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Editor speaks.....

The advent of Durga Puja fills the hearts with great jubilation as the goddess will descend on the earth. In fact Durga Puja is the worship of women power / energy. We celebrate it with much pomp and show. The origin of the Shakti Cult deftly denies possible perception of the human mind. Any inference drawn on the basis of targeted studies carrying various perspectives of the Mother Goddess always forms a part of the whole ocean that dissolves all whims and caprices that tend to trespass principles and order of the society evolved with an objective of peaceful co-existence. To cite here a saying of the super human sensibility Sri Aurobindo in his august creation *Savitri* has reflected "Shakti is the energy principle activating the descent of Purusha on Prakriti and the ascent of Prakriti on to Purusha." The observance of the Durga Puja with multi-coloured mood all over the country signifies the feeling to be identified in the whole with unfatigued juvenile spirit by accumulating the inner spirit. Durga, acclaimed for her prowess and strength primarily symbolises the war goddess. She, according to DurgaSaptasati, assumes the forms of Mahakali, Mahalaksmi and Mahasaraswati. These three entities are different aspects of the same Supreme Power. Mahalaksmi is the goddess of secular glory and embodies the principle of sustenance and beauty. Mahakali is emblematic of violence and fury of destruction, dread and horror. Mahasaraswati is an embodiment of knowledge.

But the irony is that on one hand Man is worshipping the Woman power during the Puja and on the other hand exploiting, posing violence and maltreating the women across the country which is sheer hypocrisy. Literature has been reflecting these evils and propagating peace, harmony and mutual love as a woman is a giver, a nurturer, a feeder, above all a life giver.

Rock Pebbles in its September issue wishes better tomorrows for the entire womankind

-Editor

CONTENTS

	Page
Editorial	ii
R.K. Narayan's <i>The Vendor of Sweets</i> : A Text on East - West Encounter	
Basudeb Chakraborti	05
Banned Odia Literature by Britishers : A Study	
Chittaranjan Bhoi	14
Reconfiguring Within and Beyond : A Study of Literary Influence	
Nishamani Kar	19
Celebrating Motherhood as a Connection rather than a Crisis in Meera Syal's <i>The House of Hidden Mothers</i> : Changing Concerns of the Coloured Asian Women in Britain	
Aindrilla Guin	23
Living in Two Cultures : The Sorrows and Solaces of Migration	
Sumithra Devi S.	29
Reading Poetry as Cognitive Media : A Study of the Select Poems of Pradip Kumar Patra	
Chandrima Sen	35
Indian Philosophical Influence on the Poetic Works of W.B. Yeats	
Radhashyam Dey	44
Sachi Routray's <i>Chitragreeba</i> : A Study	
Sudarsan Sahoo	48
Survival in Times of a Catastrophe : Changing Face of Man in Albert Camus's <i>The Plague</i>	
Sashikanta Barik	52
T S Eliot's <i>The Waste Land</i> : an Expression of Modern Disillusionment and Barrenness	
Sanjib Kumar Barman	61
Portrayal of Dharavi in Imtiaz Dharker's <i>Postcards from God</i>	
Shahaji Mastud and R. P. Lokhande	68
Issues of Identity Crisis and Role Conflict in the Novels of Margaret Laurence	
Jyoti Agarwal	74
Historical and Geographical Diagram of Contemporary Odisha in <i>Sarala Mahabharata</i>	
Abhinna Chandra Dash	83
Narrative Technique in the Novels of Cormac McCarthy with Focus on <i>The Road</i>	
Sandipani Choudhury and Swayamprabha Satpathy	92
Satish Alekar as a Progressive Playwright with Special Reference to <i>The Dread Departure</i>	
Asma Rafiq	102

A Psychoanalytic Study of Asif Currimbhoy's ' <i>The Dumb Dancer</i> '	
SanghamitraNath	112
The Theme of Alienation in Peter Abrahams' ' <i>Song of the City</i> '	
Megha Balaso Mali & Pradnya Vijay Ghorpade	118
Rediscovering Sri Aurobindo's ' <i>Idea of India</i> ': Lights for Today's Society	
Charan Singh	124
Representation of Women in Indian Mythology :	
A Feminist Perspective	
Sujata Rath & Krishna Pratap Singh	139
Contesting Anthropocentrism : Joseph Conrad's Anti-anthropocentric	
Ecological Narrative	
Santosh Kumar Sethy	146
Reflections on the Agonising and Miseries of Dalits	
in Bama's ' <i>Karukku</i> ': An Assessment	
Pramodini Patnaik	157
Subscription Form	73 & 101



R.K.Narayan's The Vendor of Sweets: A Text on East -West Encounter

Basudeb Chakraborti

The theme of 'East-West Encounter' recurs in most post-colonial Indian writing in English. Recent Indian writers of the Diaspora like Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharati Mukerjee and Amitav Ghose try to probe into the emotional predicament of the protagonists of their fictional writings. The emotional predicament in their protagonists' minds arises out of the conflict between the Indian cultural ethos which they have carried with them when they move abroad from India or have inherited from their parents if they belong to the second generation of Indian immigrants to the US or any country abroad. It is very often noticed that the psychological tension in the characters of their fictional writings is largely due to those characters' roots in Indian cultural ethos that encounters the western norms and values of life. The introductory story 'A Temporary Matter' in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Malady* shows how the central characters suffer the pangs of alienation even while they have every reason to be quite happy in their new homes in America. The pull of their past in India at the sub-conscious state of their minds prevents even the second generation of Indian Immigrants in America from taking a complete and unhesitating dip in the mainstream American way of life. The theme of this type of 'East-West Encounter', found in the short stories of Jhumpa Lahiri and others, is popular owing to the recent globalization of world economy and culture. They are popularly known as writers of Diaspora and it is to them that the phrase 'East- West Encounter' is primarily applicable. R.K.Narayan does not fall into this category of writers of the present time like Jhumpa Lahiri and others who primarily believe in the homogenized and synthesized culture of one tiny world.

R.K.Narayan was born in Madras in an orthodox Brahmin family in Colonial India in 1906. He died in 2001 when he was 94 years old. Truly speaking, he did not experience the environment of 21st century globalized culture and Market economy. He belongs to the long span of the 20th century, the early and the middle part of which are overcast by the 19th century values of life and the later part, by the influence of Reaganomics and Thatcherism, the beginning of the Globalization and Market Economy. He mostly breathes in the environment of the traditional 19th century India. With one part of his mind he was in the 19th century, and at the same time his exposure to 20th century Western science and technology was undeniable. He received Western education, visited the United States several times and

assimilated the western ethos consciously as an educated enlightened Indian. The fundamental difference between writers like R.K.Narayan and Jhumpa Lahiri and others of the present time is that the East –West Encounter in R. K. Narayan enthuses him to enter into the age-old Indian tradition while the same tension or the predicament arising out of the East-West Encounter in Jhumpa Lahiri or Bharati Mukherjee results in their utmost and sincere efforts to accept emotionally as well as intellectually the homogenous values of global culture .R.K. Narayan and his contemporaries look forward to embracing the Indian ethos while Jhumpa Lahiri and others promote the concept of the Globalization of culture and integration of the world economy. R.K.Narayan has a deep rooted commitment to the ancient Indian heritage which is a definite Brahmanical cult. R.K.Narayan has not settled abroad. He is an Indian writer of fiction written in an Indian variety of English. The theme I intend to pursue in this article will examine the consequences of the East –West Encounter in R.K.Narayan.

There are many ‘Indias’ even in one ‘India’. But the acceptance of one homogenized Indian culture, i.e., Hinduism in general and Brahmanical cult in particular is the hypothesis of this article that aims at exploring tolerance and mystic realization in R.K.Narayan’s *The Vendor of Sweets*. Tolerance and mystic realization are the essential foundations of Indianness. Indian religion from time immemorial inspires men and women to follow the principle of tolerance, sacrifice and mystic belief in the divine. Belief in the divine in all living organism is an important creed of the Vedanta philosophy 1. Soul that is indestructible is Brahma.² Swami Vivekananda once said that one who serves creatures serves the divine. Every devout Hindu believes that the divine exists everywhere; the divine is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. This unwavering conviction that is intrinsically connected with the Vedanta Philosophy makes Indians tolerant to all. Everything animate or inanimate in this world is intrinsically sacred. This is the Indian attitude to life. So, every action a devout Hindu initiates is basically altruistic and non-violent. One would not want to hurt something which one revered. A fundamentalist belonging to any religion is motivated by the belief that everything is divided into ‘two often very different or opposing parts, and those two opposing parts are good or evil, man or nature, God and Devil’ and so on. This belief in duality encourages friends and foes. And in this belief of duality, the principle of non-violence is absolutely irrelevant and redundant. This belief is a blasphemy to Hindu religion, culture and civilization. Let me refer to the relevant excerpt from the text of the Brahminical cult. The virtuous, according to the Veda, are those who are free from ‘hatred’ and ‘inordinate affection’. Where there is abhorrence, there must be aggression. The absence of the belief in duality in the Vedanta philosophy, resulting in the non-existence of violence is one of the facets of Indianness.

The present paper aims at showing how R.K.Narayan with all these centuries old Indian values of life, and being intellectually challenged by the western ways of looking at life finally turns out to be a Hindu mystic in *The Vendor of Sweets*. The novel begins with a direct reference to the fundamentals of the Vedanta philosophy. Jagan, the protagonist of the

novel addresses to his cousin saying that he should conquer his taste and then only he will succeed in conquering his self. The novel begins, “Conquer taste, and you will have conquered the self”(p.1). According to the Hindu Script, once a man succeeds in effacing his own self, i.e., the annihilation of his own ego, he finds no difference between him and any living organism. He finds the presence of the divine in every object of the Universe. To him then, violence or aggression, abhorrence or dislike in any form to anyone, is self-destructive. Thus, the introduction of the protagonist in the novel at the very beginning by R.K.Narayan makes his readers feel that the protagonist is a typically Hindu saint.

But as the novel progresses a reader hardly overlooks that Jagan, the protagonist of the novel is full of contradictions. In the one hand, he champions the need of ‘self-effacement’ and frequently refers to the name of Gandhi , and on the other, like a smart business man he reduces the price of the sweets and sells his daily stock of sweets within a short time. The cook and other employees in his shop think that Jagan resorts to this policy only to win the market. He is very much interested in making money by temporarily lowering the price of sweets for ousting other sweet-sellers from the competitive market or even by evading sale tax to the Government. The authorial comment on Jagan’s interest in money-matter is relevant:

Jagan gave a final look at the cash in the drawer, locked it carefully, tugged the handle four times, . . . He put a huge brass lock on the door, turned the key and put it in his pocket, and said,” Captain ! See if the lock is all right”.(p.14)

The comment made by the narrator here leads readers to consider Jagan either a man of contradictions or a hypocrite who professes one thing and practices something else. He thus wearing the mask of a so called religious Hindu goes on accumulating wealth by even evading sale tax to the Government. He seems to be a champion of the principle of Mahatma Gandhi. Let us see what the narrator says on Jagan’s reluctance to pay sale tax to the Government:

He had a habitual, instinctive, and inexplicable uneasiness concerning tax. If Gandhi had said somewhere, “Pay your sales tax uncomplainingly,” he would have followed his advice, but Gandhi had made no reference to sales tax anywhere (to Jagan’s knowledge) (p.111)

However, William Walsh characterizes Jagan with a little bit of sympathy. He comments:

Jagan is both a comic and an anguished figure: comic in his innocent combination of commercial sharpness, fiscal duplicity, vanity, and genuine reverence for Gandhian spirituality; anguished in his lacerated relationship with his sullen, brutish son Mali. (R.K.Narayan, p.159)

His greed for money ludicrously combined with his commitment to the Gandhian principle of life reveals, no doubt, his hypocritical state of mind. A careful reading of the text reveals that Jagan is not comic in his outlook. He is shrewd enough to assert his patriarchal hegemony.

Jagan experiences three tier responses to the East-west confrontation. His strong stand against the European way of life is the first response. Being the head of the family he believes that his opinion is final and decisive. He is very demanding. He wants everyone in his family to follow what he asks him to do. He believes that the physical ailments of his wife will surely be healed by the medicinal prescription of the Ayurvedic 4 system of herbal treatment. His wife on the contrary is in the habit of taking pills regularly for her headache. Jagan has least belief in Allopathic treatment. In his personal life he dislikes sugar; instead of sugar he takes twenty drops of honey every day, he brushes his teeth by margosa twigs. He hates toothbrush and paste. He hates “intolerable European habit”. And he wants his wife to follow him rigorously. He is a typically Hindu patriarch who believes that his say in every decision of the members of his family is final. He expects his wife and his son to obey what he thinks good or bad.

The second response to the East-West confrontation makes him a little bit confused and confounded when he finds that his son wants to quit the college. Mali decides to quit the college because he does not like college education. He wants to be a creative writer and for this reason he wants to go to America for joining a course on creative writing. Jagan becomes very upset. By that time his wife dies. Naturally, like a typically doting Indian father Jagan becomes emotionally dependent upon his son. After the death of his wife, Jagan looks very much concerned about the well-being of his son. He starts cooking regularly for his son. But Mali is very much reluctant to see his father cooking for him. He asks his father to engage a domestic help; so that he can cook for them. At this Jagan becomes very much upset. The conversation between the father and the son in this context is interesting to note:

“I don’t believe in engaging any cook”.

“Why not?”

“Do we engage a servant to do the breathing for us? Food is similar”.

“Oh, Father! Father!” the boy cried, “Don’t you engage cooks in your sweetmeat shop?”

“Oh, that’s different. It’s like a factory and they are specialists and technicians” said Jagan, giving full rein to his imagination. (p24)

Here Jagan is truly a Gandhite who believes that one should do one’s everything including washing one’s clothes, preparing one’s own food, cleaning one’s house where one lives, etc. One should not depend on others in one’s daily life. Even one should make one’s clothes by Handloom, i.e., Charka.⁵ Jagan runs his Charka every day. The son and the father belong to two generations. Jagan’s affection to his son is overprotective and it is typically Indian. Jagan cannot conceive of the idea that this overprotection tends to overshadow his son’s normal growth.

Jagan does not accept what his son plans for his career, nor does he openly oppose him. It is a kind of emotional as well as spiritual predicament that confronts him. It is almost impossible for him to think how his son takes decisions about his own career independently.

At the same time he becomes helpless to oppose what his son wants to do. ‘An invisible barrier’ between the father and the son gradually grows. With deep anguish Jagan finally assents to what his son, Mali, plans to do. It is with his deep-rooted expectation that Mali will acquire the appropriate knowledge in America and return to India. He will thus boost up his father’s social prestige.

Jagan’s expectation after his son’s return to India is further confused. First, it becomes very difficult for him to accept Grace as his daughter in law. Mali introduces Grace saying, “This is Grace. We are married. Grace, my dad ... Married? When were you married? You didn’t tell me. Don’t you have to tell your father? Who is she?” First of all, to a typical Indian father who believes in Indian heritage, a son cannot marry a girl without the prior consent of his father. Marriage is an arranged one among Hindus. The entire marriage process must go through rigorous religious rituals in presence of parents and social gatherings. Second, the Brahmanical cult of the Hindu society does not permit any inter-caste marriage even among Hindus. The Hindu society is caste-divided. The third is more sinful even than the first two. A Hindu cannot marry a person of different religion. If he does, he ceases to be a Hindu. A reference to one Hindu code of conduct is that a Hindu once visits England or America or any part of the world outside the Indian sub-continent, he no longer remains a Hindu. To be a Hindu again, he needs to expiate through a particular religious ceremony, i.e., Prayaschitto. 6 Jagan later knows that Grace’s mother is a Korean and her father an American. And she is a Christian. How can he then accept Christian Grace as his daughter in law? Mali upsets Jagan’s innermost realities of life. They all start living together in the same house. On one occasion Jagan wants to talk to his son and he asks Grace to inform him of the interview. Grace goes up to Mali’s room, returns within a few minutes. She tells Jagan to wait fifteen minutes because Mali is busy with his type-writer. In the present social or family context both in India and abroad this event is very common. But to Jagan it is very humiliating. He is conditioned to the age-old custom that a son under no circumstances can ask his father to wait even for a minute. Seeking appointment with son is beyond his imagination. But he does it and gets such an arrogant reply from his son. After a couple of minutes, Grace leads him to Mali’s room. Here the novelist uses a noteworthy phrase in his comment, “Jagan took the visitor’s chair, looked for ...” (p.76). The phrase “visitor’s chair” is significant. Jagan being the father of Mali cannot be a visitor to his son’s room. I refer to these events in this context to show the difference in the ethos of two cultures, i.e., the traditional Indian culture and the culture of the West. Tension in Jagan’s mind mounts up gradually by insignificant events like these.

Jagan’s anxiety grows further when he comes to know that Mali wants to start a business at that tiny town in collaboration with an American company and for doing that he wants his father to be a partner of his company against the payment of ‘a little over two lacs of rupees’. With his father’s money he wants to buy the ‘story-machine’. Mali even without his father’s consent prints Jagan’s name in the brochure of his proposed company. Jagan finally confesses that he is not interested in investing that money in this entrepreneurship

with the argument that “Gandhi always advocated poverty and not riches (p.89).The result is an emotional encounter between the father and the son. Indeed this is an encounter between two attitudes to life.

Finally the tension and anxiety arising out of this encounter between the two modes of life reaches the climax when Mali announces that Grace will go back to America. Jagan cannot make out any connection between his decision of not spending any money for his son’s business and Grace’s going back to America. Jagan with all his bitterness has accepted Grace as his son’s married wife. But when he hears Mali saying, “She has come here for the project, to work with me; didn’t you see her name in the notice?” he is now totally confused. He is unfamiliar with what Mali thinks about his wife. Jagan’s world always asserts that “a wife must be with her husband, whatever happens” (p.127).The concept of separation between wife and husband is alien to Hindu belief. Later on, he discovers that Mali and Grace are not even institutionally married and this totally disorients him. He is shocked to see that his son has ‘tainted his ancient home’ by living together in sin. This ‘East-West Encounter’ is the text of R.K.Narayan *The Vendor of Sweets*. The following conversation between Jagan and his cousin is interesting in this context:

The cousin gave a clear-headed statement. “Get through their marriage very quickly in the hill temple. It can be arranged within a few hours”.

“Alas, I don’t know what her caste is; so how can I?”

“Oh, she can be converted. I know some persons who will do it”. (p.139)

One can be a Hindu by birth only. Grace cannot be converted into Hinduism according to the strict rule of this religion but with the change in Indian society in the later part of the nineteenth and the twentieth century because of the British colonization of India and western exposure through English, a mode of compromise formula has been evolved for the sake of individual’s convenience, hence the reference of conversion of Grace into Hinduism. Jagan has lost his wife. Nobody in his extended family likes him. He is totally ostracized by his brother and sister. His affection for his only son Mali circumstantially leads him to think of Grace’s conversion into his religion and subsequently solemnizing their marriage through Hindu rituals for social acceptability. This scheme suggested by his cousin is not materialized. Jagan starts living in his house making him totally insulated from the other part of the house where Mali lives. Even Jagan is not aware of whether Grace has left for America or not. Jagan’s second tier response to the East-West confrontation reaches the climax at this stage resulting in an expected turn in his later life.

Instead of accepting his son’s way of life, Jagan becomes totally a different person. The third and final response of Jagan to East-West confrontation is very natural. He becomes a Hindu mystic. The novelist at this moment of Jagan’s emotional predicament as a devout Brahmin shows how the protagonist repeatedly remembers that he is sixty years old and he may live another twenty years at the most. This is very significant in the context of his attitudinal change in his life. According Hindu religion a man’s life is divided into four

stages and they are Brahmyacharjya, Garhasta, Banoprasto and Sannyas 7. Jagan has reached the stage of Sannyas in his life; so he should be in search of deliverance through renunciation of the life and this world. R.K. Narayan sees a well of inspiration within himself. An excerpt from *The Vendor of Sweets* is relevant to the context:

An hour later, after his morning ablutions and nourishment, he came out of his house carrying a little bundle, in which among other things was included his charka. "It's a duty I owe Mahatma Gandhi. I made a vow before him that I would spin every day of my life. I've got to do it, whether I'm at home or in a forest. (p.176)

Finally he leaves his home and takes refuge in the mystic world of his own. Hindu mysticism is a realization of spirituality. Once a man is in the state of Sannyas, he starts pursuing direct religious or transcendental experience. He then tries to unite himself with the divine. He can also establish communion with the Absolute Reality or God through meditation which is trance-like. The spiritual search for this unique realization has nothing to do with his intellectual comprehension of the life and the world. It is a particular psychic state of mind which no other individual can share. Highly private and individualistic realization it is. A Hindu mystic is a lone person. The Veda, basis of this realization is his deep-rooted belief in the Hindu Scriptures like the Upanishads and the Gita. Towards the end of his life Jagan attains this mystic realization. A reference to the Bhagavad Gita in this context is relevant:

Perseverance in (seeking to gain) the knowledge of the Supreme Spirit, and perception of the gain that comes from knowledge of the truth: This is called knowledge: all that is contrary to this is ignorance. (The Gita, 13:11) (Website)

During the last phase in Jagan's life, i.e. Sannyas, he is in search of this Knowledge. This is the Knowledge of the Brahma. An attempt to explain this Knowledge in terms intellectual perspectives will be futile. He does not even care for his only son when he is arrested by the police for keeping 'half a bottle of alcohol in his car'. He develops a kind of indifference to all worldly affairs. Towards the end of the novel, Jagan says:

I don't care what he does. I am going to watch a Goddess come out of a stone. If I don't like the place, I will go away somewhere else. I am a free man. I've never felt more determined in my life. I'm happy to have met you now, but I'd have gone away in any case. Everything can go on with or without me. The world doesn't collapse even when a great figure is assassinated or dies of heart failure. Think that my heart has failed, that's all. (p.184)

Jagan attains the mystic realization of the Hindu concept of life. Tolerance to everything and to everybody is in conformity to the Brahmanical tradition of India. Even he accepts Grace and Mali as his son and daughter-in-law. His fatherly affection to them leads him to make this compromise. He still believes that it is a sinful deed they have committed. This is his deep-rooted conviction. So he physically as well as emotionally insulates him from his son and daughter-in-law. Out of curiosity, one day he peeped through the window another portion of his house where his son and Grace live. Mali sees that his father tries to trespass to his private life by peeping through the window. In fact he then snubs his father

saying if you want to see how we are and what we do in our room you could have easily knocked the door of my room. Even after his son's arrest by the police, Jagan's concern for his son is undeniable but at the same time he is determined that he must go renouncing everything of life. This transformation in his attitude to life is neither abrupt nor casual. The East-west encounter and its consequent tension which R.K.Narayan has experienced in his own life has been reflected in the character of Jagan. ■

Notes:

.....Vedanta philosophy is one of the important systems of Hindu, particularly monistic philosophy—the philosophy that is based on the Upanishads. The Vedanta philosophy asserts the divine is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. According to this philosophy a man is born in this world to complete his unfinished work. He goes on working his specified jobs through several births. Once he completes his work he is then united with the divine. The soul is indestructible. Even death cannot destroy the soul. So every death is a re-birth. The following lines of a poem written by Wordsworth

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who our home;
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!

shows the poet's belief in the pre-natal or ante-natal existence of the Soul---the belief which is one of the fundamentals of the Vedanta philosophy.

The Ayurvedic system of treatment pertains to Hindu medical tradition. Ayurvedic is also a science of life. The Vedic philosophy believes that human beings are the inseparable parts of nature and the treatment is totally based on herbal medicine. "The Ayurveda dates back an estimated 5,000-10,000 years and is widely considered to be the oldest form of health care in the world".

.....The charkha or spinning wheel is a symbol of non- violence, freedom and economic growth during the time of freedom movement in India. The Charka is an emblem of self-reliance and it is a sure source of earning for the rural Indian folk. It adorns the flag of the Indian Congress.

.....Prayaschitto, according to the Vishnu Puran of the Hindu religion, means "expiation". If one commits anything sinful one needs to make Prayaschitto or Expiation which involves with a kind of religious rituals.

..... Brahmyacharjya, Garhastha, Banoprasto and Sannyas are the four stages in the life of a Hindu according to the Veda and a true Hindu needs to pass through all these four stages of his life in this world for his spiritual fulfillment. During the period of the Brahmyacharjya i.e., from his childhood to the youth, a Hindu, according to the caste to which he belongs, will either learn skills or attain knowledge, e.g., if he is a Brahmin, he should study the Vedas and other Classics all written in Sanskrit. This period is called Brahmyacharjya. The Garhastha, begins with the marriage of a Hindu. After marriage he should take care of his family. He must help his progenies develop both economically as well as spiritually. He is then a complete family man performing all his duties to the members of his family. The third stage i.e., Banoprasto is a preparatory period in the life of a Hindu for going into Sannyas. During this period of Banoprasto he will try to gradually withdraw himself from all mundane affairs of life. The final stage in the life of a Hindu is Sannyas that means total renunciation of everything worldly. During this period of his life, i.e., the last phase in his life, his only aim is to travel to the next life or to the domain of the divine by “crossing the bar” much as Lord Tennyson conceives of death as leading him ‘to see my Pilot face to face’ ■

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Banned Odia Literature by Britishers: A Study

Chittaranjan Bhoi

If we ponder over the history we witness the coloniality of the colonial empire which gave birth to nationalist literature, patriotic literature and protest literature during British rule in India. The enforcement of stringent and inhuman British rule over the years snatched away the identity of the Indians. The quest for identity became the major concern of the colonised Indians. However, Odisha's Contribution in freedom movement can never be ignored.

The history of British Odisha is quite horrific. I am from a land that witnesses the 1st organised Freedom movement known as Paika Rebellion started 40 years before the historic Sipahi Mutiny of 1857. To bring an end to British rule in India, many poets, writers, activists and artists have contributed immensely. They have seen that all, horrors and brutality of the British Raj, trials and tribulations of the impoverished Indians, sorrows and sufferings, plights and predicaments of millions of Indians and their untiring protest against British hegemony. They have been a part of it all with just pen in their hands, not just pens but the sentinel of their conscience, voice of the speechless masses and cry for the social flux and reform and voice for justice against intimidation and exploitation. Nevertheless, their attempts to bring forth the misery of the millions of Indians and their sacrifices are candidly reflected in their writings. They are the guiding force who paved direction to the Indians voice against British Raj. Those legendary literary figures should be commemorated and paid tribute but for whose sacrifices we would not have enjoyed the bliss of Independence. American poet Longfellow justifiably says:

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Foot prints on the sand of time. (*Henry Wordsworth Longfellow*)

It is time to remind the contributions of those heroes of our nation who have left their foot prints for us to follow to make our life sublime, meaningful and worth living.

