social constructs.

Desai is positive in her approach in advocating a better life for women. Women according to Desai can gain power and status only by reaching the capacity to take a decision about their lives by equalizing their position with the men in the society. Desai's later women represent the new women of India with a focused consciousness. They rebel against the existing power structure internally as well as externally. Though Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* failed to resolve their crisis, Desai's later females show a radical development in their characters. Maya lag behind and fail to resolve their crisis as she neither protests seriously, nor realizes their interests to achieve a fuller meaning of life through compromise. Characters like Nanda, rebellious in spirit endeavour with a certain capacity to question accepted social code, trying to achieve a pattern of life that fits their expectations. Nanda in *Fire on the Mountain* denying the space given to her by tradition, seek for some refuge in the lap of nature by alienating herself from the family. But the very realization that she has been rejected in the domestic space which is measured as the primary domain of woman, reduces Nanda to accept a life of compromise.

In one form or other, it can be acknowledged that Nanda Kaul, though an elderly lady is an icon of New Woman who revolted for her identity against the callous treatment of her husband reminding him the real position of a wife in the Hindu society. The novel *Fire on the Mountain*, thus celebrates the potency of an aged woman who transforms herself from a docile and

stereotyped wife to an assertive woman and courageously withdraws herself from the emotionless world of her husband and children to lead a life of independence retiring to the stillness of Carignano.

The novels of Anita Desai are the novels of protest of the silenced. From the viewpoint of feminine sensibility, Desai has documented how women struggle not against the power of male authority but also against the social and cultural oppression rooted in contemporary society. Nanda Kaul, though an elderly heroine of Anita Desai, is a dominant representation of the new woman. She indicates a clear progression to assert herself by choosing a life of alienation though she fails to come out of the world of anxiety and anguish. Like Maya in *Cry, the Peacock*, Nanda Kaul does not end her life in the painful process of establishing individualism but scurry away and transform into an alienated world of her own while waging a grim fight for her existence and freedom.

Desai thus campaigns a better plea for women thereby infusing an assertive spirit in them to challenge the social taboos and age old tradition which restricted the escalation of women and independent growth. Her women, in all their weaknesses and strengths, go against the current flow of life and question the validity of the patriarchal convention that attributed positive values and powers to man. Her women oriented novels give us the first glimpse of feminism with a rich backdrop of gender specific novels by highlighting the women's world with their diverse issues.

Anita Desai's writings find justification among the feminist writers of

the contemporary period with her reformatory vision challenging the taboos of the present socio-cultural structure. Unlike Shashi Deshpande and Nayantara Sahgal, Desai's writings do not reflect social and political realities but stand a sharp contrast to her contemporary novelists in her effort to project the inner sensibility of women. Her novels symbolize the universal feminism by naturalizing the women's suppression with a view of equalizing their power in the male androcentric world.

It can be affirmed that economic independence is not an important issue for the female protagonists in Desai's novels. But what they crave for is to live as an independent being with real identity. In the fight for the survival of the fittest, many a time, the merciless victims go through emotional deprivation, suffer from identity crisis, resort to violence whereas the others accept the mode of compromise. Since Indian society nurtures a traditional patriarchal outlook, women in Indian fiction get unquestionably 'Otherized'.

The muted voices in Desai's novels have freed themselves and come on the periphery voicing the hitherto neglected, unheard and ignored other-sex. The novels of Desai project the ambivalent aspect of deconstruction as well as reconstruction of gender roles and thus prove instrumental in reconstructing the gender identity in the process of its being deconstructed in the protagonist's constant crave for inner space. The later novels of Desai show a sudden emergence of New Women who know their worth and their rights to live as an independent soul. Anita Desai's feminism is not demanding and radical but her voice

for the liberation of women from bondage to freedom with a sense of passivity from self-negation to self-affirmation is quite prominent and powerful. Desai believes that women's liberation neither lies in affliction nor in repudiating all dictates of patriarchy but rather in recognizing their worth and reconciling between tradition and morality. ■

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# Ngugi Wa Thiongo : Concern for Women

**Rajesh Kumar Dinkar**

Woman, the creator of man, is put next only to God. God has attributed woman with the power of creation. But unfortunately, Women have been taken as the weaker section in most of the societies. They are subjected to all miseries. They are source of misery, love and compassion but unfortunately they get hatred, dejection and disillusionment in return most of the time. They have been treated as a toy, as a mere object of pleasure. They are supposed to be surrendered to the will of man, which proves the dominance of man in the world. A call for the women empowerment is at the top in the present world. Different organizations have been devoted to the welfare of women globally. Women on the basis of race, class and gender were exploited during the early state of the colonial period and Ngugi did not find any change in the condition even in the post colonial period. Ngugi depicts despair, despondence and hopelessness of women in his novels.

Ngugi portrays the women who suffered at the hands of Europeans in different situations. Racial exploitation in the form of cultural exploitation is brought about clearly in his *The River Between*. Ngugi depicts the despondent condition of the African women during emergency, which is well described in *Weep Not, Child* and *A Grain of Wheat*. Sexual harassment by the colonists as well as the bourgeoisies is revealed openly in *Devil on the Cross*,

*Petals of Blood* and *Matigari*. Ngugi ponders over the different problem of women and their causes.

Ngugi reveals through *A Grain of Wheat*, the powerful position of women in a Giluyu society in the ancient time. He writes the echoes of history as:

It was many, many years ago. Then women ruled the land of the Agikuyu. Men had no property; they were only there to serve the whims and needs of the women. Those were hard years. So they waited for women to go to war, they plotted a revolt, taking an oath of secrecy to keep them bound each to each in the common pursuit of freedom.....Fate did the rest; women were pregnant; the takeover met with little resistance (AGW,pp.10-11).

This takeover proved fatal to women. This was the beginning of decay in the condition of women. Ngugi being concerned to women, exposed the exploitation and humiliation suffered by women in Africa. Ngugi exhibits the trauma of women as *Weep Not, Child*. In the colonial period, Mwhiki's father Jacobo indulges in the exploitation of Africans shaking hands with the white government, Young Mwhiki has to pay for her father's action. She does not have her father's company as her father remains busy in conspiring with whites or



giving his services to whites. Besides the other children of the village keep themselves away from her because of her father's action. Thus she feels alienated in her own community among her own people. Role of her father often puzzles her. She cannot understand his behaviour. And cruelty, Jacobo, himself knows that his fellow persons hate him and want to kill him. He fears death at the hands of Ngotho's sons.

This fear of death even surrounded Muihaki, so she tells Njoroge : "I am caught in it and if this goes on, I feel as if I could go mad..... I am telling this to show you how glad I am at the prospects of escaping from it all (WNC, p.44). It reminds the mental tremor of a French woman in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of Earth*. She outbursts:

"I used to wonder, how it was that a human being was able to

Bear hearing those screams of pain.....Quite apart from the actual torture and so it went on finally. I did not even go home. I know almost all the families that live there. In the end, I did not Dare walk in the street any more. K was sure meeting hatred anywhere."

Like this French woman, Muihaki also feels hatred in each one's eye for her. She notices that everyone wants to steer her away from him. She loses friendship of her fellow beings. Her father does not like her intimacy with Njoroge, son of Ngotho. Howlands uses Jacobo as his agent to give him all the information about the planning of the natives. He alienates Jacobo from his community but Muihaki has to bear the consequences of all the conspiracy. She

bitterly suffered the death of her father. She believes: "If one man sins, God punish all" (WNC, p. 59).

The wretched condition of women is illustrated by Ngugi during the emergency in the colonial period. During the curfew, any man can be taken away by the white soldiers, leaving behind their wives in utter disillusionment. The wives are left to suffer in fear and anxiety, and in long waiting for their husbands to return, but often to hear death of them.

Women were harassed by the soldiers, physically and mentally. Njeri and her son Kori were arrested by the soldiers when they just came out of the house to search Boro. Ngotho, refrain from the scene, being helpless. Again when Jacobo was murdered, both the wives of Ngotho, Njeri and Nyokabi were arrested. Even the young children were arrested, imprisoned and tortured for no crime. The atmosphere of panic and fear surrounded the whole nation. Mother of Njoroge was frightened merely at Njoroge's taking name of Mau Mau. She warned him not to take even the name of the movement. The days of poverty and hardship were made rather heavier to the women. Njeri and Nyokabi lost their sons, one by one. They saw their husband broken and dejected helplessly. They even had to face the anger at their husband Ngotho that he could not release of show elsewhere. They faced all the worsening effects of colonialism. Even in such atrocity they had faith in education suicide after his father's death. They were already broken at the death of their husband but somehow they were able to save their son from committing wade. They remained alive still in hope of better



tomorrow. Such is the life of women to suffer and suffer and still be hopeful for a better tomorrow.

Ngugi presents women with all their pains, sorrows and dejection, but at the same time he does not forget to reveal the power, courage and fire in them. Deferent women characters represent variety of faces of women. waitherero, a distant aunt of Murgo embodies a very hideous picture of woman. She was a drunkard lady full of hatred and disgust. She was widow with six married daughters who never visited her except at her death, that too without tears and emotions. Mugo, after his parents, death, was brought up under her supervision which could be hardly called as care. She could never pour love on him. Her behaviour was so disgusting that Mugo even wished to kill her. Her behaviour could only lead Mugo, to a very discontented, insecure and uncomfortable life.

Mumbi in a Grain of Wheat represents a modern woman of substance and self reliance. Different shades of her character embody her as strong woman of twentieth century. She is projected as a beautiful and attractive girl who was the centre of attraction among the youngsters Gikonyo and Karanja, both friends of her brother Kihika, loved her very much. She reused Karanja's love for Gkonyo. But her happy married life whith Gikanyo ends with his arrest by white soldiers. Gikonyo's love for Mumbi to was grate that he passed seven long years in detention just in hope to meet her again. Mumbi at village struggled hard for survival as the terror torture of white soldiers and the home guards was at its zenith. Women were not at all safe in the

village. Most of the men were in detention camp while women were left behind to be tortured physically and mentally by the whites as well as the back home guards.

The new Do did not mind the cries. He even permitted solders to pick women and carry them to their tents. (AGW, p. 139)

Mumbi represents a true picture of woman's faithfulness. She enjoyed the company of Kariuki and shared the boy's prattles about anything from school to women. She was also aware of the importance of education Thus she arranged for the foe of Kariuki even in emergency, as she asserts. I paid his school fees , in him he saw the hope for the future. There is nothing like education. (AGW p. 142)

Mumbi bears all the responsibilities on her shoulders with full honesty and Karanja often tried to win her favours in Gilinyo's absence. Finally he gave way to his vengeance when she came to his house and he informed her about Kionjo's home coming. The news let her paralyzed, here Karanja took the oppurtunity to molest her, and she gave birth to his child. When Gikanyo came back he could not accept Mumbi knowing the fact that she had given a birth to somebody else's child. His resentment got the condition from bad to worse.

Certainly, Mumbi had tried her level best to keep her chastity. It was only in a weaker moments. When she got information that her husband was coming back and the lost her control over herself and Karanja got an opportunity to molest her. But Gikonyo her husband, could not understand her properly when he came from the detention camp and took her action as a great crime

done by he, though it is true that she was innocent. A critic has rightly commented.

For her single affair with Karanja was not adultery after all since she was exploited. His, position as a chief and her dazed anxiety.. the moral perspectives bearing upon the Gikonyo Mumbai plot in which Gikonyo's own breeding slavers of jealousy has been the only known factor, getting the tone so far in the narrative. Mumbai's story is thus, reminiscence, a flash back that also induces a valuable sense, a moral security and complexity in the novel.

Gikonyo treated Mumbi badly and abused her "I'll make you shut this mouth of a whore (AGW, p 163) Gikonyo beat Mumbi and she felt so hurt that she left his house and went to her parent's house. Thus she embodies a modern outlook of a woman not to surrender to husband blindly. She loved her husband very much but still could not accept the insult at his hand. She told her mother: "I may be a woman, but even a cowardly bitch fight back when cornered against a wall (AGW, P. 176)

Thus Mumbi suffered and met a wretched fate. She was exploited by her fellow men, physically and mentally but she did not surrender and fight the situation boldly and courageously.

The exploitative colonial conditions changed the peaceful married life of Mumbi into a discontented and miserable marital relationship. But carrying the name after the mother of tribe Gikuyu, she proved her name and not even once looked at her illegitimate child with hatred, rather she retaliates when Gikonyo hit the child. Her words exhibit her agony.

What sort of a man do you call yourself? Have you no manly courage to touch me? Why do you turn a coward's anger on a child, a little child (AGW, p. 163 )

She took care of her child and also remained faithful to her husband. But she could not resist the desperate words and disgust of her husband. She could not bear the disrespect at the hands of her husband. Emmanuel Ngara rightly asserts.

The life of Gikonyo and Mumbi is one of the most significant pints of attention in *A Grain of Wheat* because it enlarges the traditional conflict between man and women in society and prescribes solution, which is still relevant to the entire situation in the novel. The most important prescription is recognition of equality and mutual co-operation.

Mumbi left the house of her husband Gikonyo, unable to bear the insult. Here Mumbi represents a strong individual modern woman who demands love and respect and equal status in the family. She reminds of Nora of the protagonist in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* who is discontented in marriage with Torvald Helmer and leaves house with the words.

Listen Torvald, I have heard that when a wife deserts her husband's house, as I am doing now. He is easily freed from all obligations. You are not to feel yourself bound in the slightest way, any more than I shall There must be perfect freedom on both sides.

Thus Ngugi presents a conflict of equality between man and women and advocates balanced relationship of coordination, co-operation and mutual understanding of both the parts for happy married life.

The people of Thabai Village were hit by the vehemence of black home guards and white governments in one or the other way. One critic has rightly observed.

“A considerable portion of Ngugi’s novel is devoted to the portrayal of violence that was done not merely to the body the lands, home and hearts of the Gikuyu-but also their soul in the form of a spiritual suffering and agony inflicted on them by the Whiteman.”

Even the home guards, the black soldiers treated the natives inhumanly. They tortured the natives to their very hearts, even their souls were terrorized. Mumbi described the devilish act of the Home guards when they splashed petrol in the pass thatch of her mother’s hut which was already dry.

“The leader of the home guards struck a match and threw it at the roof. It did not light, and the others laughed at him. They shouted and encouraged him. One of them tried to take the matchers from him to demonstrate how it could be done. It became a game between them. At the fourth or fifth attempt the roof caught fire. (AGW, P. 136)”

Women were left there to watch the merciless act of the home guard which they playfully. Women wanted to scream but they became voiceless because of sorrow

dejection. They could not move their eyes from the scene. Those huts meant much more than a house to them.

“The roofs were cracking. I remember the pain as the cracking noise repeated in my heart. Something gave away in my hearts, something in me cracked when I saw our home fall (AGW, P. 136)”

Thus the colonists uprooted the natives from their home land. They did not want their men to get back their home on coming back to their places from the detention camps. The Thabal Village was completely demolished. This was a warning there villages, never to give food of any other kind of help to the men fighting against the colonialists. The frightful condition is thus explained through Mumbi’s words:

“We were prisoners in the village, and the soldiers had built their caps all rounds to prevent any escape. We went without food. The cry of children was terrible to hear. (AGS, p.139)”

Even children suffered the torment at the hands of the whites and were inflicted punishment on them. They were forced to dig the trenches without taking rest. Women who stopped working were whipped by the home guards and the small children had to watch this frightening sufferance of their mothers. Women lived in a constant fear, agony and threat from the white people. The lives of women meant nothing to the oppressors.

Wambuku died in the trench. They took her body and threw it into a big dug a few yards from the trench (AGW, p. 139). The condition of Kenya during the

emergency is well depicted through a character Kigondo, a farm labourer in Ngugi's Powerful play. 'I Will Marry When I want':

“Our Patriots,  
Men and women of,  
Limuru and the whole country,  
Were arrested  
The emergency laws became  
very oppressive  
Our homes were burnt down  
We were failed.  
We were taken to detention camps.  
Some of us were crippled through  
beating  
Other were castrated  
Our women were raped.  
Our wives and daughters were  
raped before our eyes.”

Women were led to forced labour, sexual harassment and mental torture. Her identity was not more than a mere article, as the white soldiers and home guards were free to pick any women, from anywhere to any where they wished. The ruthless and reckless behaviour of the whites and the home guards lead women a traumatic condition. They were broken at hearts and body both.

The degrading situation of women is displayed through the testimonies of different competitors, who with proud, declare the number of wives they have, at the same time also reveals the number of girl friends they have as a status symbol. They think that giving a luxurious car to a wife with some pounds and shillings to spend are just enough to keep her satisfied. Women have such humiliating position in the life of a man. Mwireri goes to an extent of saving.

“I won't believe in tribal or social discrimination when it comes to women... Women belong to no age group, no clan no country (DC, p. 160).”

Thus he believes in using the body of a woman, no matter if she is white or black or Asian. Thus the organization of marriage is meaningless to the thieves and robbers collected in the Devil's cave. Ngugi pointed towards the futility of love and marriage in the modern time. He draws the attention towards the impurity and faithlessness in the relationship of man and woman, husband and wife.

Ngugi ponders over the problem of prostitution which is mushrooming in Kenya very fast. Wanja in *Petals of Blood*, portrays the most exploitative section, the African woman in the African society under post-colonial or imperialistic conditions. She is presented as prostitute and prostitution in any society is seen as a sinful act. Ngugi wants people to examine the causes, the circumstances responsible for prostitution. He also wants the prostitutes to realize the courses of their degeneracy and usages them to fight back the causes and circumstances. In his own words:

“Generally in fiction one tries to portray those peoples who seem to be exceptions of the norms. What I tried to do in my novels is to show that dialectic relationship between various aspects of society and reality, when I take prostitute, I want to show she is a product of all the forces impinging on the society.”

The sexual harassment of the African women during the colonial time by the white

settlers, white soldiers and even by the missionary people gradually led to the rise of prostitution. In the post colonial times, the rise of bourgeoisie class among the Africans, the traders from Asia and Europe, rise of bars and tourism encouraged the profession of prostitution in imperialistic Kenya.

African woman lost her traditional status and identity during colonialism. Women used to have considerable economic freedom over the products they produced along with men in the pre-colonial Kenya. But slowly and gradually she was deprived of the economic independence in the colonial and further in post colonial Kenya. As Onunwa asserts.

“The growing division of labour in the modern economic sector is widening the gap in productivity and in income between them. The status of women is therefore lower in relation to that of men.”

The aftermath of colonialism altered the whole way of Kenyans. Inspired by the colonizers, they too craved for power and thus suppressed the weaker section i.e. the women. The increasing urbanization also led to the degradation of women. The men moved to the big cities in search of jobs leaving behind their wives to suffer the tormented life in the village and they enjoyed life or rather encouraged prostitution in a craze for artificial life induced by the colonists.

Wanja is one of the young girls who became a prey to the artificial way of living. Since her childhood she was fascinated by the life of her cousin glittering in attractive dresses, high heels, shining earrings. She reminds her picture of European women. Her

cousin's husband often beats her so she ran away to the city. Her father had been serving whites in war. He was highly influenced by the power of whites and wanted the Africans to learn the ways of earning money from the whites as he thought:

“The true secret of the white man's power: money, Money moves the world. Money is time. Money is beauty. Money is elegance. Money is power. Money is freedom... with money we can get rid of our fears and our superstitions.. Give me money and I can by holiness and kindness and charity, indeed by my way to heaven, and the sacred gates will open at my approach. That is the power we want (PB. P. 277).”

These words had definitely influenced Wanja very much. She also wished to be a rich woman in her life. Though her mother was a patriotic woman who did not like her husband's faithfulness to whites, she often persuaded him to leave his service to whites. She told him:

“You were brave and strong to kill for the race of white people. Didn't you retain a little courage, a little strength to lift a finger for your people, your clansmen? What did your father tell you?... Why never went back? Not even to see him hanged like a dog by the same white man you faithfully served in the war? (PB, p. 278).”

Wanja saw her father beating her mother in bitter rage. Wanja was brought up in a contradictory atmosphere of disillusionment. Her father was devoted to whites while her mother had faith in May

Mau movement. Her father worshipped money while her mother had faith in her tribal God. Thus Wanja was distorted and ran away to a city where she could only become a barmaid. She at first enjoyed the new places new faces, new friends, and new colours. But soon she got tired and wanted to run away but did not know where. She says to Abdulla: "I hate a man thinking he can buy me with money ... I am really tired of this wretched hole" (PB, p. 92).

Wanja was tired of the ill-treatment and negligence that barmaids received. Wanja explains to Karega the misery in the lives of the barmaids as:

"There is only on song, sung by all bar maids. Oh! They give you 75 shillings a month. They expect you to work for 24 hours. In the day time you give beer and smiles to customers. In the evening you are supposed to give them yourself and sigh in bed. Bar and lodging. The owner grabs 20 shillings for getting a couple uses a Wano bed and torn sheets for 10 minutes (PB, pp. 75-76)."

The barmaids were exploited by the owners of the hotels, physically, mentally and financially also. So Wanja tried to get out of this muddy life many times. Once she went home, but her father said: "I do not want a prostitute in the house!" (PB, p.156).

Thus Ngugi draws attention towards the negative attitude of the people, even the family members of the barmaids and prostitutes. Once they are indulged in this profession they cannot get out of it even if they want. They do not get support from

anywhere. Thus Wanja undergoes a traumatic condition:

"Sometimes you see what is wrong. You want to get out: you also want to remain. You keep on saying to yourself: tomorrow ... tomorrow. I know some who tried. One became a housemaid. She did all the work in the house. She wakes up at five ... She helped in milking the cows. She cooked breakfast. She cleaned the house. She went to the shop or to the field to fetch food to cook lunch. She also looked after the little children. She made afternoon tea; she made supper ... and when the wife was away the man wanted to share her bed. And all for what? Seventy shillings a month! She ran away (PB, p. 156)."

Many other tried to get out of this world of ignominy and humiliation, but they could not get rid of the exploitation at the hands of men:

"So in the end they all return to the world where they have friends and where they know the rules: where they know what is honest and what is not honest; what is truth and what is not truth; what is good and what is not good (PB, p. 156)."

Suffering the disgrace and disregard they are so degenerated that they can to any extent to get money, as Wanja tells about a woman, one of the, who married a very old European, over seventy years. After she had made him make a will, she had thrown him down the steps in the house, and she got all his wealth. Though Wanja could not do that, she went



to Ilmorog to her grandmother in search of peace. One critic observes:

“In some respect Ngugi’s character Wanja in *Petals of Blood* is the East African counterpart of Juguna. Both women are strong personalities and both have considerable powers of seduction. The difference is that where as for Juguna, the captivity of men is a principal source of personal satisfaction. Wanja has inhibition. She is torn between convincingly in the country and greater and greater opportunities of urban including sexual self-expression.”

Wanja lives in Ilmorog among the innocent villagers. She has always feared that she is barren; incapable of having a child and her urge for a child grew stronger and stronger. She believes:

“For children, no matter how we neglect them, are what makes may a barmaid feel human. You are a mother and nobody can take that from you (PB, P. 298).”

She tried a lot to conceive a child. The prophecy of a sage that she can conceive a child on a full moon night in the field failed. She even tried Barabana’s treatment that was famous with herbs, especially those to do with women’s illness and with child-bearing. She got involved with many men in Ilmorog with the purpose. This great urge to be mother in Wanja reveals her motherly attitude and her wish to prove herself as a complete woman.

At Ilmorog, Wanja started brewing Thengeta along with Abdulla and made the

drink popular. But unfortunately an order was passed to cancel the license to brew Thengeta. Thus once again she became a victim of new-colonial power.

Wanja gathered courage and opened her trade house, The Sunshine Lodge. She shook hands with imperialists like Ghui, Kimeria, and Mizo to worship Mammon:

“It is origin of Sunsine lodge that elegant brother between Cape Town and New Jerusalem ... eat of to be eaten Wanja becomes wealthy and powerful. Not only hypocrisy is dramatized but also the progressive deterioration of the moral horizon in direct proportion to the consideration of development of new Ilmorog.”

Ngugi also portrays such individualistic women characters in his powerful novel *The River Between*. The conflict of traditional culture and the power of new faith describe nicely the strength and vigour in simple girl Muthoni whose fater has converted into a new faith; baptized himself and follow Christianity in a strict sense. Ngugi’s concern to women is clearly revealed in a strong portrayal of Muthoni and further Nyamburo also.