Indeed, the poets and writers maligned by the Britishers and even much derided by the tyrants were unanimously acclaimed as the human encyclopaedia of renaissance. The

clarion call of independence pricked the conscience of many poets and writers and compelled them to write to instil nationalism and patriotic feeling among Indians. It would be a sacrilege and blasphemy if we do not reckon their contributions. But it is difficult to recount every one's contribution and place them in a few pages. An attempt has been made to highlight some literary figures who really ignited the Indians to come forward and join organised freedom movements and therefore chastised by the British. Their writings really acted like an ignition spark to set fire to the British supremacy in India. The literatures of pre-independent India bring back to our memory the realistic picture of the colonial India. The disproportionate adulation and derisions of the literary figures and the native Indians were grounded on an imperfect understanding of the pith and core of their identity crisis and social concerns which took the form of resistance against the colonial power.

Many poets and writers were sentenced imprisonment and their literatures were banned by British on sedition charges. Many journals, periodicals, books and pamphlets were banned by British for variety of reasons. Indeed, an effort has been made to glorify some Odia poets and writers who created an impact on the Odias by their priceless literary creations.

Saint Abhiram Paramhansa is one such Odia writer who not only got arrested and jailed for his patriotic and nationalistic writing. His immortal book *Kali Bhagabat* was banned by the Britishers so as to cease his patriotic voice. He was deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. As a saint, he was not simply propagating religion but raising his voice against injustice, bigotry, lawlessness and exploitation of the British rule in India. *Kali Bhagabat* was a missile against the tyranny of the Britishers. This invaluable book carried the message of India's freedom. It was written in 1929 and completed in 1932. Paramhansa predicted that under the dynamic leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, India will get its independence which became true later. He was the ardent follower of Gandhi's doctrine of Ahimsa and Satyagraha. Unfortunately he was sentenced one year imprisonment in Rajmandri Jail for his patriotic writing and nationalistic motivation. His book *Kali Bhagabat* was banned through gadget notification on 30th April 1934 by the then Madras Government. Britishers harboured the impression that the book contained several pages of salacious matters intended to bring into hatred and contempt. Perhaps the following lines and many such lines created fear in British camp and therefore he was jailed.

“If the satyagrahis get united, all disputes will be subsided
Europeans will leave; Mohan's army will drive them out” (*Kali Bhagabat*)

However, the ceaseless voices continued on and on till his death on 27th November 1963.

Poet Birakishor Dash is another great nationalist poet of Odisha who jumped into action with his mighty pen. I am prompted to delineate the contribution of Birakishor Dash. Poet Dash was a vociferous supporter of Mohatma Gandhi's doctrine and ideology. However, the powerful poetry collection of Birakishor titled *Banambar* (pseudonym), *Mohan Bansi*, later was published in Mukur press in 1922. All five thousand copies of the 1st Edition were

sold out in a few days time. The content of the poems illustrated the patriotic spirit, nationalistic thinking and voice against British oppression in India. Post-reading effect of the book and the message in it spread like a wild fire. When it came to the ears of British establishment, they started hunting the poet but their efforts went in vain as the poet's and the publisher's names were unreal. Though Birokishor was suspected yet no action could be taken as there was no evidence. The poems inspired millions and induced a kind of jingoistic spirit among the Odias. The Britishers faced a whiplash when almost all the youth of India got spirited and aggressive. Anticipating the mass agitation and protest by the Indians the book was banned. By then, Birakishor, the revolutionary poet had already spread the message among the Indians. His *Mohan Bansi*, *Bidrohi Bina* and *Rana Dunduvi* are the collections that created sensation and put a match to the embryonic Indians. The translated lines of his poem read:

Enemy has not left yet, war is not over
Brothers, please come to my camp!
Sound is heard at Himachal
But there is no fear at all. (Bidrohi Bina)

Such lines really tempted the Indian youth to escalate the protest against the unjust English rulers. The British Government, considering the books of Birkishor Dash provocative and inflammatory, banned all those. Two more poems "Rana Bheri" and "Rana Dunduvi" of the same poet were also considered seditious and therefore banned.

Banchhanidhi Mohanty was one of the few literary icons who had galvanised people against the atrocity of the then government by his fiery and thought provoking poems which had stimulated the people. He was born on 20 April 1897 in village Eram, known as 'Jallianwala Bagh of Odisha' in the district of Bhadrak. This revolutionary poet of Odisha is aptly compared with Qazi Nazrul Islam, the illustrious revolutionary poet of Bengal. His poem "Kaha kaha keun jati paichhi mukati kari huri hari guhari" touched the sentiment of the youth of the generation and got approbation and chanted everywhere by the Odias. The message in this poem was loud and clear. The poet did not like to beg freedom from the British rather he urged his fellow country man to voice against the British regime in India. This fiery song shuddered the British and therefore they banned the song.

Kuntala Kumara Sabat, known as Bulbul often compared with Saroini Naidu was a multitalented genius. She was a doctor by profession but literary artist by passion. She led the women movement in Odisha and fought for women liberation. An ardent follower of Mahatma Gandhi, Srimati Sabat penned down a lot of patriotic poems which influenced the youth of her time. Her collection of poems *Awahan* and *Spulinga* were considered atrocious and banned.

Ananta Patnaik, poet and translator of pre-independent India has been admired in the progressive Oriya poetry as a revolutionary poet. *Raktasikha*, his collection of poems

got readers admiration for its patriotic substance and nationalistic approach. He was deprived of getting education in Ravenshaw College for his revolutionary writing. His radical nationalism made him a firebrand revolutionary. His writings were provocative and inspirational which put the British in trouble. The anthology *Rakta Sikha* (Blood flame) too was considered atrocious.

Sachi Routray, the architect of modern Odia literature has his own technique of writing poetry the essential element being its address to the oppressed. In some of his poems like “*Raktasikha*” (Flames of Blood) he has raised his voice of protest against exploitations of the whites in India. Many of his poems are clarion calls to the struggling masses to come out of the cages of servitude. Another poem of Routray’s is *Baji Rout*. Translation of the aforesaid book by Harindra Nath Chattopadhyaya into English became a precious collection in Indian literature. The poem is about the martyrdom of a 12-year old boy of Bhuban in Dhenkanal. The boy who gallantly laid his life at the hands of the British police has emerged as an emblem of true sacrificial grandeur on the canvas of unkindled futurity. This is an immortal creation of Sachi Routray as it has kindled the hope and aspiration among the people who were tyrannized by the British as well as the feudal overlords of Dhenkanal districts of Odisha. Sachidananda Routray was not only a poet but a humanist and a visionary as well. His poetic crusades release a sense of freedom and aggressiveness. Routray’s staunch faith in man, his assertive protest and dissent against man’s frustration and despair and his undying dreams for man’s social salvation make him truly a poet of the people.

Beside these poets and writers many others too register their claim for admiration for their contribution. To name a few other nationalist publications were “*Palasira Abasana*”, “*Swarajyara Daka*”, “*Pataka Uttolana*”, “*Jatya Sangeeta*”, “*Hindu Muslim Akata*”, “*Lunamara Geeta*”, “*Veera Vidrohi*” etc. These literary pieces not only motivated people but also made the Government nervous and scared. In order to subjugate the Odias, British Government banned some of the books such as *Bharatere Engraja Raj* of Guru Charan Patnaik, *Lunamara Geeta* of Laxmikanta Mahapatra, *Veer Vidrohi* of Ramprasad Sing, *Palasira Abasane* of Harekruhna Mahatab and *Swarajya Pala* of Nityananda Mohapatra and so on. Even the leaflet/pamphlet like *Nimantrana* and *Rastriya Taranga* were also banned. Even the Odia newspapers like *The Samaj*, *The Prajatantra* were indirectly banned as the Government promulgated a stringent press ordinance to curb these two dailies. Through the ordinance the Government raised the amount of security deposit incredibly high and consequentially these two dailies were forced to suspend their publication.

Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das and **Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das** also triggered the spirit of the Odias to fight against the British administration in India. Though their books were not banned, yet, they confronted the British with vehemence and therefore they were jailed. Their provocative writing and speeches disturbed the British establishment to a greater degree. Many other poets and writers and their works are still unexplored. Thus it is the right time to commemorate such sacrificing characters and their literary contributions. The discourse will be fructified if serious attempt is made to explore the unexplored poets

and writers and steps taken to revive and introduce their invaluable nationalistic poems and prose pieces in school, college and university curriculum so as to instil nationalist spirit among the Indian citizens. ■

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Reconfiguring Within and Beyond : A Study of Literary Influence

Nishamani Kar

The word ‘influence’ is ambiguous; it implies both a fact and a value-judgement. Influences are usually individual one-to-one relationships - kinships by association. There are recognisable facets of ideational correspondence, formal affinity, stylistic resemblance, or demonstrated imitation, which lead us to conclude that an influence exists. It is a commonplace of criticism that where conventions are extensive, impacts are intense. Contrarily it would be hardly adequate to state that Virgil influenced Dante when so many other elements stood by and what was operative was the authority, clout and continuity of a tradition. One indeed steals from single works, not traditions. But it is also true that certain poems or characters incarnate traditions and symbolise other poems or epitomise other characters. Inevitably, foundational texts of authors (for example, Mill’s *On Liberty* or Homer’s *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*) or characters (such as Hamlet or Faust as they pass from the literary to the legendary) make inroads into another. Also, when influences spread and amalgamate and become the air many writers breathe simultaneously, they ought to be called something like conventions. In other words, literary conventions are not only technical prerequisites but also fundamental, collectively shared and comprehensive influences.

Nevertheless, we tend to think of conventions synchronically and traditions diachronically. A cluster of patterns forms the literary vocabulary of a generation, the repertory of possibilities that a writer has in common with his living rivals. Traditions involve the persistence of certain conventions for several generations and writers’ competition with their ancestors. These collective “available influences” permit and regulate the writing of a work. But they also enter the reading experience and affect its meaning. Eventually, this study would help define a usual working procedure for comparative experts to suspect and establish what they understand by influence*. Hopefully, this would negotiate to reveal a general agreement on what is understood by the concept of influence while providing the veritable ground for illumination in search of a comprehensive theory of Comparative Literature.

Keywords: Literary Tradition: Anxiety of Influence: Extinction of Personality: Death of an Author: Intertextuality: Comparative Literature

William Wordsworth, in the critical text of Romantic poetics, the ‘Preface’ to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), urged that “all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion; recollected in tranquillity.” (This is nothing if not categorical—unproven and un-provable. When Wordsworth advocated the cause of self-expression as the quintessence of poetry, his contemporary John Keats referred to himself as a “chameleon Poet”: “the poet has . . . no identity—he is certainly the most un-poetical of all God’s Creatures.” Keats, in 1818, had already propounded his own “impersonal theory of poetry,” one that we indubitably acknowledge. He wasn’t the only poet partial to such pronouncements. It is a convention of poetry treatises to provide a memorable image of the poet and his role. Percy Bysshe Shelley’s “Defence of Poetry” (written in 1821 and published posthumously in 1840) attests the same: the poet is like an unconscious medium connecting the spirit and human realms. For Eliot, the poet doesn’t serve as a medium but has a medium: “The poet has, not a ‘personality’ to express,” Eliot writes, “but a particular medium . . . and not a personality.” Certainly, Eliot knew how to create a memorable image.

In “Tradition and Individual Talent”, Eliot’s idea of the poet is equally atypical: “I . . . invite you to consider, as a suggestive analogy, the action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide.” That is the last sentence of the September instalment of the essay—a real cliff-hanger, by literary-critical standards. Eliot solves the riddle for us early in the December conclusion: “The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum.” That is to say; it’s a catalyst; it creates the conditions under which the two gases combine to form a new compound. (Critics would point out that the resulting compound is not, as Eliot states, sulphurous acid but sulphur trioxide. But never mind that.) The catalyst, which is the platinum here, isn’t affected by the reaction, nor does any trace of it appear in the new compound. But without it, the reaction does not occur.

Similarly, Shelley writes of the poet, “the influence which is moved not, but moves.” Eventually, Eliot explicitly rejects that formula, calling it “inexact”: “it is neither emotion, nor recollection, nor, without distortion of meaning, tranquillity.” Instead, Eliot insists, “Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality.” And then the rim-shot, at which Eliot excelled: “But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.”

In another of Eliot’s descriptions, the poet’s mind is “a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together.” On this score, the essay seems to have cleared the critical ground for “The Waste Land”—a pastiche of quotations, echoes and parodies; a poem that carried footnotes. Often considered plagiarism by some blackhole critics, this espouses the “impersonal theory of poetry”: “The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.” So, poetry has nothing to do with self-expression, inspiration, or originality, as customarily understood; the measure

of the poet's art is the pressure he brings to bear on the available raw materials given shape by the precursors. Auden's lines on the legacy of W. B. Yeats are relevant here: "The words of a dead man / Are modified in the guts of the living."

The disquiet thus caused by the 'dead man' (parent author) within the latter author (child author) brings a type of literary criticism established by Harold Bloom in 1973 in his book, "The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry". It refers to the psychological struggle** of aspiring authors to overcome the anxiety posed by the influence of their literary antecedents. Bloom's central thesis is that poets are hindered in their creative process by the ambiguous relationship they necessarily maintain with precursor poets. While admitting the influence of extra-literary experience on every poet, he argues that "the poet in a poet" is inspired to write by reading another poet's poetry and will tend to produce work that is in danger of being derivative of existing poetry and, therefore, weak. Because poets historically emphasise an original poetic vision to guarantee their survival into posterity, the influence of precursor poets inspires a sense of 'approach-avoidance conflict' (Kurt Lewin's phrase) in living poets. We may corroborate Bloom's central principles here: "Poetic Influence - when it involves two strong, authentic poets - always proceeds by misreading the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation. The history of fruitful poetic influence, the main tradition of Western poetry since the Renaissance, is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature of distortion, perverse, willful revisionism without which modern poetry could not exist." Thus, Bloom attempts to work out the process by which the small minority of 'strong' poets manages to create original work despite the pressure of influence.

It is relevant at this point to remember the Sainte-Beuvian dogma that the work is the product of the author as the fruit of the tree. Incidentally, the comparatist critic tracing the fortune of work finds it plucked from its tree and the seed transplanted in a different climate. Inevitably, the book is freed of the bonds of authorship, making its fortune. The work can then be viewed on a broader aesthetic plane in a state of autonomy. Jaidev rightly observes thus:

In any literary text, influence is not a single, simple phenomenon: rather, several influences coexist, coalesce and clash: there are inter-literary, intra-literary, and also, at times, non-literary. Also, there are always degrees as well as kinds – creative and imitative, assimilated and superficial, strong and weak and so on of influence. Finally, all issues related to influence or reception can be seen linked with various socio-cultural ones having a bearing on the production of a text. (Jaidev: 129)

However, it is indicative of a formulation called "intertextuality" - the notion that the later writing is always an echo of the former, especially in a new context. Going back to Bloom again, the child author revises, displaces and recasts the writings of his precursor or parent author on account of the approach-avoidance conflict. In this sense, all literature appears to be intertextual; every text is an intertext, the text before it being a pretext. Thus,

every text takes shape as a mosaic of citations; every text is an absorption and transformation of other texts. (Culler: 139) Roland Barthes, in his salient essay “The Death of the Author,” claims the same way thus: “The text is a tissue of quotations . . . a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash.” Barthes’s multi-dimensional space sounds for all the world like Eliot’s description of the poet’s mind—but it’s even more purely impersonal than what Eliot had imagined. The space is no longer conceived as existing within the poet but without. It is the text itself.

To conclude, if one remains unaffected by others’ genius and stands inaccessible to others’ ideas, one renders oneself dull, dry and drab. New inspirations must be continually sought and novel ideas assimilated. (Kar: 12) True art, however, belongs to the entire human race, and one accomplishes the best in it when one connects with others and corrects its inhibitions, imperfections and idiosyncrasies while accommodating the freshness from outside without obviously surrendering its genius to servile simulation. ■

Notes:-

- A study of literary influence is very complex. In our pursuit of tracing the influence, we run the risk of rank aversions and irrepressible enthusiasms. The dilemma that confronts a literary critic is often vexed: should he remain content to indicate the similarities between two authors, his efforts are deemed superficial. His actions are eyed with suspicion if he is rash enough to discover an influence. It is precisely because the influence issue is so problematic that a sharper definition of its character and implications is warranted.
- From Bloom’s viewpoint, such ‘an agony’ depends on six distortive processes - ‘revisionary ratios’- which are based on Freudian ‘ego defence’ and the ‘tropes’ of classical rhetoric. In his view, we all read our precursors through the above categories and fail to know ‘the poem-in-itself’. All interpretation is a ‘necessary misprision, and all reading is a ‘misreading’. A weak misreading is an attempt doomed to fail in getting what a text means, while a strong misreading helps recast the text innovatively.

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Celebrating Motherhood as a Connection rather than a Crisis in Meera Syal's *The House of Hidden Mothers*: Changing Concerns of the Coloured Asian Women in Britain

Aindrilla Guin

Syal's second generation protagonists struggle hard to acculturate and far from retaliation or criticism, there is a strong attempt at connecting. The protagonists gradually proceed in their process of acculturation and try hard to connect with the characters from their homelands, who act as cultural specimen. Meera Syal's novels show a strong acculturation as the protagonists of her novels never wish to return to their homeland and instead find their home in the hostland. But for this the protagonists do not quit their cultural grounding in the homeland ethos and hence take up the Asian notion of togetherness in the family, selfless love for the parents and motherhood as a realization of South Asian identity. Though this had been an important issue in her novels *Anita and Me* and *The Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee*, her *The House of Hidden Mothers* explores motherhood from diverse angles. Beginning from functioning as a single mother, the protagonist Shyama considers having a child can provide the ultimate sanction to a relationship and through a series of adjustments becomes the selfless mother.

Keywords: identity, motherhood, acculturation, homeland, hostland, cultural ethos.

The diasporic novels touch upon diverse issues related to home-homeland, identity crises, the assertion of the self as one with the homeland, that they had never been to or the urge to acculturate and assimilate in the host land and realize one's dreams. There is a deep urge to connect to both the lands and failure to connect in most cases. The lack of identification and the dire attempt to connect makes these diasporic subjects struggle hard to create new possibilities and newer desires to create a home that would be entirely their own, an identification where they would give up the disruption and instead become a transformed individual through a series of encounters with both the nations. The processes of the land and its culture touch upon these characters and a matured individual, firm in her/his realization emerges. Similar is the case of the characters in the novels of Meera

Syal, the second generation South Asian British writer, actor, screenplay writer. In her three novels is revealed such struggles and quest for identity mostly by the women protagonists.

In *Anita*, the adolescent Meena, a girl of nine, “living in the fictional English village of Tollington...under the pressure of fitting in and being the perfect daughter,” (“Anita and Me Summary...”), aspires hard to assimilate in the host land society, and in this process becomes friend to Anita, the British girl, slightly older than her. Meena feels quite confident of herself in the company of Anita while encountering the host land and taking to her ways of eating tinned food and going round with boyfriends. The mooring of the homeland’s cultural ethos and understanding of her positioning in the new land makes her life problematic. It is with the advent of *Nanima*, her grandmother, an emblem of the East that her problems are resolved to a great extent. Though it might sound quite an over-simplified generalization, yet it can hardly be denied that this association between the two women (Meena and *Nanima*) over two different generations cures ailments and bridges emotional rifts. Under such a condition Meena undoubtedly recedes to her cultural background getting alienated from Anita. Though she does not assimilate and instead takes a step back in the drastic acculturation process, she has nonetheless found a home for herself in the hostland. Meena in *Anita and Me* writes of her acquaintances who are not, “blood relatives but connected by something deeper, India.”(*Anita and Me* 29-30).

In almost a similar note in *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee*, Chila, Tania and Sunita, the three women though of different sensibilities, come together in the search for their home in the new land. While Chila is quite comfortable with the traditional notion of Asian womanhood, Sunita stretches herself out to the host land culture and the trends of her ambience in the outer world, while fulfilling the demands of her family. Tania refutes the traditional concept of a good girl and instead poses a threat to Eastern sensibilities. But in the end the three women come together and form a world of their own as situations complicate. The three women stand in solidarity and fight out their existence in search of an identity. As Susheila Nasta in her *Home Truths* takes up Matthew Arnold’s stance in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) —

...home suggests order, cohesion, the stability of culture, whereas a state of ‘homelessness’ is its inevitable opposite, a negative and disenfranchised space where anarchy will persist and disrupt the security of tradition and State (2).

The myth of Trishanku applies very much to Syal’s characters when they are constantly pulled from both the ends. Meena in *Anita and Me* in spite of her deep affinity for Britain feels ashamed of herself as they as Asians are constantly made fun of by the native white people. The characters throughout Syal’s novels are steeped in the awareness of themselves as others in a British society where they do not exactly belong. As Meena in *Anita and Me* mentions:

Papa's singing always unleashed these emotions which were unfamiliar and instinctive at the same time, in a language I could not recognize but felt I could speak in my sleep, in my dreams, evocative of a country I had never visited but which sounded like the only home I had ever known. The songs made me realize that there was a corner of me that would be forever not England (*Anita* 112).

However the characters do not have any longing to get back to their homeland. Syal's characters in most cases had never been to India, their homeland, and hence cherish no desire to get to their land of origin. In *Anita and Me* the protagonist Meena is a second generation diasporic and so are the protagonists, Chila, Tania and Sunita in *Life Isn't*. However it is only with *The House of Hidden Mothers*, that there is a clear comparison made between the two worlds and there is also a journey to and fro from Britain to India and vice-versa. The characters throughout the text never long to get back in this novel as well, but far from being ashamed of being in the West amidst Western ethos and white people, the protagonist in *The House* finds a true companion in a white man, as against her Indian husband, though things change by the end. Going by the Asian notion of marriage, in *Life*, a character in her early thirties would never like to become intimate with her boyfriend. One of the protagonist trio, Chila would find being 'squashed in a dark corner with some strange bloke's tongue in my ear' (Syal, *Life* 31), most disgraceful. Instead she would only wish to indulge in sex after marriage. In *The House* the protagonist Shyama, a woman in her fifties, on the contrary is perfectly okay with her boyfriend, a man much younger to her and almost quite close in age to her daughter.

In *The House of Hidden Mothers* the house far from acting as a sense of security, harbours mothers. The protagonist Shyama the mother of a nineteen year old Tara resorts to surrogacy to become a mother for the second time, as she has an "inhospitable womb" (*The House* 13). As her aged mother Sita stays close by generating strength in her, she too tries to stay close to the surrogate Mala, the brown skinned young woman from India, who also contributes the egg for the fertilization, while Shyama's white boyfriend Toby is the biological father. As Shyama's house secures the life of both Tara, her daughter, and Mala, the surrogate, Shyama ultimately turns out to conform to the Asian notion of sacrificing mother when she realizes Toby and Mala with their biological child gestating in the mother's womb would make a perfect couple—

...it was Mala and Toby who had created a life together...no matter who claimed the child, they would be indivisible in thought and memory and longing for what might have been. Mala, Toby and their son (*The House* 401).

The mother-child factor comes up repeatedly in Syal and it is always the mother who acts as the comforting factor, the mooring for the child. On the other hand the child too acts as the strength for the mother who confronts the prejudices and disruptions of her present state by dint of this strong bonding which forms the cocoon where the identity and self find their

centre. The centre and the fulcrum of the individual existence finds its core in such relationships which initially begin with the Asian notion of family and friendship ties, but gradually transcend to become the taut ground where the personal becomes political, where exchange of simple familial and societal ties gets represented in strange equations.

The numerous openings that a woman has are limitless. Unlike her male counterpart she can stay connected to the world through her children. In the novels of South Asian British diasporic women authors like Syal's *The House of Hidden Mothers*, Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, Tahmima Anam's *A Golden Age*, make it quite clear that a woman can find a locus through her children or connect to the outer world. However at the same time they can stay confirmed in their own cultures and ethos of homeland through which they might act as the functional part of the social community in the diaspora. The characters throughout Syal's text never wish to prove their presence in the land, but only to get a place, a society, a union with the land that would gradually grow and so on.

The presence of the men in Syal's fiction is negligible. The reference to Papa in *Anita and Me* or the reference to Chila's boyfriend and Sunita's husband in *Life* or the sympathetic white man towards the end of the novel *Life*, Mr Keegan are stray references which further bedim the male presence. Though most of them are Asian men, and Syal is never too far from Asian culture and totem, yet the elaborate presence of the white boyfriend Toby in *The House* is quite unique. Toby is a character and one who participates in her life, managing the household and being concerned about Shyama's nineteen year old daughter, who he advises and reprimands even. The white is endeared and accommodated inside the house. In spite of a lot of self-questioning and hindrances the mother in Shyama wants to be enlivened because of Toby. She wishes to become the mother to Toby's child and relive the dream of a house with husband and children. However by the end he turns out to be unfaithful and another blemish on Shyama's list of unreliable men.

The host lot of Asian characters throughout the novels struggle to work out a space for them in the new land in most diasporic fiction. However when it comes to the novels of Syal the narrative is particularly different as the characters seem greatly one with the ambience in the hostland. Dilemma can hardly be seen and what reveals is a series of characters that already belong to the hostland. Hostland is not the alien land, nor are the people alien. There is a strong oneness and a dependence which had never been present even with her husband in Shyama's case. As the British Council webpage on Meera Syal gives regarding the stance of Meena, the protagonist in her debut novel *Anita and Me*:

Despite being a child of the Indian Diaspora, Meena's narrative is distinct from the majority of diasporic writing in that it reveals an affection for the local village community, rather than the tropes transatlantic travel preferred by writers such as Salman Rushdie and V. S. Naipaul (British Council)

The characters all belong to the host land, whether Shyama or her daughter, they are all of this land. The homeland culture yet remains, and the feeling that a relationship between a

man and a woman can never reach its completeness unless there is a child acting as a bridge between the two seems quite close to the Asian notion of family. By the end Shyama's daughter settles down in India, and makes the homeland her workplace. As Esterino Adami, the veteran critic on Syal observes, "[t]he focal point in Syal's novel resides in the treatment of hybridity..." (Adami 152)

Meera Syal's *The House of Hidden Mothers* is a story about diasporic subjects where they wish to get back to their land of origin for some reason or the other trying to locate a home or get back to the pristine feel of a home in an Indian setting in one's loved land or amidst the land of one's ancestor or may be in a setting where one had built a home for him/herself. However the characters throughout the novels of Syal struggle hard to get to the core of their identity in a fashion that their identity becomes dependent on issues which manage to have a connection with the homeland. Shyama's state is to some extent explained by Roger Ballard in his *Desh Pardesh* where he talks about how immigrants accommodate in the diaspora in Britain,:

Thus even the most well settled may suddenly find themselves faced with irresolutely contradictory pressures as when they have to balance their obligations to care for ageing parents in the subcontinent against an equally strong commitment to support their British based offspring (Ballard 9).