Nyambura and Muthoni are the daughters of Joshua a converted Christian who is very conscious about his new faith and wants his family to present an example in the society as well cultured Christian family to usher a new path to his backward society which according to him is living in darkness. Thus he looks at the tribal ritual of circumcision as a sin and does not allow her daughters to undergo the custom of circumcision. They are not allowed to attend

the initiation ceremony. Circumcision is an important custom of the Gikuyus, girls and boys cannot be married unless circumcised. Thus Muthoni wanted to get circumcised to be a real woman, made beautiful in the tribe. She did not like her father's dictatorial and suppressive nature.

Ngugi also portray a difference between the attitudes of mother and father, Joshua was unable to understand her till her end. When her wound got infected and her health deteriorates, he did not care and not even once visited her. He remained indifferent even at her death, whereas her mother Miriamu suffered the anxiety and pain of her daughter.

Ngugi does not hesitate even to bring out the evil relationships of the women who are leading a reputed married life. He openly reveals the futility of married life, hollowness of the relationships of husband and wife, man and woman. Thompson's wife in **A Grain of Wheat** had an extra marital affair, in *Matigari*, the wife of Minister of Truth and Justice had an affair with her car drive. In the annual general meeting of the Women's Development Association she urged the women:

"Adultery and drunkenness were the principal evils behind the destruction of many homes in the country .... Women should take refuge in the safety of the church and stop competing with their husbands in drinking and adultery (*Matigari*, p. 27)."

Ngugi sarcastically remarks the depressing and degeneration moral of women. As the wife of the Minister of Truth and Justice herself was caught committing adultery with

her driver in backseat of the car outside the city. Guthera also speaks of man's double standards and the sorrowful condition of women at both the ends:

"What problems do we women have to go through wherever we are! When that woman goes home, her husband will beat her, demanding to know what she was doing in the wilderness with a man. When her lover goes home, he will beat his wife for demanding to know what he was doing in the wilderness with a woman (*Marigari*, p. 157)."

Thus women have been marginalized through cultural institutions and religious rituals. Woman is kept out of the mainstream and denies her personhood. But Ngugi presents some strong women characters that proved their individuality and status struggling hard all the hurdles of life presented by men and society, culture and custom. They affirm their 'self' in the man dominated society, emancipated themselves from the traditional image and come out with vital force to make a new Kenya. She challenges the man who has been the central figure governing and controlling her life and identity.

Ngugi presents the direct and indirect exploitation of women in the colonial and post colonial Kenya. He exhibits the causes behind this exploitation but he also presents the considerable value that women consist and her resistance against all odds. He wants to empower the woman with substantial power and dignity. She should regain her individuality and self-respect which has been masticated in the colonial and the post colonial Kenya. ■

# Dramatic Irony in the Short Stories of Jayant Khatri

**Rajesh V. Basiya**

Short story is the ancient, most popular and universal literary form. Drama is a literary form meant for stage performance. Some short stories have some of the features of drama. These dramatic elements in short story make the reading more enjoyable. Jayant Khatri (1909-1968) is one of the renowned writers of Gujarati literature. His stories are full of dramatic elements. Khatri enjoys a significant position in the history of Gujarati literature. He has given three short story collections titled; 'Fora'(1944), 'Vaheta Zarna'(1952) and 'Khara Bapor'(1968). These collections contain total forty one short stories. Some other stories of Khatri were also published in magazines. Khatri wrote an incomplete-unpublished novel 'Chamarchal'. He also wrote a one act-play 'Mangal Pandey'. He was given Mahida prize for Lohinu Tipu and Uma-Sneh Rashmi prize for Khara Bapor. Some of his stories are translated into English under the title *The Outlaw and Other Stories* by Uma Randeria and Rohini Patel and published by Gujarat Sahitya Akademi in 2004.

This paper analyses dramatic irony in the short stories of Khatri. It mainly focuses on two of Katri's most popular and highly appreciated short stories 'Lohinu Tipu' (1944) and 'Dhaad'. 'Dhaad' was originally written in 1950 and published in a magazine named 'Aarsi' in the same year. 'Dhaad' later on was published in the

collection 'Khara Bapor' in 1968. Dramatic element in a story is a sudden and surprising twist. It is impressive, exciting and striking situation showing a lot emotion in a way that makes people notice. The sudden unexpected twists in the stories of Khatri are very dramatic. The story Lohinu Tipu titled in English version 'The Blood in His Veins' and Dhaad titled as 'The Outlaw' have poignant twists. Both these stories are very interesting and full of dramatic elements. 'Dhaad' is also converted into a novel by the well-known Gujarati writer and novelist Vinesh Antani and published as serialized novel in the Janmbhoomi group dailies 'Fulchhab', 'Janmbhoomi Pravasi' and 'Kachchhmitra.'

It is also screened into a Gujarati-Kachchhi movie with same title. 'Dhaad' (2018) is starred by well-known Bollywood film artists Nandita Das, Kay Kay Menon, Raghuvir Yadav, Sandip Kulkarni and Sujata Maheta. It is produced by Jayant Khatri Films Foundation. The former editor of the daily Kachchhmitra and son of Jayant Khatri, Mr. Kirti Khatri is producer and Paresh Nayak is director of this film. Screenplay is written by Mr. Vinesh Antani. The movie is like an earthen pot made from the soils of Kachchh. Kachchh is a unique region of Gujarat with sea, hills and desert. The story of the movie is set in the mid 1950 of Kachchh. The movie captures the beauty and vibrancy of the terrain and cultural

heritage of Kachchh with the language, costumes, and music. 'Dhaad' also has become successful stage play. It is performed on stage at Ahmedabad (2016) and Anjar-Kachchh (2019). It is dramatized by Vinesh Antani and directed by Aditi Desai. Another equally interesting short story with dramatic elements is 'Lohinu Tipu'. It was also converted into a play and performed by artists of Visual Arts at Bhuj and Mandvi in year 2017. It is converted and directed by Dr. Rajesh Basiya.

'Dhaad' is a story centered on a dacoit named Ghela who believes in the power of gun and regards it as a necessary tool for survival. Ghela is tall, sturdy and fearful man. He is a merciless crook. Ghela's brutality is seen when he crushes a rat and hits a dog violently. He kicks his wife and always treats her with insulting manner. The setting of the story is desert of Kachchh in its varying moods, which strikes the reader as a character rather than a mere background. The story opens with a chance meeting between Ghela and Pranjivan, a wanderer. Ghela explains to Pranjivan what life means to him. According to Ghela power and domination only survive in the hostile world. Ghela has a single solution to all life's problems. He explains his philosophy of life to Pranjivan,

"There is only way to solve the mystery that is life, and to overcome its hurdles. You just have to be domineering- to be more than a match for others- and make them submit to you."(101)

Khatri highlights the struggling life of people of Kachchh by giving example of the tree called cherionp that grows in coastal muddy swamps of coastal Kachchh. Ghela

narrates how the tree gets nourishment from the mere slush in the midst of salty water. It is interesting that how it grows and gets food and how it is able to survive. The roots of the tree first go deep in the mire, so they gain strength, and the tree is able to stand on its trunk. It does not get any nourishment from the mire; its roots come out of the ground and spread themselves all around the trunk. It is through their thorns that they get nourishment from the air. Yet the plant which has grown after perseverance and stood straight is eaten up by the camels of desert. Ghela says,

"Pranjivan, that is the secret of life - compassion, mercy, dharma all sound very well in books. In real life, he who is most aggressive leads the best life." (101)

Ghela compares the soil of desert with breast of a barren woman which never yields any milk. He forcefully takes Pranjivan with him on a dacoity. He becomes very brutal when he makes a dacoity at Daji Sheth's house. Ghela has no human feelings he beats Sheth's wife and tries to snatch forcefully the bangles of the Sheth's daughter. Ghela cruelly threatens the Sheth with a gun, "Hurry up and open the safe, or else something untoward will happen in an instance- is that clear to you?" (115) This is the most crucial scene of the story with wonderful dramatic irony. Ghela considers himself powerful and dominant but the destiny is against Ghela. Unfortunately something untoward really happens but it happens with Ghela. Ghela has a stroke. The domineering man who was in control of the whole situation becomes disabled, a victim of circumstances lying helplessly. Pranjivan takes control of the situation and brings Ghela home. They set out on a hazardous

mission but returns with dreadful outcome. It is ironic that Ghela's Dhaad (robbery-raid) on Daji Sheth becomes a dacoity on himself from destiny. Before going to make the dacoity Ghela told Pranjivan with proud, "We are going on a mission fought with hazard. But whenever I am up against danger, it is I who always prevail- do you follow?" (106) This time destiny prevails and Ghela has to surrender. The whole episode ends in a tragedy. Ghela is paralysed, his left body fails, and he also loses his power of speech. After two days of the dacoity Ghela dies.

Khatri's characters are born of circumstances and environment. They strive to be saved. There are two forces they battle against each other, 'The Blood in His Veins' (Lohinu Tipu) deals with man's fight with his own genes. It is a man's battle with his own self. Bechar is a blacksmith with record of criminal activities in the past. He is jailed for a robbery. After five and half years' imprisonment he is returning home. Bechar is forced to spend the night in a village dharmshala because of heavy rains. A young beautiful woman named Halima is also there with other travelers. Halima's beauty and gracious behavior makes Bechar excited and he is attracted towards her. In the quiet dark night he plans to rape her but finally he controls himself. The story has interesting and ironical twist. Though saved from Bechar Halima is raped at night. Bechar becomes protective towards her and takes Halima his home. The end of the story is very dramatic as well as ironic. At his home Halima screams seeing Bechar's young son Kanaiyo. Bechar understands the reason and becomes angry with Kanaiyo. Bechar hits his son with a severe blow. Kanaiyo is injured and tries to escape. Bechar's wife

cannot understand the situation. She tries to stop her husband and asks him, "What crime has he committed?" (36) Bechar roaring asks his wife, "Tell me, whose son is he? Whose blood flows in his veins?" (36) At the same moment he reminds the vision of last night. He again has that vision of beauty- the blowing breeze, the romantic cloudy night.... the expansive mood in which he would have liked to have lost himself. His anger vanishes now and his eyes have tears. First time in his life, Bechar's eyes are filled with tears today. His wife sits down beside him and asks very softly, "I am asking the same thing. Whose blood flows in his veins- whose flesh and bones is he?" (37)

We find undercurrent of most of Khatri's stories with the tragic sense of life. The most poignant in this story is the ironical end. Bechar's all efforts to keep his son away from his evil past prove futile. When he was in his jail for five and half year, he always asked his wife to take care of his son. He asked his wife,

"Don't worry about me, and listen, Kanaiyo is growing up, and after all, it is my blood that flows in his veins. Whatever kind of thief, robber or brigand I am, I have the nimble fingers of a thief and the know-how of a dacoit. But kanaiyo is a fool – he has some of your softness. So take care of him. That boy is immature as he is dangerous. I am not worried about you, nor about myself. But keep Kanaiyo close to your heart. My blood is gushing through his veins; keep it cool." (24)

Bechar was a thief and robber in past but he did not wish his genetic inheritance to pass to his son. The very ironic thing is he

could control the desire to rape the girl but his son committed the same crime. Now Kanaiyo is doing business and some prosperity is there in his house. The writer does not explain what business Kanaiyo is doing. We can say this is Bechar's fight against the destiny in which he fails. The answer of his wife to his question, 'Tell me, whose son is he? Whose blood flows in his veins?' is very poignant. The counter question of his wife is very ironic, "I am asking the same thing. Whose blood flows in his veins-whose flesh and bones is he?" Bechar regrets because his own crime is reflected through his son. It seems that bechar's fight was not against other forces but it was against his own self. Both stories thus have very ironic ends.

Khatri is also known for experimental themes and innovative narrative techniques. He was progressive writer of his era. Being a painter, he has painted images and symbols for his stories. Several of his stories revolve around Kachchh region from where he belongs. Setting and locale have unique roles to play in his stories. The backdrop in some of his stories is the desert and hills of Kachchh. He wrote to his friend Chandrakant Baxi in 1961,

"I am terribly attached to my place and my people. I know very intimately the earth I trod upon. The wail of wind on dusty rocky desolate plains, the means of the sea on silent sandy shores the evening that die without glamour, and the sky so crystal clear that it almost speaks to you." (729)

Dramatic irony is the major feature of Khatri's stories. It is Khatri's art of storytelling that makes the situations very

dramatic. No where the writer tries make any kind of poetic justice. Thus, dramatic irony is the soul of both these stories. Bechar's efforts cannot make his wicked blood clean. Domineering, proud and cruel Ghela has to surrender before the situation created by destiny. ■

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# Understanding the Complexities of Context in Single Word Utterances during Teaching and Communication Process: A Study

**Pradeep Kumar Debata**

Communication has been a serious concern among human activities now days. Though we find English language plays a pivotal role, we always put much more emphasis on its usage. Therefore, in our everyday communicative life we facilitate to use English language as medium of communication. Basically in our class room situation too, we would like to facilitate English as medium of understanding of students. Here, in this paper my aim is to decipher how the single word expressions are useful to make communication faster with abundant language resources and that also may be available to us at the time of communication. While such words facilitate communication richly, sometimes they make us to confront difficult and embarrassing situations when supposedly easy short-cuts lead to confusions, half meaning and total meaning blackouts. The situational remedy in all cases lies in close attention to the basics of successful communication – minding the regular and appropriate turns, keeping track of the linguistic event in rich opening and meaning the intended message. For the class room teacher, the real job is to acquaint the students with possibilities of meaningful communication involving single word utterances.

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching of English in the country like India requires great care and concern on the part of the teachers whose socio cultural backgrounds and academic and professional qualifications make their decisions on approaching students' needs and sometimes it becomes difficult in terms of answers and it would make learning ensured while using communication as one important and indispensable part of imparting teaching. In this context, teaching of single word utterances has been considered against the background of context complexities that make meaning generation and transmission difficult on certain occasions. Accordingly, the effort in this paper has been to list some communicative situations where English is used on certain occasions that go by a definite cultural pull. Again, against those occasions and situations, a tentative list has been drawn up to realize how challenging it is to give meaning to get things done with learners not only being enabled to visualize the real life contexts but being also helped to find for themselves where exactly they come to a fix while negotiating difficult social and cultural situations. On the basis of understanding of the situational challenges that are specific to culturally

difficult communication. This paper seeks to suggest a few measures employing which the successful communication goals would be achieved by the students.

### **Cultural Pull Constraining Communication**

Players and parties in all communicative situations are not necessarily always to come from the same socio-cultural backgrounds. When, therefore, such situations occur, communication in order to be desirably successful awaits the possible parity to arise granting thereby the level playing field to the parties concerned. Unless such parity comes easily, communication has to halt until by some other strategies the meaning and the message are hopefully restored. This communication blockade is indicative of the fact that class room English teaching needs to be adequately sensitive about such limiting and frustrating possibilities. The class room teacher in his resourcefulness has, therefore, not only to see the magnitude of such difficult situations but also to come out with creative corrections so that such abortive efforts can be effectively managed to the advantage of the students that may be faced with such situations.

### **Single Word Utterances in Communication Blockades**

This is borne out on the basis of experiences involving extensive language use across social and cultural situations that there arise instances when almost abruptly in the midst of free flowing communication some desired response in the regular expected turn is not thrown up by the respondent. The expecting party thus

obviously waits and then enters an enquiry mode to investigate as to why possibly the communication has been derailed. When satisfied about the causes of that ominous break down of communication, the analyzing party explores possible effective intervening measures so that he is able to hand on to his neighbor the missing thread. The strategy in the real life situation, therefore, is to come up with relevant corrective and explanatory details that would not only lubricate the situational flux but also provide for extensive and useful gloss work. The class room situation has thus to minutely employ by way of emulation such natural real life strategies to remedy impaired communicative situations. The teacher and the student in the class room have; therefore, to enter into such demonstrated handicapping communicative situations by role plays to fix such problems appropriately employing exercises to find innovative and effective solutions with the co operation of the class as a whole.

### **Illustrations**

#### **Single Word Utterances with Interjections**

Ah!, alas!, Oh!, etc. are invariably in good regular use to express feelings, emotions and thoughts for purposes of expressing surprise, shock, appreciation etc. When inappropriate use of these is made, communication is confronted with a jolt. The expected answer in turn being absent, the party in communication is rendered virtually deprived in terms of meaning opulence that is characteristic of the already continuing communication.

### **Context of Use:**

#### Reporting tiredness

Mother: Take some food.

Son: I'll take nothing now.

Mother: Why?

Son: Ah! I am tired.

Here we do find that both mother and son in conversation are well conversant with the expectation of language production that culturally would allow the on interrupted communication to take place.

However, when either because of ignorance of the culturally determined semantic code or due to failure on the part of any party whose proper turn is to carry forward the exchange, single words are in use, but dislocation does not allow the coherence to result.

### **Context of Use:**

#### Enquiry of a route by a stranger.

Stranger: Is this the road to the market?

Mr. X: No.

Stranger: Then?

Mr. X: Turn to the left and take that.

Stranger: Oh!

Mr. X: It's fine. Take that one?

A look at the above would tell us that both the speaker and the listener are in co operation to lead the communication to its desired end. Contextually we do observe that through the use of single word expression the problem of the strangers has been sorted out.

### **Single Word Utterances with Verbs**

Very often in regular communicative exercises verbs in gerundial and other formations are drawn in to use to

add meaning and effectiveness to the communicative process. Going?, bringing soon, done, etc are examples of single word utterances with verbs. Where, however, such words are used in seemingly outside the immediate context, a dislocation of meaning takes place and the party getting the same in response or in expectation of response gets dumb founded.

### **Context of Use:**

#### Ordering for something

Teacher: Attendant.

Attendant: Yes, Sir.

Teacher: Bring me a piece of chalk.

Attendant: Looks askance.

Teacher: Go and get it.

Attendant: Yes, Sir.

Teacher: Soon.

Attendant: (Runs and gives the chalks)

Teacher: Thanks.

From this situation we find that the attendant has got the command, missed the gist, and looked askance and got a brief thus being able to understand the order of teacher and completes the job of bring the chalk soon thereafter.

However, if the attendant in his turn is not duly and instantly helped out by the teacher, the purpose of communication would have failed and no task should have been done by the attendant to help the teacher get the chalk.

### **Single Word Utterances with Adverbs**

Similar experience is abundant with reference to the use of adverbs. Some examples may include 'where' 'next' 'away', 'out', 'a little only', surely, certainly, definitely etc. Again, when somebody is not

keenly keeping track of the exchange. One is very likely to get the wrong implication of the situations thereby allowing the communication to slip out of the hand.

### **Context of Use:**

#### Asking some questions

Teacher: Have you finished the assignment?

Student: No, Sir.

Teacher: Why?

Student: I was away.

Teacher: Where?

This exchange ensures the use of single word related to the use of adverb to make enquiry and get clarifications.

However, the extract above shows an incompleteness of communication suggesting that the exchange is still on to lead its logical conclusion.

### **Single Word Utterances with Pronouns**

In certain contexts to carry forward communication in existence, we use pronouns to signal individual persons or groups for disclosing identity or fixing responsibility or assigning work. Examples: you, he, her, me, mine etc. Uttering such types of pronouns, we try to derive the concrete sense of meaning between the speakers and the receivers.

### **Context of Use:**

#### Enquiring about the possession

Police: Whose bike is this?

Mr. X: Mine.

Police: Sure?

Mr. X: Yes.

Police: Papers?

Mr. X: Searches for the same and gives a vacant look.

Police: Are you the real owner of this bike?  
Mr. X: Sorry, Sir. Left the documents at home.

Police: Go and get the papers soon and take the bike afterwards.

Here, we have the evidence of how single words in communication in flow go to gloss the context and making the communication faster and easier to comprehend.

However, the complexity of the situation explains itself in the strictly formal exchange demanding from the owner of the bike the papers on his claim to its ownership. Anytime a slight lack of cooperation in this formal legal investigatory exchange would lead the owner into legal action.

### **Single Word Utterances with Question Words**

To get additional clarification for better grasping of meaning in a given communicative situation, sometimes we use wh-question words like how, what when, where, whom, why etc.

### **Context of Use:**

#### Enquiring anything

King: How are you?

Old Man: Fine.

King: Where are going?

Old Man: Forest.

King: Why?

Old Man: To live there.

The above dialogue throws light on using single words (wh-question words) through which the old man enables himself to answer the queries.

However, the culture of using wh-question words as single word expressions

needs to be followed in order not to miss out on any step of communication as the regular and indented turns of the speakers.

### **Single Word Utterances with Confirmatory Words**

During communication, we also, use some confirmatory words such as yes (affirmative), no (negative), never (semi-negative), scarcely (semi-negative), rarely (semi-negative), seldom (semi-negative) etc.

#### **Context of Use:**

##### Simple Conversations

Mother: Do you need money?

Daughter: Yes.

Mother: Rs.1000/- will do?

Daughter: No.

Mother: Then?

Daughter: Rs. 2000/- only.

Mother: That much?

Daughter: Yes.

Mother: Ok.

Daughter: Thanks.

In the above example it may be seen that at different stages both agreement and confirmation on one hand and registering difference and negation have been shown using single word expressions have been used as per stages and sequences as relevant.

### **Single Word Utterances in Different Sentence Types**

Different sentence types are eminently known for the single words that they use for conveying meaning in different communicative situations. Whereas imperatives immediately stand out as an example in this context (Go, Come, Write etc.), and interrogatives also (why, why now, why not you etc).

#### **Context of Use:**

##### Exam time advice

Students: What shall we do now for the examination?

Teacher: Read, revise and prepare well.

Students: How much and how long should we study?

Teacher: 18 hours a day.

Students: So much time!

Teacher: Yes, as you sow, so you reap.

Students: Ok Sir.

The above example brings home the idea that in seeking for and offering advice, the communication is freely to be shaped with context bound use of sentence type as they open out mostly in an unconstrained atmosphere of intimacy and good will.

### **CONCLUSION**

From the above discussion, we arrive at a particular conclusion that single word utterances are generally used in most communicative situations. These uses are related to our day to day real life situations. What such communicative environments imply is that single words in their use contribute to make communication faster with abundant language resources that may be available to us at the time of communication. While such words facilitate communication richly, sometimes they make us to confront difficult and embarrassing situations when supposedly easy short-cuts lead to confusions, half meaning and total meaning blackouts. The situational remedy in all cases lies in close attention to the basics of successful communication – minding the regular and appropriate turns, keeping track of the linguistic event in rich opening and meaning the intended message.

For the class room teacher, the real job is to acquaint the students with possibilities of meaningful communication involving single word utterances. The remedy taken from the source of real life examples is to be applied by the teacher in the class room where instead of giving readymade solutions; he has to involve the entire class in comprehending the real extent of the communicative disaster and in making a

pool of their creative explanations to arrive at effective solutions to those problems. ■

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# Marginalisation of Women in the Society of Bengal during Pre-independence Period as Reflected in Women's Autobiographies

Emily Pandey

The present article is based on and linked with the researcher's attempt to trace and explore the regions lying behind the marginalisation of women in the society of Bengal in pre-independence period. The society of Bengal during the times was fully patriarchal. Patriarchy controlled the society and regulated the activities of women in order to restrict their social life. Women were repressed and suppressed; they were reduced to slaves and deprived of honour and dignity as human beings. The article investigates and discovers various factors leading to women's deprivation and oppression in the society and sheds light on the terrible consequences of their life due to male dominance over them, which led to their trivialisation and marginalisation in the society. It focuses on the wretchedness of women's life in Bengal and seeks to bring out women's traumas and tribulations, sad plights and shelterlessness in the society and castigates the patriarchal attempt to curb women rights and freedom in order to reduce them to the secondary status in the society. Each of the autobiographies which the women wrote is the faithful representation of the life of women in relation to the society that neglected, deprived, exploited, trivialised, marginalised and dehumanised

them. It is not the history of a woman's life written by herself; it is a literary work based on the realistic, frank and bold revelation of her life. Marginalisation of women is the central focus of the article. The social realities, namely, patriarchy, kulinism, polygamy, gender discrimination, deprivation of women of rights and freedom, denial of education to women, superstition, ignorance, etc formed the basis of women's trivialisation and marginalisation in society of Bengal during the period and these are clearly traced in the autobiographies such as Sarala Devi's *Jibaner Jharapata* (The Dropped leaf of My Life), Manada Devi's *Amar Kaifiyat* (My Justification) etc.