This connection which is intricate and cannot be denied gets its jolt as the people of the homeland would not accept those who had settled down in the West either for money or better opportunities for themselves and their children. In *The House* the novel brings in a series of cases where the diasporic subjects find their lost homeland but not their homes. In most cases they are found betrayed by the greedy relatives who had been trusted.

The homeland versus host land controversy has undergone a twist in the changed scenario. The Western materialism versus Eastern spirituality, the benevolent east versus the corrupt West certainly does not hold good and the members of the family suffer from a sense of disruption. The members of the extended family in the homeland no more consider the diasporic Indians as part of their community. Instead they consider these people as well off and the moneyed class who should not lament over the loss of a single home constructed several years back.

Syal's *The House* has several striking issues, but certainly harps on the issues of home, hearth and to act as the epitome of it, the child. Motherhood is seen as the most challenging task and a glimpse of, "the infinite residing within the ordinary" (*The House* 26). Shyama's mother, Sita feels giving birth to a child is certainly noble but one cannot discard the reality that childbirth is full of hazards and difficulties. Shyama's longed for home loses its essence by the end. However this had not waned out the dream.

Throughout diasporic novels the second generation characters do not find an urge to get back to the homeland. They find their home wherever they go only because they have their children tethered to them, and it is their children who make a home for them. This

novel creates a strange environment where the woman from the homeland like the mother who is always waiting to help the child in need, the motherland cures the struggle of Shyama and lures her towards a happy life. However once again Mala destroys Shyama's dream of a happy home by stealing her boyfriend who ultimately completes her life and not Shyama's.

Motherhood which in a way acts as a hindrance in the path of a woman achieving her goals and aspirations in life, change to become the ground for acquisition. Such a nexus between women getting connected beyond boundaries makes a different world possible where homeland versus hostland gets overpowered by the connection possible. As Mala Pandurang a critic on women's position in the diaspora, in response to Robin Cohen's observation of diasporic groups (*Global Diasporas*) as retaining their loyalty and cultural affinity in the homeland, rightly comments under the sub-heading, "Spatial Connectors: The Problematic Umbilical Cord" (90)—

My interest lies in the power of such spatial connectors that originate in the home culture, but continue to shape female subjectivity even after the act of emigration (Pandurang 91). ■

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Living in Two Cultures: The Sorrows and Solaces of Migration

Sumithra Devi S.

Multiculturalism entails heterogeneity, diversity, difference and plurality within which immigrants retain their native cultural specificities, thereby resulting in fractured identities. The immigrant confronts multiplicity of selves and as a consequence, they vacillate between their multiple belongings to no sense of belonging at all. Contemporary diasporic discourse chronicles the doubly liminal, shifting and evolving terrains of diasporic realities. Migrant writers have explored the possibilities of the border zone where the migrant meets the host. This entails a working out of what to discard and what to preserve in the indigenous culture and the migrants' reaction to the adopted home. The aesthetic of dislocation created by writers of South-Asian origin evokes the anxiety, anguish and violence characterizing cross-cultural mobility and displacement. The multicultural trajectory of thought involves the possibilities of occupying two or more distinct worlds simultaneously, which is often accompanied by the emergence of a sensibility that is equally at home and abroad.

Keywords: fractured identity, liminal, third space, hybrid identity

In the modern era, "diaspora" has come to refer to the dispersion of any people belonging to a recognized nation or having a common culture. The state of homelessness and alienation in the new land are major concerns for the diasporic communities. More than physical, dislocation is a psychological process. The sorrows and solaces of migration have resulted in a search for non-territorial principles of solidarity among the diasporic communities. This has set the trend for defining diasporic subjectivity based on the current conceptualizations of identity politics such as hybrid effects, liminal or border zones, the "third time space" (Lavie 56) or the impure genre of the "hyphenated subject" (Mishra 433). The multiple cultural configurations of diaspora, according to Stuart Hall:

bear upon them the traces of particular traditions, languages and history by which they are shaped. The difference is that they are not and never be unified in the old sense, because they are irrevocably the product of several interlocking histories and cultures: belong at one and the same time to several homes. (310)

The diasporic consciousness, as expressed by the writers of the Indian diaspora, is seen oscillating between their multiple belongings to no sense of belonging at all. In fact, their authorial desires are kindled by the precarious liminal world they inhabit. This makes their writings, to borrow Uma Parameswaran's words, "doubly liminal" (98). Migrant writers have explored the possibilities of the border zone where the migrant meets the host. This

entails a working out of what to discard and what to preserve in the indigenous culture and the migrants' reaction to the adopted home. As diasporic writers, they are outsiders gazing at the new culture, but they are also outsiders in their homeland gazing at their past, at times nostalgically and at others, surprisedly, since their past space has altered in their absence.

Divakaruni, an award-winning poet and writer and co-founder and former President of MAITRI, a helpline for South Asian Women, served as a spokesperson of the Indian women in the United States through her writings which explore the innermost recesses of the protagonists' psyche. *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (2001) comprises nine stories out of which three are set in India. This paper is designed to make an analysis of the challenges of living in two cultures, the shifting and evolving terrains of diasporic realities as well as the continuing bonds with the old country in the six stories which figure Indian immigrants in the US from the author's native region of Bengal.

Robin Cohen, while enumerating the defining characteristics of a diasporic formation, mentions "the memory of a single traumatic event" (22) that sustains the diaspora in their new space. The traumatic experiences of Bombay riots and memories are what sustain Mira's diasporic self in "The Blooming Season for Cacti". Her journey for self-realization begins with the poignant experiences of the Bombay riots in which she loses her mother. Later, she responds positively to an invitation from her brother and escapes to America to live with him and her sister-in-law, as she "needed something as different as possible from Bombay" (169). She hopes that America might eradicate her past pains. Memories haunt her especially the memories of the days where she searched for her mother "through streets filled with the stench of kerosene and burned flesh, calling her name" (176). The trauma haunts her even while in America, especially the smell of the water tank in her Bombay house where she had to remain hidden for almost two days during the riots. However, her new space fails to offer a safe haven when her brother makes plans to arrange her marriage. She escapes to California from her brother's house in Dallas since she dreads marriage. She feels, "How could I tell them that when I thought of a man touching me, I smelled the water tank, smoke and corroding metal" (183). California poses new challenges to Mira in the form of Radhika and Ajith. Radhika reminds Mira of her own mother and she thinks of the different words to describe Radhika: "friend, sister, mother" (190-191). The mother image towers over the other images. The worst shock occurs to Mira when Radhika kisses her on her lips as she realizes that Radhika's bitter marital experiences have urged her to foster an unnatural relationship with her bordering on lesbianism. Mira feels that she is "being sucked into a vortex from which whispered words rise like ancestral ghosts, disgusting, perverted, unnatural" (201). Though indigenous values prevent Mira from indulging in a lesbian relationship, there occurs a phase in which she goes through what Kaur calls "cultural flowering while away" (56). She comes under the spell of liberal American norms and indulges in love-making with Ajith to explore "the possibilities of my new American life" (203). However, her hope to come to terms with her self through pre-marital sex proves to be disastrous as the experience of sex had been a disappointment.

Mira is thus unable to accept both the “absent topos” and the “present topos” (Mishra 16). In this sense, she conforms to the paradigms of diasporic subjectivity which Vijay Mishra terms, “the semantics of the hyphen” (16). The unresolved nature of her affiliations in relation to her homeland and hostland makes her identity severed/sutured and she occupies a “third time space” (Lavie 16).

Like Mira, Monisha in “The Love of a Good Man” escapes to America on a student visa for a new life and to rescue herself from the shame and emptiness caused by her father’s abandonment, her mother’s painful death due to cancer and the excruciating pain she felt when she had to light the pyre of her mother all alone. As Cohen says, the experiences that they had to go through in their homeland is one of the factors which determine “the nature of the diasporic group in its countries of exile” (22-5).

Monisha’s father left for America deserting his wife and his daughter for reasons not fully explained. Years later, he visits his daughter in California and expresses deep remorse for having abandoned her and her mother. She forgives him easily and in the process of exploring herself, realizes that her first mistake “lies in trying to find motive, in thinking of humans as rational beings whose actions spring from logical causes” (101). Monisha’s reaction to her father shows how she has shunned her past and has assimilated into the American culture completely.

The mixed notion of hybridity appears as one of the convenient models of diasporic formations in migration. Iain Chambers describes hybridity as the process of cultural mixing where the immigrants adopt the norms of the host culture and rework and reconstitute this in the production of a new hybrid culture or hybrid identities (50). Tarun in “The Intelligence of Wild Things” accepts American norms and reinterprets his native cultural code to acquire a new hybrid identity. Tarun was forcefully sent to America by his mother as she feared that he might get killed in the naxal movement in Calcutta. She even went to the extent of saying that “he was ungrateful, a burden” (42) which wounded Tarun. In America, his sister and his brother-in-law neglect him and this lack of affection on the part of his sister acts as a catalyst that compels him to shed his past identity to assume the identity of an American. To his sister, “even the expression on his closed face is so totally American” (41). His love affair with an American girl is another symbol of his transformed self. The initial and complete transformation of Tarun into an American widens the emotional gulf between the two, and the sister desperately feels the need to communicate to him that their mother is dying in India and that he must visit her. Towards the end of the story, Tarun’s transformed self undergoes yet another transformation when he comes under the influence of his native cultural values through the sight of a bird similar to the marsh crane, or *sharash* the way it is known in Calcutta. The bird stirs fond memories in him and he endearingly addresses his sister *Didi*. His sister, in turn, shows her readiness to reconcile with Tarun’s affair with the foreign girl and feels that the bird has flown straight from Bengal, out of the old tales to bring her a message that will save them both. Both Tarun and his sister acquire hybrid identities and strike a happy balance between their roots and routes.

The protagonist of the titular story “The Unknown Errors of Our Lives”, Ruchira, lends meaning to her diasporic self by strongly retaining native ties which Safran defines as “ethno communal consciousness” (83). Though brought up in America, she shows her firm belief in Indian legends and paints a series of mythic images. She used to visit India during vacations to see her grandmother whom she loves more than anybody else. She studied Bengali in order to correspond with her grandmother through letters. When her grandmother died, she takes to painting as a means of correspondence with her.

Ruchira paints pictures of “Hanuman, the monkey god, Kamadhenu, the magic cow” (222) and “Jatayu, who died to save Sita” (223) and paints her father, grandmother and her grandfather’s faces on these paintings respectively. Jatayu’s feathers are given the colours of the Indian flag; saffron, white and green. Her final painting is that of Kalpataru, the wish-fulfilling tree that she plans to give to her fiancé Biren, after their marriage, as a surprise wedding gift.

The critical period in Ruchira’s life surfaces when she confronts Biren’s past, when Arlene visits her and confides in her about her affair with Biren, which culminated in her pregnancy. Though at first, Ruchira decides to cancel the marriage, love works on her like a talisman when the voice mail on Biren’s cell phone greets her thus, “And in case this is Ruchira, I want you to know that I’m crazy about you” (233). She forgives Biren as he has already told her about the relationship, but she decides to paint the face of the baby in one of the birds on her painting of Kalpataru and muses, “And if Biren asks about him? This is what Ruchira wants from the Kalpataru, that when Biren asks, she’ll know how to ask him back” (235). It is Ruchira’s staunch faith in her roots and its values of tolerance and forgiveness that gives her the much needed anchorage in the host topos.

Migrant writings express issues such as uprootedness, nostalgia, alienation and adaptation. RaminderKaur observes, “In the relationship between home and away that marks out diasporic understandings, away signifies some sort of loss” (6). It is this sense of loss that defines the diasporic subjectivity of Mrs. Dutta in “Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter”. A first generation immigrant in the U.S., she is unable to sever her roots and come to terms with her routes. Her son Sagar, daughter-in-law Shyamoli and her grand-children Mrinalini and Pradeep, as representatives of second and third generation immigrants respectively, have assimilated into the western culture easily. They scoff at Mrs. Dutta’s Indian ways. After her husband’s death and with her only son in the United States, Mrs. Dutta had been leading an independent life in Calcutta. A thorough traditionalist, she comes to America to stay with her only son and family as she feels an intense longing to be with her grandchildren. The initial stages of her subjectivity are characterized by nostalgia, which coupled by the indifference shown by the members of the family weigh her down. In her mind, she writes to Mrs. Basu, her bosom friend, who is the only link she has to her hometown in Bengal, “Oh Roma, I miss it all so much, sometimes I feel that someone has reached in and torn a handful of my chest” (8).

Steeped in nostalgia, she tries to reconstruct her homeland in America by following traditional ways. She rises up at 5.00 a.m., offers prayers and cooks Indian dishes. All her attempts to create a miniature India are thwarted by Shyamoli. At this stage, Mrs. Dutta's identity remains unchanged through her "persistent ties with the old cult" (Weber 390). Mrs. Dutta grows past the phase of nostalgia, reminiscences and native country sentiments and strives hard to assimilate into the American culture for the well-being of her son's family. According to Driedger, "many immigrants would no longer wish to continue the traditions of the restricted old world, but would opt for the opportunities of the new. Openness to abandoning the restrictive past for future opportunities" (23) is common in ethnic changing patterns.

Mrs. Duttattempts her best to assimilate into the American culture. At times, she praises herself for this. In her mind she writes to Mrs. Basu, "I'm fitting in so well here, you'd never guess. I came only two months back. I've found new ways of doing things, of solving problems creatively" (17). In spite of all her attempts, Mrs. Dutta fails miserably in adapting herself to the ways of her adopted home. What she misses most is the strong sense of kinship of Indians, which is in sharp contrast to the etiquette in America, where "they don't like their neighbours to invade their privacy" (21-22). She is completely disillusioned when she hears Shyamoli bursting out with anger to Sagar that she can no longer tolerate Mrs. Dutta's old-fashioned ways. "In their day-to-day interaction with their children", says Wadhwa, "these first generation mothers of second generation Indian children are repeatedly reminded of the fact that they are Indian and their offspring, despite their Indian blood are American in their beliefs, outlook and style" (134). As a first generation immigrant, Mrs. Dutta realizes that she is an intruder to the bliss of her Indo-American son's family, "A silhouette- man, wife, children- joined on a wall, showing her how alone she is in this land of young people. And how unnecessary!" (33). She decides to return to her homeland to retrieve her long-lost happiness, in the company of Mrs. Basu.

In some diasporans, the liminal state is too prolonged or too excruciating to cope with and they may withdraw to their ancestral identity. One such instance is depicted through the character of Aparna in "What the Body Knows". Following her separation from her new born baby, she develops a brief phase of infatuation with Dr. Byron Michaels, who has performed her second surgery. But very soon her liminal self gives way to self-realization and she clings to her ancestral or native cultural norms. This brings her the eternal joy of her realization that her real joy is with her husband Umesh, who is the best husband, she thinks, she could have.

The six stories in *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* encompass the experiences of diasporic individuals. The characters who go through the challenges of bicultural pull enumerate the different methods of possible transitions within, between and among cultures for the people in the diaspora. Every character chronicles the angst, sorrows and solaces of displacement and mobility. A common concern seen among the immigrants is to lay claim to belonging. In some like Mrs. Dutta, nostalgia induces return motif, whereas in others like

Monisha, assimilation into the foreign culture bestows a new identity. Other stories feature hybrid, liminal and hyphenated subjectivities. Exploring the infinite possibilities of routes through an awareness of roots make their diasporic sojourn meaningful. The stories depict the conflicts between generations; the first generation that has its roots well-fortified and the second and third generations which have their routes defining their identities. As a diasporic text, *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* chronicles the painful process that the immigrants undergo in creating a new space in the adopted land, at the same time, acknowledging the homeland as a vital part of their existence. ■

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Reading Poetry as Cognitive Media: A Study of the Select Poems of Pradip Kumar Patra

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Pradip Kumar Patra is one of the contemporary Indian poets writing in English who has seven volumes of poems to his credit. His books are *Panoramic Shillong*, *Summer Implications*, *The Winding Path*, *Denouement*, *Dewy Morning*, *Midnight Divinity* and *The Rain Speaks*. Patra talks about Assam, Gangtok, Puri, Shillong etc. Poetry is one of the best media to highlight the value of time and significance of places. Not that we transform those from 'unknown' to 'known', we rather make those memorable and vibrant. These go to collective human memory which acts as an important addition to reality. The paper will explore the complex process and show how the mediation of media contributes to our existence and survival. The cognitive portrayal of varied time and distinct places configure Patra's visionary self.

Keywords: Media, Poetry, Time, Place.

Pradip Kumar Patra is one of the foremost poets of the 21st century. He has seven collections of poetry to his credit. He composes poetry in his own way. His synchronization of words corresponds to his poetic style. The basis of his composition rests on configuration of ideas, views and observations. The idea gets mediated with the use of various symbols and images. It tries to exemplify a picturesque beauty. Through his poetic cartography his seven poetry anthology namely *Panoramic Shillong*, *Summer Implications*, *The Winding Path*, *Denouement*, *Dewy Morning*, *Midnight Divinity* and *The Rain Speaks* emphasize on his poetic philosophy from different angles. At the background, the paper aims to discuss the similar issues in relation to a few English and Indian poets writing in English. It further applies the theory of poetry to delve deep into his poetic identity. The symbolic significance alludes to the phenomenon of truth and reality. The paper insists on the prospect of mediation between the meanings of the poems and its understanding by the readers.

Poetry acts as a media for representing reality. Clement Greenberg in *Towards a New Laocoön* calls poetry as a discourse that reflects on 'the opacity of its medium' (iii). Patra's poetic discourse stages an objective to intermingle truth with reality and nostalgia with memory. As a poet, Patra draws force and meaning not just from his exposure to reality,

but also from his study of various poets like John Keats, William Wordsworth and JayantaMahapatra. We live in a world where we shape our ideas, thoughts and impressions with the help of media. Patra's use of words like 'panoramic' symbolises existence and survival, 'summer' symbolises realisation, 'wind' symbolises force, 'denouement' symbolises loss of faith, 'morning' symbolises wonder, 'midnight' symbolises earthly consciousness, and 'rain' symbolises peace.

In each and every collection Patra aims to project a virtual image of the different objects and its association with the poetic self. The value added objects in his poems clarify his commitment towards preaching his poetic message to the mankind in general. It appears from his ideology that poetry is one of the best media to capture the true convergence of time and place. This convergence satisfies his impulse to deliver a kind of universal message to the humanity at large. David Wellbery writes in *Forward to Friedrich Kittler's Discourse Networks 1800/1900*: "Poetry, however, as the universal art, was permitted to reign over the universal medium of the imagination" (249). For Patra, poetry acts as an abstract in relation to its style, form, originality and ambience. He also says: "Mediality is the general condition within which, under specific circumstances, something like 'poetry' or 'literature' can take shape"(3). Patra's art of poetry suggests inclusion of thoughts and expansion of ideas.

In the book titled "New Ruminations in Indian English Literature" an article by Md. JoynalAbedin called 'Tradition to Modernity: A Comparative Study of the Poems of P.K. Patra and JayantaMahapatra' presents Patra's poems as a way of life and living. He clarifies how Patra tries to define life in the context of nature, history, memory, imagination, art and reality. He demonstrates the wake of modernity and sets to incorporate himself in the different enclaves of living. The article further discusses the intensity of his mind to recollect his past memory in order to understand the present. It also explores Patra's use of poetic images and symbols that perform as a kind of a media. "Romantic Sensibilities in P.K. Patra's Poetry" a journal article by DhanjyotiGogoi asserts Patra's belief that poetry acts as a tool and motivates everyone. It acknowledges the fact that poetry appears to be a kind of mental recourse for the poet. His use of imageries calls for an echo in recognition of his own self. The article heightens Patra's feelings and emotions that urge to understand and explore the distinct faculties of the meaning of poetry that serves as a medium. Again S.J. Wary in his article "Rain as a Symbol of *Elan Vital* in the Poetry of P.K. Patra" discusses about poetry that acts as a force for the poet. It centres on the symbolic significance of rain. The article talks about 'rain' that appears as a recurrent feature in his poetic endeavour. The article examines rain as a motivating life force that serves as a symbol of sustenance and rejuvenation. The picturesque beauty of rain represents Patra's assertion of circulating his promissory note through poetic words and phrases. His articulation of the beauty and truth of rain seems to be a precise one. B.K. Mahapatra in his article 'Landscape vis-à-vis Imagination and Thought: A Comparative Study of the Poems of David Brooks and Pradip Kumar Patra' writes about depiction of universal appeal in Patra's select poems. It deals with the maturity and experience of

Patra as a poet. It features the poetic language of Patra that unravels his visionary zeal. The cosmic experience of the poet gets clarity here.

Patra's experience as a poet draws his amount of pleasure and pain. His indefinable self receives great joy and pleasure. The memory of certain places invokes his unprecedented self to speak for the people in general. He views these places with the help of his memory. From this Patra derives pleasure even in pain. Poetry actually keeps on moving, shifting and alludes to different set of meanings. Aristotle writes in Chapter nine of *On the Art of Poetry*: "Poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals..." (Chapter 9). Patra's poems give an account of his emotions, thoughts and feelings. His import of his philosophy through words helps him to deal with universalism. He makes a universal appeal about the advent of time, place and action.

The paper explores the complex process and shows how the mediation of media contributes to our existence and survival. It also concentrates on the theory of poetry. William Wordsworth in *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* regards: 'Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquillity' (13). The poet also possesses a power to recollect and retrospect nostalgic perception and sentiments.

John Stuart Mill writes: "Poetry, accordingly, is the natural fruit of solitude and mediation; eloquence, of intercourse with the world" (1216). Patra's poetry mediates the correlation between time and place that again corresponds to the cognitive universal appeal. The meaning of 'time' in his poetry appears to be silent and meditative, long and progressive, prolong and sustained, growing and matured, sympathetic and expressive, noble and inspiring and intense and real. He projects his link with places like Shillong that gives him a true realisation, Assam and Golconda that gives him a feeling of belongingness towards a glorious present and a wonderful past, Gangtok, Kaldia and Puri elevates and awakens him, Orissa, Hyderabad and Osmania University enlightens him, Sanchi Stupa makes him feel liberated. By emphasizing upon the importance of time and place he urges to satisfy his quest for meaning in life, to validate the beauty and incredible reality of the various places, to uncover his extended self through the process of realisation, to get solace being intimate with the different places and to overcome loneliness with the passage of time.

Hayles writes: "Texts would routinely be discussed 'both' in terms of the conceptual content and their physical embodiments" (278). Further, he emphasizes on content and its understanding. As the line reads: "Meaning is thus built up out of the particular characteristics of written characters and their phonetic equivalents, as well as through higher-level considerations such as imagery, metaphor, etc" (286). The genre of poetry alludes to the synchronisation of text and context. Patra's poetic text displays his imaginative self and symbolic strategy.

The idea of visual imagery is also found in 'Ode to Autumn' by John Keats where Autumn symbolises truth and opportunity. He sees autumn as a force that empowers him in

communion with the universe. As the poem reads: 'Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,/ Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;.../And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core' (1-6). In pictorial terms, he attempts to envisage his idea about life and death through the picture of autumn. On a melancholic note he projects his subscription towards the beauty of nature and truth of life. Similarly Patra's poems manifest the prospect of visualizing nature in its existential reality. Patra tries to focus on the ultimate truth of human life in connection with nature.

On the other hand, Wordsworth's 'The Rainbow' symbolises his prosperity as a worshipper of nature. The view of a rainbow provides him immediate charm. His spontaneity as a poet comes from his sustainable relationship with spirituality in nature. As he writes: 'My heart leaps up when I behold/ A rainbow in the sky' (1-2). Here the poet refers to his growth as a worshipper of natural beauty. The rainbow he sees when he begins to worship nature continues to appear before him even when he grows old. The poem succumbs to the fact that he shares a sustainable relationship with nature. Each and every aspect of nature occupies an important place in his mind. It further helps him to enlighten the world with his symbolic message. Patra's poems reflect a kind of a Wordsworthian shadow. The influence of Wordsworth on him seems to be immense. The intensity with which Patra takes poetry as a medium to reach out to the humanity at large comes from being influenced by Wordsworth.

JayantaMahapatra's 'The Life' refers to his understanding of a river. The roaring and transparent water in a river casts a spell of joy for the poet. It symbolises spontaneous support, positivity and reinforcement. It helps him to grow in strength and vision as a poet. The poet seems to be motivated by the power of a river. It aids gain momentum even during hard times. His belief in the flow of a river makes him grow as a matured man. He learns to rethink about life and living. Similarly, Patra also appears to be growing to remodel and reshape his philosophy of life.