*Key words: trivialization, marginalization, patriarchy, kulinism, polygamy, gender discrimination*

## Introduction

Women autobiographies depict women's social life in Bengal during its Pre-independence period. They tell the sad inhuman tales of their deprivation and exploitation in patriarchal societies. They were denied freedom as human beings, rights natural to human beings and education as their social rights. Restrictions were imposed on their social participation; they

were barred from participating in socio-political which the country needed for freedom from the British colonial rule and also for social movement for women liberation from orthodox patriarch. The patriarchal society defined and demarkated women's role in socio-political life. It restricted and curbed their right and freedom in the pretext of family dignity and social honour. Injustice was done to them as they were considered inferior to men biologically and intellectually. Cruel treatment by family as well as society stigmatized the society of Bengal. The central themes of the autobiographies and memoirs by eminent women writers, namely, Sarala Devi, Manada Devi, Suprabhat Dutt, Kamini Roy, Nistarini Devi, etc. give a living and realistic picture of the sad plights of women's life in the hands of men in the society. Patriarchy has been indicted for trivialising, marginalising and dehumanising women in the society. It has been charged with subordinating women with men and reducing them to an insignificant entity in the society.

### **Stringent Social Laws to Dominate Women**

The patriarchal society of Bengal made stringent social laws to consolidate and retain male dominance and control over women. Women's voice was suppressed and they were subjected to inhuman treatment everywhere in the society. They were reduced to insignificant creatures and projected as being inferior to men - biologically and intellectually. They wrote autobiographies, memoirs, diaries etc. to reveal their wretched life. They were written in order to record their distressed existence.

Their writings are expressive of their sad tales of deprivation, oppression, social repression, subordination and subjugation to their male counterparts. They wrote to convey their suppressed voice to the society not only to protest their deprived life but also to win social sympathy in their effort to have social and human justice.

The voice was an insurgent, subaltern voice. It was a depiction in words of their imprisoned life within the social dogmas and stigmas. They were shackled to domesticity and social draconic laws. Their private life which represents the life of women in the society of Bengal during the pre-independence era has been reflected in their writings which are feministic in nature, spirit and message. Their writings are largely confessional and personal and their subjective style is feminine. They are the voices of women's liberty, right, equality, dignity, honour, protection and justice in the male-oriented and male-dominated society of Bengal.

### **Male Dominance in the Society of Bengal**

The society of Bengal before independence was fully male-oriented and male-dominated. Patriarchy controlled the society and regulated every activity of women. Men were the guardians of social life and the makers and custodians of social laws which were intended for their unrestricted authority in the society and unchallenging dominance over women. The social laws were so stringent and draconic that the society of Bengal seemed to be a feudalistic society. The laws authorized and enabled men to subjugate women and to compel them to submit to them. The conservative society was out and out male-

centric. It was opposed to women education. The false belief into which the society was dipped was that education would demoralise women and ultimately invite social ills which would cause moral degeneration among women. Even the conservative society baselessly linked widowhood with education. This means that education was considered as a curse for women because it would make them widow in future. Thus, the society denied women not only of right and freedom but also of education and empowerment.

Women were the victims of gender discrimination. In the family as well as in the society girls and women were given a secondary status. They were denied gender equality both in the family and in the society. Even parents considered girl children to be inferior to male-children and so they were accordingly treated. Kamini Roy protested it. In the society men were free to receive education while women were deprived of it. They were not allowed to claim equality and opportunity because men were afraid of women education which would empower them to be equal to them and to challenge their dominance in the society. Kamini Roy turned down the concept of the traditional roles of women as mother and wife only and advocated their active role in the society in line and equality with that of men. She has boldly expressed her opinion in her *Gyanbrikkher Phal* (The Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge).

Male dominance over women let to their trivialisation and marginalisation in the society. Women were victims of social injustices. They were reduced to insignificant creatures. Orthodoxy, dogmatic

social laws, ignorance, superstitions, gender discrimination, inequality and social prejudices against women combined to be a hellish experience about life for them. The ideology of motherhood, dignity and honour let to the engagement of their life, and their patriarchal customs, traditions, polygamy and dowry were instrumental in subjugating them and also subordinating them to men. These patriarchal mechanisms which dominated Bengali women irrespective of ranks and classes in the society subalternised them. Women's subalternisation brings light that patriarchy subordinated women and trivialised and marginalised them. This reality about women's life stigmatised the society of Bengal.

### **Trivialisation and Marginalisation of Bengali Women**

Trivialisation and marginalisation of Bengali women during pre-independence period in the society are attributed to women's deprivation of rights, freedom and equality of opportunity with men, denial of education, oppression and repression. Subordination and subjugation of women to men, disregard for women's dignity and honour, disrespect towards womanhood and various social evil practices prevailing in the society. Patriarchy was the central point of these anti-women factors. Dominance mania of men drove them to be cruel and inhuman in their attitude to ill-treatment of the women. It created their mindset to underestimate women in all activities in the society. Women were not only exploited but their spirit of independence and self-reliance was crushed by the patriarchal society as well. They were doubtlessly trivialised and marginalised in all domains of the Bengali Society.

## **Social Realities Marginalising Women in Bengal**

The autobiographies and other autobiographical writings also record and illuminate the distressed life of widowed women who were virtually helpless, hopeless, shelterless and disregarded in the society. The authors have indicted polygamy and early marriage of girls for not only cheapening the value of womanhood but also humiliating it and jeopardizing the entire womankind in the society of Bengal. This may clearly be said that women were reduced to the position of mere commodity in the assessment of society of Bengal. Polygamy and early marriage of girls not only disregarded women's self reliance and independent existence but also profaned the institution of marriage, denigrated womanhood and engendered social and human degeneration. Nistarini Devi mentions in her reminiscences *Sekeler Katha* that one Bholanath Bandhyapadhy had eighty wives when he was fifty five. Purnachandra had sixty wives when he was fifty five. Gitaram Ganguly married fifty five women till he attained the age of seventy. These are the pictures of helplessness of women in the male-dominated society. Nistarini has condemned this abominable practice in her society. Women were kept behind the purdah. This means that they had to live a caged life both in the family and in the society. It was a crime against womankind; it was a stigma on the civilised society; and it was a sin against God's creation of woman with equal status on Earth. The patriarchal society of Bengal was made a prison house for women where they were to pass days without right

and freedom, without education and independent existence, without honour and dignity, without equality and social recognition. This was a social shame and human disgrace. Manada Devi expressed her bitter experiences when she was at her childhood. Her childhood had been snatched brutally and was forced to perform the domestic duty in her family. She was deprived of receiving education, equality and dignity in the family and in the society also. She was treated as the most unbearable burden that cannot be tolerated any more.

## **Conclusion**

Women's autobiographies which were analysed and examined in this study are the document of the society and the faithful record of the deprived and distressed life of women in the pre-independence society of Bengal. The society of Bengal has been graphically and accurately depicted in the women's works, i.e. autobiographies. Each of the autobiographies is of immense social and human values because of the fact that every act of cruelty to women including rigorous social laws made by men has been boldly highlighted. The autobiographies of expressive of women's harrowing experiences which are representative of the experiences of women who were deprived, oppressed, disregarded, exploited, subdued, subordinated and subjugated in the society of Bengal. The degradation of women's life leading to their trivialisation, humiliation and marginalisation in the male hand is adequately and faithfully mirrored in the autobiographical writings. The autobiographies of women tell the truth of women's oppression, deprivation, exploitation, humiliation, subjugation and

subordination to men, trivialisation and marginalisation in the society of male-dominance in Bengal before the independence of India from the colonial rule. They ring with woman's voices for emancipation from the caged life in the society and are expressive of the tribulations of women's life. ■

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# The Shifting Paradigm from Home to the Workplace : A Study of the Philosophical Perspectives of AdvaitaKala's Chick-Lit Romance *Almost Single*

Gobinda Sahoo

## **Abstract:**

*As a consequence of the widening thematic range of the contemporary novels the thematic orb has undergone a sea change pertaining to the urbanized thoughts and behaviour. Study of the post-modern literature reveals that lack of faith in religion, degenerated moral values related to love, sex, matrimony, social life, gender discrimination and battle against male chauvinism have been the new vistas of experiments in the literary laboratory. Though the aim of equality is yet to be achieved the number of works on feminism is so abundant that it has become difficult to keep the attention intact with the same approach. Development of some new trends like campus literature, metro reads and chick-lits is a remarkable phenomenon in the literary scenario that aims at representing the women folk in a very different way. The present paper intends to bring out the philosophical perspectives with reference to the changing images of women brought forth by Advaita Kala in *Almost Single*. This romance comes under the category of Chick-literature or chick-lit which is a post-millennial, post-feminist genre of literature that ponders around the*

*role of women and their identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

Key words: 21<sup>st</sup> century, feminism, postmodern, campus literature, metro reads, chick-lits

One of the striking features of post-modern Indian English literature that appeals the readers is its widening thematic range, especially in the sphere of novel. The realm has been shifted from the rural-rustic-pastoral-uncomplicated setting to the metropolis of the country as well as the ones in abroad. Consequently, the thematic orb has undergone a sea change pertaining to the urbanized thoughts and behaviour. The alteration in the attitude of the new generation people has most often stimulated the writers to add in those special facets to their fictional world. Study of the post-modern literature reveals that lack of faith in religion, degenerated moral values related to love, sex, matrimony, social life, gender discrimination and battle against male chauvinism have been the new vistas of experiments in the literary laboratory. With the changing physical age the writers encounter transformation in the literary age and consequently resulting in the varying trends, which get reflected in the approach



of the characters especially in the protagonists’.

In many oriental as well as occidental ancient literary works woman has been described to have been created by man. Being an integral part of human civilization and constituting half of the world population, women are denied of their rights in all spheres - social, political and economic - even at par with their numerical strength. Equality in many countries has remained only to be a constitutional provision. All through the ages, they have been termed as ‘weaker sex’ across the world. In the traditional framework of society, individual woman has no place unless she is a daughter, wife or mother. Contemporary literature too is replete with such plots and this has given rise to feminism.

The women in the post-colonial era in the developing countries like India live as per the norms specified by the ones whom they once conceived. Marginalisation of women is a universal feature. There is no qualm to believe that girl children are nourished in a more possessive way than the boys, husband treating his wife in a second-rate way and even instances of mothers being dominated by their sons and grandmothers by their grandsons are not rare. The feminists were committed to the social issues generally confined to the struggle of women protagonists against the age old patriarchy, later on the direction of plots turned towards the bond of matrimony where husbands were considered to be the obstacles on the way of women freedom. Their concern is for the section which is the worst sufferer in Indian society, which silently undergoes the torment caused by the

social norms. The suffering of these character representatives, their struggle against the moral codes and social norms generally lead to a devastating conclusion – a shattered familial life. This has led to a new approach to literature. Many writers like Sashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Sobha De, Nayantara Sahgal, Bharti Mukharjee, Gita Hariharan, Manju Kapur and many others who have insightfully perceived the gender issues prevalent in the age and presented women as belligerent individuals combating against censorship and coercion of patriarchy and male chauvinism. Their approach is to voice the inner sufferings and torments to defy the age old moral codes for the establishment of their rights. Though the aim of equality is yet to be achieved the number of works on feminism is so abundant that it has become difficult to keep the attention intact with the same approach.

Recently some new trends like campus literature, metro reads and chick-lits have developed and writers are contributing a lot to make these spheres represented in a better way. The present paper proposes to bring out the philosophical perspectives with reference to the changing images of women brought forth by Advaita Kala in *Almost Single*. This romance comes under the category of Chick-literature or chick-lit which is a post-millennial, post-feminist genre of literature that ponders around the role of women and their identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The narratives under this banner project their female protagonists not as oppressed or suppressed in the society rather they are portrayed as the ones trapped in the web of indecisiveness, in a transient phase where they are iced up into inertia on account of

struggle against the old value system with fast emerging new age sensibilities. These literary works usually written by women for an audience of the same gender reflect the women's points of view towards the society and the world resulting from the life experience of the authors. They bring out the complexities, challenges and issues surrounding the maidens and their right to choose and live a life of their penchant in the transitioning society. They are not stigmatized by the society rather they are caught up between being strong and independent and retaining enough compliance to accommodate the concerns of their family. Chick-lits concentrate on the life choices of contemporary Indian women, especially related to marriage and career.

Women have remained a very pivotal force in literature. Feminism was initially a war against patriarchal dominance in the society which gradually took the shape of revolt against male dominion; fight against dominating husband and sometimes against dominating sons. Now the turn of the feminist movement has been towards new-feminism which has taken the approach of literature for introduction of this new genus in literature: the chick-lit. This genre fiction deals with women protagonists focusing on their trials and tribulations, romantic relationship and female friendship in a humorous and lighthearted way. It became popular in the late 1990s and critics agree that British author Catherine Allott's *The Old Girl Network* (1994) gave the clarion call in this genre and she was the sole inspiration for Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996). The ones written by Indian authors in the same line are known as Indian Chick-lit. This modern genre of

romance usually in first-person narrative, presents a realistic portrait of single women, especially educated women urban dwellers, their aspirations, and regrets, when there is a sea gap between their romantic ideals and reality and their constant struggle to materialize their families' expectations of the social values. The protagonists are usually single young women of marriageable age between 24-30 years leading strugglesome life and with career amid spirit, generally working in private sectors in metropolitan cities to enjoy ordinary moments even during their search for significant romantic relationships. The protagonists of Indian chick-lits usually belong to the upper caste-Hindu-middle-class families, while their parents usually placed in govt services. Representing the contemporary Indian women they live in the cities, for female relationship that are light and fun to read and have a happy ending.

With the changing social set up there has been great change in the thought process and the movement of women especially young, educated and working Indian women for getting established in the society. And in order to achieve this goal they have realized that a happy married life will lead to a happy family and it will finally lead to peace of mind. Many writers have now come up to deal with this complex-never-told-before-story of the urban women. Writers like Preeethi Nair, Kavita Daswani, Anita Nair, Ginu Kamani, Farahad Zama, Rekha Waheed, Roopa Farooki, Monica Pradhan and Advaita Kala have occupied special berths in the creative orb. Among them upcoming Indian English writer, screenplay writer, columnist Advaita Kala has carved out her own space in the literary

world dealing with a novel aspect of literature, the chick-lit. Apart from two novels *Almost Single* (2007), and *Almost There!* (2013) she has penned the screenplay of films like *Anjaana Anjaani* (2010) and the thriller *Kahaani* (2012) in between the two novels. Daughter of a former bureaucrat Advaita spend her childhood in Central Delhi. She takes pleasure in moving from one place to the other and currently resides in Delhi with her parents. She admits that the idea of *Almost Single* came from the experience that she accumulated during her career as a hotel executive. And she quit her job in order to groom herself as a writer. She admits that the idea of the novel came with the observance of the changing concept of love and dating. She writes *Almost Single* by incorporating the struggle of single women represented by Aisha Bhatia for delineation of the aspirations of modern women. It is a work that has received wide readership ever since it was first released in 2007. The approach of the modern women for marriage has greatly changed. Unlike their predecessors they wish to enjoy the company of their friends, get into occasional fancies and turn successful in their careers. There has been an inclination for arranged marriage among them and they wish to be traditional Indian women. However, they are all set to find their own men as they belong to post-feminist age.

A woman is the worst sufferer in the rigidly formed traditional Indian society. The present study is an attempt to bring out the changing images of women from the tradition to modern and postmodern era reflected in Advaita Kala's novel *Almost Single*. Her protagonist here has undergone significant change. She deals with the inner

turmoil of her protagonist in bringing a solution to the problems and though they sometimes dislike the approaches of their parents they tend to be very traditional.

In the very beginning of the novel the author gives her view point on the philosophy of life in the contemporary age before the protagonist Aisha Bhatia introduces herself where she makes a confession about her passion for getting married.

Aisha, Advait Kala's protagonist in *Almost Single* is a 29-year-old maiden. She has two friends, Misha, a maiden like her and Anushka whose marriage has split, besides only boy friend with whom she had a split-X, 'soul buddies, really'. (3) She works in a hotel leading a very busy life, meeting a lot of interesting people along the way. She is very romantic and has a longing for an ideal man to get tied up in marriage but is not so serious. She takes parties with the friends as a means of socialization to thwart her loneliness. She is not shy about her single status. She differentiates the approach of boys and girls towards marriage and says:

"The older a guy gets, the bigger his dating pool. It works just the reverse for women. We come attached with a 'best before' tag, and if – god forbid! – we reach the expiry date while still single, it's downhill all the way from there." (AS 11)

She is very honest and deals with the dilemmas of her life with honesty and good humour in her search for identity. But unlike the traditional women she drinks and smokes with her friends in the parties. She

says 'my breath smells of a brewery, but one from Scotland. I am no cheap drunk!' (AS 256) Her philosophy of life fits to the expectations of chick-lits.

Misha is an eternal optimist. She comes from an affluent family of Bhatinda, works as an insurance advisor. But she 'works as and when she has a client' or when her liaison officer pleads with her. It was her Bade Papaji the patriarch of the joint family who got her the job. For Misha the job in Delhi means 'a release from the shackles of small-career prospects it offers'. At the same time her parents too feel relieved for they 'don't have to keep explaining why their kudi is still not married.'

In the very first chapter Aisha and Misha are found registering to marriage bureau, *desivivah.com*, as a means of 'online spouse hunting' (AS 36) and in the words of Misha they are two cosmopolitans for the local boys and as a step to expand their horizon they think of responses coming from America and London. The approach to life has been rapidly changing with the development of science and technology. The present century has witnessed the indispensable attribute of internet and social media. Consequently the new genres of creative writings contain in them the increasing popularity of internet and social Medias in the social life. Matrimonial sites have been playing a vital role in the public life, especially of the city dwellers. In the opinion of Aisha "Online spouse-hunting is actually a lot for fun once you get into it. It's like an electronic *swayamvar*. Except it's a customized *swayamvar*. It does have its own stomach-knotting moments, especially

once you have expressed an interest in someone and are waiting for a response." (AS 231) At the same time there has been a remarkable increase in openness among male and female in regular conversations. Nobody feels otherwise to discuss the physique candidly even in the workplace. The discussion among Aisha, Rishi and Seema, the resident beauty queen and Public Relations lady, regarding the arrival of Miss Lekha leads to such discussion. Rishi says 'women with a little meat on them look good. More cushion for the pushin', like my mamma used to say'. (AS 237)

Aisha wants Misha not to talk aloud regarding registering to marriage bureau so that the whole world knows what they are doing. It means they do not want to let the people around know what they are doing. Misha once says 'Fortune favours the brave' (9) This reflects the philosophy of life of the author in the voice of a character.

After the end of the conversation over phone on Aisha's marriage, her mother concludes 'it's karma at the end of the day' (AS 12) which shows the philosophy of the previous generation people. 'When your parents stop matchmaking and turn philosophical, it's time to worry' (AS 12). Being modern, Aisha claims herself to be a traditionalist and the no.1 speed dial is of Shastriji who is their family astrologer. Her approach to life is very different from that of her older cousin 'I'm-married-and-hence-my-life-is-perfect' sort Lata. She informs the cousin of a couple of boozy nights for which she is 'off food' who is a complete teetotaler and 'feels that giving in to alcohol is a sign of weakness: a result of the fast life in the big city'. (AS 42) Aisha lives in the big,

bad city of her own but did not get married when she was supposed to and she says 'the dog (Julian) gets more proposals than I do'. (AS 99)

The sub-title of the novel – 'Is there such a thing as a perfect relationship?' - is befitting one to any relation, especially in the contemporary society. No doubt Advaita Kala puts forth her feelings as an almost single lady, at the same time she has not forgotten to codify the sufferings of all relations in life, employer-employee, divorced-divorcee, mother-daughter, husband-wife, coworkers, friends, friends of opposite sex, so on and so forth. She portrays a realistic picture of the relationship in a very candid manner and makes a contrast with the pretensions that we make in our daily routine. Her reference to 'Break-up sex' (59) is a befitting example of the complex relationship. She highlights the relation of divorced-divorcee through Anushka-Anuj liaison. Despite their separation through divorce they had a sex on the night they met in the opening ceremony of a new lounge bar Tao. Though she expressed her reluctance to be a part of the party to Aisha, the moment she meets her ex-husband she clicks to him.

The novel exhibits the sexual freedom of women. Anushka says 'If men can have it, so can women.....' (60) The philosophy of life has been better explained at the end of the chapter The Tao of Anushka. Misha's first date with Samir, Ric's old friend, is delineation of westernization of Indian culture. In the very first date Samir, the host, asks Misha about her preference of drinks. "'What would you like to drink?' Before she could answer he said 'How about

a bottle of white wine, or do you prefer red? I think an Indian white.....' " (AS 64)

And at the time of departure Misha says 'Let's get a smoke and then leave' (AS 67). In order to calm down herself Misha took long drags of her cigarette. There has been no conversation except the ones related to smoke and drinks. And what is more important and serious is that on his first date Samir has a coupon which his father got with his membership which entitles him to "two free bottles of wine".

The short introduction of Vishal, whom Aisha and her friends met at Ritz Continental for their Sunday Brunch, is an episode of a new culture that has developed in India - man leaving job after getting married. Vishal's intention was very clear throughout his courtship with Rohini that was very noticeably acknowledged by his confidants. He 'can't work for anyone' and at the same time he doesn't 'have cash to start anything' and thus, Rohini was his ticket. His wife 'runs a successful garment export business, with buyers all over the world, from Italy to Singapore'. (91) He is a man when asked about him says more about his wife. And Ric concludes the discussion with a single word for him - 'metrosexual'.

Despite modern setting, observation of rituals and celebration of traditional festivals has been the hallmark of chick-lits. Advaita Kala has given a vivid picture of Karva Chauth, a festival celebrated and observed by the women folk particularly of northern part of India. Misha and Aisha had a talk to go on fasting on that auspicious day. Though it is meant for married women only Misha says 'Single women do it all the



time in the hope of finding a good husband, and it works.’ (AS 110) But for Aisha the festival is all about ‘starvation and romantic fulfillment’. Even Anushka who has already split with Anuj is going to observe the ritual. And Misha’s room was chosen for the ceremony and it may give her an opportunity to integrate with the bhadrakalok in her neighborhood. But to Aisha’s mother it is mere drama baazi.

Aisha’s mother, like the ones of girls of marriageable age, very much bothers about her daughter getting engaged. She goes on inquiring regularly about the proceedings. She too is in contact with many people to arrange one for her. Even she has opened a profile of her daughter on net. Almost all her telephonic conversation is related to marriage only. In the chapter ‘No Garlic, No Onion’ she inquires whether Aisha is doing the ‘ritual with the Shivling’. The ritual, placing the Shivling in the sun and pouring water over it at sunrise, it is supposed, assures the girls with good mates. But to Aisha it is just ‘worshipping phallic symbol’ (AS 161)

Inclination of the modern society towards vegetarian food has been highlighted in this chapter. In the chapter ‘No Garlic, No Onion’ through mother-daughter conversation Advaita Kala gives a picture of that group of people in India who take no-garlic, no-onion food. The mother speaks about the proposal of a boy working in McKinsey in New York after his MBA, who is a pucca vegetarian, even takes no garlic, no onion. She considers it to be a problem but Aisha’s view is different. Taking vegetarian food has become a new trend especially for those who are health

conscious and do dieting. Vegetable and herbs are the relevant basis for marriage. In the words of Advaita Kala ‘food group philosophy’ has become the requirement of the girls. Aisha is ready to settle with a boy with high protein and no carb; she can even compromise with one with low carb. When Mamma Bhatia asks Aisha that probably she is doing ‘drugs which is the one named after the cold drink’ Aisha is shocked to hear such words used by ‘Kalyug’ mothers in their vocabulary. And at the end of the conversation she gives the verdict of belongingness.

In the changing cultural scenario, fitness has been the prime concern of youngsters as well as the seniors, and consequently the gyms have been playing a vital role in life. Soon after the conversation with her mother regarding the twenty-six years, no garlic, no onion boy Aisha rushes to the gym which he has discontinued for last two months. He receives a very humorous response from his gym coach. Kala gives a vivid picture of the intimate trainer-trainee relationship in the city cultural life. “.... Your personal trainer is the only guy in the world that you can talk to about the boobs... You know stuff like how big they are, the way they sag, how to firm them up etc. It’s strangely intimate relationship, necessitated by pure and cold-blooded clinical vanity.” (AS 164) But the protagonist expresses her concern that the women folk do not acknowledge such relationship.

The whole story revolves around how Aisha and her friend Misha go on man hunting for marriage. With the impact of western culture it has really become a very



big problem to get a suitable match. And as in many cases people go on pretending and it becomes very difficult. Aisha's feeling regarding the single women gives the real picture of the man-hunting women. "The day they find a man, they totally disconnect from the rest. Their single girlfriends become a burden, reminders of just how close they came to missing the boat. Suddenly, the single girl community perceived as a group of hungry piranhas, waiting to sink their teeth into any man, even the unavailable variety. The soon-to-be-married species starts to take refuge in married friends, like they understand the nuances of relationships as opposed to the single gals."

Human relationship in the contemporary age has become so difficult that it is very difficult to name the relations. Even it is very difficult to let people know about the relations. In the chapter "Blended Relationship" Advaita Kala highlights the social relationship these days. She says in the voice of the protagonist "the most indiscreet aspect of a social interaction is the question, 'So how do you know him or her?'" The answer is often more difficult to comprehend than high school algebra." And in fact the relations these days have become so complicated that traditional people won't make them out. Advaita Kala terms those as 'Blended Relationships'. The terms like 'go-between', 'ex-husband', 'metrosexual male', 'skirt-chasers' 'soon-to-be-married' are self explanatory. She gives a summary of what boys and girls discuss while they meet. "We are definitely following the path – from poop to sex. Isn't that what boys actually discuss?"

Girlfriends, on the other hand, talk about men and sex." (AS 145)

Infidelity has been a notable symptom of modern relation. Advaita Kala has summed up the 'clichéd excuses' generally made by the modern men to cheat women in a very apt way which can be read as representation of modern way of life as a contrast to the philosophy of life in the traditional way. The common statements are very common in the 'dating world'.

- "a) I was drunk, it happened by mistake
- b) You don't make me feel man enough
- c) It was just sex
- d) We haven't been having great sex lately and I have my needs"

And she has been very precise and pinpointed in dealing with the human relation and concludes with the equation "Infidelity = opportunity + availability."

Karan invites 'a few people from work and a few friends' for 'The House Warming Party' – a party where they will only eat and drink. The openness in conversation in the party gives a vivid picture of urban civilization. Karan's sole intention behind the party is to spend some time with Aisha. And Aisha too despite a stiff neck after a workout in the gym attends it on the pretext of getting a chance to come closer to him. But while pouring a tall glass of water in the kitchen Aisha's eyes fell 'on a stack of papers' (177) where 'a print out of an email' was on the top - the mail in a bold font with the subject column 'Marital Alliance'. It contains details of a Mumbai-

based-girl-twenty-four-year-old-convent-educated, MBA from a foreign university, a good classical dancer, tall, slim and fair with sharp features. It irks Aisha and in her voice Advaita Kala gives a flamboyant picture of the modern women.

The idea of the NRIs being fond of the idea of born and bred Indian gals for bahu as a trend in the contemporary society has been well dealt in the novel. Those girls are considered to be 'susheel'. But they lack the idea that the gals of New Delhi are in no way behind the gals of New Jersey, rather they are far ahead. For them, study of good traditional values is merely an elective course offered to them.

After Karan takes depart from Aisha in the chapter 'Diminished Logical Thinking' Kala begins with a philosophical statement "Sometimes, I feel that the desire to love overweighs the desire to be loved. That has to be the reason why so often, we continue to love those who don't deserve to be loved. It helps us feel emotionally employed. 'Amour' becomes a career, a vocation. So, we continue to draw from our depleting inner reserves while steadily moving towards emotional bankruptcy." (AS 265)

The characters like Aisha Bhatia are not merely tragic figures because they are single. However, at times like Aisha such women fear that they might be going away from the tinges of ancient culture with the aspiration to become liberated and open-minded Indian women. All these fears, aspirations, dreams, stress and lifestyles are universal in any Indian city these days. To conclude, the philosophy of life has been summed up by the novelist in the voice of the protagonist at the very beginning of the novel. It reads "For most people, life and love are like a game of connect-the-dots: the numbers always form a straight line to the goal. The result is a perfect picture. For the lesser half - especially for those who inhabit my world – vision is a blur of blots and splotches and there's no straight line to speak of." (AS 2) ■

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# Search for Identity: A Study through Edward Ricardo Braithwaite's Novels *Reluctant Neighbors* and *Honorary White*

Pramila Kumari Das

This paper intends to highlight the social condition and racial segregation in the second half of the twentieth century Britain. The black people are oppressed and exploited everywhere due to contemporary orthodox ideas and social bigotry. The Whites in USA, Britain and South Africa were ruling authorities who inflict torture on the innocent Blacks. The society is stratified into two groups: master and slave or exploiter and exploited. As a Negro, Rick Braithwaite suffers a lot due to social prejudice and aims to eliminate social disparity and acquires social identity through peaceful revolution. Identity is nothing but a state of mind i.e. granted by our interaction with fellow beings, identifies our importance and acceptance in the society. It is similar with dalits in India who fight for their rights and dignity. They are not cowards and sustain moral courage to face the critical situation and solve the critical issues. Key words: Segregation, Development, Social Identity, Social justice, Apartheid.

## Introduction:

The term 'apartheid' refers to the people who face segregation in every sphere such as race, education, art, culture and politics. They are indifferent and attacked savagely. According to Concise Oxford English Dictionary 'apartheid' means the

system of racial segregation especially in former South Africa. Apartheid also means 'apartness' in Afrikaans. It was a policy of South Africa during 20th century, from 1948 to early 1990s, when the white minority groups ruled over non-white majority groups. Social, economic and political and racial discrimination against the blacks are approved under the policy of 'apartheid' which force them live apart from each other. The 'apartheid' refers to 'separate development' of the white and non-white people. According to South Africa constitution of 1994, the system of 'apartheid' was banned and racial disunity was officially abolished. (Wikipedia) 'Identity' is an inductive term. It is defined in various ways, such as the distinguishing character or personality of an individual is his individuality or identity. (Merriam-Webster) According to English Language Learner's Dictionary a number of qualities and beliefs of a person or group recognize him or the group different from others is the identity. (yourdictionary.com) The people of a team are alike having sameness, oneness, they are united by the identity of same interests. The downtrodden people quest for identity, demand for right and dignity. A black man's identity crisis is his struggle to achieve aim as a human being in full sense against the White force. Mr. Braithwaite reflects the problems of the black people

which has familiar relationship with dalit issues in India and tries search for identity after going through the phases of alienation, nostalgia and assimilation. In the novels *Reluctant Neighbors* (1972) and *Honorary White* (1975) Rick Braithwaite highlights the black man's search for identity in the society. He portrays the neglected people of the society who always find their own definition and create a new place for them. Through his own character and various other characters Mr. Braithwaite reflects their emotional perplexities and disturbances and finds out self-esteem and liberation.

#### **Indifference to Black s suffering:**

Mr. Rick Braithwaite (1912 -2016) was a successful author, diplomat, educator and social worker of British Guyana. He had a train journey to New Canaan along with a white stranger neighbor in the same compartment having discussion on British culture, social manner, social status and education system. Braithwaite represents for the black people while the stranger neighbor stands for the white people. All are human beings. Due to rigid social prejudice the white people feel themselves superior and exercise supreme power, while the black people are inferior, ill treated, and suffer a lot throughout their life. In *Honorary White*, he explores that the Blacks are not treated equally with the Whites; they are subjects to them, always afraid of them and live under awful condition. Braithwaite states: "Our predecessors fought and conquered the Bantu and like conquered people everywhere, they became subject people. Subject people are never treated as equals, at least not until prevailing political and economic conditions dictate such a step. The

Bantu outnumber us ten to one, at least, and we cannot now or in the foreseeable future allow them any conditions or circumstances which could precipitate armed conflict with us. We must protect ourselves against them. Outsiders don't understand this. Actually, we live in fear of them". (*Honorary White* 30) The Whites dominate the Blacks, resist them and exercise power over them. Every person desires self-respect and achieves it through the practice of moral values.

The white people don't prefer train journey with the black people in the same compartment because their rough manner irritates them. Mr. Braithwaite experienced his neighbor's ill treatment during the train journey to New Canaan. So he states: "Nose, mouth, spectacles everything about him sharing in the surprise, the shock, that an outsider had invaded his sovereign earth. I swallowed to ease the dryness in my throat, the hot rage mushrooming inside me. Arbitrarily, contemptuously they believed themselves entitled to the best on no other qualification than that pallid skin. 1971, and nothing had really changed. Zoning laws had replaced the NIGGER KEEP OUT signs, but hell, those stately trees could steel support a weighed rope" (*Reluctant Neighbors* 6). Braithwaite does nothing except observing his white neighbor's contemptuous superior attitude. In *Honorary White*, he describes his visit to South Africa and talking with the mix-emigrants of Britain, America, Switzerland, German, South Africa and a few from France who were young but looking ill. They struggle with the native black people for job, and try to bring certain changes in their life condition. At Nairobi everyone was White, no sign of Black man was there. So he felt uncomfortable, did not

get chance to talk with anybody else in London airport. So he states: "I was odd man out, wrapped in layers of uncertainty and apprehension, wondering whether and for how long I would be able to stay in an environment which would deliberately seek to humiliate and degrade me" (*Honorary White* 4). Most of the travelers understand his decision to expose himself in a social order. So he gives divine guidance to the mankind through his writings. In *Reluctant Neighbors* he exposes James Proudly and his wife (a civilian) and Braithwaite discusses the integrity among the warriors and the civilians. Friendship and brotherhood was among all, but not segregation. To rescue from racism he emphasizes on fraternity. In this context, he highlights: "At the airport there was the general camaraderie, the particular friendships, the occasional dislikes, and irritations of men with men, but all peripheral to the special squadron unity each appreciating his dependence on the others, his need of the others' Brotherhood." (*Reluctant Neighbors* 28).

The Blacks are apartheid everywhere, not treated as human beings. They live in danger like animals. They were like lambs engulfed by predators. There was Scorpio, the White terrorists, a violent right-wing group operated with the knowledge and consent of the Government and Security Police. The fire bombed at the home of student president of Cape Town. A struggle was between two groups. About the hate session Braithwaite states: "During the bitter year in England there had been many occasions for 'hate sessions'. Meeting another black encouraged the ready recital of woes. After all, the common enemy was insistently vocal in his demands for our

rejections "keep Britain White. Ban the Blacks" (*Reluctant Neighbors* 142). It refers hatred of the white people towards the black people. The black ambassadors are fully different from others. So he explores: "... blacks would naturally behave differently from whites, at any social or economic level. Blacks were not people; they were a disturbing phenomenon within the social scene, forcing attention on themselves. First black is named to City's Board. Mayor appoints first black to ... President names first black. ... First black is appointed to run city's prisons. Always attention is focused on the blackness. Not on ability or qualification. Blackness." (*Reluctant Neighbors* 149). Fortunately, as a Negro Mr. Braithwaite enjoys opportunity for public contact. The White's etiquette towards the blacks is also intolerable. They call the blacks as 'stinking nigger'. Hate them. Neglect them. Treat them as slaves. So he writes: "The White mouth always ready with the final epithet "stinking nigger". (*Reluctant Neighbors* 171) This word pierced Braithwaite's skin and spirit because sticks and stones can hurt the skin but words pierce the skin and spirit. Hence, he encouraged the black and neglected the whites to reform their way of life and urged them to educate themselves and dress well etc. He resorts non-violent method to arise people's conscience and protest against the laws meant for the higher class people. For instance, in *Honorary White* Mr. Braithwaite recounts that his books were banned for a short time because of being a "colored" man. Fortunately, the Official Gazette announced the withdrawal of the ban and allowed him to move freely, talk with others etc. Then he continued writing according to his own

thought, own interest and received international reputation as a critic of racist. Some renowned Whites started revolution to live peaceful life with justice for everyone. And all, irrespective of race, prefer democratic rule and social justice. The problems that the Blacks face have some similarities with the *dalits* in India, who spend their life in ignorance, disease and misery, without good health and education while most of them have no houses and live barbarous life. In the present civilized society *dalits* are also sufferers of casteism. For example, on 6<sup>th</sup> march 2019 **The New Indian Express** highlights a dalit woman cook from an anganwadi centre at Debendranarayanpur village in Rayagada block faced protest by the upper caste people that their kids would not consume meals prepared by her.

#### Discrimination in appointment:

It is the major problem that hinders the smooth living of the blacks in the society. No black squadrons except Braithwaite were appointed in British Royal Air Force but Just Crew members, Pilots, Navigators, Bomb aimers, Fight Engineers, Wireless operators, Gunners, Ground Crew. No black man occupies high rank despite higher degree. In *Honorary White* he describes that in 1947 Braithwaite was in disillusionment because of social prejudice and discrimination. He was job hunting, firstly offered hospital orderly job and later messenger in a grocery store to sweep out the store and carry groceries for the Whites, getting English money about eight shillings. He left for England, walked to Port Elizabeth and Southampton, ordered him to wash decks and help in galley. The blacks in South

Africa work as the servant of the whites. So he states: "Here, no Black would dare raise his ambitions that high. Any job higher than shit carrier is reserved for the white man. By law" (*Honorary White* 43). Braithwaite frequently experienced rejection and frustration like other young blacks searching for appointment. Finally he was appointed as a teacher with certain challenges. While working in the Welfare Department he proved himself capable, imaginatively capable and sensitively capable to do every work. So he writes: "Regular employment diverted my attention from hurt, rejected me to ambitious, intelligent me" (*Reluctant Neighbors* 107). Like Rick Braithwaite other black youth face discrimination in job seeking.

#### Discrimination at work places:

Mr. Braithwaite analyses the gloomy situation of the workers at the work places. They are discriminated in every towns and cities having no equal rank and payment with the white employees. The novel *Honorary White* deals with the horror of the black workers in gold, diamond and coal mines of South Africa. The European conquerors torture them, they suffer under the cruel watchful eyes of the masters or the armed white guards. In this context, he states: ". . . Blacks working deep in the bowels of earth, day after day, ill-fed and poorly paid, completely at the mercy of the Whites who tyrannized and bullied them. Floods and cave-ins had trapped hundreds of these Blacks, and only token rescue efforts were made; their fate was of a little consequence because they could be so easily replaced" (*Honorary White* 5). The sugar plantation workers of Guyana were



suppressed by the burden of long laborious hours with poor payment and immediately raised voice against such intolerable behavior of the employer. So the government of South Africa formed new laws for protection of the workers from their white masters. So he asserts “. . .the whole sorry business began with the establishment of a Dutch East India Company Trading Station at Table Bay and some mutinous personnel who later settled there as free farmers. Slaves from other parts of Africa were shipped there to help in the development of the settlement but were rigidly segregated, being denied even the right to wear shoes. As the settlement developed, the settlers or trekboers pushed into the inferior, seizing the wide grazing grounds of the pastoral Hottentots, stealing their cattle and killing the virtually defenseless Blacks” (*Honorary White* 6). At Alexandra, there was separate bus stop for Black people. Black workers born in ghetto at Soweto, Alexandra, and migrant workers from Bantustan of Transvaal, Transkei were not allowed to live with their family. They live in the broken dark room, having no privacy, no electricity, and no running water, no sewage facilities, no sunlight, no air. Such terrible situation forced them to serve the Whites and work for them at every moment. If raise voice against them the Blacks would be assassinated. Mr. Braithwaite as a social reformer tried to eradicate the evil system of racial discrimination from the society. The overseas visitors acquired the ‘Honorary White’ designation for their free movement. Equal pay for equal work became law in South Africa. So the economic condition of Blacks was a little better than other parts of

Africa. South African blacks were changed a little from their original primitive state and lived happier than before in the rural Homelands according to the traditional way. The black immigrants suffer a lot at work places. They were appointed as soldier, sailor or airman, also worked in hospitals, on buses and trams, served as postmen, as garbage collectors and street cleaners and unskilled building labourers. They need house to live if want to gain the ownership of the house, immediately inflate price, and charge high, their difficulties and frustration increase and they cannot live in better houses. Thus, the disparity at work places increases the harassment among the black immigrants. Hence, through strike they can claim their rights and achieve success.

Discrimination in educational institutions:

Rick Braithwaite describes the sufferings of the black teachers, students, lack of interest among the parents and lack of suitable environment for education. For example, the black students in the East End School were in the atmosphere of difficulties and disappointment, unfortunate to receive better education as well as affection of the teachers. Most of them belong to poor family; live in overcrowded homes, unable to maintain personal privacy. On the other hand, the white students neither respect the teachers nor follow their advice. In *Honorary White* Braithwaite explores a school at Umtata meant for the white children only who enjoy all sorts of opportunities and receive affection of the teachers and acquire education. The black students were not allowed to learn with them. In United States, many students were school dropout; some never go to school

because the parents were unable to afford fees, clothes and books. The schooling was compulsory for the Whites but optional for the Blacks. Therefore, frustration appeared among the black students. Rick Braithwaite found at Soweto, the high school was empty and miserable condition. Lack of adequate infrastructure and staff was obstacle in the school education. So he writes: "We pulled into the high school yard and peeped into a class room through a broken window. Row upon a row of dusty wooden desks the walls unrelieved by even a map. Gloomy." (*Honorary White* 53) In Soweto vocational school, they learn the subjects like electrical wiring, plumbing, bricklaying, masonry and carpentry etc. And get opportunity for high level of training, become ambitious and enthusiastic in order to compete with the white students for appointment in the industries where the skilled laborers work. Their performance was very good but never get job due to the reservation of seats for white scholars. Work as low-paid helpers of Whites, even sometimes work without payment because they are not considered as human beings. So he states: "Blacks are not human, so they need passes to move among the humans" (*Honorary White* 57). Such disparity inculcates a sense of revolution among them. The principal, teacher, and students' aim is the intellectual growth within the students that will help to change their thought, increase their interest for their own sake. Rick Braithwaite does not feel pride in his personal freedom of spirit. He works for the interest of the blacks for the sake of his soul. In order to change the situation Mr Braithwaite came face to face with the students of Witwatersrand University who were unhappy for ugliness

of White bigotry towards Blacks and discussed with them on social justice, social realities and honesty of liberalism etc. He emphasized the integrated system of school education, the black and white children should sit together and learn together for better education and their all round development. The black man's literary creations such as poems, novels, plays are meant for the benefit of all but the Whites exploit them for their own benefit. So he states: "If he has any talent he is milked by some white bastard until he is dry" (*Honorary White* 134). The black artists contribute a lot but they are caught in the White man's snare. To abolish disparity and achieve self dignity all should support each other and work together. An organization at Mdali of Johannesburg was constituted to unite all black people to discover their art and talent. The white men must come close to them, respect them and their art. The blacks are kind, sympathetic and genial person with a compassionate heart. They have knowledge and equal talent like the white people and earn reputation all over the world. Rick Braithwaite, as a social reformer, advised to trust each other because trusting can make them together; stand against the white man's tyranny. Mr. Tiro, the leader of student organization was in favor of black's dignity, but the Whites committed murder. To take revenge twenty millions Blacks raised their voice against four million Whites who tremble in fear. It indicates they are no less powerful than the white people. Mr. Tiro, concludes a letter with a line "No struggle can come to an end without casualties" (*Honorary White* 147). It reflects their strong determination to revolt against Whites without fear because fear

means powerless. In this context, he states: “We are ashamed, my friend, to sit here like women, and weep for those whom they ban and imprison and kill. We, the sons of Zulu warriors sit and cry because we are powerless in our fear. We should rise up against them. Perhaps you too sit there thinking that we should forget our fear and rise against those who make us afraid” (*Honorary White* 148). The ban on Braithwaite’s books was for the time being. He was self-confident that his writings would be accepted by the mankind. Rick used the term *enslave* instead of the term *slave*. A civil war of the black people is a kind of guerilla movement. Braithwaite walks with a sense of grace and pride. His suffering and release from it was an example of the black’s quest for dignity. After a long period of suffering he discussed with Sociologist Richard Hauser and his wife Hephzibah Menuhin, Donald Chatsworth and many others who discovered the salvation of the black people depends on their interest and labor.

In *Honorary White*, he traces Mr. Braithwaite and Mr. Bob Foster (a boxing champion) occupied special position in South Africa. Mr. Foster was offered the honour to be a guest to inaugurate the hotel for public business. Braithwaite assured the South African non-whites, Asians and other mixed-blood people who were restricted, segregated and finally designated as “Honorary Whites”. This title has nothing to do with the way he dresses and the way he combs his hair. It has to do with the kind of spirit; he has a spirit that will accept nothing which dehumanizes in African soil. Mr. Braithwaite was a pioneer of non-violence because he knows violence is not the means to end the problem but encourages

it, non-violence is the only means to solve problems, welcome changes, welcome evolution. Co-operation of all irrespective of race is necessary for socio-economic and political reformation. The Bantu (black) people need education for their skill development and take the responsibility of the government. They can acquire education along with the Whites and equality can prevail in the society. God is divine architect and director of man’s destiny. All are creation of god. Everyone should believe on truth, justice and fellow man, love and friendship. Rick Braithwaite as a philanthropist focuses on equality, love and friendship among human beings irrespective of race and color. Observations: The following points are observed from the above discussion:

- The influence of racists severely affects simple living of the minority groups. Braithwaite focuses on terrible condition of blacks in U.S.A, Britain, West Indies and South Africa.
- Lack of free and positive discipline draws them to decay.
- Lack of co-operation and free discussion enhances the superiority and inferiority complex; maintains gap between the privileged and unprivileged groups in their daily life.
- Lack of motivation destroys enthusiasm to eradicate discrimination.
- Apathetic or indifferent attitude of people makes the government and non-government policies failure.

Suggestions: The basic factors for the abolition of segregation are:

- Defend the rights of individuality i.e. meant for the power or capability for critical enquiry and responsible thought.

- Rule out coercion for self-regarding and other-regarding actions meant for the welfare of the nation.

- Liberty in the life of rational person i.e. absolute liberty of conscience, liberty to express and publish one's opinion, liberty to live as one pleased and pursuit good for all. It is helpful for development of humane, civilized and moral person and beneficial to the individual and the society.

- Empower the lowest social groups of people through government and non-government plans and programs.

- Self-awareness is required to obtain dignity. There is a saying one can easily drag a horse to water but thousands cannot make the horse drink unless it wants. Unless the youth of minority group want reformation no one can do it.

- Education for egalitarianism to cultivate people's talent and ensure equal opportunity to all sections of population.

- Give support to eccentricity and refusal to bend the knee to the customs.

Mr Braithwaite emphasizes on the absolute liberty of expression and good action those are crucial for black man's identity.

### **Conclusion:**

The coming year will see equality in the society. A casteless and classless society will be formed. It is not only the role of the government but also the responsibility of every individual to achieve the goal. The exercise of blacks' or other minority groups' rights is the root cause of progress. All should have identity and equal status for all

round development in the society. In Indian context, the *dalits* are not aware about their rights and respect. They are not fully educated, but they have to play actively for well building of the nation. Therefore, we say firmly if we work together changes will occur surely in the lives of the hundreds of dalits who are in social and economic deprivation. It is urgent to aware them regarding their rights and duties and various government programs and policies related for their improvement. So we pledge to work together and dedicate ourselves towards creating New India where dalits will realize their dignity. ■

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# The Agony of Black Women in Zora Neale Hurston's *Jonah's Gourd Vine*

R. Sheela Banu

Black women are the most vulnerable and the most exploited members in the American society. They have a long history of sexual harassment. They have been the targets of sexual abuse and cruelty. Married or single, young or old, they were generally looked upon as sexual slaves by men, both white and black.

Shane Phelan says, "The bedrock of women's oppression is heterosexuality" (*Identity Politics* 45). Phelan's observation of heterosexuality suits best to interpret Hurston's *Jonah*. In this novel, Amy Crittendon and Lucy Potts are horrendously humiliated and discriminated by their male counterparts.