In his first poetry anthology titled as *Panoramic Shillong*, Patra perceives the sensitive elegance of a morning and a fresh instinct of an evening. In "A Morning in Assam" the poet writes about a morning that marks an end of the night and speaks to the humanity at large. The poet draws calm and subdued nature of a morning that provides enlightenment and gratitude to the people. The insight and vision of a morning looks amazing to him. The poem reads: 'Each morning here/ is an enthralling page/ constituting an enormous encyclopedia' (8-10). The sight of morning appears to be acute for the poet. In "An Evening in Assam" Patra speaks about the static reserve of an evening in Assam. He focuses on the communicative nature of an evening. He writes: 'The evening attains puberty,/ so meek and shy she remains/ aloof from the humbug of the day/ and communicates silently with the trees and the creepers' (7-10). To him an evening pictures truth and transparency that protects 'the intrinsic aesthetics/ of her own precious moments' (23-24). An evening announces achievement and salvation. The last rays of the sun validate expectation, ambition and magnitude. In this collection he comments on places like Assam, Shillong and Ravenshaw College. He plans to stage his unidentified rhythm of experience and unnamed thoughts

and feelings by the pedigree of his poetic philosophy. He writes in “Spring at Ravenshaw College” that Spring bestows peace and joy on the campus of Ravenshaw college that is situated at Cuttack, Odisha that ‘beckons a dynamism which should/ carry us far in its spate’ (23-24). The memory of Assam, the north eastern part of India helps him to grow in strength and wisdom. These two places usher uprightness in the life of the poet. The mist, the mountains and the greenery of Shillong find a marked setting in his elegiac sphere, The poem reads: ‘... my mind/ develop tiny and tinsel wings/ and fly over/ to kiss the ethereal/ existence of Shillong’ (14-18). He wishes to be liberated by being immersed in the lake water. He here through these places learns to accept life as it is. It again helps him to realise the true value of time and distinctive places.

Marshall in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* writes in Chapter 1 about message as it is ‘the content’ (7). According to him, media study considers “not only the ‘content’ but the medium and the cultural matrix within which the particular medium operates” (5). The very content of Patra’s poetry serves as an antecedent for his amplitude and rationalism. His comprehensive proposition stages compliance, assurance and confidence.

Summer Implications talks about his perception of Assam. Patra tries to contemplate with the landscape of Assam. He finds a sense of belongingness to the state of Assam. He mentions about Guwahati in particular. He writes about his experience of seeing Assam while travelling by air. He says: ‘And the finale introduces me/ to the form of the state/ which gives credibility to/ my feeling of belonging’ (11-14). He praises the greenery in Guwahati, Assam. Patra attempts to reveal the mystic integration between his self and nature. The poet believes in his own reformation. The beauty that he sees from above seems to be calm, cool and tender. In this collection, Patra talks about afternoon that symbolises achievement as well as assurance. To him, an afternoon appears to be calm with a prospect of achievement. His unknown and unexplored self passes through a state of realization.

Arnold in his *The Preface to Poems, 1853* talks about the eternal objects of poetry: “They are actions; human actions; possessing an inherent interest in themselves, and which are to be communicated in an interesting manner by the art of the poet” (188). For Patra, the main objective of poetry lies in delivering powerful messages with purified content and developed thoughts. His action as a poet appears to be clear and distinct. In *The Winding Path*, Patra writes about places like Assam, Gangtok and Puri. All of these places make him locate his identity as a poet. In “A Night in Assam” the poet seems to be able to connect himself with the infinity. The sight of night enlightens him to feel his own breath. The gracious power of the night envelops his worries and distress. The poem reads as: ‘How graciously the night/ envelops her infinity/ and associates the nightmares/ with all my woe and wonder’ (1-4). A so called night in Assam enfolds him to rethink and reconfigure his sophisticated past. In the poem “Gangtok” Patra demonstrates an ethereal beauty of the place. He visualises the divine beauty of Kanchanjangha. He talks about the peaceful entity of the place that is inhabited by Buddhists. The splendid and spectacular view of the city

appears like a medium to deliver his way of attaining salvation. The poet gives a fine portrait of the city through his imagination. Here, he uses both his primary and secondary imagination to envision the underlying charm of the city. He writes: ‘... the mystic self of the city emits a/ rare delight for an experience splendid and spectacular’ (10-11). The self of the poet understands the prosperity of the place. In “Puri” Patra talks about the voice of the sea, Lord Jagannath and coconut trees. Puri is a place of religious sanctity. He adheres to the enthusiasm and simplicity of architected Puri. As he belongs to Orissa, he aims to unravel the passionate power of the place that calls for satisfaction and rapture. The realm of his interest gains momentum from the scenic beauty of these places. Moreover, the poet talks about morning fog, creative evening and monsoon night which look precious to him. His evocative power of looking at things makes him an elevated self. Whatever he envisions takes strength from his experience and exertion.

In *Denouement* Patra speaks about rain in Assam. He insists on visualizing the transparent drops of rain. It reminds him of his previous birth. As it reads: ‘The rain in Assam appears so intimate to me/ that it brings me very close to the fond memories/ of my previous life’ (12-14). From his strong and spontaneous faith in the beauty of Assam emanates an intense spiritual urge to live life afresh. In the poem “Time” he writes: ‘Time itself is a mystery’ (1). He lives within the jurisdiction of time. It is an amalgamation of past, present and future. It plants seeds of confidence within the poet. The different connotations of time increase his zest for life.

In *Dewy Morning* the poet dramatizes the memory of Hyderabad, Osmania University and Orissa. The poem “Hyderabad Memory” talks about his self-consciousness. He often visits Hyderabad because it revitalizes his relationship with his wife. The place extends a kind of a support to the poet. At the same time it also reminds him of the happy past which implies a yearning for the repetition of the same. In this aspect of recollection even sorrow appears to be so pleasant. The place further calls for a spiritual contentment for Patra. He writes: ‘My memory of Hyderabad is not just a/ memory, but also a reminder of a relation/ to be taken care of between myself and my wife’ (20-22). At moments of loneliness his mind reverts back to memory and resentment. The pearls of the Charminar symbolise his love and care for his wife. His attachment with his wife comes to light through his description of Hyderabad. The place appears to be so bright with a whole lot of expectations and desires. In the poem “Orissa” the poet leans towards the beauty and delicacy of the Purisea. He here refers to the historical entity of the place. The state doesn’t appear to be only a state but also ‘a spirit, a living being, a living myth’ (12). The stones and temples of the place reminds him of the past beauty and glory. The cultural history of the place acts as an epic. Patra tries to recreate his idea of how dream and reality meet each other so graciously. He compares the depth of the place with the depth of his mind. As the line reads: ‘To live in Orissa is to live amidst past/ and present both and march towards an epic ...’ (19-20). He meditates over the place as it surmounts all of his difficulties. He visualizes the extensive profundity of the place. In the poem “Osmania University Within me” the poet realises the

presence of the place within himself. He generates his feelings towards his own self and the serene nature of the university campus. He wonders at the communion that takes place between his self and nature. He feels indebted towards the divergent agencies of nature. The memory of the University always freshens his mood and temper. He writes: 'For the first time I feel in my life/ the creepers too live and enjoy their life' (12-13). Here he notes how his mind and soul respond to this fragile reality of the expanse. The aspect of morning helps him to mark a balance between the designs and the events of his dream. Moreover, the midnight traces a kind of bonding between the poet and the unseen power.

Midnight Divinity raises his voice for an analysis of a morning and midnight. To him the morning resembles peace and purity whereas midnight holds for earthly consciousness and yearning. The consciousness of time helps him to come nearer to the truth. He considers time to be silent. Time witnesses the communication between himself and the places of his interest. Further, the image of Sanchi Stupa changes his perception of the world. The stupa serves as the symbol of peace and godliness. It gives him a mundane feeling. The ecstatic beauty of the Stupa assists him to think in a positive way. The poem reads: 'The red light atop the stupa/ signifies no danger but metamorphoses ...' (10-11). This particular place inspires him to rediscover his sense of belongingness.

In *The Rain Speaks* Patra talks about Orissa and the Supercyclone that caused not only material but also emotional loss. As he writes: 'They lost everything,/ they only lived' (1-2). The wind, the water, the tidal waves had perished, what still exists is God, the ultimate source of life. With this truth he envisions a green earth with all its purity and freshness. The poem reads: 'When everything has changed/ and nothing memorable has been left/ by the supercyclone, the temples/ remain intact...' (35-38). In this regard, he epitomises the power of God justifying the fact that amidst any such disaster, the Gods and Goddesses still remain.

Poetry acts as a source of inspiration and acknowledgement. It mediates the link between past and present making room for a worthy future. The reference to time and place accustoms to the criteria of aesthetic creation. It helps him to grow both mentally and psychologically. Patra's select poems project his spontaneous growth as a poet. It serves as a medium to deliver his spirit and idea to the humanity in general. His poems further enunciate interest and charm. His poetic phenomenon authenticates human values in identifying different connotations of nature and its valued resources. The aspect of time brings him a foresight to hope and feel enlightened. The incense of different places alleviates his ideal consciousness and aids him to acquire consistency. However, time acts as a great mediator for the poet. He identifies himself with the landscape of his poetic enterprise. Patra uses his verse to convey his proposition and enchantment to the human race. His usage of words and phrases show his vigour and wisdom in preaching pragmatic revelation.

While investigating, P.K. Patra's poetry one comes across the interface of the issues, the centre of neurosis from which his thoughts spring up, socio-cultural, psychological and

the working of the mental process. The making of the poetry and its reception form a discourse which is interdisciplinary in nature. Here poetry is not just for its own sake, it is rather a part of a holistic construction and expression. ■

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Indian Philosophical Influence on the Poetic Works of W.B. Yeats

Radhashyam Dey

William Butler Yeats is one of the titans of modern poetry. He was actually conscious of the spiritual barrenness of his age. The East has always been an inspiration for Yeats. Meeting with Mohini Chatterji encourages Yeats to know India better. His relationship with Rabindranath Tagore gives Yeats the opportunity of deeper understanding of the Indian philosophy. Yeats's life and work were deeply touched by his associate and friend, Shri Purohit Swami. The translation of the Upanishads and his "Indian essays" corroborate the poet's final position on matters of life and death and the degree of an Eastern spell on his thinking. Yeats's use of 'trigunas', 'avidya', 'maya', 'atma', 'Brahman' etc. reflects his Indian influences. It shows that he had an interest in Indian metaphysics.

Yeats's contact with Mohini Chatterji introduced Yeats to *Vedanta*, the *Bhagavadgita* and its theory of reincarnation. Yeats wrote:

It was my first meeting with a philosophy that confirmed my vague speculations and seemed at once logical and boundless. Consciousness, he (Mohini) taught, does not merely spread out its surface but has in vision and in contemplation, another motion and can change in height and depth. A handsome youngman with the typical face of Christ, he chaffed me good humouredly because he said I came at breakfast and began some question that was interrupted by the first caller, waited in silence till ten or eleven at night when the last caller had gone and finished my question.¹

W.B. Yeats also says:

Some years ago I bought the *Yoga System of Patanjali*, translated and edited by J.H. Woods. It is impeccable in scholastic eyes, even in the eyes of a famous poet and student of Sanskrit who used it as a dictionary.²

Yeats's concept of that India, especially the one he derived through meeting Tagore, fitted neatly with his dream of Irish Revival and anti-colonial attitude. He seems to have sought Irishness in the India where, he believed, the simplicity of the past and the love for one's

people had been preserved, and found it in a common cause for anti-imperial resistance. For such expression of positively conceived nationalist feelings, Edward Said holds him in high regard:

Despite Yeats's obvious and, I would say, settled presence in Ireland, in British culture and literature, and in European modernism, he does present another fascinating aspect: that of the indisputably great national poet who during a period of anti-imperialist resistance articulates the experiences, the aspirations and the restorative vision of a people suffering under the dominion of an offshore power.³

John Rickard says:

Indian philosophy and literature provided Yeats with what he liked to see as viable alternatives to the Western way of life against the rationalism, empiricism, materialism, and modern urban culture that he disliked. Yeats turned to India for answers in the mistaken belief that Indian culture fully preserved its purity, unity and spirituality in the face of the merciless colonizer.⁴

Yeats searched for a philosophy that would leave imagination free, yet satisfy his curiosity about the nature and existence of God and soul, life and death. In June 1885, he helped organize The Dublin Hermetic Society with a select group of friends including Charles Johnston. The idea for the society came from reading Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism*, which had profoundly impressed Johnston, and Yeats too. The aim of the members of the Hermetic Society was to discuss and promote Eastern system of thought. This Hermetic Society in 1986 changed into the Dublin Theosophical Society.

By the time he was thirty years old, Yeats's reading included J. Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, A. Besant's *The Ancient Wisdom*, Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, *The Buddhist Sutras*, *The Bhagavadgita* and *The Upanishads*. The last three books were edited by Max Muller in a series called *The Sacred Books of the East*. Yeats' *Indian Upon God's* is a highly meditative poem. It explores Hindu philosophy and emerges as the quintessence of how W.B. Yeats used the Indian theme as the context of the poem. His other poems 'Kanva on Himself' and 'Anashuya and Vijaya' illustrate the concept of God according to Hindu philosophy. Yeats was well in not only Indian philosophy but was familiar equally with the Indian epic *The Mahabharata*. He wrote, "Why is there not some authority reverently given for so strange a thing? In what part of Ireland was it said, this saying recalling *The Mahabharata* and *The Divine Comedy*".⁵

The following lines Ribh considers of 'Christian Love' is sufficient to proof the imprint of the *Mahabharata*:

Thought is a garment and the soul's bride
That cannot in that trash and tinsel hide.
Hatred of god may bring the soul of God.⁶

In *The Mahabharata* Bhishma's display of his destructive energy compelled Lord Krishna to take to arms. Bhishma's "Hatred of God" made him begin his war on God". Ultimately it resulted in the surrender of Bhishma and Lord Krishna's own realization that he had lost self-possession. Since the *Bhagavadgita* forms a part of the *Mahabharata*, the sensitive mind of Yeats must not have remained unattracted towards this lore of the epic. Actually Yeats's quest for the 'real' made him look into the Hindu scriptures. He was disgusted with the common day affairs which came to him as routine matters. He wrote in a letter dated January 3, 1932:

We should ascend out of common life. Out of the thoughts of the newspapers, of the market place, of men of science, but only is so far as we can convey the normal, passionate, reasoning self, the personality as a whole.

In fact with the tortuous nature of experiences over years (as an individual, an Irishman, a lover and a poet) that led to an astounding maturity in Yeats's poetry both in terms of theme and technique, the treatment of Indian spiritualism/mysticism likewise undergoes a sophisticated treatment away from the evocation of a naïve wonder in the poet and the poetic valorization of the Oriental scholars of thought characterizing his early poetry. Thus element of Hindu spiritual cults is found to bear a most powerful yet complex implications in many poems produced in the later phase of his career. In this way, the changed gear in handling mysticism becomes apparent in poems of Yeats's mature stage as an artist. In 'Sailing to Byzantium', one of Yeats's most famous and representative poems and the opening piece of celebrated anthology 'The Tower', one finds a cogent use of spiritual imagery to serve the poet's aesthetic purpose. The overtly sensual orchestration of life in general in the natural world (symbolized by Ireland) appear to the old poet as the fiesta and fetish of temporal passion of the dying flesh, a phenomenon similar to the manifestation of 'Karma' (desire) in Hindu religion and a fit subject force liberation to mortal men and animals ('dying generations') whose lack of spiritual guest has necessitated the old poet's desperate search for a spiritual heaven for his soul. The hearty alacrity of the soul tasting liberation from the fetters of flesh as expressed in the following extract, corroborates to Hindu spiritual concepts such as that of ectoplasm enunciated by the great Ramkrishnite mystic Swami Avedananda in his book *Life Beyond Death* and also to that of the soul's joyful and endless journey through incarnations as explained in the *Bhagavadgita*: Soul clap its hands and sing and louder sing for every tattler in its mortal dress..." (Line 11-12). The poem 'Meru' is the finest specimen of the Oriental impact on Yeats and probably it was influenced by Purohit Swami's translation of Bhagawan Sri Hamsa's *The Holy Mountain* (1934) of which Yeats was pleased to write the introduction. The Himalaya ('meru' meaning the peak) here stands for the ideal space of retreat necessary for the spiritual reduce for their austere measures or 'sadhna'.⁸

Unlike T.S. Eliot, Yeats refused to let his faith 'circumscribed by the Christian revelation.' He had "an assured belief in personal immortality."⁹ Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna the same lesson when he tells him that there was no time when he was not present and there

will be no time when he will not be present. In the poem 'Kanva on Himself', Kanva is the name of an Indian sage who was also the foster father of Shankuntala, the protagonist of Kalidas's drama *Abhijnana shankuntalam*. However, there are several instances in Yeats's play where the behaviour of Anashuya or Vijaya does not conform to the Indian values. We know that Yeats talked of writing "a sort of European Gita, or rather my (Yeats's) Gita, not doctrine but song".¹⁰ To conclude, it must be admitted that Yeats was greatly influenced by Indian philosophical thoughts. ■

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Sachi Routray's *Chitragreeba* : A Study

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Padmshri (1962) Sachi Routray, the winner of Sahitya Akademi Award (1964), Soviet Land–Nehru Award (1965) and Jnapitha Award (1986), is acknowledged as a pioneer of modern Odia poetry who wrote hundreds of poems, quite a large number of short stories, two volumes of autobiography and scores of essays on Odia literature and culture during his long creative career of more than half a century. *Chitragreeba*, the only novel written by Sachi Routray was published in 1936, when he was a student of Intermediate Arts in Kolkata's City College in 1936. In 1938, his collection of poems, *Abhijana*, which announced his commitment to the progressive literary movement, was published. During the nineteen-thirties, Marxism and major European literary works had deeply impressed the young and middle-class intellectuals of Kolkata who seemed to have got disillusioned with all romantic and idealistic notions about life and society. By 1934, the Communist Party of India, which had a shaky beginning in 1924-25, was already active in places like Kolkata and Bombay.

Chitragreeba was written in the context of socio-political and cultural milieu. It is therefore not surprising that much of the intellectual ferment and debate of the time finds place in the novel. Since the setting of the novel is Kolkata, it is very different from the Odia novels of the nineteen-thirties whose plots basically centred rural life with all its aspects of poverty, superstitions and orthodox values. Further, the impact of Western intellectual and political ideas was hardly perceptible in the Odia fictional narratives, while in *Chitragreeba*, there are quite a large number of allusions relating to many contemporary and classical literary works of the West. *Chitragreeba*, in fact, was an exceptional work in Odia literary world of the nineteen-thirties in terms of urban setting, political awareness and intellectual fervor.

Chitragreeba is a novel of ideas. It does not have a story or well-knit plot. There are no events, emotional conflicts and psychological depth in characterization. Its narrative is governed by dialogues, debates and intellectual discussions centering around the two mutually opposing ideas of idealism and materialism. The novel has neither a female character nor a dominant hero. It is in this sense of defying elements of traditional fictional narratives that *Chitragreeba* can be termed as an anti-novel, which according to M.H. Abrams, is "a work which is deliberately constructed in a negative fashion, relying for its effects on the deletion of standard elements, on violating traditional norms, and on playing against the

expectations established in the reader by the novelistic methods and conventions of the past” (258)

There are four major characters in *Chitragreeba*. They are actually four friends who have formed the Chaturanga Club of which they are the only members. Souri, a student of B.A. classes, is like a “Whitmanesque prose poem” with no rhyme or rhythm. For him, verbose in speaking about anything and “postwar poetry”, he is intentionally obscure about what he says. There is a tendency in him, life is “an indivisible negative number of algebra. You need the knowledge of higher mathematics to find its square root.” (25) He rejects the idea of truth and all forms of idealism and invokes Einstein’s theory of relativity: “There is no norm to measure the truth” he asserts. (56) “Truth is relative. What appears like a straight line to you may appear egg-shaped or triangular to me,” he says (56). In a long speech delivered on the occasion of the inception of Chaturanga Club, Souri argues vigorously against all notions of romanticism and idealism against conservative values that instill a sense of fear and guilt. He pleads for revolt against all forms of reactionary forces that subvert human freedom.

Gagan, Souri’s intimate friend, is an avowed Marxist and swears by the Marxist view that religion is the opiate of the people : “Right from ancient times, two classes of people have existed: the rich and poor, the exploiter and exploited, the cat and mouse”, he proclaims. (87) He militates against all forms of exploitation and says that the rich have always enjoyed the fruits of poverty-stricken labour force. He considers Congress as a capitalist party and comments that the khaddar dress of the congress and black shirt of fascists are substantially same. In one of the addas in tea and snacks shop, Gagan and trade union leader approvingly discuss the logic of history implied in the Marxian concept dialectical materialism and reject the idea of nationalism as an exploitative weapon of capitalists. Gagan asserts that human suffering due to economic inequality is a global phenomenon and is beyond any geographical divisions. He grieves over the passive submission of the suffering people to the exploitation of rich and comments that it is only through struggle and resistance that their condition can be redeemed. As they watch an election rally of the Congress workers loaded on an open garbage truck, the trade union leader comments, “Just like mushrooms blooming with the advent of rain or gentle breeze blowing with the coming of spring, a bunch of patriots are feverishly anxious to serve the motherland when election comes”. (72) In his long speech on the occasion of the inception of Chaturanga Club, Gagan proposes that the club should reject all forms of idealism. He urges the members to be pure materialists because “idealism, like a thorny insect, is tearing into the backbone of our nation”. (90)

In contrast to the leftist views of two friends, Souri and Gagan, there are two other major characters, Ganesh and Mruganka. Ganesh is a veritable day dreamer. He is Souri’s room-mate and lives in make-believe world. His grouse against Odias is that they are fools who cannot recognize his talents as an actor and a poet. He drops names of writers and books gathered from library catalogues and magazines and carries fat books whenever he goes out.

The most amusing aspect of his character is that he imagines himself to be a great lover. He runs after any woman he sees on the street and often gets snubbed by them though he pretends that he has many girlfriends. Though no one is sure if he has completed seventh class, he boasts that his girlfriends urge him to complete M.A. He tells Souri, "I hate the present education system. I do not want to waste my time by preparing for the M.A. Examination of your useless universities." (61) To defend his inability to obtain a girlfriend, he sermonizes on the value of platonic love: "Man creates his beloved in the ecstasy of his imagination.... My beloved is not outside. She is in the world of my dreams." (65) Ganesh knows that imagining a beloved is only self-delusion and yet he clings to it for he thinks that it might make life worth tiresome flights of imagination, however illusory this reality may be. Man like Chitragreeba, Ganesh says, who cannot fly all the time. When the wings get tired, he descends down to an object of reality. He needs the branch of a tree. He does not have patience to consider if the branch is broken or whether it can withstand the load of his weight. Sometimes Ganesh turns absolutely rhapsodic when he speaks about platonic love.

Mruganka is the oldest of four friends. He is married and earns his livelihood as a clerk in an insurance company. He is fed up with the colourless life of an ordinary householder. Life, for him, is so hackneyed that he has lost all curiosity and zest of a living being. His relationship with his wife, he says, is like a 'worn out bathing towel. We have got so used to each other that we can hardly think of anything outside us. We do not even know if we love or hate each other. Our relationship is beyond love and hatred, beyond affection and pleasure. We only know that we badly know each other. Yet he compromises with this kind of life for he doesn't want to swerve away from tradition: "We are trying our best to follow the way of our fathers and grandfathers. We do not want to get hurt by trying to jump the boundary wall. We are one among many, not like a mad cow who strays out of the herd." (56)

These four major characters represent certain points of view about life and reality. They are middle class intellectuals who have sensitive perceptions of contemporary ideas about politics and culture. Both Souri and Gagan are bitter critics of the existing political and social systems. They dream of a socio-political order where there would be no exploitation and no class distinction. They dream of a socio-political order where there would be no exploitation and class distinction. Both of them are harsh critics of traditional values that have distorted our apprehensions of material reality. There is obviously an echo of Marxist ideology in what they say. Ganesh, on the other hand, lives in the cloud-cuckoo land, fantasizes about women and sermonizes about Platonic love as a defence against his inability to find a lover. Mruganka represents an ordinary person who conforms to traditional ways of life despite his feeling that such a life is monotonous and dull. Interestingly, in 1938, two years after Routray wrote *Chitragreeba*, one of his major poetry anthologies, *Abhijan*, was published and this anthology marks a transition from his romantic phase to a progressive revolutionary phase. In the preface to *Abhijan*, he declares, 'This is the age of proletariat. It is a historical responsibility of all anti-imperialist and anti-reactionary forces to unite and devote themselves to the task of building a classless society'. (1) He also

denigrates the middle class, the bourgeois, for its complacency and conformity to values promoted by vested interests. *Chitragreeba*, which elaborately discusses and debates over the two points of view, the Marxist and the bourgeois-idealist, seems to echo Routray's personal dilemma which precipitates into a clear manifesto of his literary creed pronounced in the preface to *Abhijan*.

One of the most remarkable aspects of *Chitragreeba* is that it alludes to a large number of Western writers and texts. For instance, when Ganesh laments that editors of Odia magazines do not have the caliber to understand his poems, Souri, with tongue in cheek, says that all great men have been misunderstood by their contemporary society. 'Think of the French dramatist Moliere', Souri says, 'the priests did not pray for his soul to rest in peace because they thought he was an atheist. But today Moliere's soul has outlived hundreds of priests.' (76) In another context Ganesh, in expressing his discontent with the legal system, refers to John Galsworthy's play *Justice*. When a friend of Ganesh calls him stupid and mean, Souri consoles him saying that "there were, are and will be scandals in everyone's life. After all, people accused that Byron killed his tailor, that Shakespeare was in love with Earl of Southampton, that Socrates was a thief, that Michelangelo was canned by Julius ii and that Moliere was in love with his own daughter." (65) Gagan, while denigrating all wives as parasites and bereft of personality, refers to Bernard Shaw's *Mrs Warren's Profession* and Ibsen's *Doll's House*. Mrukanga asserts that he can not afford to hate his wife like August Strindberg did. In fact, there are many other references to western authors and texts like Aeschylus, Freud, Newton, Winstein, Rousseau, Turgenev, *Divine Comedy* and *Alice in Wonderland*.

Though Sachi Routray wrote quite a few short stories and non-fiction prose, he never attempted to write another novel during his long writing career of more than a half century, perhaps because he realized that writing long fictional narratives was not his forte. Most of the critical writing on Sachi Routray has only a marginal mention of *Chitragreeba*, partly because it is not quite in sync with the dominant themes and preoccupations of his poetry and partly because its form and structure are considered far from satisfactory. However, it is worth mentioning that leftist and modernist ideas which were the shaping forces of Routray's poetry had already been articulated in his only novel *Chitragreeba*. ■

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Survival in Times of a Catastrophe: Changing Face of Man in Albert Camus's *The Plague*

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Absurdism is man's natural tendency to seek out meaning and logical explanation in the universe. However, conflict occurs when we go to do so and find the universe utterly devoid of any meaning at all. Camus's Absurd embraces a kind of positive optimism, in the sense that he respects Man and hence, puts the onus on mankind for civilizing the world. Camus believes in a world that is devoid of all hope for the future or the religious concept of an after-life. Man must revolt against the thought of giving up of a cowardly religious escape. Death is certain. Hence, it is important to live in the present. In *The Plague*, going about its business, mankind in the face of an epidemic chooses to be disbelieving. It goes through several phases of change starting from disbelief, fear, anxiety, acceptance, and ultimately, surrender. The protagonist and the narrator, Dr. Rieux himself goes through this change of phase but he continues to work tirelessly for the people of Oran. Along with him, Raymond Rambert too searches for various means of escape but eventually, settles down in the city and takes part in various anti-epidemic forces that are in place due to the epidemic, symbolizing revolt. While some characters try to escape the Plague, some others try to fight it. Hence, mankind, when faced with the Absurd or a pestilent form or a catastrophe, must revolt against it while also trying to appreciate each wonderful day of his life.