In *Jonah*, Ned ill-treats his wife Amy worse than her ex-master Alf. He subjects her to verbal and physical abuse. Once he shouts at her for talking smart. He says, "Don't you change so many words wid me, 'oman! Ah'll knock yuh dead ez Hector. Shet yo' mouf!" (*Jonah* 3). Described as "an alligator in jeans"(8), he curses her and thrashes her. No day passes without quarrel in his family. Whatever she does sparks his ire. There is absolutely no affection between them. Ned bosses around the house doing nothing and throws abusive words on Amy and lashes her with whippings for every

paltry reason. One day, when she forgets to keep a plate for Ned, he lashes her with a rawhide whip on her back. When she retaliates, he whips her with more force on her head. When Amy beats him with a wooden stick, "He thrust his knee into her abdomen and exerted a merciless pressure on her throat" (*Jonah* 8).

Actually, Amy shoulders more responsibility than Ned. While Ned works only in the plantation, she works along with him in the plantation from morning till evening and also provides food for her family. Despite her hard work, she is never treated with sympathy by Ned. He is a transmitter of oppression that he himself experiences because of the racial and class prejudice. He transfers his suppressed agony of his ill-treatment by his white master to his wife by humiliating her in all possible ways and derives a pseudo-satisfaction that he is her master. In his long experience as a slave, he has internalized white patriarchal values losing his own self in the process.

Violence is perceptible in the Pearson's household too. John Buddy's oppressive treatment of Lucy is the result of his internalization of patriarchal behaviour from his stepfather. Watching Ned beat Amy daily, he believes that women

must be beaten and ruled by men. After he marries Lucy, he treats her just as Ned treats Amy. He reduces her to a domestic slave. His sexual oppression of her is quite apparent in her frequent pregnancy. At thirty five, she mothers nine children.

John Buddy imbibes his notion of maleness not only from his stepfather but also from the white world. Like whites, he believes in a double standard of sexual behaviour for men and women. He thinks that just because he is a male, he is entitled to sexual freedom. He lures Lucy's heart by making her grand promises and eloquent apologies. While he flouts his familial duties, he forces Lucy to live with him, despite her unwillingness. Once when Lucy expresses her desire of quitting him, he threatens her and controls her, thus:

...Ah never laid de weight uh mah hand on you in malice. Ah never raised mah hand tuh yuh eben when you gits mad and slaps mah jaws, but lemme tell you somethin' right now, and it ain't two, don't you never tell me no mo' whut you jus' tole me, 'cause if you do, Ah'm goin' tuh kill yuh jes' ez gun is iron. Ahm de first wid you, and Ah means tuh be de last. Ain't never no man tuh breathe in yo' face but me. You hear me? (*Jonah* 110)

Contrary to the eloquent promise that John Buddy makes at the time of his marriage, he cares neither for Lucy's health nor death. He abandons her when she needs his presence and support most. For instance, while Lucy struggles in labour, he fails to remain by her side. Later, when his daughter is afflicted with typhoid, he evades his familial responsibility and dallies with

Hattie Tyson. When Lucy falls ill, he takes little interest in her recovery. Although she dies of consumption, he hastens her death by killing her emotions. Blinded by lust, he uses harsh words to the dying Lucy and mercilessly slaps her. He heaves a sigh of relief when she passes away. For all her selfless service to him, he gives her only troubles. Forgetting that she is the ladder of his life, he forsakes her for Hattie Tyson.

Lucy, in *Jonah*, is treated with disrespect not only by her husband but also by her brother. The anecdote in which Bud storms into her house and takes away the feather-bed in return for an unpaid debt that John Buddy owes him is a fitting instance of the black woman's oppressive status in her home. Despite the fact that she and Bud are siblings, he does not show not an iota of sympathy for his pregnant sister. Hurston describes the scene thus:

The bed was down in a twinkling, the feather mattress and bolster heaped upon the floor, while Bud dragged out the head and foot pieces. Lucy sank down upon the mattress and fought the lump in her throat. When her brother returned for the rails and slats, Lucy was crumpled in a little dark ball in the center of the deep mound of feathers. (*Jonah* 91)

In *Jonah*, Lucy passionately loves and marries John Buddy, but she is scarcely happy with him. She endures stifling oppression in her marriage. She gropes for words to express her innermost doubts, fears and dissatisfaction. Her conversation with her fellow women offers her an emotional gratification which she never gets from her husband. In her desperate struggle to express



her unexpressed emotions, she pours out her heart to Pheemy, the granny of John Buddy thus: “Lawd, An’ Pheemy, Ah got somethin’ in mah heart ain’t got no name. Ah layin’ here right now tryin’ tuh find some words for feelin’s. Look lak mah right heart ain’t beatin’ no mo’”(Jonah 92).

Much later, when Lucy is sick and bed-ridden, her neighbour Mrs. Mattie Clarke calls at her. To her too, Lucy eases her pain thus: “Don’t worry ’bout me, Sister Clarke. Ah done been in sorrow’s kitchen and Ah done licked out all de pots. Ah done died in grief and been buried in de bitter waters, and Ah done rose agin from de dead lak Lazarus. Nothin’ kin touch mah soul no mo’”(Jonah 131). By confiding her personal worries to Pheemy and Mattie, Lucy is relieved of her emotional burden.

Hurston’s *Jonah* not only highlights the horrors of female oppression but also present the oppressed woman’s ceaseless resistance to oppression. Black women resist male domination using their verbal power. In *Jonah*, John Buddy speaks about the power of the woman’s verbal thus: “Dat piece uh red flannel she got hung ’tween her jaws is equal to all tuh all the fistes God ever made and man ever seen. Jes’ take and ruin a man wid dey tongue, and den dey kin hold it still and bruise ’im up jes” ez bad”(Jonah 96).

Right from her adolescence, Lucy resists patriarchal oppression. When her mother beats her for her disobedience, she boldly tells her that she is no more a girl and adds that she cannot endure any more beatings. At 15, she exerts her rights as a woman and says to her mother, “Ah ain’t takin’ no whippin’ tuhnight. All mah

switches done growed tuh trees.” (*Jonah* 78). She adamantly marries John antagonizing her mother.

Lucy is “a verbal lioness” (*Meisenhelder* 58). She quickly stands up for the rights of herself and her children. She condemns John’s behaviour in the most direct manner and points out his irresponsibility in discharging his familial duty. The truth in her words does ignite his anger but she is least intimidated by his loud talk. She says, “Well, John, ...If you’d stay home and look after yo’ wife and chillun, Ah wouldn’t have nothin’ tuh talk uhbout”(Jonah 128). The more she exposes the infidelity of John, the more he tries to control her thus, “Shet[Shut] up! Ah’m sick an’ tired uh you’ yowin’ and jawin’....Ahm uh man grown. Don’t need no guardzeen[guardian] atall. So shet yo’ mouf [mouth] wid me”(Jonah 128). Pointblank, she silences him saying, “Big talk ain’t changin’ whut you doin’. You can’t clean yo’self wid yo’ tongue lak uh cat”(Jonah 128-129)). Unable to compete with Lucy verbally, John slaps her to show his power over her. But she draws on all her spiritual and verbal strength and grimly forewarns his future thus: “De hidden wedge will come tuh light some day, John. Mark mah words. Youse in de majority now, but God sho don’t love ugly” (*Jonah* 129).

In *Jonah*, Hurston highlights women’s innate strength to counter oppression. In the interaction between her men and women, she reveals the capriciousness of men and the mental equipoise and fortitude of women. Her men mask themselves in false masculine pride and try to rule their women.

Lucy devotes all her attention to strengthen John Buddy's position. She delightfully teaches him and encourages him to sing and speak in sentences. Her efforts prove fruitful and steadily he progresses in life solely because of her support. But he grows haughty and betrays her after attaining an eminent position. But Lucy never swerves from her fidelity to him. She treasures her children even in the worst adversity. He cannot confront the numerous problems that throng him from various corners. He is a weakling and a coward compared to Lucy. He scarcely cares for his family and fritters away his life in the company of other women. Yet Lucy bravely battles against adversities with grit and determination. Besides, she infuses positive values in her husband as well as her children.

Lucy struggles with John Buddy till her last breath. On one occasion, John gives intense pain to Lucy by stealing the neighbour's pig in order to settle a debt. As soon as Lucy learns of his arrest, she leaves her three day old baby and rushes to rescue him scarcely caring for her weak health. She pleads to Cy Perkins who sets the court,"...Ah got fo li'l' chillun 'round mah feet; if they send John off Ah don't know whut'll 'come uh us all"(Jonah 99). Apparently moved by her plight, he gives her time and suggests that she approach Judge Alf who has the sole power to rescue him. Without wasting a second, Lucy runs to meet the judge but collapses on the steps of his office. Judge Alf sends her home in his buggy and releases John Buddy. While this episode illustrates Lucy's familial responsibility, the episode in which John

Buddy runs away from his sick daughter shows the irresponsibility of John. Finding his baby daughter sick with typhoid, he laments: "Ah can't stand 'round and see mah baby girl die. Lucy! Lucy! God don't love me. Ah got tuh go 'way 'til it's all over. Ah jus' can't stay"(Jonah 117). Unable to bear the pain of his daughter's possible death, he leaves Lucy to worry over the sick child alone. At the dire need, he deserts his family and regales himself with his concubine Hattie Tyson. Because of Lucy's efforts, Isis recovers. Thus without the help of the Reverend Minister and Mayor John Pearson, Lucy admirably fends for her family with no financial resources. Although she dies early, her poise, equanimity, and spiritual strength are visible throughout the novel.

Through Amy and Lucy in *Jonah*, Hurston brings out the "quiet grace" and "unshouted courage"( *Cannon* 135, 144)) of women in the face of formidable oppression. They learn from their bitter oppression and pass on what they learn from their horrible experience to their women friends and neighbours. They transform their traumatic experience into a triumphant history. ■

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# Impressionistic Elements in M.A. Nare's Poem *Kolkata, the City of Joy: A Study*

Uttam B. Parekar

'Impressionism' which began in the genre of 'Painting' in late 19<sup>th</sup> century attracted the attention of the 20<sup>th</sup> century literary men of the western world. This theory, as time passed, paved way for the theories of 'Expressionism', 'Modernism' and 'Post-Modernism'. M.A. Nare's poem *Kolkata, the City of Joy* is an impressionistic poem in Indian Writing in English. The poet has recorded his personal experiences of Kolkata visit in the most impressionistic manner. He writes about composite culture of Kolkata while writing about the historical background of the city. This poem ends with a prayer to god and goddess to bless the countries with *Peace* and *Prosperity* in troubled times. He wishes the countries of the world to follow the principle of 'Universal Brotherhood'.

## Key-Words

'apposition phrase', 'Impressionism', 'sensations', 'visual representations', 'sensory inputs', 'Broken phrases', 'Words with archaic and etymological effects', 'Juxtaposition and Antithesis', 'unfamiliar rhetoric and rhythms', 'Tangible symbols'.

## Introduction:

### What is Impressionism?

Impressionism is a late 19th century art movement interested in capturing the

fleeting qualities of light, colour, and atmosphere as well as the emerging psychological principles concerning human consciousness. Impressionist artists are the precursors of 'Imagism', 'Modernism', 'Post-Modernism'. The movement is most widely associated with the paintings of Monet, Manet, Renoir, Cezanne, and Degas. We're interested in the study of 'Impressionism' because it offers a visual representation of the Modernist, a break from Locke's empirical theory of knowledge. Impressionism represents the growing belief that the perception of reality is mediated by personal emotions and memory.

## Hypothesis:

The objective of this research paper is to analyse and interpret M.A. Nare's poem *Kolkata, the City of Joy* from the perspective of principal elements of 'Impressionism'.

## Principal Elements of Impressionism:

- 1- Reality mediated by personal emotions and memory
- 2- Images as reflective sensory inputs
- 3- Author's emotional and subconscious "*clouds*" constitute perceptions
- 4- Dissociation with conventions and morality

- 5- Work of art as a world of sensations
- 6- Use of disinfected grammar, Broken phrases, Words with archaic and etymological effects, Syntax conducive Juxtaposition and Antithesis, Use of unfamiliar rhetoric and rhythms, Tangible symbols are used to present radiant reality

**Perception of reality is mediated by personal emotion and memory.**

Taken as a whole, Impressionism argues that we don't really see the natural or "real" world objectively because everything that we perceive is filtered through *our minds*, and our minds are filled with unique and personal memories and emotions; so each one's mind perceives the world differently. You might say that while Locke argued knowledge comes via "sensation and reflection," Modernists (and Post Modernists) argue that reflection shapes "sensation" (sensory input) as it enters, so that we never really even see the natural world as it truly exists.

In many ways all Modern arts focus on this complex and often *faulty* relationship between reality and perception. Modernists argue that our perception of reality is *filtered* through a complex process, rather than the brain holding a "one-to-one" reflection of the objective/real world.

Psychological Foundation of Impressionism:

The movement grows directly out of the profound influence of Freud's theory that we're constantly reminded that our emotional and subconscious "*clouds*" shape

our perceptions, and this is rooted in Rousseau's "I felt before I thought." Impressionism attempts to capture/represent psychological *perception* of experience; experience as perceived by the *mind*, not just the eye or an objective observer.

Philosophical Foundation of Impressionism:

1- Marx:

Marx argued that our minds are simply full of Ideology, not facts or Truth, and these "clouds" shape our perception as much as our emotions, making our understanding of morality and truth: "hazy and "grey" rather than "black and white". Impressionist author presents the reality through his or her personal emotions and memory.

2- Nietzsche

Nietzsche, similarly, argued that morality is culturally constructed. The Impressionists apply these concepts to their ability of perception and capture in art even the "truth" about what we physically see. The impressionistic presentation of reality transports the readers to the author's world of sensations; and this experience makes the work of art different.

**Significance of Symbols in Impressionism:**

Impressionism is closely associated with 'Romanticism' in the use of symbols as medium to withdraw the author from vulgar actuality of life. Use of symbols attributes to the work of art a new status with a capital A: an independent region of thought and feeling into which to escape, by which to reduce the pain of living. Steady contemplation of "the beautiful" created a "truer" world than the one accepted by

ordinary people as real. This creed of self-redemption through art is related to the movements known as Symbolism and Impressionism. It is noteworthy that the Impressionists were able to take up subjects which are the sights that most depress their fellow men; and by recomposing them in brilliant, shimmering colour they create a refreshing world of new sensations.

The Symbolists in literature had a more difficult task than the painters, because their medium: words must be shared with all those who speak the language for ordinary purposes. To disinfect grammar and vocabulary for poetry and “art prose”, author requires severe measures. All set phrases had to be broken up, unusual words to be revived or common ones must be used in archaic or etymological senses; syntax had to be bent to permit fresh juxtapositions from which new meanings might emerge; above all, the familiar rhetoric and rhythms had to be avoided, until the literary work, poetry or prose, created the desired “new world”. It is a world difficult to access but worth exploring, all its tangible parts being the symbols of a radiant reality beyond—in short, the antithesis.

#### **Dr. M.A. Nare as a noted Versatile Author:**

M.A. Nare is widely known for his prolific writings in English as a critic and a poet. He is a profound lover of knowledge and English Language; therefore in his career as a professor at different Govt. colleges in Maharashtra, his students revered him for his oratory and profound knowledge. A man cherishing love of beauty unknowingly takes to painting and drawing sketches; the same thing came true in Nare's

case and today he is known for his paintings and drawing sketches, too.

His poems published in prestigious literary journals, his eloquent literary speeches in seminars and conferences made him a close associate of the celebrated Indian English poet ‘Nissim Ezekiel’. On many occasions Ezekiel wrote letters to him. Nare's *A Collection of Critical Essays*, poetic anthologies entitled *From Snow to the Sea* and *The Dome in the Air* brought him into limelight as a renowned critic and poet.

Taking note of his poems, ‘World University’ from the USA conferred upon him the award of ‘Cultural D. Litt.’ in 1987. Nare received ‘Fellowship’ from ‘United Writers Association, Madras’ in 1988. ‘International Poet's Academy’, Chennai, conferred upon him ‘Life Time Achievement Award- 2010’. The publishers of ‘Rock Pebbles’, a peer-reviewed Journal of Language, Literature & Culture, felicitated him in a program held in Bhubaneswar and conferred upon him the ‘National Literary Award- 2015’ for his prolific writings.

Many critics have analysed and interpreted his poems and published them in international journals. Nare's wide reading and varied life experiences have turned his mind into a treasure-house of memories of historical and contemporary personages, events and incidents. Like a skilled craftsman he selects archetypal images and literary archetypes; shapes them to communicate his thoughts and feelings through aesthetic experiences.

An individualist of serious disposition and sensible reasoning, Nare has his own opinions on the personages and

events cherished in his memory. The use of archetypal images and literary archetypes has provided historical and cultural dimensions to his poems; owing to these poetic features his poems rise above his personal experiences and opinions.

Nare is fond not only of reading both old and contemporary critical theories but also of investing their tenets in his poems.

### **Nare's Poem *Kolkata, the City of Joy* taken for Analysis and Interpretation:**

#### **1-Kolkata, the City of Joy, 2004:**

##### **Introduction:**

In this poem the poet has delineated a pen-picture of the city of Kolkata in which his poetic vision perceives the primordial culture of the city cohabiting with the secular spirit inculcated in Indian psyche during the British Rule. The images of living and non-living objects, the references of the poor and the rich, the deities such as Ma Durga and Shri Ganesh weave the texture of the poem into a unified whole. At the end of the poem the poet prays to these deities to bless the countries of the world in troubled times. Kolkata has become an iconic city of Tolerance and Peace where the people of diverse ways of life, and the houseflies swarming in the market of veg and non-veg foodstuffs go on buzzing the song of joy: the cosmopolitan culture of Kolkata.

##### **Gist of the Poem:**

This is a beautiful impressionistic poem in which the poet celebrates the secular spirit in the contemporary Kolkata through paradoxical situations spanning from the British regime to Democratic India.

It is enigmatic to the Europeans as to how the Indians so diverse in every walk of life live in peace and amity. To their surprise Kolkata, a representative city of modern India, sings the song of joy, freedom, peace, spirit of secularism and security.

### **Impressionistic Elements in the Poem:**

A large number of impressionistic elements have garnished the poem enriching its poetic significance. A few of them have been taken hereunder for critical assessment:

#### **1- Reality mediated by personal emotions and memory:**

Impressionist poet presents reality from his personal experiences and his attitude as exhibited through his writing provides peep for critics to look into his personality. Following lines of the poem stem from the poet's emotions and memory:

“The city of the tall fat bamboos  
And tall lean baboos with fluttering  
Dhotees, walking through the streets  
Lined with red, red banners and red  
Brick buildings: the decayed roots of  
*The British Raj*, now enjoying ...”

‘tall fat bamboos’ and ‘tall lean baboos’ are the images symbolising the ‘employers’ and ‘employees’, respectively; as a consequence of exploitation of the poor and the ruled there grew the spirit of communism in the city symbolised by ‘red, red banners’.

The poet symbolically communicates that Kolkata is the city of exploitation. Natives of Kolkata are orthodox and conservative in the matter of cultural values and therefore, they wear ‘Dhotees’ and worship ‘Ma Durga’ and ‘Shri Ganesh’. The poet points out that the



composite culture of Kolkata is on the whole secular and liberal.

## **2- Images as reflective sensory inputs:**

The images invested in the poem are reflective sensory inputs for they enable the readers to imagine the visual effects of the description. Ma Durga, also known as Ma Kali, is a deity worshipped with sacrifices in Kolkata. It is believed that Ma Durga being black loves to have sacrificial blood of black goats only. The scenes of slaughtering of the goats in the name of sacrifice and the black goats strung in a line near the altar for sacrifices in the temple premises of Ma Durga terribly upset the poet. Following lines definitely substantiate this point:

“The city of *The Black Mother Goddess*  
With blood red tongue hanging out and  
A garland of human skulls around her neck,  
A severed head held with its long black locks.

The city of the black goats waiting for  
Their turn like the heifer in *The Grecian Urn*.”

Kolkata is famous for the temple of Ma Durga where black goats are slaughtered in the name of sacrifice. Looking upon black goats strung in line for sacrifices in the temple premises reminded the poet of the literary archetype of a sacrificial ‘heifer’ in Keats poem *The Grecian Urn*. The only difference between the two situations is that ‘heifer’ is ceremonially being taken for sacrifice is a Greek ritual, and the black goats being slaughtered in the name of sacrifice and many other strung in a line for sacrifices near the altar demonstrate cruelty unto animals. The sacrificial images of the black goats being slaughtered and the others

strung in a line for sacrifices at the altar evoke pathos. These images functioned as sensory inputs that evoked pathos in the poet.

## **3- Author s emotional and subconscious ”clouds” constitute perceptions:**

The poet is overwhelmed to observe the poor and the rich living side by side in ‘thatched huts’ and ‘Havelies’ without any grumble and hostility and that ‘Bengali-sweet’ vendors and ‘fish-markets’ run their business in Kolkata market like good neighbours. Using the technique of distancing he adds that the houseflies in the market,

“Mix and mingle, buzzing together *The Song of Joy*,

Welcoming the customers, irrespective of their caste,

Creed, religion or sex: the most secular citizens of

The three worlds - Air, Water and Land.

For them, *Sundarban*– honey, or mangoes, fish

Fowl, beef or mutton..is all Food Divine.”

## **4- Dissociated with conventions and morality:**

Kolkata has been described as a modern Indian city with vestiges of ancient culture. Though the inhabitants of Kolkata progressed on the line of modern parameters, yet they haven’t parted with their age old traditions. The poet observes in Kolkata streets ‘baboo wearing Dhotees’, ‘ladies wearing Bengali cotton sarees’, putting ‘red, red *bindies*’ on their foreheads, and ‘Bunches of keys, dangling from their waists’. In attitude and social

behaviour people follow conventional morality but they have incorporated in their life modernity in terms of industry and business. Poet summarises:

“The city where Religion and Superstition Mix and mingle like hooting of sirens and Clouds of smoke rising from the chimneys.”

### **5- Work of art as a world of sensations:**

This poem presents the pen picture of the city of Kolkata in a mosaic form of many scenes with sensational effects. In modern Kolkata the poet comes across many Paradoxical scenes and situations. Paradox is an appropriate figure to communicate the sense of sensation and wonder experienced by the poet. We know that Joseph Conrad also used the same figure abundantly in his novella *Heart of Darkness*. Following lines taken from the poem for illustration will bring home the point:

“The city blessed with ponds, poodles, and lakes  
Breeding, fish, frogs and crabs - the favourite  
Haunts of water-birds like herons, cranes and  
Kingfishers, waiting for their prey, like the holy  
*Sadhus* on the *holy ghats*:”

*Sadhus* have been compared to carnivorous birds. In above lines paradox lies in the contrasting situations. Such scenes and situations arouse sensation in the minds of readers who begin to make out meaning of life.

Glory of the city lies in its past position as capital city and the city that has produced *four Nobel Laureates from Poetry, Physics, Economics and Social Work*, and the contemporary Kolkata, to the poet,

stands perfect contrast as it is ‘The city where Religion and Superstition mix and mingle like hooting of sirens and Clouds of smoke rising from chimneys’.

### **6- Broken phrases:**

Modernity has exposed life to erosion and sufferings, therefore, the contemporary life can be effectively presented through ‘broken images’. The poet has employed the syntactical device of ‘Broken Phrases’: the phrases appearing not in complete sentence. Following broken phrases may be taken for consideration:

“The dusty buses wearing, garlands of old shoes, brooms  
Chappals to ward off Evil, ...  
The beggars in rags or singers with bowls”

### **7- Words with archaic and etymological effects:**

Archaic words form poetic jargon, and their skilful use to communicate contemporaneity marks extension of the literary tradition. Archaic words with etymological effects are used in modern poems as reminder of their exalted significance in the past which, by way of contrast, effectively presents disillusionment of the contemporary people.

This poem is replete with such words; a few illustrative words may be taken hereunder for critical examination: ‘the decayed roots’ of the *British Raj*, ‘heifer in *The Grecian Urn*’, ‘Mix and mingle, buzzing together *The Song of Joy*’, ‘The favourite haunts of water-birds, like herons, cranes and Kingfishers’. The contemporaneity of the city life is suggested through the terms ‘hooting sirens’, ‘Clouds of smoke rising from the chimneys’.

## 8- Juxtaposition and Antithesis:

There are many examples of 'Juxtaposition' and 'Antithesis' in this poem which serve the purpose of 'Paradox'. The images of 'Juxtaposition' employed in this poem are:

“The city of the tall fat bamboos  
And tall lean baboos with fluttering  
Dhotees.”

Ironically bamboos are fatter than baboos so they make no movement, on the contrary the baboos walk in streets fluttering their Dhotees. This poem is replete with Antithetical situations which in their turn emphatically communicate sense of disillusionment in the contemporary life e.g. 'One-time capital of India' and 'The beggars in rags or singers with bowls'.

## 9-Use of unfamiliar rhetoric and rhythms:

Like an impressionist artist, Nare is also inclined to use unfamiliar rhetoric and rhythms in his poem. The very title of the poem in the syntactical form of 'Noun as an Apposition Phrase' is so catchy that every reader is tantalised to know more of the city of Kolkata. Like a recurring rhyme of a ballad, in this poem, there occurs the rhetorical 'Apposition Phrase' for Kolkata 'The city of', 'The city where', 'The city blessed with', 'The city proud of'. Recurring flash of such rhetorical phrase in the poem for 11 times is very catchy and appealing. It attributes animate status to the inanimate city. The ballad like texture of this poem presents the poet's personal observation of the city of Kolkata most objectively with all visual effects.

## 10- Tangible symbols used to present radiant reality:

Use of tangible images to impart his personal experience of the city presents radiant reality of Kolkata. This poem appears like a collage of visuals presenting the city of Kolkata as an entity that has been prominently manifesting its various attributes. The poet's perception of the city is presented through tangible symbols that make the poem vivid and picturesque and such images are employed in the following lines:

“The city of *The Black Mother Goddess*  
With blood red tongue hanging out and  
A garland of human skulls around her neck,  
A severed head held with its long black  
locks.”

## Rhetorical Prayer:

This poem develops through the recurring rhyme of apposition phrase 'The city of' and reveals various facets of the historical city of Kolkata. Touching upon the facet of 'The Secular Spirit' underlying in the contemporary Kolkata, the poet reveals that it is the sheet anchor of India's composite culture. It has inculcated in Indians the spirit of tolerance and amicus living. At the end, the poet makes a prayer to Ma Durga and Shri Ganesha to bless all the countries of the world with 'Peace' and 'Prosperity'.

“Now, I invoke MA DURGA and SHRI  
GANESHA to bless  
All the Countries in the World in *these*  
*troubled times:*  
*Let Peace and Prosperity spread all over*  
*the World.*”

## Conclusion:

M.A. Nare's sensibility as expressed through this poem gradually grows from the local to the global perspectives of life. This poem reveals poet's strong belief in the cultural values of 'Tolerance' and 'Amicus Living' that make human life meaningful and progressive, resulting into *The Song of Joy*. The poet means to say that the values of 'Tolerance' and 'Amicus Living' only can usher *Peace* and *Prosperity* in all the countries of the world in troubled times. The highway to reach these values is 'The Spirit of Secularism'. ■

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# English Language Teaching in India : The Broader Perspective

**Namita Laxmi Jagaddeb**

This paper, which is qualitative in methodology, seeks to highlight the prevailing predicament of English language teaching in India; analyse the attendant problems and find out effective measures for its upgradation in the broader perspective of globalisation.

English, a link language in India's multi-lingual and multi-cultural social structure since independence has, of late, come to be viewed as "the language of opportunity, empowerment" in the context of the globalising world. This has justifiably generated mass enthusiasm for acquiring of competence in the language thereby necessitating appropriate reforms in the English language curriculum, which is currently beset with chronic problems such as dearth of skilled teachers; preponderance of large classes with heterogeneous groups of students; inadequate teaching hours; want of sophisticated teaching aids, suitable text materials. The core of such reforms should invariably constitute culture-rich reading materials and suitable innovative pedagogy for effective learning as the learners are required to actively participate in the dynamic life of the nation and also to go beyond to benefit from the opportunities of globalisation.

Thus, the decision makers need to view the present plight of English language teaching in the broader perspective and facilitate things accordingly.

**Keywords:** English language teaching, globalisation, opportunities.

## **Introduction:**

The role of English in the multi-lingual and multi-cultural context of Indian society has been very significant and valuable in various ways. It is an efficient link language for inter-state as well as intrastate communication as people from different states and regions speak different languages. Considering the usefulness of the language, it has been accorded the status of an official language and is, thus, profusely used in crucial spheres of public activities such as in administration, legislative and the judiciary. It is now the most preferred language in the socio-political and cultural discourses. UGC has designated it as the library language. It is the language of trade, commerce, science, technology; the language for international communication. Hence, it would be no exaggeration to say that English is now inescapable for the modern ways of life of Indian people. David Graddol has considered it "the key ingredient in a new, IT-enabled, economy

which is everywhere transforming Indian society”. For him “English is now seen as a new ‘basic skill’ which all children require if they are to fully participate in 21st century civil society” (Graddol, 2010 P. 9-10). With the rapid expansion of ITC as an integral part of globalisation, the utility value of the language has grown phenomenally. In popular perception, English is now being viewed as “the language of opportunity and empowerment” in a fast globalizing world. (Pattnaik, 2017 P.308). The young India looks upon it as a passport to prosperity, a ladder for upliftment. This elevated standing of English language and the resultant euphoric attitude towards it has logically triggered a surge of mass enthusiasm for acquiring linguistic proficiency with a view to reaping the benefits the global world has to offer. At present, it is a massive challenge for the Indian educational mechanism which is supposed to respond with matching action. But, a majority of schools and colleges imparting English teaching are, regrettably, not 21st century ready. They are saddled with problems of critical nature which incapacitate them from delivering effective learning to students aspiring for proficiency in English language.

### **Purpose**

This paper seeks to spot light the current predicament of English language teaching and learning in India, in general, analyse the attendant problems and propose enabling measures for necessary capacity improvement and upgradation in order to help the learners acquire autonomy and competence in learning the language as required for their prospect at the national as well as in the global arena.

### **Methodology**

This paper is research based and qualitative in methodology, sourcing the materials from reference books, journals and the internet. The cited materials have been examined in terms of their usefulness and relevance to the issues in question and have formed part of the findings.

### **Discussion and Findings**

The issue to be discussed is what constitutes the essentials of an efficient English language teaching system particularly in the present context for delivering effective learning. Such issue logically calls for a detailed discussion and assessment of the status and working of the various aspects of English language teaching (ELT in short) which includes teachers, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, infrastructure and examine their strength and weaknesses required for delivering effective learning. As the aforesaid components are supposed to work in an integrated environment they need to be dealt accordingly.

English is being taught mostly as a second language in the schools and colleges of India from primary to higher secondary levels. Traditionally, teachings of English and other subjects were teacher-oriented. Teacher did all the talk in the classroom and the learners remained passive throughout the teaching hours. This resulted in no effective learning as the learner hardly got any scope for motivation and participation in the process.

However, as part of modernization of education system pursuant to progressive thoughts concerning the objectives of



teaching, pedagogy; a paradigmatic shift from the usual teacher-oriented instruction to learner-centric method has been accepted in principle for the purpose of classroom of teaching. Accordingly, most of the states of India have adopted functional communicative approach to language teaching. As per this concept, the learner is considered the centre of activity. The teacher has to ensure maximum participation of the students at all stages of learning. Teacher's role will be that of a guide, facilitator and inspirer. The teacher should ensure that the students learn the language independently pursuing the techniques of self-study.

This interactive method is considered eminently suitably for acquiring the skills of English. If of a majority of Indian students after going through long years of schooling and college education in English fail to learn the language properly and unable to write and speak acceptable English, it is primarily due to their lack of participation in the traditional way of teaching. Hence, in the fitness of things, the new method should reverse the situation, provided all the components of ELT work as required. However, the ground reality is regrettably far from satisfactory. The gap between the objectives of teaching and practice is still wide. Some references are cited below on this count as found relevant for discussion.

Dr. Dibyajyoti Likharu in his research article has found that English language teaching gets hindered due to factors such as dearth of competent teachers, large classes with students having varying capacities of assimilation, inadequate teaching hours, sub-standard textbooks,

scant use of modern teaching aid (Likharu, 2017). Such deficiencies are not only specific to Assam, his home state but also a general malaise that affects ELT in India, at all levels of instruction.

Dr. Jaydeep Sarangi has sharply focused on the factors hindering effective teaching and learning English in India as a second language. To him, the problems concerning large, heterogeneous classes and unskilled, inexperienced teachers handling them are to be addressed seriously: 'Peer teaching', 'role play', 'group activities' are rare in Indian classrooms. In India, lecturers speak. The class listens passively. The learners are not encouraged to ask questions. Many lecturers are inefficient due to problem of delivery, pace and production. The teachers must involve their students to work in pairs, groups and teams and prepare term papers, projects, etc. (Sarangi)

Classroom teaching, the core of learning English language in schools and colleges poses a real challenge for effective learning. Barring some selected institutions in urban locations, in most of them found in rural areas classrooms are very large and cumbersome. Classes comprise heterogeneous groups of students hailing from various socio-economic-ethnic backgrounds. They pose problems of different dimension which an English teacher finds very difficult to address. Children belonging to rural setting are hesitant to speak English. For tribal students English is their third language. Children of economically poor and uneducated families do not get any academic help from parents to learn English. These factors create herculean problems for teacher to teach in

an interactive manner ensuring participation of students.

In this context, for suitable management of the problems of large heterogeneous classes, Mr. Penny Ur in “A course in Language Teaching” has prescribed some teaching solutions such as: (a) Vary topics, methods, texts, (b) Make activities interesting, (c) Encourage collaboration (d) Individualize, (e) Personalize, (f) Use compulsory plus optional instructions

(g) Use open-ended cues

The aforementioned strategy for teaching is clearly intended for turning a large heterogeneous class into an advantageous learning experience. However, what is needed to put these techniques into practice is the efficiency and skill of the teachers, which the schools and colleges are found wanting. English language teachers require specialized training which should be imparted through continual and comprehensive ELT programme for different levels of learning. Unlike subjects such as History and Political Science; English is to be taught for acquisition of proficiency in communication through the four well-known basic skills of language viz. listening, speaking, reading and writing. Such a task is, by no means, easy. Teaching English as a second language is a complex activity, which necessitates teacher’s language specific skills and meticulous planning suitable for his students having varying degrees of abilities and backgrounds. Since, the teachers are brought up in the traditional mode of teaching throughout his career, need a through training in communication skills of the

language. C. Paul Verghese analyzing the objectives of teaching English in his “Teaching English as a Second Language” has enlisted five functions which communication ought to achieve. First is revealing oneself, then the direct utterance with the listener, the third phatic communion, the fourth is referential utterance and the last the creative use of language as in poets, singers etc. He stresses that India should lay greater emphasis on the communication needs of the learner. The aim of teaching should enable them to use the language instrumentally and integratively (Verghese, 2016 P.16).

Another important factor which is necessary for effective teaching of English in the participatory mode is adequate teaching hours. The time slots usually allotted to English is five or six hours in a week as Mr. Likhari has pointed out, which can’t do justice to any open ended skilled teaching. The authorities should provide longer time for language activities. As the students, particularly of rural areas hardly find any scope for using English language outside classroom, adequate teaching hours would enable them to benefit from larger exposure to language use. Hence, the authorities have to make necessary adjustment in the time table accordingly for English classes.

Since teaching second language is a highly skilled job, sophisticated audio-visual teaching aids computers etc should be used to supplement the learning process. This will make the classroom teaching more lively, interesting and motivating for the learners. But, such amenities are conspicuous by their absence in most of the

schools and colleges of India. Dr. J. Sarangi highlighting this deficiency has satirically commented that learners in the schools of many remote villages of India still learn without a roof and the age old fashion of backboard and the chalk is still enduring, endearing and versatile in teaching of English (Sarangi). Thus, in this context of technological advancement, it is incumbent upon the authority to ensure that all necessary sophisticated teaching aids and infrastructural amenities are provided for effective teaching of English.

It is a fact that as part of the functional communication approach to teaching English reforms have been introduced in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment and accordingly syllabus has been structured, teaching methods made interactive, participatory and assessment formative. However, the big gulf between the desired goal and the present practice persists owing to reasons set out in the preceding paragraphs. Here, it is worthwhile to mention the relevance of suitable text materials as the key instrument for effective implementation of the curricular objective innovative pedagogy and formative assessment. In this connection, Dr. Likharu has pointed out that modern structural syllabi which have been introduced in schools and colleges help in learning the fundamentals of the language; but deprive them from exposure to free and natural use of language. (Likharu, 2017). Indeed, the course materials designed according to structural syllabus suffer from content-deficiency. B.N. Pattnaik has observed that specially prepared language material that ignore content and project the language

aspects such as rules of grammar and pronunciation are so boring that they kill the learner's interest in the target language. The content should be interesting, enriching, educative and eminently readable. Interesting pieces have motivational value for the learner towards further learning on his own. Thus, culturally rooted contemporary Indian literature in English satisfying the above criteria should be selectively used as text materials (Pattnaik 2017).

To corroborate Pattnaik's point of view, two references are cited here. Clair Kramersch has observed, "Culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill" (Kramersch, 2010 P. 1). M. Vijayalakshmi and Dr. Manchi Sarat Babu have remarked that during post-colonial period most countries have undertaken contextualisation of textbooks in indigenous culture (Vijayalakshmi, 2014 P. 3).

Such culture-rich, interesting text materials in addition to rendering English learning enjoyable will inculcate the cherished values of India which a learner of English essentially requires for his meaningful participation in the life of the nation as well as in the international domain as part of his prospect in life.

## **Conclusion**

The National Policy on Education, 2016 has set forth four key objectives of education i.e. building values, awareness, knowledge and skills and envisaged that education will amalgamate globalisation with localisation, enabling the children and youth of India to become world citizen, with their roots deeply embedded in Indian

culture and traditions. (2016 P. 1-4). To quote David Graddol, “The Story of English in India is a still-unfolding one about India’s journey from British Colony, through the status of being a ‘developed country’, to its eventual destiny as one of the world’s superpowers.” (Graddol, 2010 P.10). Effective teaching of English in the manner suggested in this paper, if pursued with earnestness will definitely contribute to furthering of such unfolding and fulfill the national objectives of education and its global vision. ■

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# Man-Woman Relationship: A Study of Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni: The Story of Draupadi*

Sarita Naik

## ABSTRACT

Pratibha Ray is one of the most powerful contemporary Indian novelists in English. She is concerned with the inner world of her characters. She tries to look for the deep desires, emotions and feelings felt by her characters and show them as the influencing factor behind their action. Her portrayal of man woman relationship is influenced and conditioned by complex social milieu. She basically portrays the disparity in temperament as affecting the man woman relationship. This paper puts forward the portrayal of women in man woman relationship. Mostly women are culturally as well as emotionally dependent on man and any disruption in relationship proves to be a loss of self. The paper highlights the aspects that meticulously reflect the deplorable *state* of women since the time immemorial and relate with the contemporary scenario.

This Proposed research work chiefly seeks to attempt minutely the major novel of Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni* with special focus on exploration of man-woman relationship. Consequently, a comprehensive study will illustrate that the major novels are analysed in the light of man-woman relationship that bears a critical focus of characters as abstractions of ideals

or ideas. The human approach instructs the closer examination of all characters at micro level that consequently put us at the threshold of other themes concerning society, culture, identity, politics and other.

Pratibha Ray is a modern novelist who distinguishes the disarticulation and marginalization of women and attempts to put these experiences in her writings and raising her voice against exploitation of women in the hand of men, she doesn't spare even the close relatives from her attack. She considers that for the negative impression in the relationship of woman the man is the only responsible fellow. She voices against the dominating relationship and strongly despises the marginalization of women. It is hypothesized that the theme of man-woman relationship has enormous influence upon the work of Pratibha Ray's novel *Yajnaseni: The Story of Draupadi*. She has a number of rewards to her credit, the award by Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India for a short novel on neo-literates, Orissa Sahitya Academy Award for her novel "Shilapadma", 1985, Jhankara Award for the best short story writing from Prajatantra Prachar Samitee, 1989, Sarla Award for her novel *Yajnaseni*, 1989 which also brought her Moortidevi Award by Bharatiya Jnanpith, New Delhi in 1991.

*Yajnaseni* is the novel which has given her name and fame in the world of psychological novels. It is her Bhartiya Jananapith's prestigious ninth Moortidevi award winning novel. "Love and let live" is her motto. Anwesh Ray says quoting the words of the author, in his critical review on the book, "I am a humanist" she says, "men and women have been created differently for the healthy functioning of the society. The specialty in a woman is that she has been endowed with her great introspective intellectuality. As a human being however woman is equal to man". The same approach is generated in this novel also.

Besides the need and justification of the theme of man-woman relationship in Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni: The Story of Draupadi* the present work of research simultaneously bears the following hypothesis:

1. Human relationship
2. The way the characters are portrayed in this novel
3. The effect of human soul and psyche on the society.

Relationship between man and woman is an outcome of the difference between the sexes. The family relations like husband and wife, son and mother, daughter and father, sister and brother are recognized by social and cultural codes of conduct between genders to form family institution. While looking at these relations, we have to consider various aspects and approaches like physical, economical, cultural, social, religious and psychological too. There are some elements which govern these relations

such as the physical factor, the emotional factor, in the relation of mother and son and father and daughter.

Emotions are always there in relations between a man and a woman. A mother is fully attached with her son through the bond of emotion and like this the son does anything for his mother. Nearly all the family relations are governed by emotions. In Indian perspective a wife never looks her husband as an equal partner but culture teaches her to look at him like a God, and this attitude in her husband makes her emotionally attached with her husband.

Economic factor is also there in man-woman relations. A husband in India generally proves to be the economic base for his wife. He owns the source of income and he fulfils every demand of his wife. Wife stays dependent and accepts the mastery of her husband in their relationship. Like this in all relationships, husband-wife, father-daughter, mother-son, sister-brother, the economic factor plays a vital role in governing these relations.

Like emotional and financial factor, culture plays a major role in stimulating relationships between man and woman. Culture has been leading us how a woman and a man should be the social and familiar ground as far as relations to each other are concern. Culture and emotions govern the relations between man and woman whereas sex plays the main role in formation of relations. Husband-wife, boy's girlfriends and Girl's boyfriends, these relations are mainly governed by their physical relations.

The society is made of men and women. Every work of art is related with



these relations. Literature as a work of art focuses on these relations. It is a kind of trial to put forward the inner side of these relations between them. Literature represents society, which constitutes both men and women, and while doing so it focuses on various angles and shades of these relations.

The significance of the present research work can be cited in the view of following points

- i. Exploration of man-woman relationship
- ii. Her fight through the characters of Draupadi against various injustices in the society.
- iii. Focus on burning issues in the relationship

Draupadi is a well-groomed princess in *Yajnaseni*, born out of fire, who is intelligent and educated, beautiful and wise; she is forever bound by law - that is the "law of submission". As a first-person narrative, the story speaks of her marriage against her wishes to the five pandavas. She continues to respect and revere each one of them. She loves Krishna and surrenders herself to his wishes and agrees to marry Arjun. Ray's Draupadi tells her story and brings the trials and tribulations suffered by her. It is the story of a woman in love, a woman who sacrifices herself for the integrity of her family and people but she gets little in return. Her life is offered in the form of a prayer to Krishna, her Sakha, her soulmate. In a letter addressed to Krishna she voices her woes.

Ray subverts the traditional narrating and symbols that perpetuate male

hegemony. Draupadi writes her agonies that she did suffer for preserving dharma. She thought that on the strength of her adherence to dharma and fidelity as a wife she would be able to accompany her husbands to heaven. Yet, She slipped and fell on the golden dust of Himalayan foothills but nobody turned back to look at her, not even dharमारaj Yudhishtira, the lord of righteousness.

Image of woman in Indian culture emerges mainly from the ancient epics. These epics exert a powerful impact on our modes of thoughts and feelings. A woman is depicted in a variety of ways in the *Mahabharata*. However it can't be said that the *Mahabharata* is the exact representation of that period or that it represents all the women of that period. Whereas it describes womanhood in all its complexity. They are the objects of a male dominated perception. These are the ways man has perceived woman. Ray looks at Droupadi from a woman's point of view. This image unravels different and new facet of Droupadi's life.

In *Yajnaseni*, Draupadi enjoys a special relationship with Krishna. That is seen not only in such dramatic confrontation but also in unexpectedly delicate, understanding interactions in the *Mahabharata*. In Ray's retelling of Droupadi's story, Krishna advises her to marry Arjun, his dear friend. Droupadi deliberately tries to forget that her father has first offered her to Krishna. She surrenders her wishes in front of Krishna, who exists as the image of patriarchal power. Ved Vyas illustrates Droupadi as the embodiment of submission to support the patriarchy at the time. In the hand of literary Patriarchy,

literature has become an effective tool to perpetuate male hegemony. They have created euphemistic myths to propagate male hegemony which shouts all the possibilities of self-assertion and growth for women.

Draupadi realizes that marriage offers no happiness to her. In a patriarch ally defined pattern of behaviour, to be feminine means to be weak. Independence is a male attribute here. Here, happiness is banned for women. Any sign of self assertion in woman is disgracing. It is offensive that woman has no say in the choice of her husband. Unwillingly, she lets herself to live with the four brothers of Arjun. She reminds us of the cunning male oppressors who emotionally manipulates women. In a patronizing manner Krishna pins her down to his motive of preserving dharma leaving no way to escape. Literally, Krishna the symbol of male hegemony imprisons her emotionally. She has no choice but to obey male authority. Draupadi is driven into marriage. In patriarchal belief, women instigate misfortune and disaster. Man always tries to subjugate the potential power derived from her reproductive capacities with his virile sexuality. Ray revisions the myth through Draupadi's narrative. She takes off the attention from Draupadi's feminine qualities to her realities. Draupadi is not just a princess with colorful image. She is the symbol of an ordinary lady of emotion, struggling to survive in such a pathetic condition. Anger, self-esteem, mortification all are choked in her.

Ray portrays her as a victim of patriarchal society. The famous disrobing scene is important to bring out this point. Draupadi is forcibly brought into the court,

a space dominated by men. Dushashana drags her and pulls her hair and brings her in front of all the members of the court. Status of a prostitute and a slave is accorded to her and in the discourse of man she has no right to ask or question this status. Here Draupadi's outrage is clearly pictured in Ray's version. She thinks about her five husbands who stacked her and having handed her over to others. Polyandry makes her an easy target in public. She refuses to plead for mercy. This is an affront to male sexuality and power. Draupadi demands justice and gets silence in return. What becomes apparent in the entire episode speaks that woman merely an object and a possession and the state too can do little to protect her from the shame and loss. Law and the so-called Dharma, legal system, fail to protect her. The mythological Draupadi had Krishna as her saviour. Ray's Draupadi too is saved by Krishna from complete humiliation.

As a significant attempt to write herself, Ray's Draupadi provides a rich discourse on women's speech. Women are supposed to be weaklings to be subordinated, protected and always controlled. Men emotionally blackmail them through love and marriage and force them into passivity. Draupadi controls herself before the injustice done by her favourite husband Arjun. She has been waiting for Arjun who went to the forest and making preparations for his return. Ray draws a pathetic picture of Draupadi :

“Waiting, especially waiting for the beloved – how delightful it is! I was decorating Phalguni's room I was decorating his garden, His library, sitting room... I decked myself like

a Virgin bride. Let not Phalguni feel that twelve Years had gone by and that I had grown older by twelve years.” (197)

Draupadi is a representative woman in a patriarchal society who is found into passivity. She cannot protest against her husband's deeds without considering her emotions. Arjun brings a new bride Subhadra, Krishna's sister. She has been forced to give up the newly built mansion for the new bride. Arjun does not ask Draupadi's permission for his marriage. She becomes a symbol of “every woman”, a helpless victim in the patriarchal world of oppression. Ray shifts her heroine from the object position to the subject position from where she speaks to the readers.

In the patriarchal social system a woman who wishes and tries to shape her personality as a human being is scorned at. An aggressive woman is always perceived as a threat to man's power and superiority. A woman who denies her femininity has to accept the disapproval of man and society. Either she has to be like other women, or else she has no place in the society. The patriarchal social system has laid down the sanctioned ways of expressing womanhood. A woman should live as daughter, wife, and mother or as a prostitute. Draupadi questions the injustice which was done by Pandavas with full of anguish and anger:

“Was woman merely man's movable or immovable property, male and female slaves, horses and elephants? Being a woman did I not have Right even over myself, my own soul? If they had rights over this body of mine, did it mean they

could do as they wished with me?” (235).