Keywords: Absurdism, Mankind, Fear, Acceptance, Catastrophe

Albert Camus (November 7, 1913-January 4, 1960) was a French-Algerian novelist, dramatist, and moralist. He spent his life in Algeria and France observing each little nuance of the changing of the seasons and contemplating the difficult questions of life. He has also been known as a philosopher, existentialist, journalist, and politician, however, people who knew him well regarded him as a warm, sensitive, and humble human being.

Camus denied being a philosopher and an existentialist. He endeavored to be an ordinary man who speaks for ordinary people. Camus's understanding and exploration of the world of man prove that he is an intelligent man. Camus argues that human beings cannot escape asking the question, 'what is the meaning of existence?' He, however, denies

that there is an answer to this question and also rejects the answers that humans have created to this particular question. The search for its answer is what Camus calls The Absurd. Existence as such has no meaning. Thus, while Camus accepts the fact that human beings inevitably seek to understand life's purpose, he also understands the universe or the natural world's indifference to it. Camus's concern with the Absurd in the world and man's reaction to it is best discussed in each of his works.

Even though both of his works, *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Rebel* are skeptical of the 'meaning' that man is looking for, they assert objectively answers to questions about how to live life. So, it is often said that Camus presents a philosophy that contradicts philosophy itself. In both of his works -*The Stranger* and *The Plague*- Camus centers on choosing to live without God. Because, according to him the teachings of religion make us believe in an afterlife and give us hope for a life beyond death when the truth is death is the end of it all and there is no life after that. Unlike the other existentialist thinkers, Camus takes a very optimistic approach. He says that only in accepting death and in being 'stripped of all hope' does one most intensely not only appreciate the physical side of life but also understand how effective and beautiful it is.

Camus's concern with the absurd in the world and man's reaction to it is best discussed in his most powerful literary work of all time, *The Plague*. In January 1941, he began to work on a novel about a virus that spreads unpredictably from animals to humans and ends up destroying half the population of a representative modern town. It was published in 1947.

The subjects and the protagonists of Albert Camus's *The Plague* differ greatly from those of *The Stranger*. Though Camus never experienced a plague or a pandemic, he captures what it feels like precisely. Camus gets it by drawing from his imagination. *The Plague* describes a fictional outbreak of bubonic plague in the French Algerian city of Oran shortly after World War II. A story told through the perspective of its narrator, Dr. Bernard Rieux. Due to the Resistance/Occupation group in Europe during World War II, Camus was detained in France for several years. This period of separation probably led him to discuss the themes of isolation and separation throughout his novel. Camus refers to the plague or any pestilent form as representing the absurd forces of nature. Camus presents the Absurd and shows how different characters react. *The Plague* is also a warning that the human race is bound to experience something like this again.

Camus presents the idea that the human race feels extremely vulnerable at all times, plague or not. He says "What's true of all evils in the world is true of plague as well. It helps men to rise above themselves" (*The Plague* 44). Through Rieux, Camus appears to be introducing his philosophy to man so that he can understand the Absurd and find his own motivation to live each day.

The concept of the 'meaning of life' has always remained the subject of human inquiry. On the philosophical level, it has gone through several forms of either affirmation

or complete denial. Man is almost on a quest for finding the meaning of his life. Thales, Parmenides, Heraclitus, and other Ionian philosophers were also in the race for the search of meaning when they sought the ultimate reality that constitutes life. In Platonic terms, the meaning of life implies reaching the highest form of knowledge. According to Plato, this highest form of knowledge is called 'idea' (form) from which every good and just thing derives value and utility. Plato also emphasized the meaning that is found in suffering. He says that it is only when we are experiencing difficulty is when we tend to find meaning behind our existence.

In the medieval epoch, St Augustine who lived his life motivated by the search for the meaning of life, actually found out the truth behind it. He was convinced that it was God who gave meaning to his life.

"Late have I found you O beauty ever ancient and ever new! Late have I loved you! And behold, you were within me, and I out of myself, and searched for you...."

The Austrian psychologist and philosopher Viktor Emile Frankl introduced his psychotherapeutic method which centers on life's meaning as well as man's search for this meaning. He perceives man "as being in search for meaning and at the same time responsible for its fulfillment" (36).

The reality of absurdity and despair involved in human life is obviously acknowledged by Soren Kierkegaard. He insists, nonetheless, that all the circumstances mentioned do not rob human life of meaning. Life in general for Kierkegaard has meaning, especially when one has absolute faith in God.

Rebecca Solnit's article "How to Survive a Disaster" says that "It's a myth that our reactions to danger are fight or flight. There's a third option often pursued: to gather for reassurance, protection, strength, and insight" (2).

The book *If You Leave Me* is a debut novel of Cristal Hana Kim in which a war between North Korea and South Korea breaks out. Sixteen-year-old Haemi Lee, her widowed mother, and her ailing brother flee their village after North Korean forces invade and end up at a refugee camp along the coast in Busan. Haemi finds her own refuge of sorts in the company of her childhood friend Kyunghwan. Their friendship morphs into a love triangle when Kyunghwan's cousin, Jisoo, vies for Haemi's attention, offering security and deliverance from the privations of refugee life for Haemi and her family. Inspired by stories Kim's grandmother told her about life as a refugee during the war, Kim's novel expands into a polyphonic multigenerational saga about the inner lives of women suffering through and overcoming their own personal cataclysms as survivors of war, human beings containing multitudes.

From Homer's *Odyssey* to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, literature has always strived to show life as it is or 'as it should be'. It tries to show that, while some disasters can be avoided some other disasters cannot be. It says that each disaster teaches us to avoid mistakes

and save human life. The literature during the time can also be viewed as a guide to help mankind deal with disaster in a realistic and rational manner.

Albert Camus devoted his life and writings to discovering the purpose of man's existence. Unfortunately, he passed away before he could succeed in his endeavour to resolve the questions about life. In his literary works, he discusses the absurd condition of man's existence. Brian Masters notes that "Camus gives respect to man because he deserves it. Camus realizes the tragic nature of man's fate, and that his writings are intended to console man so that he will not be misled by any hopes of myths and deities" (63). Camus said that "I continue to believe that this world has no ultimate meaning. But I know that something in it has meaning, and that is man because he is the only creature to insist on having one" (63). Camus's works are devoted to mankind. His words are a solace to people who are distressed because it gives them a sort of proof that life is still worth living and honesty and love for the present moment can truly bring peace to life. Camus's understanding of absurdity is best captured in an image of Sisyphus trying to push his rock up the mountain, watching it roll down, then descending after the rock to begin all over, in an endless circle. Like Sisyphus, humans cannot help but continue to ask about the meaning of life, only to see our answers coming back down at us. Camus defined the absurd as the futility of a search for meaning in an incomprehensible universe, devoid of God or meaning. Man's expectations and looking out for order and meaning in the society while nature's indifference to that is what is called absurdism. And hence, Camus's response to this kind of life: whether it is worth living? Or if suicide is the legitimate response? While human's response to this kind of meaninglessness of life is natural, the process of reason is not. It is important to engage in ways that will make life worth living despite their being meaningless. Celebrating nature and getting immersed in it are some of the experiences that are presented as a solution to the philosophical problem, namely finding the meaning of life in the face of death, that is, a human's response to death should be one of acceptance and all the more reason for living life to the fullest. Camus says that, the soul is not immortal. He asks his readers to face this discomfiting reality without even flinching. According to him, wisdom lies in "the conscious certainty of a death without hope" (63). Only by accepting and being aware of death are we able to open ourselves to the riches of life.

"The absurd is an experience that must be lived through..." (63).

In *The Plague*, Camus continues to explore his philosophy on the Absurd and reaches new conclusions regarding the Absurd. He chose a catastrophe, or the Bubonic Plague to talk about the Absurd forces that are present in nature and are hostile to men. As man confronts the Absurd, Camus gives him two acceptable reactions: Camus motivates man to revolt against the Absurd or any pestilent form, and he also asks them to appreciate each wonderful day of life. Camus encourages man to make meaning despite these being absurdities. He takes an optimistic approach and affirms that man will always remain in conflict with the Absurd. Hence, Camus's main purpose is the affirmation of the goodness of man.

The story takes place in Oran, a French port on the Algerian coast, the headquarters of a French department prefect. Dr.Rieux, the town's physician is the narrator. In the beginning,Rieux sends his ill wife to a sanatorium for her treatment. All of a sudden, a rat dies. The bubonic plague arrives and causes the rats to come into the city and die in large numbers. Soon after their arrival, men contaminated with the diseasedie without any treatment. The city officials declare after much deliberation that, this disease is the plague epidemic. The town gates are closed and citizens catching the virus are sent into quarantine. The town remains in this state of contagion for nine long months and then it finally ends. Afterward, the city and its inhabitants return to normal life. Those citizens who survived do not know whether they survived by chance or it was because of the stringent laws and anti-epidemic forces in place. The main characters undergo radical changes during the Plague. All the characters learn that, plagues or absurdities can never be defeated.

A million and a half people live in Coran. The city is more than just a setting. Its citizenry is the main character, far more than all the other characters. The city is dry and treeless, its citizens are obsessed with money-making and hanging out in cafes. It's entirely ordinary.

Think what it must be for a dying man, trapped behind hundreds of walls all sizzling with heat, while the whole population, sitting in cafes or hanging on the telephone, is discussing shipments, bills of lading, discounts! (46).

When hundreds of these rats come out in the open and die, the citizens who know nothing of the virus and its transmission now know that something is wrong. Soon a man named Michel dies of a mysterious illness.Rieux goes through the same psychological process as everyone else in the story. First, there is a period of denial, then fear, then horror, and finally resignation or surrender.

Initially, Oran's medical officials act secretly. Even Rieux himself follows the same path partly because he is still half-lying to himself. He knows the truth but he tells the officials that he doesn't want the citizens to start panicking. So, the doctors say it's not the plague but when the death toll rises, they are forced to declare an emergency. Soon it's on the news and people are made aware of the situation. The novel at this point has several characters who have several different reactions to the plague-to the absurd. Camus gives us Trarou, Rieux's bestfriend and a philosopher; Rambert, a journalist who is trapped within the quarantined city; Cottard, a criminal prior to the Plague; Grand, a simplistic thinker who decides to become an author in the face of plague; and Dr.Rieux's asthma patient, who is untouched in anyway by the plague. These characters are portrayed in order to demonstrate the forces that the Absurd can have on a human's life. Philip Thody states that, Camus uses an ironic tone; his tone and style have a certain irony that tends to highlight the total horror of the absurd situation. The irony lies in the way the characters speak so calmly and detachedly about the absurd horror of the plague.

Cartloads of dead bodies rumbling through London's ghoul-haunted darkness- nights and days filled always, everywhere, with the eternal cry of human pain. The doctor opened the window, and at once the noises of the town grew louder. Rieux pulled himself up together. There lay certitude in the daily rounds. All the rest hung on the mere threads and trivial contingencies; you couldn't waste your time on it (54).

This is what Camus believes the actual response of man should be, during a catastrophe or a plague or The Absurd. Man must continue to do his work and seek inner peace by being in nature or viewing its various scenes.

Camus uses precise words to describe events. Each description is filled with interesting stories of the townsfolk and their reactions are engraved so beautifully in each of the paragraphs. In order to give the true chronicle effect, Camus employs this descriptive style. He incorporates facts and examples from Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* to be realistic in his chronicle of the plague.

The best part of Camus's *The Plague* is that it lacks partiality. It isn't a moral tale. So, it doesn't comment on the characters' reaction to the plague or the absurd. It puts them as they are. Because of this, no judgment policy that Camus follows in his writings, his characters do not make any sort of comments on other people as well. For example, Rieux says nothing harsh against anyone except Paneloux, but this is also in a time of fatigue for Rieux and he also apologizes for that. Rieux also works against making the restrictions stricter as the number of death case rises but he doesn't argue against people who resist it.

Camus's symbols represent several ideas. The Plague is a symbol itself. It is a symbol of the incomprehensibility of nature or the universe. It enters man's life without any warning or justification. The plague is also the power of death and destruction. It takes away so many lives, and inflicts pain on the innocents. Man forgets to live his life amidst all the chaos. It strips man of love and pleasure. The plague is also a symbol to represent the torture suffered by the French people during the German Occupation in World War II.

Rieux, the narrator of the plague, undergoes a symbolic period of personal growth throughout the plague. The self-examination makes him aware of ambiguity in his life. In the battle, man learns many lessons that teach him how to deal with the Absurd so that he can survive. He learns that, the fight is futile and any amount of work done to lessen it changes nothing of the Absurd. But the fight is important. Resistance against the plague only causes man to realize again that there's no meaning in life. The images of the sun and the sea comforts man in an otherwise chaotic world. The sea is a source of constant refreshment in a burning climate. Camus's narrator Dr. Rieux goes through different phases to finally reach the acceptance of truth in life- the existence of The Absurd. Camus creates Rieux as a symbolic example of what man can learn in the face of the Absurd. Like Rieux man should find the motivation to live each day while striving to sustain meaning in life.

The character, Raymond Rambert, is a journalist who is trapped in Oran when the city gates are closed. He is seen saying constantly that he doesn't belong to the town. He is

a stranger to the city. He is separated from his lover, so he spends most of his time doing the rounds of cafes. He represents man who flees the Absurd and searches for an escape. The one positive aspect, however, is that he is full of life and hopes for continuous love. Rieux's asthma patient whom he visits throughout the plague is glad to see that the town is being punished. He represents an Absurd character who judges the town from a distance, without being included in the public. Character Grand, whom several critics refer to as the greatest hero in the novel works earnestly in revolt against the absurd by striving to become the perfect author. From the beginning of the novel, he is trying to write the best opening line for his book. However, he is unable to do so. He represents Camus's Sisyphus here who works in the revolt of the Absurd for contentment.

Cottard is a contemptible character. He was a criminal before the plague. He views the plague as a chance to have some freedom from the clutches of the police. He discovers freedom and life, yet he was an imprisoned, dead man. He uses the plague as an escape from responsibility and in the end, his actions are proof that he succumbs to the absurdity of the pestilence. Camus uses him to talk about how people use evil and Absurdity to profit themselves but they do not win in the end. Paneloux is the religious figure of the novel. In order to make his readers understand that blind religious faith presents a solution to the plague, Camus chooses a character to represent the followers of an abstract faith. He says, God is giving them another chance and hence, they need to wake from their banal existence, in his first sermon. Paneloux places total faith in God and says that it is because of man's past sins, that a pestilence has come to the town and people must surrender to it and think of it as salvation.

"We should go forward, groping our way through the darkness, stumbling perhaps at times, and try to do what good lay in our power" (55).

Paneloux represents the religious person who changes his beliefs in the face of the absurd. He accepts his own suffering and dies from the plague without ever calling for help. The last character, Tarrou, is very intriguing. His presence is profound in the novel. His dialogues and views greatly influence the Doctor. Adele King states that, Tarrou is a fighter of the plague because he is "obsessed with death and the necessity to combat it. Tarrou has an ironic awareness of life's absurdity" (56). He is the first to admit that he has the plague, the plague of heart. This plague inside him represents the moral torture he inflicts upon himself. He is too hard on himself. He strives to attain sainthood but, in the end, dies. The plague overcomes him. Through Tarrou, Camus tells us that the hope for a future is futile and that man must avoid doing so.

Paneloux and Othon claim to justify the punishing of the people's sins with the plague because of their beliefs in the abstraction of God and religion. They are concerned more with the serving of death and associate undue importance with it while the other characters are more concerned with the realistic notion of the search for happiness. While some characters try to escape the plague, some others try to fight it. At the end of the novel,

several characters do not emerge victoriously. They are symbols of man's failure against the Absurd.

In *The Outsider*, Camus chose one character to represent man against the absurd; however, in *The Plague*, Camus creates a city of different characters, each searching for his own solution to the Absurd. As in *The Outsider*, Camus also intends in *The Plague* to use literary techniques to enhance the absurd ideas in life. In *The Plague*, Camus esteems the wonderful nature of man to live and love and make meaning in spite of absurdity. However, in *The Outsider*, Camus attempts to portray a man who fills his days with common diversions while ignoring all meaning and significance of everyday activity.

Although, *The Outsider* was published before *The Myth of Sisyphus* in 1942, *The Myth of Sisyphus* is the actual work that explains the philosophy of the Absurd. Camus begins the first essay with the question of whether or not life is worth living. He believes all other questions are secondary to this fundamental question. Camus realizes how bleak and grim the absurd is, so he gives man an immediate answer to the Absurd- suicide. Once he proposes suicide as an answer, he prepares to prove that suicide is unacceptable in the face of the absurd. Suicide becomes an acceptance instead of denial of the Absurdity.

Humankind goes through many changes in a catastrophe-like situation. He either loses his temper, sometimes, in the process loses himself or tries to fight the situation. The hope for a better future gradually fades away because their attempt to tackle the situation remains pointless. Hence, the protagonist and the narrator of the book Dr. Rieux, along with many other characters, decide on maintaining 'decency', i.e., do their job despite the irrelevance. The plague dies and normalcy returns to the city but does it actually return? Does the chance of another epidemic occurring also die?

At a very young age, Albert Camus began his journey to discover the meaning of life. He discovers that the enigma of the Universe, which is breathtakingly beautiful, is indifferent to life and man whose craving for meaning and happiness in life remains unabated by his awareness of his own mortality. Camus, though, refuses to allow the absurdities to subside his feelings of love and his desire to live, he also accepts the hostilities of the world to have a cause to revolt against all absurdities. He asserts that the nature that gives us the inspiration to live life, nurture our relationships, and practice mindfulness, can also be a source of the absurd. In spite of all the periods of incertitude, Camus has lived through, he smiles his way through life and perseveres to live each day as if the next will not arrive. Camus could never understand the ways of the world. He, however, continued to develop his thoughts, and observe the world around him. The purpose of this paper has been to discover man's response to catastrophes in *The Plague*. This paper proves that, within the work, Camus continuously discusses man's reaction to the catastrophe, in this case, a plague. The section of Camus's absurdist philosophy discusses the many aspects of the absurd throughout the novel which brings to our understanding of man's fight or response to it in a broader way. Through the use of symbols, images, and descriptions, Camus brings to the

front in each section the citizen's response to a widespread disaster. He uses several techniques to reveal man's struggle against the absurd such as its indifference to man. ■

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T S Eliot's *The Waste Land* : an Expression of Modern Disillusionment and Barrenness

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The 20th century in English literature is marked with the emergence of new and varied values in all fields of life. The social, economic, political and literary values have undergone tremendous changes in the modern age. Religion and spiritualism are fast deteriorating and materialism getting hold of them. T S Eliot as a poet belongs to an age which is essentially the age of realism and rationalism. Through his poetry Eliot has unfolded the rapid growth of science and deification of machine that have brought commercialization of art, literature and music. The present paper makes an attempt to focus and deal with the disillusionment of the age and the barrenness of the modern society as depicted by T S Eliot in his poem *The Waste Land*. The worship of power and challenging attitude of old values are more persistent and searching in the modern society. The paper will try to discuss the various issues brought by T S Eliot in the poem to highlight the infertility and cynicism of the age.

Keywords: Modern poetry, disillusionment, barrenness, realism, religion, materialism

Although the earlier half of Victorian Age was witnessing the scientific and mechanical advancement, yet social security was guaranteed by the general framework of social conventions and established political order. There was an unquestionable belief in the inviolable sanctity of existing moral values. But after the two World Wars and explosion of Atom Bomb on Japan the mind of the people has been shattered. The belief that science would safeguard the world has been destroyed and a doubt engulfed the whole mankind. This aspect of modern age is well reflected in the poetry of T S Eliot. The modern literary movement flourished with the exclusion of any previously acknowledged theory and ideas in regard to literature and other fields. New experiments such as expressionism, experimentalism, realism was widely carried out during this period. Modern poetry is marked by the expression of revolt against the established tradition. It is revolt against the Humanism and Romanticism as well. The impact of advancement of science influenced the modern poets and they turn away from the decadent romantic tradition. This kind of spirit of revolt finds expression in the poetry of T S Eliot who observes human life in its stark realism. The

note of pessimism is another important feature of modern poetry. The grim reality of materialistic modern life in fact shattered all the hopes and aspirations of poets during this period. the in-depth frustration of mankind finds clear expression in the poems that highlights the mood of disillusionment of modern age. The pessimism expressed in modern poetry is even more rancorous than that of Thomas Hardy. The poem *The Waste Land* depicts the disillusionment of post-war Europe and modern peculiar human condition and it reflects the tragic gloom and despair after the World War.

In the poem *The Waste Land*, T S Eliot has focused on the barrenness, sterility, fragmentation, alienation, boredom and indecisiveness of modern man. The impact of two great wars and its after-effects are the main impulses behind the composition of this poem. The futility, horror and boredom beneath human existence are the main causes of social disillusionment and this aspect is beautifully depicted by T S Eliot in the poem. However, it also expresses the problem of modern world in terms of values, ethics, social and psychological problems. T S Eliot is a modern poet who is unique in his style and technique of poetic expression. The immediate sense of the ugliness, the emptiness and aimlessness of man's spiritual estate during the post-war years was responsible for the genesis of the poem *The Waste Land*. T S Eliot speaks through the voice of the lonely prophet in a corrupt city. He has spoken about the world's illness and also attempts to prescribe a cure for the healing of the city and civilization of which he is also a representative. The poem is highly fragmentary in nature and the technique and mode of expression of the poem is significant of the poet's preoccupation with utter despair of the existing society.

The modern age is one of the most critical and complex periods in the cultural history of mankind. The awareness of crisis, loss of faith and deviation from conviction in modern civilization give birth to human anxiety. The bewilderment and confusion of modern man have been directly expressed in the poems of some great modern poets such as T S Eliot, Hopkins, and Auden. In other forms of literature of this period also the sense of fear, aimlessness, frustration and impotence are discernible. *The Waste Land* reflects the anxiety, despair, neurosis, and mental agony of the modern age. In the present society corruption and sexual degeneration is seen almost in all levels. It is a poem that offers a criticism of life like the poem of Mathew Arnold. It is a lament over the fall of man and spiritual degradation. According to fertility myth sex-act is the source of life and vitality when it is exercised for the sake of procreation and becomes the expression of love. But when it deviates from its primary function the same love may lead to commercialization of sex and degeneration of society. In such case flesh overcomes the spirit resulting spiritual decay and death. In the poem the title *The Game of Chess* expresses that sex has become a matter of intrigue and source of momentary pleasure. It has become a sordid deed of seduction and exploitation of the innocent. There is reference to a fashionable lady who is blessed with all the pleasure of life. But in spite of all she is found surrounded by boredom of life and passes her time by following meaningless routine of life. She is neurotic and hysterical and miserably fails in her social as well as domestic affairs of life. The commercialization of sex and degeneration

have engulfed the society which invited spiritual drought and dissolution and emotional barrenness.

Perversion among the middle-class people is also depicted in the poem through the mechanical relationship between the characters of the typist and the clerk. The typist is seen falling in artificial love with the clerk and giving him everything with total indifference and apathy. In their relationship there is neither any repulsion nor pleasure. Eliot measure the sterility of the age through such mechanical relationship among the people of the modern age. The typist with “automatic hands” rearranges her hairs and switch on the gramophone as soon as the clerk departs. The same perversion is also seen in the lower-class people also which is reflected through the songs of the three Thames daughter. The poor section of the society is too poor to make any efforts for the upliftment of their condition. Sex has become a monetary pleasure and world has lost the humanity. The deserted Thames is a favorite picnic spot for the people of upper class. The place is used by the poet to suggest the temporary pleasure and business proposition of sexual encounters. Moreover, the conversation of fashionable ladies in some London pubs reflects the repugnant nature of relationship in the present world. The modern society and its barrenness are beautifully highlighted by Eliot in the poem through the above characters and places mentioned in the poem. T. S. Eliot is preoccupied with extreme examples of abnormal types and his poems display the feelings of disgust at the existing civilization and he has tried to portray this in his poems. He has been considered as one of the major poets of the Modern Age owing to his use of imagery, poetic power, and thought-provoking ideas. There are also reference to some abnormal sex-practices in the poem. Mr. Eugenides is a homo-sexual and Hotel Metropole is hot-bed of homosexuality which is essentially a sterile relationship. Whenever sexual function is perverted, there will be certainly spiritual degeneracy and decay. Sex has been separated from procreation and it has merely become beastly resulting in decay and barrenness in the society. In fact, *The Waste Land* is a poem that deals with the theme of life-in-death. In the poem it is shown that men have lost their passion, faith in God and religion. As a result of this there is decay in the faith of humanity and loss of vitality as well. Both emotional and spiritual life of people have become barren to make the modern waste land. In the existing society man only exist like dead objects and there is a life in death, a life of utter inactivity and apathy. Therefore, Eliot has said that April is the cruelest of months because they do not like to be roused from their death-in-life.

The Burial of Dead expresses the inevitable dissolution and lament over the loss of fertility. April is described as the most painful month and spring showers in April rouse from wintry sleep dull roots of trees, shrubs etc. The vegetation excites in spiritual rebirth but unfortunately this is not possible because the waste land is devoid of spiritual regeneration. In this first part of the poem Eliot introduces Tiresias, the protagonist of the poem who enquires one woman if she is Russian. After the short conversation with the young lady Tiresias become anxious to know about the roots that can firmly hold the materialistic life of man. From here the issue of modern degeneration starts. He further asks himself about

the plants of cultural ideas that can take birth out of this barren and stony surface of human mind. Tiresias refers to materialist and Christianity and suggests that materialist should come under the shadow of Christianity which is different from that of selfishness. In the present time selfishness and materialism follows human beings from morning to evening. The German song talks about a lover who was welcomed by his beloved but her face and eyes were silent giving an impression of sadness and he felt that the sea of his life is empty and desolate. The fake fortune teller tries to play tricks with some mischievous pack of cards which are used to tell the fortunes of people. London is described as an unreal city in a nightmare of memories:

That corpse you planned last year in your garden
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?