Man deprives woman of her human rights and then pretends to give her everything by making her the queen of his heart. He assures her that she will get everything desirable in life by surrendering herself to the husband. At the same time, he cannot fulfil the womanhood. The crux of womanhood lies in the blind acceptance of the inequality imposed on the woman. This shows that there is a hierarchical ordering of man and woman. A woman has to complement and help man. But Draupadi desires an independent life of her own. She even dares to admire Karna who retains Dharma even during the Kurukshetra war where her husbands and even Krishna played treacherous games in the name of Dharma.

Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni: The Story of Draupadi* is a feminist endeavour to revalue women's experiences in patriarchy. She examines power relation in our culture. She speaks for all women who have lost their energy, creativity and power in male centred culture. Yajnaseni discusses the history of women's oppression in a male dominated culture. She exposes the patriarchal myths and shows how women's life designed for them. In Yajnaseni, Ray portrays patriarchy's mode of oppressing women. She portrays the emotional turmoil. She sketches divine Draupadi's helplessness, agony, struggle and even surrender.

*Yajnaseni* is the story of Mahabharat narrated from the perspective of Draupadi, one of the most important but overlooked characters of Indian mythology. Draupadi fights against injustice in every

possible way while existing in a male dominated society. She is the embodiment of women's pride, sharp intellect and strong will. Draupadi speaks at the end of Dvaparayuga. In the form of a letter she is placing everything in front of her lord, Krishna. The Novel itself is in the form of an autobiography. Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni* is an unwritten history which explores the man-woman relationship of the world.

*Yajnaseni: The Story of Draupadi* is a re-writing of the events of the *Mahabharata*, related to the life of its central female figure Draupadi, accounted by herself at the time of her death, highlighting the somberness of her life as a woman, where at every step she is used as an object by men to suit their designs. She is an epic heroine whose predicaments and sufferings seem endless. Despite making all compromises in her polyandrous marriage, no one around her bothered to empathise with her. Born of sacrificial altar, true to her appellations, *Yajnaseni* throughout her life burns in the fire of men's lust and her actions, reactions cause burning in others. Ray draws on the element of irony relating to *Yajnaseni*'s position as well as predicament. *Yajnaseni* is a deeply wronged woman; all decisions about her are taken by others without ever taking her token approval. Everyone right from gods, her father, mother-in-law, husbands use her like a bait to achieve something for themselves, she has no freedom to think of her own preferences, and when she raises a voice of protest against such a treatment, she is labeled an avenger.

Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni* displays courage in challenging and questioning the male dominated practices that render women

helpless. She maintains silence and even in her silence she keeps thinking and questioning her predicament. "Tolerance is the ornament of women but to bear injustice with bowed head is not the dharma of women."

Through the character of Draupadi, Pratibha Ray presents the subservient image of woman in Indian society who is left to suffer and die at the mercy of the dominating male attitudes. Indian culture expects woman to be an epitome of sacrifices for the interests of male dominated society. Ray tries to give voice to the silenced woman of our society by questioning the prominent gender issues. In spite of its mythological background, the issue raised in this novel appears quite similar to the present-day gender issues that human society is facing in an era of globalisation. Looking at Draupadi from a woman's point of view Ray presents before the readers a complex image of an Indian woman both as victim and the one who challenges the tradition. ■

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# M.A. Nare's Poetry of Progressive Understanding : A Critical Evaluation

Ananda Sethi

A poet always tries to explore the resources around him to primarily serve two purposes; self identification and establishment of national identity. This kind of self assertion becomes all the more important when a poet is ripe with colonial experience of exploitation and repression. It is exactly the vibrant world of Nare that flourishes at its vintage best when it comes to understanding the intrinsic and progressive nuances of life. His poetry springs a surprise or two for the reader, especially when long serving career of academic accomplishment is behind the poet, creating self inquisitive aura when one tries to comprehend the subtleties of the life in a complex world. An ordinary reader cannot but disagree with Nare's postulations which defeat his personal level of perception considerably. It needs a connoisseur's depth and ability to enter into the seemingly complex yet vibrant poetic world of Nare when a common place happening of quotidian life has a heightened intensity of evocation, and empathy for the misunderstood for sheer miscommunication. It is in this sense that Nare's depictions of various familiar characters of the society are depicted in a rebel cast which an ordinary reader fails to reckon with. This the backdrop of the present paper which tries

to explore the progressive understanding life as portrayed by Nare's poetic persona. His latest collection of poetry, given that Nare is a seasoned campaigner, *The Dome in Air* (2009), is an anthology of 25 poems covering various subjects on life and beyond, each poem sounds strong singing the muse of the unheard voice of the poet's inner self in myriad tones. His first Collection of poetry *Visions and Voices* (1987) has 27 poems with multiple themes. He has also edited one volume of verse of Contemporary Indo English Poetry. Nare is a professor, painter, poet, critic and creative writer all rolled into one.

The deep aesthetic sense and elite etiquette of Nare's progressive taking on life becomes the talking point of the collection in contention, the cause and context being different and varied, is reflected in the experience and expertise of the poet himself. In fact, the very first poem of this anthology *The Dome in air* is "M.F.Hussain at 93" which is indeed a tribute to M.F.Hussain, the wizard in Fine Art. In the words of the poet, M.F.Hussain, had great love for India, his motherland. It is true that Hussain had no love for Mother India, otherwise he would not have portrayed Goddess Sita in erotic and obscene postures with Hanuman, for which he was forced to leave India and

live in exile. Nare has suppressed this fact and described the phenomena in Shakespearean terms. The Poet terms the beleaguered artist as 'more sinned against than sinning....Ignoring the wounds and the biting words Lives in Exile' (5) and portrays him as a modern Risi. No doubt he is a modern lascivious Risi like those who are put behind the bar for their immoral act. The poet seems to favor the artist and his brush though his art which hurt the sentiments of Hindus. It is obvious that an independent art may be obscene or irreligious and provoke anger for some but to other, it is pious and holy. The poet further argues and justifies in citing the violent mixed reaction for kissing or embracing an Indian girl in this poem.

Some say,' It is a Great Sin'.  
 Some say, It is Obscene'.  
 I think, the time is ripe now,  
 For Lord Krishna to come to us,  
 To teach, what is sin and what is  
 Obscene':  
 But, does He remember – the Age old  
 promise? (6).

The poet candidly admits in another poem titled "Artist's Religion" where he describes that 'An artist has no religion, Save the Religion of Beauty (9). It does matter if an art hurts other. An artist is independent and his innovative creation does not come under the purview of caste, creed, color, community, sex and religion. The poet further advocates in favour of artist and his creation and declares in this poem that Art is nothing but everything and a perennial source of joy for the Artist:

An artist tries to rise  
 From his origin to embrace

The whole sky, for him love,  
 For his own people, his own  
 Nation, his own culture  
 Are only the steps that lead him on  
 To The Temple of All Arts  
 A perennial source of Peace,  
 That passeth all understanding (9)

The province of art is not only entertaining, it also instructs morally. May Hussain's painting considered as crime and sin for most Hindus for which he was forced to lead exile life as punishment and expiation.

In the poem "Mother Teresa" Nare has unfolded the magnanimity of Teresa who raised herself from Sister Teresa to Mother Teresa for her pioneer role to render service to the suffering humanity for which she became a saint and attained beatitude. Here he has employed the Climactic philosophy in Christianity that a mortal can attain divinity and become the 'Son' by virtue of his noble deeds. It happened in case of Mother Teresa and this poem depicts the deep philosophical understanding of the poet:

Now, her empire has grown vaster  
 Than the compassionate Ashoka's:  
 I think, she is now a new Avatar  
 Of Mother Mary and Ma Durga  
 With a million long, loving arms  
 Reaching and feeding abandoned,  
 New –born infants, babes, orphans,  
 Lepers, the destitute and dying,  
 All over the world.(10)

Nare also pays heart-felt tribute to other eminent personalities in this collection, Sonia Gandhi, Amrit Pritam, Robert Burns, Nissim Ezekiel, Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. He recites their noble



deeds and discovers the best in them and invaluable contribution to mankind. Nare sings Sonia Gandhi's magnanimity for denouncing the post of Prime Minister in 2004 and 2009 'She offered the crown to Manmohan Singh and the like St. Joan stood behind' (9) in the poem "Sonia Gandhi". Sonia's name will be recorded in the annals of history for her sacrifice in the greater interest of the nation. Another poem that merits the attention is "On the Demise of Nissim Ezekiel". Nare is deeply aggrieved on the demise of eminent personality, the Indian Jewish poet, actor, playwright, and Editor Nissim Ezekiel. He has deep reverence for this man of letter and the poet description is elegiac in tone:

How painful it is now, even to think or feel  
 He would not be seen reading his poems:  
 Goodbye Party for nMiss Pushpa T.S.  
 or  
 Night of the Scorpion at the  
 All India-English Teachers  
 Conferences?...  
 Will never be seen, waiting for local  
 trains  
 Or lecturing on Poetry or Culture in  
 the halls...Bombay.(13)

Amrita Pritam, a prominent Punjabi writer whose writing is appreciated in both countries of India and Pakistan as well as she silences sharp criticism of male dominated Indian society who are peevish in nature for no valid reason. In the poem "A Tribute to Pritam" the poet pays deep tribute to her:

A great woman  
 Who loved Hindus and Muslims

Like her two eyes  
 And worshipped parents and gurus  
 like gods  
 Who wrote and lived like lioness  
 Following her own sweet will  
 All her life, she walked  
 Like an elephant ignoring the dogs  
 barking on her way (23).

The poet compares her with Mira and Indira for her venturesome activities 'With her magic- wand she built a great empire and ruled over it for nearly seven decades...Awards, Honours and Titles came like rain'(23). Pritam intensifies her voice against gendered discrimination throughout her life 'After the partition of the land, Phoenix like she rose from her ashes...' (2) Her voice against the patriarchy is clearly reflected by the poet. Pritam questions/ protests throughout her life against the representational system which violently displaces/ silences the women in different sector and theorist like Spivak's view on feminism seems to be correct in Indian context:

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third world woman' caught between tradition and modernization (306).

She will be ever remembered for her pioneering role in feministic writing for the people within and beyond border

The Poem 'On the Statue of Nelson Mandela' may be considered as an ode. Nelson Mandela, a staunch supporter and

also follower of Gandhian philosophy and the Noble Prize winner for peace who shed tear when 'his bronze statue was unveiled in front of The House of British Parliament'(27). In order to end Colonial rule and racial discrimination in his motherland he had to spend 'Twenty seven years spent in the Dark Cell Fighting against the tyranny of white man's (27). Mandela is a political saint and true Gandhian whose sword is nothing but Non-violence and truth. Savior of his own tribe, Mandela is also branded as Apostle of peace. "Gandhi and Terrorism", a ten lined poem is a satire on our helplessness when terrorism is on rise especially after the assassination of Gandhi. The tone of poet is clear in the lines who metaphorically calls the terrorist as butcher 'And we, like goats tied together, Watch helplessly, how the butcher's knife cuts throats of our Kith and Kin' (22).

The anthology contains some erotic poems like "A Butterfly" " Freedom at Midnight" and "The Pickled Moments". In Butterfly the poet, describes the Butterfly as a sex symbol. Its two wings are like two rose petals. The velvety wings closing and opening, symbolizes the rosy lips of the beautiful belle.

There are some poems in which the poet glorifies divine souls directly or indirectly from the Old Testament and the New Testament directly or indirectly. He picks up the characters like Virgin Mary and Divine child Christ in the poem 'Church Bell'. In the poem 'In this Garden ' indeed the Garden of Eden in which the poet 'climb the hill to read the Rock Edicts' (15) like prophet Moses to receive the commandants from Zehob Aa written on stone tablet.

*Visions and Voices* (1987), the first volume of poetry with twenty seven poems covers variety of theme ranging from common man to noble man and from nature to creatures. Most of the poems were published earlier in different reputed journals. 'The Walking Urn' is a suggestive poem where the aggrieved poet, converts himself into a walking urn, wandering in the vast wilderness of the world contains the mortal remains of the great soul of the world whose love and noble deeds for mankind is exemplary but killed by people having narrow mentality. Socrates who was forced to drink Hemlock, the deadly poison, Jesus Christ, crucified, Gandhi assassinated, Joan burnt alive. Joan liberated France from England in the 100 year war for which she was burnt to death in broad day light in the market place of Rouen. As bloodshed is prohibited in Christianity so, burning a victim is not treated as bloodshed. Out of deep agony Nare declares his soul will explode like a bomb reducing the killers to ashes. Like the ashes, he carries the urn in the poem "The Walking Urn"

"But my soul explodes like a bomb,  
Reducing them into ashes  
I am now a Walking Urn  
Moving through the streets  
Of the world." (11).

Nare, employs private symbols, images and ornaments from different fields of knowledge, which presents his multi-faceted talent in literature. The poems of Nare penetrate deep into the heart of man and expose what men posses at the bottommost layers of their heart and mind. His poem covers a wide range of secular theme and draws allusions and images from different

religions, mythologies, scripture and literature. He leaves no stone unturned in exposing the best as well as the worst in man. Nare, has great regards for Gandhi as a prophet, a savior, an apostle of peace and preacher of non-violence and truth. In his poem ‘The Walking Urn’ he describes pathetically:

‘I saw millions who wept when  
Bapu like Jesus fell,  
Is truth a deadly fireball  
That kills even those  
Who embrace it with love? (11

Nare raises his voice for the new subaltern, his deep concern for the scholars segregated and debarred from getting due weightage on racial and sectarian grounds. He sarcastically portrays the modern Gurus who destroy the bright academic career of many brilliant scholars who show undue favor to the students of superior, upper and elite group in the present day society in the poem “To Ekalavya”:

Your willing sacrifice  
To honour your guru’s words  
Will, forever, remind the world  
Of the cruel, cunning craft  
Of exploiting the innocent  
Under the guise of Traditions (9)

Ekalavya, the greatest archer in the Mahabharat as Nimrod, in the Old Testament of Hebrew mythology deprives of getting training in archery. His entry was denied by Guru Dronacharya on the ground of his Non-Aryan origin, in preferences to the Pandava and Kaurava who belong to Aryan origin. The story is known to all how Ekalavya was crippled and his thumb of his right hand was amputated. The present day

Ekalavya suffers a lot at the hands of the modern Gurus and the poet strongly condemns the modern Dronacharya :

Even to day-

I see thousands of Dronacharyas  
Running a race for  
Higher academy goals  
Carrying the kith and kin  
of the new rajas  
on their shoulders  
cutting the limbs of innumerable  
competitors with their  
subtle pen  
mightier than swords(9).

Nare, describes the academic institutions as ‘Temple of Learning’ and compares the gurus as ‘greedy wolves’. He also directly comments the commercialization of education meant for a certain class but not for the marginalized and oppressed. The ‘subtle pen’ is symbolic that may be referral and donation system in different educational institution. Nare always sympathises with poor, orphans and the slum dwellers in the poem ‘Birth on the Pavement’ which is indeed heart touching:

On the pavement  
Beside a dustbin...  
Like a star  
In Bethelhem.  
Through the crowded streets  
Many wise men and women  
Passed by like shadows  
But no one lingered  
Even for a moment  
Only a bitch sat there  
Like a vigilant guard (17).

The poem is suggestive that realistically portrays the sad tale of new born uncared

babies on the pavement and the plight of the marginalized. Subaltern consciousness is clearly visible in Nare's poetry. While analyzing the contribution of the scholars like G.C. Spivak, Ranajit Guha and others on subaltern theory, great critic John Mcleod pertinently remarks:

...the writing of intellectuals such as themselves can serve as a transparent medium through which the voices of the oppressed can be represented. The intellectual is cast as a reliable mediator for the voices of the oppressed, a mouthpiece through which the oppressed can clearly speak (192).

In both the poems "Eklavya" and "Birth on the Pavement" the poet speaks on behalf of subaltern for preservation and protection of their right. Nare is essentially a poet of nature who laments on the widening gap between man and nature. The poem "Tress" is glorified by the poet. It gives us protection from the scorching heat of sun, but the cruel man hardly realise the benevolence of trees and destroys it and the tone of the poet is alarming:

"When all the skies will explode  
And pour the wrath of man  
On our heads  
We shall need mightier trees  
Like the finger of our lord  
Holding Govardhan.(7).

The poet's concern is that life sustaining is not possible if ecological balance is not maintained. Another poem "The Path", a thought provoking poem in this anthology is symbolic in nature that indicates the distance from birth to death. The poet

appears to be a non-believer of the astrologers, the fortune-tellers, the priests, the Babas and the Mas. This poem reminds us of Ezekiel's poem 'Guru'. Like Ezekiel, Nare has no regard for Babas or Mas, he realistically portrays:

Of the 'Babas' or the 'Maees'  
They cling to them like bees or flies  
Dancing and singing around them  
As if, they hail from the Control  
Cabin  
Of the Lord, and can divert the trains  
Bound for Hell, to Heaven (13).

The Babas, Mas, the priests have nothing to do with the life and death of a man in true sense still they behave as if they are the representative of the Almighty who possess the remote to control the day to day affairs of man. The poet sharply criticizes the ongoing business in the name of religion by blackmailing innocent emotionally in the poem "Women and Cow". The poet is surprised to see 'how the gods above manage to keep shop girl on this land' (21). Certain places associated with religion where man made rumor to boost faith of common people on certain things are created to extract money by the priestly class and that is completely without having any rhyme and reason scientifically. The women's using of cows for flowing of money to her vanity at temple gate is a satire in this context:

Everyday at the temple gates  
Women with cows,  
Stand waiting for customers  
Holding a few thin bundles  
Of green, green grass....  
The customer visit the temple  
And buy a bundle or two to feed the  
cow

To win quick favour of the gods (21).  
So the poet is of the opinion that these are absolutely a nonsense practices and a rational should reject all such thing to create awareness among others. Nare warns us that no divine message or heavenly cards is at hand of these women to distribute any gifts in any form from god to devotees if they feed the grass to the cow at temple gate.

“Time Bird”, a poem reminds how time rules us. Everybody is well aware of its strength. None can escape from the paws of time:

Time piercing his sharp  
Horny beak  
Like a white-hot iron spear  
Wounded my poor heart  
So mercilessly-  
That for Seven Births the wounds  
Would not be healed (15).

Still, the poet is hopeful to conquer time as Eliot in his Four Quartets does. Eliot says time can be conquered by time. Nare also intends to defeat time ‘But before I go hence secretly, will I write on his white wings, such words in indelible ink...’(15). The burden of death is unbearable on the part of poet and is deeply shocked on his father’s death. The poem “On My Father’s Death” where he breaks down:

When my father died  
My world died with him  
I fell down like a chick  
From the nest on a high tree....  
When his ashes were  
Being immersed  
In the holy stream,  
I stood like a skeleton (18)

The poetic oeuvre of Nare is replete with allusion, symbol, ode, elegy and images and some of his poems are suggestive in nature. His poetic diction is marvelous and frequent employing of simile, metaphor and alliteration is outstanding. He is not an unknown voice in the postcolonial scene. In conclusion, it can be safely said that Nare has the ability to go-ahead with an independent plan. His is a progressive way of life that defies logic and intensity for an ordinary observer prescribes a normal course correction for an informed reader who keeps himself up to date with the trends of the time. Thus, he would have no hesitation to side with Nare’s contentions.



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## Hatabaksa

Original in Odia: **Pratibha Ray**

Translation: **Jagannath Parida**

Children always stare at Mother's hand box, a tiny square size wooden box. A drawer with different cells is placed inside it. Under the drawer looks a dark place, like a deep dark house. Small iron keys are hung from the small holes on it. To carry it, two brass rings decorated beautifully are fixed on the both sides of the box. The box designed in that time seems to be a symbol of aristocracy and nobleness. A stare at the box gives me a great pleasure like a look at mother's face. Whenever I look at the box, it seems to me that certain rare riches of the earth are treasured inside it.

Hand box, a wedding gift, is given to the daughter when she goes to the new house after marriage. It is the bride's personal belonging and no one, even mother-in-law in the house, asks the bride to see anything inside it or use it. To keep her dignity the bride in the new house never asks anyone openly for money. She has to give travel expenses either to the barber or luggage bearer who bring necessary things for her or offer little money to the children of the relatives with affection. Truly, the bride in the new house always endures humiliation, comments, scarcity and so on in silence. She spends all her life with closed lips.

Mother never gives the key to anyone. It is always tied to one end of her

cloth, even on her death bed. When the ornaments were put off and key from her cloth on her death bed, elder son stood still like a log of wood.

"How could mother know her ornaments being consigned to the fire of her pyre?"

While uncle was opening mother's nose ring with much difficulty, it bruised her nose, elder son yelled in pain and younger son showed no emotion. When daughter-in-law opened the key carefully from mother's cloth, elder son was weeping, tears streaming down his eyes.

"Rekha, keep it, tie it to mother's cloth, let it be burnt with pyre; though she has not given it while alive", he gave a mild protest.

Who can say, what is inside the box? Life's saving.

"Mother was very calculative", said Surekha, relating mother's nobility of mind.

For father's indifference, she suffered awfully in life; but never offered single paisa for his expenditure. She did not open what she had kept inside the box. In the last flicker of life, she remained silent, never expressed her desire to whom to give the share of her wealth.

"My hand box", said she in



stammering voice before death, clasping elder son's hand. She was very careful lest her key should fall in father's hand; though she had deep reverence and obligation for him —that fault is not with mother but father, we realised it in later years.

In a year or two, mother used to rearrange the box carefully - that is the delightful moment for children. Curious, children round up her when she opened the box. All eyes zero in on the precious possessions like nose rings, ear rings, necklaces and land records, revenue receipts in the wrapped handkerchief kept in cases.

"I toil in this house like an ass. Who will look after me in my old age? Will he (the husband) treat me when I grow old? He has never spoken me a sweet word in my happy days", she murmurs in despair, looking out.

"Mother, we will look after you." Mother's gloomy face beamed with delight on hearing it.

"You do better in life. Keep good name of our family. Don't be like your father"

With mother's dedication and her money, the sons got themselves established in the society and the daughters married off in right alliance. All expenses were met with money from the hand box. Bad time befell in mother's life just after father's retirement. With mother not giving money, father brandished his hands in a fit of rage. The news came to the children. Father had to sit by the box for money. Father being workless never asked his children for money. But mother's hand box had never been emptied despite father's meagre income.

"Give me the key, I will see it"

"You can't open my box even after my death. I will ask children to fling it into the fire; but you can't touch my box." Mother never handed over him the key.

One day she fell sick and after a brief illness, she departed. Children never felt father's feeling of sadness after mother's death.

"Now all are worried over the possession of the key. Who will open the box? Mother has not given permission to anyone to open the box; but told us in anger to dump it onto the fire after her demise. Whatever it may be, the box has to be opened. There must be costly ornament and some money inside it. Finally, the key was given to the eighteen years old grandson, Udaya, to open the box. Sometimes, in his childhood days he insisted on grandma to give key to see things inside it being curious. All fixed their eyes when Udaya opened the box. Surprisingly, all cases were found empty - neither a single nose ring nor money. What was mother doing closing the door? Why did not she give key to father? A folded letter with a photo of youthful days was kept in a decorative brass box.

"Oh God!—they drew back their glance from the photo in shame. For this, mother did not hand over key to father—they thought. Taking a whiff of mother's frailty, in spite of all her goodness, father, probably, treated her heartlessly throughout life. Why did not she give the key anyone?"

"Well, had Grandma, who always admonished me, a lover? Who she loved so deeply that she preserved the letter carefully till now?" thought Uday, seriously.

The elder son stood aback while reading last few lines of the letter with a curiosity to know the lover of mother.

“I send a photo snapped for you, use whatever anger you have on it.”

Yours unworthy husband,

Niranjan

The love letter, preserved in the box like a priceless possession, was from no one, but from my father, Niranjan. The photo of my father’s youth time was not easy to recognise. Mother put forth all her anger and resentment before this photo throughout her life. That letter reached when mother was in the village.