Tiresias goes near to the London bridge and he observes that even at the time of early morning the city of London is artificial and buried under the brown fog of winter. He notices a crowd passing by his side with short and unusual sighs. Their eyes were fixed before their feet and it indicates that they were lost in their thoughts of materialistic gain and loss.

Similarly, A Game of Chess recalls the dramatic irony of Binaca and the fatal power of women. The lady said to her visitor that her nerves were bad and requested him to stay with her. She wanted to speak with him but she was ignored. Out of anger she asked him what he was thinking about. The visitor replied that they were living in a narrow tract of rats where the spiritually dead people lived and died. The lady heard some noises and asked the man about that. The man replied that it was the noise created by the wind coming through the door. He said the same thing twice but the lady was not satisfied with his reply and asked him whether he knew nothing, saw nothing, remembered nothing. The man tried to solace her by praising her but she again got disturbed and angrily asked him whether he was in his senses or not. The lady uttered some irrelevant sentences and said whether she should rush out of the room and walk in the streets with her hair hanging down. She wanted to know what they should do the next day. The man replied that they would do their usual work and play game of chess very attentively and wait for a knock upon the door. There is reference to the petulant conversation and their eternal questions in this part of the poem:

What shall we do tomorrow?
What shall we ever do!

In the next section of the poem Tiresias visits the banks of the river Thames and requests Thames by recollecting a line from Spenser "Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song". On the banks of the river no waste article such as empty bottles, wrappers, silk handkerchiefs, cigarette end etc. were noticed by Tiresias. The place was deserted and the beauties are no longer there. He addressed the river again and requested to run slowly because he is commenting upon the sexuality of man. He felt the cold wind in his back and he came back to the present and heard the sounds of horns and motor engines. The music of gramophone

reminds him of the music that he used to enjoy in the boats on the river Thames. Tiresias feels sorry that the city of London has fallen a prey to sexuality and perversion. He also hears the songs of three daughters of the Thames who sung about the dirt and miserable condition of the river. After hearing the tales of the three daughters Tiresias requests God to save him from the unholy fire of sexuality and immortality.

Several themes are recapitulated in the final two sections of the poem and the poet mentions about some ways to escape from this utter disillusion and boredom of life. Self-surrender, sympathy, self-control are a few ways to salvation of mankind. The poet is disturbed by the images of desolation and he is slipping into frenzy. But like a charm of healing rain, Eliot ends the poem with the message of the thunder and blessing '*Shantih, Shantih*'.

Eliot has a high regard for Jessie Weston for her book '*From Ritual to Romance*' and he feels as if Weston has disclosed the mind of the past. Regarding the origin and source of the poem *The Waste Land*, T S Eliot himself says that the title as well as the plan and good deal of the incidental symbolism of the poem are suggested by Miss Jessie Weston in her book on the Grail Legend. He feels deeply indebted to Miss Weston and says that the book of Miss Weston will elucidate the difficulties of his poem *The Waste Land*. He even admits that the book of Miss Weston will be more beneficial to understand his poem than his notes. The post-war period is an age of revolt and disorder. People are anxious to embark on the task of reconstruction. The poem reaches to almost all the places of western world through many translations to various languages. The poem speaks clearly that unless some miraculous happen we are bound to live the paralyzed life. The innermost feeling of boredom and disillusionment of the people is expressed by the poem by citing various fragmentary instances of monotony, lifelessness of civilized London. *The Waste Land* makes a strong impact upon the world and it voices the innermost feelings and thoughts of people. The poem highlights the monotony of life where love-making has become so automatic that it creates the feeling "now that's done: and I am glad it's over". In the modern social life there is only birth, copulation and death where April breeds lilacs out of the dead land bringing no quickening to the human spirit.

The poem actually represents the modern materialistic life by using the symbol of waste land. Eliot refers to 'A heap of broken images' and 'Rock and sandy road' in order to indicate the degrading impact of materialism. Likewise, 'A Game of Chess' symbolizes the sex-intrigues and counter-intrigues which have resulted in stalemate in family life in the contemporary waste land. The poem has exposed the sterility and the consequent disillusionment at various levels. The main subject matter of the poem is the barrenness of man's contemporary spiritual state. It is one of the most convincing poems in English literature describing the social aimlessness and emotional and spiritual decay resulting in frustration and disillusionment after the First World War. The poem is essentially a graph of the spiritual degeneration of the war-torn and commercially dominated Europe. It is an exploration of the deep-rooted malaise in the heart of the

people. It presents a kaleidoscopic picture of the 20th century civilization which is rotten both at the top and at the bottom.

The poem describes the spiritual downfall of modern man which leads to commercialization of love and materialistic family life. T S Eliot expresses the rise of capitalistic canon in this famous poem of twentieth century. Modern age is a period where human beings have totally become hollow and sterile. Lack of traditional beliefs and spirituality is the cause of downfall of people in the modern age and transformed human life to something like routine based and mechanical devoid of true emotions and feelings. Simultaneously the horror of war has shattered the minds of people and the age-old faith is replaced by doubt as mentioned by Arnold in his poem "*On Dover Beach*". The world has become barren and fragile. The destruction and misuse natural resources results in deterioration of ecosystem as well. The people are found in lonely situation and alienated from family and friends. T S Eliot's '*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*' is another example of modern frustration and dilemma. The hero of this poem is seen carrying with him an overwhelming question regarding his love for a girl. He finds himself in utter dilemma and suffers from inferior complexity that restricts him from unfolding his heart in front of his beloved. The poem wonderfully depicts the alienation of modern man through the protagonist J. Alfred Prufrock. T S Eliot has highlighted some major issues of the modern age in the poem *The Waste Land* to express the barrenness of the age in a vivid and concise manner. Spiritual degeneration, sexual perversion, horror of war, capitalism, loneliness, meaningless life, lack of hope are few themes which are used by Eliot in this poem.

Two eminent poets of Eliot's time Yeats and Ezra Pound were wholeheartedly devoted to the stuff of dreams and art and politics respectively. On the other hand, T S Eliot alone focused the complex intensities of soul and body. In the poetry of Yeats and Pound the moral, religious anthropological preoccupations are missing. T S Eliot's *Four Quartets* is one of the best examples of religious and philosophical work. To express his gratefulness T S Eliot dedicated his masterpiece *The Waste Land* to Ezra Pound that shows the influence of Ezra Pound so far as this poem is concerned. T S Eliot is the truest poet of his time and he is conscious of the failings of Georgians and consequently he introduces new ways of thought and new modes of approach. His patterns of expression and poetic technique are unique marks of his poetry.

Eliot's poetic technique is consonant with the spirit of his time. The twentieth century is an age of bare, harsh and burning realities and the reflection of the time is beautifully portrayed by Eliot in his poem *The Waste Land* by using direct, irregular and stark verse destitute of all embellishment. He is fully convinced of the uselessness of wide appeal to an audience who is incapable of full appreciation. He knows it very well that the demands of the civilization are more complex than in any previous age of literature. As art is the reflection of the spirit of the age, so it requires the innovation or development of new and unique artistic device. The main objective behind such deviation is to mainly focus on the prevalent social and moral degeneration of the age through his poems. In fact, the poem *The Waste*

Land is a social document that records the modern society and its various complexities. The poem deals with the characters of different profession of various life style and interests. Right from thearistocratic to the poor section of the society almost all characters depicted by Eliot in this poem represent spiritual decay and barrenness of modern life. The lovers are portrayed here as neurotic and over sensitive that lead to nervous breakdown. The perversity and commercialization of sex prevails among all the characters and various sections of the society. The poem is the record of disillusionment and spiritual degeneration of the modern society. It is an embodiment of the lack of faith of modern man and highly material civilization. The face of Europe is actually changed by the World War 1 and this war-torn generation which is often referred as ‘lost generation’ expresses the humiliation and barrenness of people after the world war. ■

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Portrayal of Dharavi in Imtiaz Dharker's *Postcards from God*

Shahaji Mastud

R. P. Lokhande

Imtiaz Dharker has serious concern for socially oppressed and economically weaker sections of the society. She writes about religious orthodoxy, God's ideal image of the world, and minority problems. However, she is also very serious about the life of Dharavi people. She gave the space to the poverty, plight and injustice of the brow-beaten people. She also slammed the social milieu that forced Dharavi residents to live in deplorable conditions. The fundamental necessities of life are denied to slum dwellers. They are battling for food and shelter with other means of substance. Adam, who jolted the heaven, has rejected the bare necessities of life. So, the present research paper attempts to uncover Dharavi's unfavorable conditions. Here, I have chosen poems from Dharker's collection *Postcards from God*. The research paper will make an attempt to provide a comprehensive critical statement on the predicament of slum dwellers.

Keywords: Dharavi, Slum, Poverty, Deplorable, Injustice.

Imtiaz Dharker is poet of south Asian sensibilities connected with western culture. Dharker's poems are very sharp social critic of the contemporary era. Her volume *Postcards from God* (1997) is poignant volume amalgamation of multiple perspectives. The volume published by Bloodaxe has three sections, first Postcards from God, second Naming the Angel and last is Bombay: The Name of God. First section imagines the god's travelling through the human world. Here god observes floating nature of human being for the sake of trivial things. Second section has devoted to the men that enjoyed in heaven and now lived in Dharavi, the biggest slum are in Asia. In this regard, Anup Beniwal and Amrita Mehta noted that, "Imtiaz Dharker's work as a documentary film maker took her frequently to the slums of Dharavi."¹ Moreover, the last section, Bombay: The Name of God depicts communal violence after the demolition of Babri mosque. The present research proposes the question, are they capable to live respectable life in Dharavi? Is it possible to create favorable condition in Dharavi? And last one is that is there any contribution of social milieu for the betterment of the slum dwelling people. These questions are discussed and try to find out proper solutions

with the help of Dharker's selected poems in *Postcards from God*. The research will bring new dimension to the study of slum area and their crucial problems.

Dharker has chosen some typical Dharavi personalities and proposed their predicaments in her verse. They are like Adam, whose mother works as a prostitute. Adam's daughter, who is a scrap collector in Bombay. Another Adam is a journalist from New Zealand who is looking for photographs of poverty in a slum area. Zariana and her brother Adam, whose lives are filled with poverty and filth, are struggling to live. Mangala is a two-year-old girl whose mother has abandoned her and forced her to live in an orphanage. These are some of the personalities, she has picked from the slum area of the Dharavi and put them through her poetic verse to verdict their animal like conditions. Dharker used the metaphor of Adam, the first person in paradise, who enjoyed the elemental life in the garden but was forced to live in poverty. These personalities are analyzed and discussed with the help of selected poems.

The first Dharavi persona I chose is Adam, who is ten years old and lives in Dharavi. The poem "Namesake" depicts the pitiful situation of a ten-year-old boy living with his mother. He has never faced the grace of God, but he survives on rotten pigs outside the door. He gets up early in the morning to accompany his mother and assist her mother in her work. He assists her mother at the hotel by cutting and washing meat and vegetables. He waits for the food while the cooking pots are on the stove. In addition, his mother works as a prostitute to support the family. Because working in a hotel is insufficient, she must also work as a side business before her teenager child. While the mother sells her body behind the wall, the boy stands motionless, and his eyelids drooping. She is frequently hurried because they have other daily activities that require them to return home. R. P. Lokhande correctly stated that, "Poverty compels her to be prostitution. This is the condition of so many poor women in society."² As a result, Adam, the boy, must lead a very unhappy life. He is unable to join with other boys and thus rarely runs shrieking down the sky-paved lane with other rain-splattered children. Here, Dharker states that the Adam in Dharavi will not blame to god because he is unknown from the memory of the garden. Dharker observes that the boy's destiny is connected with Dharavi. There is no other option for him and no hope for a better life. The metaphor of Adam implies that one Adam lived in lavish paradise and the other in filthy Dharavi. Both have different perspectives on their fate; the one who lives in Dharavi is far from heavenly happiness. Radhika Wasson remarks that, "The poem progresses to tell us the condition of that 10 year old boy and thus tell us about the fate of all the victims and survivors of the riots. Riots lead to utter devastation. It lands people in depths of poverty which force a child to lose his childhood. Women are left with no option but to sell their bodies."³ On the other hand Prashant Lohar in his research article detected that, "the poem 'Namesake' (64) depicts agonizing world of a *Dharavi* boy who seethes avenge, and thus provides a slice of odious city. Dharavi is an urban reality."⁴

The second picture, Dharker has depicted in the "Adam's Daughter". Adam's three year old daughter watching with twisted bird-like eyes and her mouth is full of bread. Her teeth are frantic at the crust as small animals worrying about the dead. She has seen enough

to live in dread. Food is being hidden and sought because some hands give and are frequently taken away. There is no confirming pattern for appetite fulfillment. The hunger is constant, but food appears and disappears at random. So her mouth is busy consuming the food, but her mind is still waiting to see what the next step in her life. Her mother is also upset because the scraps she collects are insufficient to run her daily routines.

The food is there and sometimes
disappears. Her mother's hands
are often kind and suddenly rough,
knowing that the scraps she brings
will never be enough. (*Postcards from God*, p. 130)

Dharker moves on picturing the image of girl and her mother struggling to live life in Dharavi. Mother of the girl brings heavy shoes and dangerously stirs up the dust as crows do. Many problems arise while collecting scraps, such as deadly diseases. The girl, Adam's daughter, and her mother are carrying serious diseases. So the /The street worms in upon us, rubs against her spine./ The women and her daughter are in a terrible state because they are impoverished. Their ongoing efforts to collect scraps in order to earn resources are insufficient to deal with daily issues. Furthermore, it causes health problems and malnutrition in the slum area. Dharker emphasizes the poverty that forces him to roam on the heap of scraps. This is a slum area, and Dharker is sensitive to the plight of the poor.

Here is another outstanding Dharker's poem that expresses Adams' difficult life in Dharavi. Dharker used the same name as Adam, one from New Zealand and the other from Dharavi. "Adam from New Zealand" depicts two different images of Adam, one impoverished and the other using poverty as a source of capital for his filmmaking business. Two distinct images compel us to consider the Indian scenario and the foreign, both of which are powerful components of capitalism. Adam from New Zealand is a young journalist who is only twenty six years old. He had just arrived in India to learn about and record Indian social life. During his trip to Bombay, he decided to see the real India in Dharavi. He is always looking for authentic Indians in Dharavi, so he wanted a proper guide for a tour from the film studio to Chor bazaar in between his work schedule. However, poet acquires the role of guide and not willing to guide with the lugging cameras, microphones, sun guns, recorders and dictaphones. The poet persona is unwilling to serve Zarina and her brother Adam in front of journalist Adam's random cameras. Poet is concerned about the children and their mother because their poetry will be exploited by journalists and filmmakers.

How can I serve up Zarina
or her brother Adam
to their random cameras?
They will smile shyly.
The aperture will open
to swallow up their souls. (*Postcards from God*, p. 131)

The poet strongly claims the attitude of the capital world. The poverty of family has acquired only with only Thums Up or glasses of hot sweet tea from the stall at the corner of the lane. Dharker observes that /She will put on a brave face, but everyone in Dharavi will know the world has come with cameras to make a side-show of her poverty/. Further, poet proposes the question; will they back in ten years' time with their unidirectional mikes and portapacks to make a record of Zarina's wedding or a video of Adam's bride? Poet strongly asserts that she will keep Dharavi from the greedy cameras of the capitalists, who sell their poverty for the earning money in the exchange of cold drinks or sweet tea.

Adam, your namesake lives in Dharavi.

But I will keep him out of reach
of your greedy camera.

He is too precious for you to see. (*Postcards from God*, p. 132)

Dharker compares India to other foreign countries, noting that both have Adam, but one is impoverished and the other is prosperous. Adam, the journalist, is a powerful twenty-six-year-old eager to photograph poverty and earn a lot of money, while Adam in Dharavi struggles for food and shelter. Their poverty is worth only one cold drink or sweet tea, nothing more. According to Renate Papke, "The titles Namesake, Adam's Daughter and Adam from New Zealand underline the fact that poor people do not have a future. Generation after generation will remain in the slum. The child in the slum accidentally bears the same name as the visitor. But this is the only similarity."⁵ So, Dharker warns the capitalist world to stop using poverty as a source of income and instead invest money in poverty eradication and think about their lives. Dharavi's identity has been linked to Chor bazaar. There are two India's: one in Dharavi and one in shining India. Dharker is successful in drawing the attention of the rest of the world to the plight of Dharavi through this poem.

The poem "Your Price" addresses the issue of slum children in Dharavi. Mangala, a two-year-old girl, is subjected to abuse by her mother's lover. The poet emphasizes the issue of children living in filthy conditions. The poem is addressed to God asking the price of removing children from the slum area. Dharker posed the question of Mangala, a two-year-old girl abandoned on the street after being betrayed by her mother. Mangala's mother does not love her with a single sweet kiss, but rather ignores her existence among the other children. She only provides a single crust of bread and nothing else. Furthermore, the poet explains that Mangala's mother miscarried all of her children and those unborn were raked out of hostile wombs.

All the children, delivered by mistake;
and those unborn, raked
out of hostile wombs, one mark
between their eyes, the drop of blood
that sang, 'I live' before

they were returned, from mud
to mud. (*Postcards from God*, p. 136)

Dharker makes outcry to almighty god, asking the question why you have delivered children out of future that you have made. There must be a solution, so the poet inquires, “What is your price, lord?” Dharker’s concern for children’s plight makes clear that there is the urgent need to do some concert for slum area children. Children are the nation’s future, so protecting them from all disasters will ensure the nation’s long-term sustainability.

I have observed that Imtiaz Dharker was in Bombay during the Bombay riots. Her marriage to Anil Dharker provided an excellent opportunity to acquire Indian culture, particularly Bombay. Her observations of slums compelled her to open the subject of Dharavi for discussion. I believe, she has the ability to draw the attention of the world to the trouble of Dharavi. She had drawn a line between Dharavi and modern progressive India. With her Dharavi poetry, she paints a picture of real India. Dharker’s biblical approach makes poem gorgeous with the images of Adam and Angels. She has picked common characters and their common problems in order to sensitize the globalized India. Dharker has warned the world about people who use their poverty as a source of income. Dharker believes in God’s mercy rather than government policies. She believes that the key to a prosperous life is in the hands of God because he made a difference. She assured everyone that god exists in the unseen world. There is no need to fear God’s wrath because He has not placed a seal on our hearts, not hidden the right path from our eyes, or closed our ears to hear His word. Service to God will undoubtedly open a new horizon against the dark sun of poverty. People have been transformed from innocence to power, but returning to innocence, sympathy, and faith in God will unquestionably bring opulence to the human world. I strongly believe that only economic development will not satisfy human desires; however, honesty, morality, and humanity will undoubtedly rebuild human civilization. So Dharavi’s contribution to the development of Bombay and India must be recognized, that is why proper education, health care, and job opportunities in various sectors are required for Dharavi’s well-being. ■

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Issues of Identity Crisis and Role Conflict in the Novels of Margaret Laurence

Jyoti Agarwal

The novels of Margaret Laurence deal very effectively with the alienation and affirmation (survival) of women of white Anglo-Saxon-Protestant origin, now part and parcel of the Canadian ethos. The tensions and paradoxes of their lives are very well articulated in their writings. Identity-crisis, if one may postulate, is the central motif of these writings. But happily enough, they have also incorporated in their writings, the other half of the story, i.e. the alienation experienced by those persons belonging to the natives (Red Indians), ethnic groups, religious and linguistic minority groups, other racial groups, etc. this has certainly widened the horizon of their writings and has invested them with meaningful elements of universality, salvaging them from any fierce kind of ghettoization. Margaret Laurence was a novelist who wrote from the core of her heart and with a sense of commitment and responsibility. It is through the process of self-actualization and self-realization of the protagonists that the significance and relevance of the life-affirming values and forces is conveyed to the readers, the values and forces so vital for the progress and development at all levels and for creating better understanding amongst individuals, communities, nations and cultures so that the world becomes a better place to live in for one and all. In this connection, Laurence articulated her view from time to time, in addition to the echoes and undercurrents discernible in her fictional writings.

Keywords: Alienation, ethnic, ghettoization, affirmation, discrimination, blacks, race etc.

In Canada, the question of racial and religious minorities is also a vital one. Those belonging to these minority groups such as the Jews. Black East Indians, Ukrainians, the Japanese and the Chinese feel and find themselves outside the wall of “the garrison” and live in a state which Northrop Frye calls ‘Amiable Apartheid.’ The surprising thing is that this happens in a country that otherwise is among the top few developed ones and which loudly hails democratic norms and upholds and respects the laudable concept of Human Rights at all the international foray. Margaret Laurence views the Native Indians, the Metis and the Crees as victims of the so-called white society immigrants who regard the former as nothing better than ‘commodities’ to be sold and bought for financial gains. The death-in-

life existence of the natives is very poignantly mirrored through the character of the Italian youth named Luke in *The FireDwellers*. He tells Stacey of his visit to the Indian village Katwanga, along the Western coast of Canada. The beautiful description runs like this:

“Up the Skeena River - Kispiox, Kitwanga, crazy names like that. In some parts, nearer the coast, you drive along the edge of a mountain and the trees are like a jungle, only it's mostly evergreen, but all this fantastic growth, bushes and ferns and moss and jack pine, all crowding each other, dark and light greens, northern jungle, rain forest, and the damn road, is so narrow you swear any minute you're going to plummet over into some canyon or the other. I've never seen it... There's this place where there's a ferry. Is it Kitwanga? Yes, may be. Anyway, this beat-up old raft crawls across the Skeena and it is attached to some kind of a cable, and you think - man, if that cable goes, that is it - the river is wild as hell.... Because lots of people visit the place every summer, for may be half an hour. The attraction is the totem poles. And there they are - high, thin, beaked, bleached in the sun, cracking and splintering, the totems of the dead. And of the living dead. If I were one of them, the nominally living, I'd sure as hell hate people like me, coming in from the outside. You want to ask them if they know any longer what the poles mean, or if it's a language which has got lost and now there isn't anything to replace it except silence and sometimes the howling of men who've been separated from themselves for so don't ask anybody anything. You haven't suffered enough. You don't know what they know. You don't have the right to pry. So you look, and then you go away. (*The Fire-Dwellers* 226-27)

The Metis have a significant presence in several of Laurence's novels such as *The Stone Angel*, *The Fire-Dwellers* and *The Diviners*. Similarly, there is an important Ukrainian Canadian character in *A Jest of God*; and the Italian Canadian one in *The Fire-Dwellers*. These writings, while reflecting very meaningfully the tensions caused by the cultural-mix in Canada, also bring out the sense of alienation experienced by these groups. The self-versus the other syndrome and consciousness are undoubtedly the direct causes of the sense of displacement and to some extent dispossession experienced by Quebecois French Canadians, the Red Indians. Metism, and those belonging to other minor religions and race-groups. The complexity of the French-Canadian phenomenon has been meaningfully and realistically portrayed in Hugh

MacLennan's novels *The Two Solitudes* and *Each Man's Song*. The problems of the native Indians who can be called the 'First Nation' of Canada, the Metis i.e. the French half-breeds and the Inuit, popularly known as the Eskimos, are unique in their own ways as these minority ethnic groups are 'doubly isolated' - isolated as they are first from the two mainstream demographic cultures i.e. the Anglophones and the Francophones. In the second place, they are isolated from their own groups racial and caste configurations. They remain so because they are apprehensive of the normative features of these groups who reject their own tribal patterns and fail to conform to their own parameters are their own culture-specific

value-system in one way or another. They cannot, like most other traditional societies elsewhere in the world, escape the clutches of white and dark technological culture. And they find themselves caught in an unenviable situation (quite perplexing) of temporal flux. Bounie Barthold explains this temporal dislocation that takes place when an agrarian culture encounters an industrial one in his book titled *Black Time: Fiction of Africa, the Caribbean and the United States*. He also agrees with Richard Wright who thinks that all human life on earth in the contemporary times is moving away from traditional and agrarian paradigms towards industrialization and modernization. Underlining the difference between the two, Levi Strauss, the well-known anthropologist, points out that an agrarian, rural culture conceptualizes time as predominantly synchronic whereas in an industrialized urban society a diachronic view of time predominates.

In the works of Margaret Laurence, such as *The Diviners*, the Indians are often represented by the Metis - the Tonnerre family. The Crees also find a significant place. Laurence feels very strongly for these people called themselves Bois-Brutes (the scorched wood people) but who came to be contemptuously referred to as half-breeds after the Metis uprising. The spread of white civilization caused all these natives to be reduced from a state of selfreliance to that of dependence. This, in fact, has been the fate of all the natives in almost all the colonized countries, paralyzing their psyche and fracturing and often exploiting their culture, represented mostly through folk tales, folk songs, vast heritage of legends and myths etc. this is a strong enough cause and situation for the alienation of the natives from the socio-economically and educationally better off immigrants. The tribal's and the natives all over the world face similar situations. All along the line, there are numerous pathetic and tragic discourses on their flight. Efforts to integrate them with the lives and traditions of the mainstream have often remained confined to the government files, partially due to their own identity-crisis and partially due to the exploitative laws framed by those with a major stake in maintaining the status quo. The neutral kind of instrument like the language of the rulingmasters' majority community too has often been a major cause of the wide divide leading to alienation of both.

The alienation discourse in Canadian fiction also has been a discourse of gender-discrimination leading to well-articulated feminist movements from the decade of 1960s and onwards. Though much has happened, a lot more remains to be achieved. The situations and problem are too complex and too complicated to be handled in simple ways. Radical positions and postures have been adopted by all the concerned players in the game. All these dilemmas, predicaments, contradictions, paradoxes, perplexities, with ever-increasing pace of scientific and technological advancements impinging upon the sensibilities and often contributing in widening the gaps, cleavages and chasms, have been portrayed aesthetically by the Canadian women novelists in general and Margaret Laurence in particular.