“Oh, what a deep love mother had throughout her life! What is more precious gift than this? Without getting anything from husband till the last breath, she loved him and with this she taught us the lesson of love

in the materialistic world. They did not have such love in their conjugal life, professed the elder daughter-in-law who was waiting to get something precious from the box.”

Next day, the elder son handed the key to father, as if he knew nothing. Father entered the mother’s bed room and shut inside. Breaking sound of box was heard. Then, for sometimes, silence spread.

“I am heartless - brute, savage - I have taken out all your happiness by force - given you nothing, how can I live? Tila - Tila”, father was weeping, like a child.

Two sons, standing by the closed door, listened to the voice of father’s core of heart. With the opening of hand box, father’s heart was also opened; but mother was no more in life to listen such voice. She has departed leaving behind her loving family and her dear hand box. She has gone beyond all hopes and expectations. ■

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## POETRY

### No Woman's Land

Original in Malayalam : **Vinayasree**

Translation - Aniamma Joseph

Did you see a deer-eyed lass,  
The woman who in languor covered  
her bashfulness  
At the end of a half-eaten forbidden fruit  
Did you see her in the Garden of Eden?

Did you see the beautiful-eyed girl  
With combed strands of glossy pitch  
black hair  
With a coy look darted from the corner  
of her eye  
Who lured Cupid into her being?

Did you hear the murmuring melodies  
of her laughter  
In the billowy notes of the reeds  
swayed in the wind?  
Did you see a goddess of love  
With the beauty of splendour  
even in heated fury?

A beauty who in absolute abandon  
Adorned her wet strands of hair  
With the tender basil shoots  
Fragrant as the flower, lovely-eyed,  
moon-faced,  
Smiling, charming and enticing  
The lark's music and  
the sweet swan's tone  
Blend in the poets' eulogies of her body

As the freak's eyes of a bow,  
Caress the buds on her breast

With a voluptuous swaggering and laugh  
She offers rapture in her myriad rays  
of red  
Fondled the flowery body  
Sucked the tender lips as honey  
Adored and praised as marble sculpture  
Chanting the five letters of passion  
On her petals of bed  
She turned a doll on this earth  
Absorbing your manhood  
A new generation sprouted in her

In your chiding like the glow of sorrow  
Dazzling, this day as she is  
Dissolving into the breast of the earth  
Man, you are blinded with lust  
When your carnality crawls like a snake  
On a tender girl-child searching for  
mother's breast  
Did you forget, there'll be a time  
When there's no woman on this earth?

Man, you will be defeated  
In the chariot race  
In the remote infinity  
when with no woman  
As the sound of Time's hoofs draws nigh  
That day, darkness will fill your laughter  
Man, it'll happen, not so distantly,  
do remember

When the dolls of woman are sold  
Like the fruits in store by the road side  
The dolls which don't cast  
voluptuous looks  
It's the time when such dolls are sold  
Sans smile, sans emotion, sans coyness

That day female beasts will graze  
in your bedrooms  
As your wife; animal-men, human-beasts

With man's face and goat's body  
That day you will foster  
Bitches for your lust  
With the dog's face and man's body  
Human beasts will be born;  
Bestial men will revel on the whole earth

Then will be seen those who are lustful  
Those who bargain for the woman -doll  
On the road-side, and on petty cash  
Those who fix the dolls for their needs

Finally a little drop of water to drink  
When the lady with the bangles  
Is looked for in vain  
Man, you will cry a bitter cry

I hear the galloping of Time  
Man, aren't you the one who  
Put out this lamp's flame?  
Aren't you the one  
Who stilled the flow of this stream?  
Aren't you the one who trampled on  
These soft petals of flowers?

Then Man, you will be ALONE  
The Mother Earth will embrace  
Her daughter, an embodiment  
of prosperity,  
Will feed her on the breast,  
make her a heroine  
The women's clan will thus  
be remembered  
And praised for ever.

Tell me, did you see  
the deer-eyed lass anywhere?  
Did you...? ■

## The Silent Spring

Ajaya Patra

With eyes severe  
I rue the gathering gloom  
Like the comet, the life in the earth  
Is short and transitory.  
The floating clouds in summer  
to be burning  
Tormented by the sunlight scorching  
and severe.

The blades of grass gasp for breath  
With great sufferings  
They wait the coming autumn  
Cool, bracing and clear.  
The mosquito is buzzing, voice is thin  
That the sadness increases  
On a summer night.  
Once approaching, bites delicate skin  
The itch conveys to the heart  
Man's grief of tonight.  
In the sandy sea-shore in summer  
The wind is fast blowing  
In the awful skies, dark clouds  
walloping aloud.  
In the wanning shore  
The wind wantons with white sand  
so amorously  
The sand moves as if it flirts  
with wind sweetly.  
The wind blows cursing with jealousy  
For man's happiness.  
The disgruntled sand soars in the field  
Whirls powerfully and delineate  
beauteous hills  
Each of great plumpness.  
How redundancy the screechs  
of this inland sea are !  
Seen are the islets nearby

And the other land afar  
 They appear and are hidden  
 at evening misty  
 Never I believe, a vision or reality?  
 All men and women look up  
 to the lurid skys  
 Aspiring a full moonlit night  
 A limpid mirror is becoming cloudy.  
 To the full moon, men complain  
 Of their heart's throb  
 And weep for their springs in silence  
 Sleep, fast a sleep.  
 In wilds  
 Strangle the creatures, life at stake.  
 Deforestation, mass hunting,  
 poaching, forest fire  
 All these lunatic practices  
 Lure the ruffian men  
 in to their own grave.  
 Desert the springs, fountains, creeks  
 Blare the savages, seek for help:  
 "Save them, save the Earth".  
 Tsunami, Super cyclone, Hurricanes  
 Meet to the earth,  
 The tempest rude of woe and misery  
 That bursting from the storm  
 Fiend's angry eyes  
 Paints to the mariners frightened sight.  
 The yawning waves their dreadful  
 evelry  
 Life is in trouble, death whispers to  
 hem.  
 On a spring night  
 Heaven is clad in a thin dress  
 That the dress is like a veil  
 of obscure sadness.  
 The moon sheltered with the dress  
 Abides in heaven  
 so the moonlight gleams dimly  
 With sorrows hidden.  
 In the starry cold nights

The howling winds do moan  
 While rushing above the silent graves.  
 The vultures circled during the day.  
 From some holes in half-dead trees  
 The owls gave out in the night  
 Esoteric, ponderous hoots.  
 My troubles come out and whisper to me  
 I said – "When will I enter  
 The eternal crypt with an armful  
 Of wild flowers above  
 With birds waving to the sun  
 And swan love laughing." ■

## The Holy Blooms

**Manoja Nayak**

The holy gift fragrance of soul  
 Touched every creators of God  
 Heals every pain  
 Touch every path  
 Smoothen the zigzag way  
 To come over the blue sky  
 O pure saint, who you are!  
 Are you a part of the almighty?  
 Yaa a king of every heart  
 Gives pleasure to all flowers  
 Enlightening the whole world.  
 See, how the birds singing for you  
 How river flowing ceaselessly  
 To touch your feet  
 For a holy hug for you  
 Come and see  
 How beautiful now my world  
 Because of your holy touch  
 Embracing my heart  
 To fly all corner of the sphere  
 To reach the top of the hill.  
 My wings fluttering  
 To show its magic  
 Whateever it could do for you  
 Only for you, only for you. ■

## Lonely Way

Ram Sharma

We get only the footsteps  
only for few years  
we walk together for few steps  
and yearns we fall , break and say  
for your own loneliness walk  
alone and sway  
the way is lonely and straight  
here none is to walk with us ,  
we only thought  
how straight and clear the way is  
there is no eye to see , no lap to rest  
we have to walk , walk and walk  
to appear in the test  
footprints of few footsteps  
somewhere we get  
but there is no one ----no one ■

## Sales

Surya Sanyal

Night drawing alongside the road  
People rushing back home  
Overhead lights are on  
Everything's going fine  
They are running for loved ones  
Three women appear thereon  
Waiting for sale of their bodies  
Sale of love too  
Against consideration  
Few men stopped there  
Looked at them  
And tend to buy love.  
When woman's body is put  
To auction  
At price for livelihood,  
Dames, come on  
Wipe their tears  
And destroy this male-centric world .

## Words

Sonal Pandav

You do not need  
Shape Tone rhythm  
And Rhyme  
Let them fly out from your mind  
Here, there and everywhere  
Pluck them  
Tag them alike  
Cherished memories  
In heart  
And then  
Let them fly away forever  
As they always  
Remain near to the door of heart  
Nothing to lose  
Nothing to gain  
Still you feel  
There are so many remain  
With beautiful ups & downs  
And bound alike life with so many rounds  
And yet still  
It seems beautiful  
Bound  
Let's put it  
In such a way  
That touch and move the others heart  
Yup I call them  
Words ■

## Today

Pantas P. Sitompul

I live for today  
That is... what is real to me  
Because tomorrow  
Maybe it's just a dream



Just only a dream... !  
 Maybe before tomorrow  
 My steps have stopped  
 I have wasted today  
 Today ...  
 A real day for me  
 For me to live my life  
 With all of my heart  
 With all of my soul  
 To free myself  
 To reassure my soul  
 I have to live this day meaningfully  
 Until I feel ready to go to eternity!  
 Because tomorrow:  
 If it arrives, it will be today!  
 Take care of your bed  
 And pay off all your debts  
 Because when you fall asleep  
 Perhaps, you can't rise again!  
 Don't expect tomorrow  
 Because tomorrow is a mystery ...!?  
 Because life is a series of trips  
 Towards a heavenly home  
 Back to where I belonged,  
 our Creator  
 The deepest longing of my soul ...! ■

## The Miracle Worker

**S.Ramya Niranjani**

**H**is alluring affection  
 abdicated the adamant anger.  
 His beaconing brightness  
 beautified the baseless brokenness.  
 His ceaseless comfort captivated  
 the changing circumstances.  
 His dauntless determination disdained  
 the defeating disappointments.  
 His enduring embraces eradicated

the endless embarrassments.  
 His faithful fellowship fixed  
 the frustrating falls.  
 His generous grace grasped  
 the gelatinous guilt.  
 His helping hand hustled  
 the hopeless hours.  
 Who is Him I am talking about?  
 It is Him that there is no world without!  
 It is Him who makes a way out.  
 Without Him I will fade out.  
 There is no doubt,  
 With Him I will brave it out.

## Fani

**S. Poongothai**

**F**urious Fani  
 Spurting rain  
 Gusting winds  
 Badly ravaged  
 Tore apart the state  
 Swamped villages and towns  
 Evacuated shelters  
 Unleashed torrential rain  
 Collapsed communication  
 Disrupted electricity  
 Uprooted trees  
 Damaged roads  
 Snarled traffic  
 Caused extensive damage  
 Rescue and relief operations  
 augmented  
 To restore normalcy ■

## God's Plan

Preetha C.

I grew up as a happy child  
filled with happiness,  
Though pretty but naughty,  
I made others speechless,  
I was given the right education,  
for me to shine,  
Though not interested, I knew  
it is for me to refine,  
Days rolled, and with high hopes  
I entered College,  
That was the place where  
I really gained Knowledge.  
All encouraged me and I began to soar,  
When I understood that God's plan  
for me is more,  
The clock ticked, my focus was  
toward my destination,  
Diligence and perseverance helped me  
to achieve good reputation.  
Other blessings came to me,  
first as a wonderful spouse,  
Who gave me the freedom,  
to be the queen of the house?  
Second gift came to me as a cute little  
boy,  
This was followed by another bundle  
of joy,  
Though there are some memories  
which I would like to delete,  
I am very happy to say that  
God has made my life complete. ■

## Morning is the Noun of My Life

Basudev Paul

Sometime I spend in noiseless meditation  
I want to explore life in my pursuit and pray  
Joy and delight do I crave for a healthy life  
Future is tantalising and only holds hope

Every morn I remain alive to wonders  
around  
I feel the breeze, inhabit the times, days  
Morning creates the niceness of the day  
I observe with splendour the warbling birds

I adore the activities of people engage in  
Walking gears and escalates my jubilation  
I am grateful for the ability to rise amid bum  
In the early dawn for acquiring strength

I want to be an eternal collector of joy  
This climbs in the recess of my store  
I believe god lives in utter simplicity  
Morning does ever damage one's finer feel

Crush, cuss, being curt, can't raise you  
To set immediate goal for an eventful future  
Your will to rise must bow before the brave  
Patience to practice gives you guts to nurture

Hope and no amount of money can't lift you  
As morning jog does and keeps you effortful  
One can't live sans failure  
at some point of time  
But ultimately, you build  
your own stately state. ■

## The Bonded : A Poem of Owe

Original in Odia : **AmitavSahu**

Translation : Pradeep K. Debata

To welcome your arrival  
I had decorated my bun  
with a garland of fresh  
Jasmine flowers  
From our backyard,  
Lac dye on the feet  
and red bangle on the hands  
and had put on a silk sari  
of the month of Vadrav.

I had prepared all your favourite dishes  
suggested by mother,  
and was awaiting your arrival

You left the day of our wedding,  
and did not return, though you promised  
you would be back by the full-moon day  
But it is now more than two hours

The few sweet words of that day  
Had painted the colours of a thousand  
springs ,  
Even I had not seen his face clearly  
that night.  
Only had a slight, shy glimpse

He left , but those few moments of love  
Made me wait for so long,  
and after so long a gap  
I know what love means,  
and what is togetherness.

He didn't come, but his letter  
Was delivered by village contractor

And it said, there was so much of work  
And he would come in the coming year,  
and the words  
shattered my treasured aspirations

One day I had heard  
from my father- in- law  
telling the village headman,  
“my son has gone for bonded labour  
And our woes would be over  
A new house would be built here

Now I realize what is this bondage ?  
Can it build anyone's dwelling  
Or can it destroy anyone's dwelling? ■

## Vani Vihar

Original in Odia : **Prabir Kumar Dash**

Translation : Gobinda Sahoo

An intimate friend or lovelorn beloved  
You won't be a mere acquaintance  
You would ever remain  
I thought  
In our first ever meet.

For me you're but an inn,  
A betel-house  
Not home nor temple you will.

I had met you in the gallery  
of History department  
In Parija library  
In MKCG auditorium  
In Alka market  
and the central canteen.

Averting intimacy with each meeting  
Ignoring the abundance of love

And oppression of the air in the campus.

During the fleeting days

Like the falling sand  
through the gaps of my fingers  
Like the metamorphosis of caterpillar  
to butterfly

You brought in me changes many  
You brought many alterations in me,  
Many a new things you taught-  
That life is accomplishes in giving  
and not by taking  
And you can discover the self,  
Not contraction but  
Expansion is but life  
Progress may be the propensity  
Growth may be the destiny.

From the well to a pond  
From the pond to a lake  
And from a sea to the ocean  
You taught me to swim.

Had come for only two years  
But after thirty two years  
I've failed to part myself from you  
Like the monkey bilking the crocodile  
in the mid-river  
In monologue I say  
"I've left my liver in the hollow  
of the *bakula* tree in Vani Vihar  
I've to go back to Vani Vihar,  
my dearest Vani Vihar." ■

## After Burning the Fingers

Namita Nayak

The walls have ears  
and the wind eyes  
Rumour is like a wild fire  
can spread from city to city  
from village to village.

The dusts blowing in the street  
is intruding  
into my drawing room  
to settle on my writing table  
The candle has burnt out  
shedding all its tears.  
Now only the moon is  
flickering on the balcony of the sky.

Weeping for days together  
the waves are returning  
to their own rooms  
turning their back to the beach,  
discovering their loneliness  
caused due to their ego.  
Like an uprooted tree, I, alone,  
can not come back  
to my secured heaven.

On the threshold are placed  
my two uncertain feet  
uninvolved for half of the day  
exiled for the rest half.  
The spots on the wall  
and numerous imaginary faces  
are getting indistinct gradually.  
My flexible shadow  
on the stair case  
is sometimes entwined  
with the grasses  
sometimes with the rose-bushes.

When night is coming  
wearing its printed black saree  
darkness is following her  
like a rapist.  
Beetrebub, the false representative  
of God and Lord of the flies  
chasing her like a terrorist

No.....! after twelve years  
of secret habitation  
nothing can be explained  
to no one.  
Not to humans, not to the devils  
who are dancing with  
wine bottles in their hands,  
and not at all to God, who  
suppresses truth  
under his feet  
and patronises falsehood.

Only can I perceive now,  
it is not possible to  
pick up the pen any more  
since I have burnt  
all my fingers  
completely in the  
blue flames of the candle.  
Eternally light-prone  
my soul, is advancing  
towards the colony  
of sunlessness .....

Holding a knife in hand  
assassin darkness is roaming behind  
the beetle shop, determined to slash  
the soft, benign neck  
of the tube-light  
burning in front  
of the state bank. ■

## Someone Amongst Us !

Original in Odia : **Pitambar Tarai**

Translation : Panchanan Dalai

Do you notice that  
The fruit laden trees of yesterdays  
Stand leafless and barren today.  
The love-seeking doves also have lost  
their wings  
Now it should be asked therefore -  
O brothers !  
Whose evil works are these ?  
Definitely one amongst us !  
Someone must be drying up  
his bloodstained dress  
on the thorny fence of barbarity;  
But then cleansing oneself with water  
Trying to pray for an honest path  
to tread on.  
Who could be this one ?  
Definitely one amongst us !  
Each time,  
Someone must be stopping  
The path of summer clouds for rains,  
Burying the streams of sorrows  
under his heart  
And in order to rise to his promises,  
Readying himself for sacrifice,  
Like the proverbial cow did for the tiger.  
Why are all these stories :  
Are these cock stories  
Or stories of deer hunting ?  
Trust me,  
Take any such example to embellish  
yourself,  
Embrace any one's cause  
to dedicate yourself.  
Whatever it is,  
We need to erase the words of hatred  
From the sacred walls of religions,

Forsake the fake smiles from lips,  
 Annihilate the unwanted deaths from society,  
 And remove the pains from the injuries.  
 With the hope of impending rains in mind,  
 We need to rebuild the house of rain reeds  
 In the midst of the dried river;  
 And in a moonlit night,  
 on a sheet of blank paper,  
 We need to rebuild our houses again,  
 Our beautiful country.  
 Mark this that  
 Someone from us must have  
 Cleared the forest for a plain field,  
 Someone must be planting a tree  
 In the scorching heat of noon,  
 Someone must have cleaned the carcass  
 To make a place for crematorium,  
 Someone must be creating a garden  
 For flowers, for spring, and for fragrance.  
 Learn that, wether demon or divine,  
 During or desperation,  
 It's someone amongst us  
 Who would be offering his shoulders  
 To lean on. ■

## My Love

**Harekrushna Mahanta**

Like an angel  
 that breathes love,  
 peace and benevolence  
 you descended on me.  
 My heart  
 bewildered with your charm,  
 danced with ecstasy  
 like the peacock  
 looking at the cloud.  
 Before we hobnob  
 your inner being  
 made an inroad within  
 mine....

Oh!  
 Darling of my heart  
 dwell within me..  
 Let me savour the ecstasy  
 my love..  
 Your are epitome  
 of charm,  
 my Monalisa..  
 Like flute of Krishan  
 adoring his beloved,  
 my heart is beckoning  
 you my sweet heart.  
 But, on!  
 Your heart has dwelt  
 within me.  
 Already these two  
 love birds are singing  
 together  
 the song of love.  
 You and me  
 Our souls meet  
 Talk and love..  
 I feel like lord,  
 Lord of Vrindavan..  
 You are my love,  
 my inspiration  
 my goddess  
 of attraction,  
 A fairy of eternity.. ■

## The Hand of God

**Ngozi Olivia Osuoha**

Women are great  
 They love like god  
 And rule like lion  
 They survive ills  
 And thrive even in odds,



They need love, real love.  
 Women are angels  
 They watch the city  
 And build the home  
 They destroy strongholds  
 And inspire the land,  
 They need care, true care.  
 They are the hand of God  
 They utilize everything  
 And make waves  
 Do not hurt them  
 Do not harm them,  
 Women are rich in gifts.  
 Keep the world safe  
 Sweep the land  
 Accommodate them  
 Let nothing hinder women.  
 Help them extend these hands  
 These hands of divinity  
 The hand of God,  
 Plant it, let it germinate for harvest. ■

## The Tender Drizzling Rain has Come Earlier

Original in Odia: **Ratnakar Rout**

Translation: Pradeep K. Debata

The tender drizzling rain has come earlier  
 And it drip- drops with a musical note  
 The dark stark night slowly glides  
 towards dawn  
 And the earth giggles  
 The sun has hidden his face  
 by a covering of clouds  
 And there are tears on the eyes of the sky;  
 The touch of the chilled wind closes  
 the eye lids  
 And I remember you as the caskets

of memories open up ;  
 The cricket plays the sehnai  
 as the *chakor* birds are united  
 Are you coming riding on  
 the palanquin of clouds  
 With the lightening creeper garlanded  
 on your neck;  
 The tinkling of your anklet comes floating  
 from distance that I can hear  
 The first rain touches the lips of the earth  
 The smell of sprouting earth  
 makes throbbing the life  
 The spectrum of rainbow on the bosom  
 of sky  
 None can forget easily;  
 Your sweet memories are imprinted  
 in my heart  
 Though I have not met you  
 after your departure  
 We met each other during the last rain  
 You didn't return though with the rain ;  
 Oh , look the deep summer breath  
 reruns now  
 When it is intense I can't beat that  
 Bearing the immeasurable kindness in heart  
 The critical time when more critical becomes  
 I can't bear the pain of summer,  
 though I wish I could  
 Fill everyone's life with pleasure ;  
 I wish I could sacrifice selflessly  
 for other's self  
 And not for my own self  
 It has come back once again like every time  
 But it hasn't easily forgotten like you did  
 My mind is down with agony in your  
 absence  
 And pines for you in the solitude  
 of my dawn  
 Are you getting back  
 on the palanquin of cloud ? ■

# A Shattered Dream

Sulekha Samantaray

How long does it take  
for a sweet dream  
to be shattered  
and devastated ?  
Or for a veiled vision  
to be unravelled ??  
One minute,  
five minutes,  
Or one hour ?  
You may say it depends....  
But for Vidya  
it was just a moment.  
Just a moment  
after a tiresome day's work  
while Vidya was still  
dreaming the last night's dream  
with awakened eyes  
reliving the honeyed hours  
to relieve herself of  
month long physical pain  
and years long morose feelings;  
cosily cooing in capricious cadence  
the lilting lullabies of love.  
Suddenly a moment comes,  
suddenly something flashes  
before Vidya's eyes  
like the sword of Brutus,  
tearing down the gossamer of faith.  
Suddenly some words  
hit her eyes like a bomb  
blinding her, blasting her  
while the endearing  
euphoric image  
the masked visage is unmasked. ■

## Poet - my Name

Original in Odia : **Lingaraj Rath**

Translation : Basudeba Bharati

(I)  
Art I worship all times,  
Though 'black-arts' are not my aim.  
Truth always I pen  
With a fictional relish  
of poetic vein,  
to be labelled as a poet sane.  
Father am I to Kabita  
Named as Banita  
And the whole universe  
is my conscious den.

(II)  
Who did discover,  
Guess and gather,  
My moods and mind's matter  
To spin thoughts more  
That did I think never.  
Ah, he is the Poet-  
Who gets and grasps full  
From eyes, lips, smiles  
and tears of all,  
For a poet to be known  
before the mankind whole. ■

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Dr. Namita Laxmi Jagaddeb, our editorial board member, receiving felicitations from Dr. Rajdeep Chowdhury in Lit Fiest - 2019 at ICCR, Kolkata.





Dt. 12.09.2018

## **Peer-reviewed Journals are at par with UGC Approved Journals**

In a bid to make it easier for university and college teachers to earn points to enhance their research score for recruitment and promotion, the University Grants Commission has decided to treat all peer-reviewed journals at par with its own list of approved journals.

The recently-notified UGC minimum qualifications regulations make the point amply clear. The methodology for calculating academic/research score offers points for "research papers in peer reviewed or UGC listed journals". For each paper in languages, humanities, arts, social sciences, library, education, physical education, commerce, management and other related disciplines, teacher will earn 10 points.

The regulations say: "Assessment must be based on evidence produced by the teacher such as copy of publications..." This step has been taken to make recruitment and career growth easier for college and university teachers.