Margaret Laurence did portray women powerfully in her Manawaka cycle. As Morley states, "This cycle of fiction constitutes a remarkable gallery of vital individuals, a composite portrait of women's experience in the late nineteenth and twentieth century, and

the imaginative recreation of an entire society” (Morley 8). Many feminist critics have commended Laurence for giving women their own voice. As Diana Brydon states, in “Silence, Voice and the Mirror: Margaret Laurence and Women,” “Her books give ordinary women their voices back. They reach out to their readers to establish a sense of community. And in claiming full humanity for all her female characters, her novels challenge the stereotypes that have limited women to preordained and constricting roles” (Diana Brydon 203).

Moreover, the five Manawaka texts form a cohesive unit, like Scott’s Waverley novels. Laurence explains, “When I wrote *The Stone Angel* I had no idea there would be other books coming out of the Manawaka background, and indeed it turned out that there were five books...even though each of these books is, of course, quite independent of any of the others, they can be seen as a kind of whole” (Sullivan 77). Numerous critics, including Clara Thomas, George Woodcock, and David Blewett, to name just a few, have written persuasively about the coherence of the Manawaka cycle. In fact, the five heroines are related. Hagar is the grandmother of it all, since she is the generation of Laurence’s own grandparents, for Hagar “incorporates many of the qualities of my grandparents’ generation. Her speech is their speech, and her gods their gods” (*Heart of a Stranger* 7), as Laurence affirms in *Heart of a Stranger*. Stacey is “Hagar’s spiritual grand-daughter” (22), Laurence observes in “Ten Years’ Sentences”: “She’s not particularly valiant (maybe she’s an anti-heroine), but she’s got some guts and some humour” (*Ten Years’*

Sentences 22). She remarks, “In *The Fire-Dwellers*, Stacey is Rachel’s sister (don’t ask) me why; I don’t know; she just is)” (*Ten Years’ Sentences* 21).

In the last two Manawaka books, *A Bird in the House* and *The Diviners*, Vanessa MacLeod and Morag Gunn play bit parts in each other’s dramas. In *The Diviners*, for example, Vanessa sings the solo in the Christmas pageant, to Morag’s disgust; but, when Vanessa’s father, Dr Ewen MacLeod, dies, Morag is ashamed of having wished her ill. These heroines, as well as Rachel and Stacey, were also to have had bit parts in the novel “Dance on the Earth,” which was to have concluded the Manawaka cycle. The Metis Tonnerre family connects all the Manawaka texts, the reading through the cycle. The Currie plaid pin that John Shipley trades for the Tonnerre hunting knife in *The Stone Angel* is inherited by Morag Gunn, and the knife is returned to her on the death of Jules Tonnerre in *The Diviners*, where the two emblems, Aboriginal and settler artefacts, are reunited, to be inherited by Pique Gunn Tonnerre, Morag’s daughter by Jules, knitting the entire Manawaka cycle together.

Just as modern American photographer Edward Steichen created a pictorial *The Family of Man*, So Margaret Laurence creates a fictional Family of Woman in her Manawaka cycle, as she portrays her female protagonists in every possible familial and social role – as mother, daughter, sister, and wife, and as lover, friend and, most important, writer. But within those roles, each heroine must discover her individual identity beneath

the role-playing and gender construction – the self-hood that precedes and informs all those roles.

For example, Hagar Shipley, the “holy terror” (*The Stone Angel* 304) who dominates *The Stone Angel*, is uncomfortable in her female roles as wife and mother because she is uneasy being a woman; before the nonagenarian can die, this petrified woman with the heart of stone must first come to life; before she can come to life, however, she must accept her identity as a woman.

Rachel Cameron, a neurotic, thirty-four-year-old elementary school teacher, is a case of arrested development, still living at home with her aging, widowed mother as an adolescent no more mature than her own students. She must outgrow the juvenile role of daughter and forge new adult roles and relationships for herself and, finally, give birth to herself as an adult woman in *A Jest of God*. Rachel’s sister, Stacey MacAindra, has taken the other road in *The Fire-Dwellers* and married and borne four children: buried under the multiple roles of wife and mother, daughter and sister, she must learn to know and love herself before she can continue to love others. Vanessa is, literally, a child in *A Bird in the House*, and her adult retrospective chronicles her escape from the cage created by her Grandfather Connor and her emergence from the chrysalis suggested by her name, Vanessa, the Greek word for butterfly and for soul. Morag Gunn must outgrow the role of “Child” imposed on her by her authoritarian husband, Brooke Shelton, by finding her own voice as a writer in *The Diviners* – as Laurence did in writing her Manawaka cycle – her “(W)

Rites of Passage.”

In “Matriarch of Manawaka,” Valerie Miner comments on the rejection of roles by Laurence’s Manawaka heroines: “Morag’s biggest step is her rejection of external roles. We see Hagar battling her father’s expectations, Rachel fighting her mother’s demands of propriety. Certainly Stacey is aware of role playing. Toward the end of *The Fire-Dwellers*, she is able to externalize at least some of her thoughts, to become a fuller person. Morag carries the whole process further. She rejects the traditional strictures of marriage, motherhood and housewifery” (*The Fire-Dwellers* 20). While Morag does reject her confining marriage, however, she certainly does not reject motherhood. Indeed, Laurence does not portray her heroines as rejecting their responsibilities but, rather, as finding the confidence, through discovering their own identity, to reach out and help others. In fact, Laurence portrays her heroines as developing from solipsism to community. Hagar recognizes, too late, the devotion of her rejected husband, Bram Shipley, realizing, “His banner over me was love” (*The Fire-Dwellers* 80). She also recognizes, finally, the value of community when she is confined in hospital, as she comes to appreciate women and her long-suffering son, Marvin, saying, “You’ve been good to me, always. A better son than John” (*The Fire-Dwellers* 304).

Rachel adopts, not rejects, her mother, now her “elderly child” (208), announcing, “I am the mother now” (*The Fire-Dwellers* 203). Stacey reaffirms her commitment to her husband, Mac, and their children and even agrees to welcome her father-in-law, Matthew,

into her home as she anticipates the arrival of her mother and sister from Manawaka. Morag comes to appreciate her foster-parents, Christie and Prin Logan: Morag tells Christie on his deathbed, “you’ve been my father to me” (*The Fire-Dwellers* 420), prompting him to respond, “I’m blessed” (*The Fire-Dwellers* 420). Laurence does not portray her heroines as rejecting their roles, but, rather, as accepting them with grace, with the knowledge that their sense of self-worth is now strong enough to support their responsibility to others. As Lyall Powers states, “The Manawaka fiction favours enlightened love and respect of self, the proper selflove that is the basis on which love of neighbour must rest” (Lyall Powers 37). Self-empowerment for Laurence spells charity, not selfishness.

In fact, each of Laurence’s Manawaka women feels sympathy, rather than animosity, toward her husband or lover. We saw how Hagar comes to appreciate Bram. Rachel says, of Nick Kazlik, “He had his own demons and webs” (*A Jest of God* 197). Stacey realizes that her husband, Mac, needs support as much as she does. And Morag consoles Jules Tonnerre as he lies dying. Vanessa acknowledges how much she inherits from Grandfather Connor. Laurence frequently affirms the paramount importance of character to her fiction: “For me, fiction is primarily a matter of portraying individual characters as faithfully as I am able to do” (*Ivory Tower* 251). In “A Place to Stand On,” in *Heart of a Stranger*, she affirms, “I can feel a deep sense of connection with the main character” (*Heart of a Stranger* 6). Laurence asserts, “My books deal basically with human dilemmas...I always start with the main character or, as it may be, character. Usually there are a number of people who have been inhabiting my head for a number of years before I begin on a novel, and their dilemmas grow out of what they are, where they come from” (Gibson 193, 195). She claims that each protagonist is faced with a dilemma or conflict that she must resolve so that she may continue to function. The nature of the character’s dilemma varies, of course, depending on the culture. For her African characters, like Nathaniel Amegbe of *This Side Jordan*, the dilemma lies in the fact that they are caught between the old gods of their ancestors and the new gods of the Christian missions that educated them. For her Canadian heroines, the conflict is between the past generation, like Vanessa’s Grandfather Connor in *A Bird in the House*, and the modern desire for independence, but it is also between her heroines’ need to discover their identities amidst the plethora of role constructions and their duty to fulfil the responsibilities involved in those roles, as we can see most clearly in the case of Stacey MacAindra of *The Fire-Dwellers*. Laurence recalls in *Dance on the*

Earth the “impossible juggling act” (*Dance on the Earth* 157) involved in being a writer and a wife and mother. She remarks to Rosemary Sullivan, “Role conflict – I know exactly what that means” (*Dance on the Earth* 73).

The character’s dilemma often reflects Laurence’s own personal conflicts, suggesting that fiction may provide a form of self-therapy for the author. Margaret Laurence has written very perceptively about the themes, style, narrative strategies, etc. of her novels. Though a writer’s comments on his own writing may not be that objective and impartial as that of a critic, yet they do provide significant clues about the creative process and the visions and

insights a writer may have attempted to contextualize in the texts. With this in view, Laurence's observations on the themes of her novels become relevant as these do help us in arriving at a better understanding of the novels that her writings are perhaps her own attempt to come to terms with the past. She sees this process as the gradual one of freeing oneself from the stultifying aspect of the past, while at the same time beginning to see its true value - which, in the case of her own people. This theme runs through two of her novels other than *The Stone Angel* (in which of course, it is the dominant theme). In *A Jest of God* and *The Fire-Dwellers*, both Rachel and Stacey are in their very different ways threatened by the past and by the various inadequacies each feels in herself. In the end, and again in their very different ways, and out of their very different dilemmas, each finds within herself an ability to survive - not just to go on living, but to change and to move into new areas of life. Neither book is optimistic. Optimism in this world seems impossible to me. But in each novel there is some hope, and that is a different thing entirely." (*A Place to Stand on* 18)

When Laurence herself agrees that in spite of little optimism, in the ordinary sense of the term 'optimism' there is some hope in each novel, it clearly means that the visions and insights these two novels - *A Jest of God* and *The Fire-Dwellers*, are invested with are life-affirming in character. In the case of Rachel Cameron, she is a spinster school teacher, living in the highly taboo-ridden and male-dominated, class-conscious and ethnic-group centred society of Manawaka. The Manawaka in which Rachel, the individual lives, is both a localized prairie small town and also a microcosm of Canada. It is a divided society as is clear from the split between the rational and middle class side of the tracks (referred as 'this side of the tracks' referred as 'beyond the tracks'). On this side of the track, the values that are prevalent are: work, devotion to duty, decency and respectability. Emotions and expression of sentiments are undervalued. The elders and more particularly the males decide the codes and norms of general behaviour especially for young women. Social and cultural taboos are predominant; lack of awareness of these and the inability to observe these may be considered a sign of being uncivilized and uncultured. Rachel has incorporated these values which are conformism to the existing social and moral codes, often against her will and better understanding. On the other side of the tracks, the middle-class conception of order and duty are little known, just as on this side of the tracks 'passions and feelings' are little cared for—in fact these are up at a discount. This stifling and suffocating atmosphere (more at the psychological level) is graphically portrayed by Rachel: "No one in Manawaka ever dies, at least on this side of the tracks. We are a gathering of immortals. We pass on through Calla's divine gates of topaz and azure, perhaps, but we do not die. Death is rude, unmannerly, not to be spoken to in the street" (*A Jest of God* 3). The strong element of irony undercutting Rachel's words is hard to miss.

Like other protagonists in the novels of the Manawaka series, Rachel perceives three worlds with her caught in the middle a weak area between millstones - a situation of uncertainty. Psychologically, the first world belongs to her pupils and the apparently self-confident teenagers they so rapidly become. The third world belongs to her mother and the

social and moral mores of Manawaka. The worlds exclude Rachel, she feels alienated and isolated; and isolation generates fear. She is intimidated by glamorous adolescents, whose field and lacquered hair suggests a race of strange creatures, Venusians, to whom the planet belongs. She feels further intimidated by their easy acceptance of sexuality. Haunted by the memory of a young couple in the deep grass by the river, Rachel is forced to subscribe to the view of her mother, her doctor and her neighbours that she has no sexual needs. In fact, in the world of her mother who exercises a protective tyranny over her; and in the dreary and dull atmosphere of her friends, the unmentionable subjects include sex, age and death. Their world, as also the world of Rachel's workplace, the strictly disciplined canon at the school; and the external respectively-oriented world of the Church, are all internalized by a harsh superego, and they sit in constant judgment of Rachel: "What a strangely pendulum life I have, fluctuating in age between extremes, hardly knowing myself whether I am too young or too old." (*A Jest of God* 57) Though she does not accept her mother's viewpoint or her principal's opinion about James Doherty, she finds herself helpless to act on her own. She sees herself as an anachronism, sole survivor of an extinct species, a fantasy in the mirror or an invisible woman. ■

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Historical and Geographical Diagram of Contemporary Odisha in *Sarala Mahabharata*

Abhinna Chandra Dash

Literature is a reflection of the heart and soul of a nation. Here the poet's creative mind respects tradition and cultural values. By the virtue of his own creative power, he gives shape to the history of nation, tradition, culture, religion, philosophy and daily life-style of common men. Life and nature of men, national crisis, conflicts and curiosities are also painted in his creations. Though his creative mind is always built on the basis of the nation's self power, it is anxious to go through from limited horizon of nation; to a larger field of human feelings. The main objective of the poet is to go through the nation and create nationality and at last the creation of world fraternity. As much as his field spreads out and is deep-rooted, his field of vision turns to eternity proportionately. He builds such a literary world between a moment and eternity that, it becomes the speech of heart and soul of every man. His view of life cannot exclude social tradition and values. Rather, he feels that social facts are truer than any other things. So social facts of contemporary society have been reflected in classic literature.

From the above analysis it is clear that classical literature like Sâralâ Dâsa's Mahâbhârata is a unique literary creation. In the 15th century AD, the clear picture of social life of Odisha is reflected in each parva of Mahâbhârata. It is needless to say that Odisha and the national life of Odia people have been flawlessly placed in the writings of the poet. In the words of Dr. Mayadhar Mansingh, "if epics are and have to be national in character, the Mahâbhârata of Sâralâ Dâsa is national epic from many standpoints. It had to be a book of Orissa and Oriya, in every nature of things, His epic is a picture gallery or Oriya social life that is true even today, to make his motherland Orissa loom large and important in the eyes of his compatriots".

In this context critic Surendra Mohanty said that Sâralâ Mahâbhârata is not only an epic but also a picture of political, cultural, historical and social life of Odisha in the 15th century AD. If we study Sâralâ epic, we get information about the unprecedented word treasury of Utkal's civilization and culture. It is really the heart of Odia race. Every field of this classic epic is filled with glorious culture of Odia race and blossomed

with nationalism. Each and every character and incident of Sâralâ Mahâbhârata is portrayed in such manner that it became a beautiful literary creation not only in the field of Odia literature but also in the entire Indian literature.

About the greatness of Sâralâ Mahâbhârata, Pandit Gopinath Nanda Sharma in his book *Shri Bharat Darpan* viewed that, those who are versed with scriptures consider it as a scripture, critics of poetry as epic, metamorphical, historians as history and mythologist as mythology. Hence this great epic serves as a storehouse of knowledge in every sphere of Odia life. In other words, it can be said that what is not found here cannot be found in any other work of art.

Logically with reference to Sâralâ Mahâbhârata it is believed that what is not in Bhârat that is not seen in Bhârat. That means, Sâralâ Mahâbhârata elucidates the pictures of contemporary Odisha and Bhârat, which was not seen at times, from Sâralâ Mahâbhârata we observe history, geography, social, political, religion and the soul of culture life of Odisha and India of the 15th century A.D.

Sâralâ Dâsa's Mahâbhârata is a mythology, not a history. So, one will be disappointed if he searches for visible facts of history in Sâralâ Mahâbhârata. But he has inculcated incidents, characters and stories of contemporary history, when he described the mythological stories, incidents, characters and legend. His Mahâbhârata indirectly reflects the geographical and historical life of Odisha and Odia People. By analyzing the hidden facts of history in Sâralâ Mahâbhârata Dr. Krushna Ch. Panigrahi has proved that Sâralâ Mahâbhârata is not only a mythology or epic but also a history of the then great king kapilendra Dev and Purushottam Dev. According to Dr. Krushna Chandra Panigrahi "in this Mahabharata so peculiar in character, reference to historical events and geographical places have rather than numerous, though unfortunately they have yet been very little studied and utilized..... We obtain a historical and geographical picture of India from this Mahabharata, the main characteristic of which is that it is not a picture, of the Mahabharata age, but of the historical times, particularly of the poet's time. We must however, note the limitations of the geographical and historical information left to us by Sâralâ Dâsa. It has been casually and incidentally introduced into all the *Parvas* of his Mahabharata, except his *Sabhâ Parva* in which a deliberate attempt appears to have been made to present a geographical picture of India, mostly of historical times. The art of writing history or geography in a direct and systematic manner being not one of the achievements of the ancient Hindu writers, Sâralâ Dâsa can hardly be expected to have risen above the spirit of his age. He has consistently introduced into his Mahabharata the historical and geographical information of all ages known to him. Among the geographical places mentioned, some may be fictitious but the vast majority of them are identifiable. Some of the historical and geographical names mentioned have been changed by the poet probably with a view to give them puranic forms, and in some cases their Oriya forms have been used. The geographical regions mentioned do not, often show their order of contiguity and

directions given in them are also sometimes erroneous. Evidently Sâralâ Dâsa did not use any maps which were hardly available in his time. He has left to us certain historical and geographical names which he had heard and which he could remember at that time of writing and conveniently incorporate them in his metrical compositions. To meet the exigencies of his metre some names have been lengthened or shortened and for some exigencies the contiguity of geographical places and regions mentioned, has been made topsy-turvy. Despite these limitations Sâralâ Dâsa's knowledge of history and geography constitutes an important and interesting source of information to us". (*HISTORY OF ODISHA, Page 235-236*)

Great poet Sâralâ Dâsa was a soldier and as a soldier of Gajapati army he had visited different places of Odisha and India and he acquired geographical, historical knowledge which he has written in his Mahâbhârata. It is proved from the above analysis that Sâralâ Dâsa was conscious of the history and geography of Odisha and India in the 15th century AD. So, in his Mahâbhârata, rivers, mountains, holy places, temples and forts of Odisha and India are clearly visible which have become very lively and charming. Similarly, the past of Odisha, history of India, history of different religions and incidents of legends are mingled and having the same form. Through the incidents of mythology, various characters, legend and story with his historical facts and geographical elements have united. It has reflected the unprecedented beauty of Sâralâ Mahâbhârata as well as the classical view of Sâralâ Dâsa.

According to historians, king Kapilendra Dev divided his empire into nine provinces (Mandal) right from the Gangâ to Kâuveri. Sâralâ Dâsa indicates these historical incidents by way of giving an example. King Jajati divided the earth into nine pieces and distributed it among his nine sons and his eldest son got Odarâstra and ruled over it. In the poet's narration Puru was none other than the great king Purusottam Dev who was the successor of Kapilendra Dev. In the words of the poet-

In English Version-

"In the beginning he divided the earth into nine parts
Distributed nine parts of the world among his nine sons.
His eldest son is Puru, lord of the world
He is the son of his Odia wife.
Odarâstra mandal is mother's part
So he always resides in Odarâstra,
An integral part of India." (Âdiparva-10)

In 1458 AD king Kapilendra Dev after defeating Bâhâmanee sultan, occupied "Kalabarga" or Gulabarga area and declared himself "Kalabargeswar". By changing this Kalabargeswar title of Kapilendra Dev, the Poet Sâralâ Dâsa has made it familiar with the reflection of king of Shivapur that is Bheema as a "Kalebar emperor" in his creation. The Poet says-

“Many Brahminsworship the feet

“Kalebara emperor in forest city of kingdom.” (Âdiparva 705)

Keshari and Ganga Dynasty kings ruled over Odisha before Surya Dynasty. During the reign of king Udyota Keshari of Keshari Dynasty, Odisha was attacked by king Karna of Haiheya Dynasty of Koshala kingdom, that has been elaborated by Sâralâ Dâsa in his *Sabha parva*. Similarly, we get a lot of information about Jajâti Keshari in Sâralâ Mahâbhârata. The subject-matter of Satadhanu Saran has been described in *Madhya Parva* and in *Virata Parva* through the analysis of Bheema, the provincial wrestler. The poet has described about Chudanga or Chodaganga Dev, another great king of Ganga Dynasty. Sâralâ Das has given information about the Chudanga fort or Chudanga Nagar built by him. The poet glorifies-

“Mighty Chudanga in the corner of city west

Bajrabahu wrestler fell at nine thousand miles.” (Birâta parva-224)

After Chodaganga Dev his sons ruled over Odisha one by one. Among them Râjrâj Dev was the youngest one and his other name was Madan Mahâdev. Describing about Madan Mahâdev in *Madhya Parva* Sâralâ Dâsa edifies:-

“Mighty king Birabhadra is the king of Bheemadesh,

Madan Mahadev is accompanied with.” (*Madhyaparva-1/102*)

In *Sabhâ Parva*, by elaborating Yudhistira’s râjaswaya sacrificial rites, the story of conquering the earth by Pândavs has been described. In this context the poet Sâralâ Dâsa says, to invite the kings of different kingdoms Bheema set forth to the west, Arjun to the north, Nakula to the south and Sahadev to the east. The story of conquering the earth by Pândavs has been described in Sanskrit Mahâbhârata only in 218 metrical compositions. But Sâralâ Dâsa through analysis of conquering of earth by Pândavs has tried to place and elaborate the heroicness of Kapilendra Dev in his Mahâbhârata. Dr. Krishna Chandra Panigrahi has said, “In the Sabhâ Parva of his Mahabharata which consists of thirteen thousand verses, he takes Arjuna, for inviting kings to the Rajasuya sacrifice, to such places as Kondavidu, Devarakonda, Srisailam, Udayagiri, Tanjor and Trichanopalli, Srirangam, etc. and makes them the feudatories of Arjuna everywhere. In this Parva he also describes in a long story the fight between Bhima and Mallikarjuna whom he describes as Pundarika Vasudeva. The conflict between Kapilendra and Mahmmud Shah, the Sharqi Sultan of Jaunpur, has also been described in an episode of the fight between Arjuna and Mahesvara (Mahmmud) of Yamunapura of Jaunpur”.

It is evident from the history that in 1447 AD Kapilendra Dev had occupied Reddy kingdom and Kundâbedu fort. This historical incident has been described by Sâralâ Dâsa in *Sabhâ Parva*, giving the example of war between Bheema and two Sons of king Vishma named Rukmana and Rukmangada of Kundi Nagar near Karan mountain. In the words of the poet-

“So Bheemasen walks with satisfaction
Reached at kundali forest accompanied with soldiers.
There is a city of kundi nagra
Where a king ruled named Bheesma
Rukman was his elder brother
He always maintained friendship with wicked people.
xxx xxx xxx
Son running by noise
He obstructed Bheemasen outside kataka.
Rukman ordered his soldiers
why are you looking for, penetrate his head with arrow.
Ohh! Soldiers ran by order of Rukman.
penetrating continuously with arrow.” (*Sabhâ Parva-163-65*)

Daradasen was defeated by Arjuna and king Jamâgostha was tied up by him, during the time when Arjuna visited to the north to invite the kings that has been clearly described in Sâralâ Mahâbhârat. The Poet said-

Daradasen flew away and reached Sakhamandipur,
Messenger conveyed in court of Jamâgostha
My lord king Daradsen surrounded our kingdom
Instantly a fighter cameout and created panic.
xxx xxx xxx
Arjun was satisfied with the word of companion charioteer matali,
Sat in chriot holding hair of Jamâgostha
Tied him up by a silk thread with chariot.
All his companions flew away with fear”.(*Sabhâ Parva-419*)

According to Krishna Chandra Panigrahi, the defeat of Daradasen and Jamagostha clearly indicates the defeat of Bahamani soldiers by king Kapilendra Dev. In this context the poet Sâralâ Dâsa has compared Humayun’s character in history with Daradasen and his army chief Jalâl Khân with Jamagostha, Debarakunda fort with Amarchuda or Amarakuta mountain. It is historically true that in 1456 AD king Kapilendra Dev defeated the Vijayanagar king Malikarjuna and occupied Râjmahendri. The poet Sâralâ Dâsa compared it with the occupation of Sakalya kingdom by Arjuna. In the words of the poet-

“Partha returned with his soldiers
Sabyasâchi reached Sakalyaforest.
There was one mountain named Sarbeswar
There was Sâkalyaisland in Sâragati forest.
Fâlguni went to Sâkalya kingdom
Soldiers rushed into Kataka with chariots, horses,elephants.

Sâlu was king of that kingdom
He hadno elephant,horse and soldiers.
XXX XXX XXX
He was glad with speech of the minister
The king went to invite him to accompany the soldiers.
He went there with lots of gifts
Worshipped Arjun'sfeet".(*Sabhâ Parva-430-31*)

Sâkalya king Sâlu was none other than Sâkalya Narsingh and Shri Saila of the kingdom was Shrimountain(Shrigiri) which are described in Sâralâ Mahâbhârata. Similarly, the king of Pundak or Karabira kingdom is none other than Malika Arjuna which is described in Sâralâ Mahâbhârata as Pundarik Bâsudev. Here Sâralâ Dâsa has described the war with Bheema and his confinement.

Besides that, Sâralâ Dâsa named modern west Bengal as Sindhumandâra, he has told about the mighty Brahmin named Jânughanta. In the poet's description while Jânughanta was the disguised name of Bengal sultan Jalâludin, on the other hand Mandâra fort near Ârâmbag in the district of Sindhu and Huguli is named as Sindhu Mandâra. In 1450 AD Kapilendra Dev defeated BengalSultân Nâsirudin and occupied Mandâran fort in the bank of Gangâ. The Poet says-

"Sindhu mandar city was there,
Many soldiers served the king,
The king of that Sidhu mandâra kingdom was Jânughanta,
Continuously five hundred paridanda soldiers served the king,"
(*Sabhâ Parva-459*)

Before Muslim rule, Sen Dynasty ruled over Bengal. The poet says about Belâlasen of this Dynasty on the context of war between Sahadev and Belâlasen along with his milkman troops. In the words of the poet-

"Sahadeb reached Belâlasen kingdom,
With heroic sounds of drum,
Messenger communicated message to king Belâlasen
My lord an alien king going to attack our kingdom
King Belâla got surprised hearing this message,
He said, don't permit anyone to enter the kingdom."
(*Sabhâ Parva-45*)

From history, we came to know that from 770 AD to 815 AD, king Dharmapal was ruling over the Bengal kingdom. This has been described by poet Sâralâ Dâsa in *Aswamedha Parva* in the context of when Arjuna visited Khira Kingdom (Bengal) and about the incident of king Dharmasen (Dharmapala). The Poet Said-

“Falguni entered into the Kheer kingdom
Horse entered the kingdom with a lot of jewels.
Dharmasen was the king of that kingdom
He caught that horse very soon.
Horse said, hey king don’t catch me
For Aswamedha fair Arjuna visited various kingdoms for victory.
By listening this news, the king of Kheera kingdom became very happy
Worshipped the horse by offering several goods”.(*Aswamedha Parva-73*)

According to historians, in 1206 A.D, city of Delhi was ruled over by Muslim Kings and after that Delhi became popular. Sâralâ Dâsa, in his Mahâbhârata, described Delhi as “Dinger or Udhatta nagari Ranastambapur was captital of Chauhan Dynasty. When the poet named it as Ranastamba Garh, he presented Ajayameru as Ajmeer, as like as Manasânanda in (Nandapur), Manohar desh (Srikakulam), Padmadal(Padmapur), Hiranya Pur(Subarnapur), kausika Nagar(Kanouja), Karabira Desh (Bijaya nagar), Kaunri Desh (gouhati of Assam,) Chandrapur (chingalpur), Uttamkâberi (Pattankâberi), Chourmandal (choolmandal), Koshal Mandal, Malykâmandal, Pândavanagar (Mathurâ), Krishnâ Beni places etc. Gouda, Garjan (Gajani), Tihudi, Bhotân (Bhutan), Mallâr, Belâbaleepur, Gunjar (kunjar), Sourâstra, Kâsi, Kausika, Kubja(Kânyakubja), Koshalpur states etc.

Pârasya Desh (pârasya), Khorarstân Desh (khorsthân pradesh), Gârjan Desh (Âfganisthan), Prânjâl Desh (Panjâb), Lohapur (Lâhore), Kunjagal Desh (Delhi), Bundelkhand, Ujânikanti (Ujjaini), Brusâlnagra, (Baisâli Nagar), Choupur (Champapur), Mahendra Nagar (Rajmahendri), Krishna Bedi (Kundabidu fort), Mallikâ Mondal (Bijaya Nagar), Bhrugupur(Gujurât), Drumangir, (Nilagiri mountain), Chira Desh (Chera Desh), Shonita mandal (Jotpur of Assam), states and countries etc.

Mahendra, Malaya, Bindhya, Chitrakuta, Sri Mountain etc. Gangâ, Jamunâ, Saraswati, Rathasthâ, Saraju, Gandukee,(Gunabhadra), Gomati etc, seven important rivers of Gangeya valley. Indra Dweepa (Andaman), Nâgadweep (Nikobar), Baruna (Sumatra), Gandharb (Fillipines), Tâmbra parnee (Srilanka) and Kumârîka etc Iland. Khurmâl (Persian sub-ocean) Dadhimâl (Lohit ocean) and Balabhâmukha, (Bhumadhya Sâgar)etc. were described by poet, which clearly visualised India aswell as world’s geographical presence and historical identity. In Adi parva, the kings and kingdoms were present in the Bhanumati wedding: In the words of the poet-

“Kalinga Udanga Banga and Telanga
Khânjin Kingdom and Tihudi country part.
Chira Kingdom, Veer Kingdom and Mahâtîran Kingdom
Bhoto Kingdom, Mandâr Kingdom and Kâunri Kingdom.
Mangala Kingdom, Dâhâla Kingdom, Kingdom of Belâula
Khirana Kingdom, Khechar Kingdom, Kingdom of Bhupâl.

Mâlaba Kingdom, Gujara Kingdom, Kingdom of Marahata
Magadha Kingdom, Maschya Kingdom, Kingdom of Gujurâta.
Kâsi Kingdom, Kousika Kingdom, Kingdom of Kubja
Ujainee Kingdom, Pârijata Kingdom, Kingdom Of Kanâuja.
Khetra Kingdom, Bikhetra Kingdom, Kingdom of Gândhâra
Nila Kingdom, Anila Kingdom, Kingdom of Nepâl.
Sâkhâ Province, Bhâkhâ Province, Bajragiri Province
Sonita Province, Province of Kanaya”.(Âdi Parva-369)

On the above analysis, the poet Sâralâ Dâsa has given the clear picture of Indian kingdoms like Jayapur, Ajmer, Uttarpradesh, Gujurât, Mahârâstra, Telengânâ, Karnâataka etc. It refers not only India or its neighbouring states but also various geographical figures of Odisha which have been placed and gained importance. These are different monuments, mountains, rivers, holy places etc. Similarly, Arka Kshetra Konârka, Sankha Kshetra Puri, Ekâmra Kshetra-Bhubaneswar, Sâralâ Kshetra Jhankad, Aredeka tirtha, Ramatirtha, Gomukhi Keshab, Prâchi River, Astasambhu, Utpaleswar Linga, Bârânâsi Cuttack, Amarâbati Cuttack, Ranpur, Jajpur, Chudanga Garh, Badambâ City, Paralâ City, Khandapur City, Kanakabati Patanâ, Sâralâ Village, Nillachakra City, Baitarani, Chhitrotpalâ, Prâchi, Chandrabhângâ, Budhi River, Budhâ Balanga, Brâhmani, Mahânadi, Subarnarekhâ, Bîrupâ, Gangua, Bhângabi, Mahendragiri, Kapilâs Neelasundar Mountain, Ratnagiri, Lalitagiri and Dhauligiri etc. indicate the geographical environment of Odisha.

So, National poet Sâralâ Dâsa in his Mahâbhârata has broadly described the historical incidents and geographical situation of Odisha, India as well as its neighbouring countries. That has made his Mahâbhârata not only a mythology or great poetry but also a successful one in the field of history and geography. ■

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Narrative Technique in the Novels of Cormac McCarthy with Focus on *The Road*

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Swayamprabha Satpathy

Cormac McCarthy is a precursor in the world of contemporary fictional writing. With release of each of his creative works commencing from *The Orchard Keeper* (1965) through *Outer Dark* (1968), *Child of God* (1974), *Suttree* (1979) to *Blood Meridian* (1985) and *The Road* (2006); McCarthy as an avant-garde story teller holds his audience in increasingly awe and wonder. He well knows how to engage his readers in his magical art of narratives, while strikingly delineating landscapes with vivid pictorial presentations. His fertile creative imagination depicted in each of his novels transgresses the frontiers of familiar locales exploring a strange uncanny Kafkaesque world. The unique and hitherto unheard world of his writing not only entertains the aficionados of popular genres, but also captures the imagination and thought of the elite thinking community as well. Apart from his world of phantasmagoria, what instantly strikes us is the fresh nuance that he lends to his way of telling the story that surprisingly runs along an unheard of and untrodden path. What tells him apart from his contemporaries is the quintessential art of his narrative style that seems rugged, but sounds like pure poetry.

Narratology tells the art of telling a story that holds the attention of the readers and keep enlivening the reader's sensibility and sensitivity without impairing its effect. The art of telling stories is as old as our good old mother earth since the time immemorial when the grains were as big as hen's egg. Stories are found abundant that shapes our experiences sans which life would be like a "tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing." (Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act 5, Scene 5, lines 26-27). Stories are treasure-troves of distilled wisdom relating to how we interact in the society we live in. They are providing us the means to confront the reality. That is why the scholars have nourished and nurtured their interest in how the stories play a pivotal role in human affairs. Researchers are using many disciplines like linguistics, literary criticism, anthropology, psychology, and sociology for the analysis of story structure that enables them to discover the motive of the individual in a work of art. It is always a sought after thing how recurrent elements, themes, and patterns

contribute to universal archetypes that decides motif of the author. The leading exponent of narratology is Aristotle whose *Poetics* is considered to be an august philosophical treatise in the history of narratology. It is a fact that Aristotle's *Poetics* does not give us an explicit account of narratology; but his statement on tragedy, comedy and epic gives us the idea that how narrative should be built up. Much before Aristotle, world's oldest narrative is '*Epic of Gilgamesh*'. Homer who had led a pioneering role as noted literary figure in 700 and 800 BC produced his first ever magnum opus epics, *The Liad* and *The Odyssey*. In 900 BC Roman poet Virgil contributed to the narrative literature by composing *Beowulf* and *Aeneid*. Noted Italian author Boccaccio produced *The Decameron* earning the title for Italy as homeland of novels. Chaucer has deeply been influenced by Boccaccio's narrative structure. The form of novel in its texture and structure under went through many changes starting from the writers like Malory, Thomas More, through Philip Sidney, Daniel Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Sterns, George Eliot, Mary Shelley, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, D.H. Lawrence to Stephen King, Toni Morrison, and Margaret Atwood of our times. Cormac McCarthy has contributed immensely to the tradition of novels by his individual talents through his remarkable original technique of narration. His ensemble contains many wonderful and amazing works that are laden with a new appeal to the lovers of fiction.

McCarthy's august novel *The Orchard Keeper* tells us about the story of hill born teenage boy who is ignorant that the outlaw he meets has killed his father and what happens next. All three characters namely John Wesley Rattner, Arthur Ownby and Marion Sylder, an outlaw, are important in the development of the plotline. They together have undertaken a unique and wild adventure in the 1940's south. The drama involving these three characters revolve around themes of loyalty, independence, and endings – the ending likes, the end of prohibition, and the sudden disappearance of mountain life and ways. John Wesley Rattner steps forward stumblingly along the path of his life and cannot cope with his sense of belongingness to where he is anchored. Marion Sylder is bootlegger peddling contraband liquor. Arthur Owembey is an old man who leads a life of hermit in the woods near the mountains watching over an apple orchard. The young Rattner does not know that Sylder is the killer of his father. And Owenbey knows where the dead body is dumped, but never reports it for seven years since he first finds it. It is also intriguing that Sylder does not have the knowledge he has murdered Rattner's father and Owenbey has no idea whose body is perishing in the pit.

The lovely, lilting melodious language with its soaring heights of description, triumphant rapidity at once arrests the attention of readers. The beauty of McCarthy's prose perfectly matches the bleak and harrowing lives of his characters. It is often admitted by many that McCarthy's style is almost a reflection of William Faulkner's. In the year of its publication in 1965, *The New York Times* reviewed it with the following words,

“wandering pronouns with no visible antecedents; the dense prose packed with elaborate figures of speech; the deliberate ambiguity, the hints and

withheld information; the confusion in time and place, and the flashbacks that fail to shed much light into the intermittent gloom.”

(*The New York Times*, March 1965)

“In his *The Orchard Keeper* he has his own story to tell; but he tells it with so many of Faulkner’s literary devices and mannerisms that he half submerges his own talents beneath a flood of imitation.... All of these factors insure that *The Orchard Keeper* is an exasperating book. But the wonder is that in spite of them it is also an impressive book’.... Others, however, saw it as illustrating a new approach to writing about the South. James G. Murray noted in *America*, ‘This is an interesting first novel by a young Southerner: interesting in part because it does not seem to be autobiographical, and in part because it almost (but not entirely) rejects the influence, more bad than good, of the Southern *mystique*.... [I]t is quite exceptional for young writers to be so objective.’ Granville Hicks concluded in *Saturday Review*, ‘Although the novel as a whole develops erratically, particular episodes have narrative power. With his gift for vivid description and his strength in creating characters, McCarthy is another man to watch’.”

Edwin T. Arnold and Dianne C. Luce, eds. *Perspectives on Cormac McCarthy*

(U Mississippi 1993) 4-5

An unusual, but not destructive style, varied in odd structures, some abrupt and some run-on, and some fragmented sentences, missing apostrophe very often in his writings are discernible all the while. Quotation marks are astoundingly absent in all dialogues while some dialogues are interspersed with paragraphs of description, actions and narratives.

“Yes, he said. I busted him and he busted me. That’s fair, ain’t it? The boy was still silent, calmly incredulous. No. Sylder went on. I ain’t forgettin about jail. You think because he arrested me that throws it off again I reckon? I don’t. It’s his job. It’s what he gets paid for. To arrest people that break the law. And I didn’t jest break the law, I made a livin at it.”

(McCarthy, Cormac. *The Orchard Keeper*)

His second novel, *Outer Dark* is at once symbolic, suggestive and evocative. Set in an unspecified locale called Appalachia, probably around the turn of the century the novel tells a tormented story of brother and sister. The sister bears her brother’s child. The boy leaves the baby in the woods and lies to her sister that it dies of natural causes. The journey of the two erring brother and sister starts. Sister is in search of her lost child in a strange countryside, while the brother is chasing after the sister. Sin goads the two and judgment awaits them. The duo witness many goblins on their way while these horrible phantoms pursue hard to bring them to justice. The two protagonists are dying many times a day always on the brink of hunger and starvation. They are blissfully ignorant of the world

around them, being engaged in search of their goals. It is a heart-wrenching tale narrated with poignant pathos with tell tale atmosphere of fear enveloping around them.

As usual the atmosphere of the novel is bleak and the narration is seemingly incoherent being devoid of punctuations. The ambience of the novel is wetted heavily with despair and desolation.

“McCarthy’s Faulknerian rhetoric, his elliptical syntax, his dense, obscure diction, his bricks of winding language that seem to obfuscate and resist easy interpretation. Like Faulkner, McCarthy’s language in *Outer Dark* functions as a dare to the reader, a challenge to venture to the limits of what words might mean when compounded. And while the results are sometimes (literally) startling, they often strain, if not outright break, the basic contract between writer and reader: at times, all cognitive sense is lost in the word labyrinth.”

Edwin Turner, *Outer Dark* — Cormac McCarthy, Biblioklept

McCarthy’s *Child of God* is set in the mountainous terrains of Tennessee, in the 1960. It is the story of a Lester Ballard christened as, “a child of God” by the narrator. Ballards who is a dispossessed and violent man, attempts to exist outside the social order that turns to be disastrous and diabolic. Orphaned and homeless he has no ties to rely on in life. He is literally reduced to a barbaric primitive man as he pursues his mission of crime and violence. The story is told in three segments. In the opening segments some unidentified narrators from Sevierville introduce Lester to the audience, claiming that he belongs to their community’s mythological and historical past. Community and culture gradually seems less and less conspicuous by their absence as Lester moves from squatter to cave-dweller to serial killer and finally ending in being necrophile while more and more becoming fascinated with pre-modern and inanimate phenomena. At the end of the novel, it is stunning to watch the dehumanized and mutilated Lester dying in incarceration, the dissection of his remains by medical students and his cremation outside the city and discovery of long hidden corpses of his victims in his former subterranean haunt.

Child of God carries the signature of his writing style that has unconventional grammatical approach. The sentences are disjointed and fragmented but interspersed with beautiful description and vivid pictorial presentation. The author through his writings deals with psycho-analytical vision of his characters having been endowed with a unique foresight, far sight and insights into human affairs.

“Child of God’s multiple narrators support a sub-textual reading that the novel is about moral judgment: those judgments held and revealed by the narrators through the stories they tell. The dominant child of God narrative, which details Ballard’s acts of criminal and moral degradation, expresses an odd sympathy toward the protagonist, “a child of God much like yourself perhaps, while the local anecdotes express the opposite as they are told with a distinct lack of

sympathy and/or empathy for the protagonist.”

Scott C. Williams, Mountainscholar.

Suttree, a semi-autobiographical novel of Cormac McCarthy, has Cornelius Suttree as its protagonist who prefers living alone and in exile in an old and tattered boat house in the Tennessee river close by Knoxville. He is the reprobate over schooled son of doomed Saxon clans who chooses to be a river rat and to live amidst other rats like gamblers junkmen, prostitutes and stray boys. The story told in episodes has a poignant character like Gene Harrogate who vows to survive in Knoxville with a plan of staying in some river bank vaults. But he fails to dig his way to these vaults owing to his wrong chart. He destroys his charts and begins all over again. Suttree as a lost character finds no way to connect to this world. He crazily roams about like a dog at large. He socialises with human being, but for a moment. He drinks beer with a friend, fishes, makes love and then leaves to move on, jumps down river, or hides in the dead nightmare city. McCarthy's sense of wild freedom and bohemian eccentricity is reflected and embodied in this representative novel through his perfectly painted imperfect protagonist Suttree. The writing style of *Suttree* is as usual Faulknerian like some other creations of McCarthy. The things about writing style of this book that strike most are slow steady character development, mundane conversation, and dark, dry atmosphere. The minor details are blown up in size and concentration.

“The book comes at us like a horrifying flood. The language licks, batters, wounds—a poetic, troubled rush of debris. It is personal and touch, without that boring neatness and desire for resolution that you can get in any well-made novel.”

Edwin T. Arnold and Dianne C. Luce, eds. *Perspectives on Cormac McCarthy*, Amerlit.

Cormac McCarthy's *All the Pretty Horses* is a western adventure novel that is split into four long chapters. It is about the two friends namely John Grady Cole and Lacey Rawlins who set out to explore Mexico along a tough and rough road steeped with dangers and troubles. John Grady Cole is a teenage boy who plans to leave for Mexico with his friend Rawlins. They escape just after Grady's parents are divorced and once on the road they act like true cowboys forging friendship with some Jimmy Blevins, a kid, who claims to be a sharpshooter. But the ties with Blevins soon breaks when the two friend realise that the kid spells nothing but trouble for them when he loses his horse, clothes, and gun in the storm. Blevins part ways from this duo and goes on his own, but leaves behind the reverberations of his violent actions that bring trouble for these two. Eventually John and Lacey land jobs as cowboys on a rich Mexican ranch owned by Rocha. John wins the favour of Rocha by breaking a herd of mustangs. But his job is in jeopardy when he seduces Rocha's lovely and rebellious daughter Alejandra. Dona Alfonsa, Alejandra's strong-willed aunt, confides John that his love affairs have destroyed his honour. Eventually John and Lacey land in prison by the scheme of Rocha. They get free with the compassionate act of judge in the end. *All the*

Pretty Horses as its name suggests is not affairs of fanciful love or romantic adventure. The author uses bare minimum words to depict the themes and stories and what happens all along the plotline. The narrator skilfully skips the descriptions leaving the reader to judge on his or her own. As a distinctive characteristic of McCarthy's style, he willingly avoids punctuation and quotation marks, thereby letting readers to wonder whether the narrator or the character is speaking.

“Cormac McCarthy's prose is like black coffee — you can appreciate when it's well-made, but it doesn't always go down smoothly and you might wish there was something to sweeten it.”

Inverarity, Book Review: *All the Pretty Horses*, by Cormac McCarthy.

Blood Meridian is an epic creation of the wild violence and unredeemable depravity that Cormac McCarthy has ever penned. Based on historical events relating to America's westward aggressive expansion, this novel recounts the story of a fourteen year old Tennessean who runs into a heinous gang of murderers in a nightmarish world. He joins Joel Glanton's real life gang of American mercenaries those are hired by the Mexican states of Sonora and Chihuahua and deployed to combat the Apaches and Comanches. While struggling over occupation of territories, the notorious gang soon start killing and collecting scaps from peaceful, Indigenous peoples. Eventually they end up demanding the scaps from the very Mexican citizens they are deployed to protect. The dark religious vision attached to the novel's gruesome excess is very intriguing. Judge Holder, a scary character owns this vision that unleashes a murder spree. The judge is a hairless, gigantic, albino man who is a sharpshooter besides being skilled in languages, horsemanship, dancing, music, drawing, diplomacy, science and anything that he likes to put his mind to. He also serves as ideologue of the Glanton gang's lawless warfare. He is the motivation behind the Glanton gang's mission of war. He seems to be inclined to the material world and the violence that he finds there. Cormac has portrayed him as a Charismatic, evil sub-deity. The style of writing that McCarthy uses to create this epic work can be described as dense and poetic. What strikes most about the narrative style that the novelist presents such passages with incredible details that the reader finds tough to process in mind. Lengthy and elongated descriptions of beauty set against the violent plots in hyper-detailed prose in *Blood Meridian* seize the grey matters of brain. The readers are taken on a roller-coaster-ride to some uncanny world without a pause.

“The image of Shiva Nataraja or lord of the dance becomes an informing metaphor near the end of *Blood Meridian* to suggest that meaning and explanation are not prima facie evidence of the will-to-power or of random genetic changes, but are narratives. McCarthy works out a postmodern view of language in association with the character of the Judge in *Blood Meridian* that subsequently informs the Border trilogy.”

John Rothfork, Language & the Dance of Time in Cormac McCarthy's
Blood Meridian.

McCarthy's monumental work of art, *The Road* is set against a backdrop of catastrophic diminution of entire population on this planet. After this apocalypse everything is found dead and burnt, the sun is eclipsed by thick layers of ashes rising from the surface of the earth. The kingdom of the planets and animals are already extinct and the few survivors are left lonesome or are members of cannibalistic communes. The novel centres on its two unnamed protagonists – the father and son, are seen travelling on the road as the plot begins and the scene unfolds. They desperately cling to their journey towards south coast of the United States in order to escape from the vagaries of extremely cold and starvation. They move along with their shopping cart, two knapsacks, and a pistol. The man often vomits blood while the boy always begs for comfort and reassurance. On their way they scavenge for food in abandoned buildings. The man is often seen lost in his dreams about his past and his wife. It is fear of being raped and murdered on this wild earth that drives his wife to kill herself. After crossing a mountain range in horrible snowstorm they come across a truck that carry bad guys, the gangs on the road who rape, murder and eat whoever they meet on their way. It was chilling to learn that they encounter one of these cannibals, who longs for the boy. The man shoots him in head in spite of his son protesting him, because he is alive only to keep his son alive. They somehow escape, but the boy is intrigued about the fact that they are good guys. When they run out of food, they enter a roadside plantation house in search of food. It stuns them to find that house is inhabited by some prisoners who are being kept as live stocks in its basement. Soon as some bad guys return, the man and the boy quickly and stealthily flee. Following the map that the man keeps, they move forward. They are again stung by the hunger and thirst when they find an apple orchard and a well full of water. Later on their way they come across on bomb shelter full of canned food and supplies. It is there that they prefer to spend some days where they cut their hair and bath. When they resume their journey they encounter an old man named Ely. At last they arrive at their destination, the southern coast. It disappoints them to see the ocean to be gray and lifeless as everything else. It is a feeling of abandonment that seizes them. They believe they have been deserted by the good guys and God. Days in and Days out, the boy gets fever. The man never leaves him until the boy recovers. A thief takes away their cart and food. They run after him and the man takes back the cart after making the thief strip naked. The boy feels upset worrying that they have killed the thief by leaving him naked in extreme cold. Soon they leave the coast and make their journey inward when the man is wounded by a gunshot fired by a bad guy. He coughs more and more and realises that he is soon going to die. Then it dawned to him that he would not leave behind his son to be the food of the cannibals. But later he quit the thought of killing his son and dies after advising his son to keep going southward in his absence. After spending three days with the dead body of his father the boy sets off alone. He encounters a group of good guys in the way who invite him to join them. The boy trusts them while reminiscing about the brook trout that once lived in the

mountain streams. MacCarthy's prose style abruptly arrests the attention of the reader in this representative fiction wherein the novelist has employed his consummate artistry and splendid craftsmanship with hammer stroke of finality. His text in this novel portrays the grey, cold atmosphere filled with charred remains with uncanny appropriateness. Words and dialogues convey a nihilistic despair, occasionally enlivened with flashes of hope. Usage of traditional construction of sentences would ruin the authenticity of the story, its appeal to the reader. The intermingling of third person and first person narration abruptly makes the author's writing incoherent, but not incomprehensible. The following quotation from the text amply testifies my observation:

“They stumbled and fell through the woods the night long and long before dawn the boy fell and would not get up again. He wrapped him in his own parka and wrapped him in the blanket and sat holding him, rocking back and forth. A single round left in the revolver. You will not face the truth. You will not.”

(*The Road*. pp-68)

The broken pithy sentences with ambiguity of the speaker help illustrate the bleak atmosphere of novel. The author is at his creative height embracing wild freedom to consciously violate the rules of grammar in order to strike a balance between the theme and the form. A breathtaking portrayal of the apocalyptic world takes place in this great work of art. The narration and the dialogue have different roles to play. Narration helps the reader to meditate, the dialogue let him realise the world. Throughout the book there is an intimate relationship between the content and sentences. Sentences are long and short. His lack of grammar reinforces his content. The atmosphere is dry, bleak and often found as solemn. His near total lack of grammar in the book makes it difficult on the part of reader to read the book. McCarthy prefers to emphasize episodes isolating the paragraph containing the event, even in the middle of the page. A glaring example of such a one is found in page 28 of '*The Road*'. This paragraph is significant as the author takes us back in his flashback technique to emphasize the disaster. This also establishes its significance to the story. Absence of punctuation and pauses in his writing, his use of conjunction, is labelled as polysyndeton. He skips quotation marks separating the dialogue as he thinks the punctuations stains the text with weird little marks. His dialogues lack coherence, yet they still have sense of the dialogue. His use of language is found absolutely forceful and overpowering. He always prefers directness and vivid delineation of his thoughts to old and conventional. His use of simple colloquial language instead of the formal one proves that he does not enslave himself to grammatical rules. *The Road* as such is the triumph of experimental narrative structure while exploring post-modern narrative technique to accentuate the necessity of halting the danger lurking behind the sustainable safety of natural environment belonging to this planet of ours. Therefore his writing style is treated as literary paradigm of new humanism in post-apocalyptic world leaving last survivors to lead a new primitive life sans identity beginning their lives from the scratch.

“McCarthy’s rhythms could certainly be accused of distracting the reader’s attention, and after that first paragraph, it can be difficult not to keep an ear out for unusually regular or neatly mimetic patterns. One irony is that these deliberate, ‘artificial’ rhythms frequently match natural phenomena. But the logic of that matching is one of cosmic correspondence: heartbeats, breaths, waking and sleeping, days and nights, safety and danger, food and hunger, travel and rest, action and thought, question and answer, speech and silence, life and death—all conform to rhythms sounded by McCarthy’s language. Life like language in *The Road* is limited by number. There is an order to a cosmos.”

Sean Pryor’s essay “McCarthy’s Rhythm”.

”*The Road* puts forward an allegory as a means of achieving a fragile intentionality that works to alleviate the suicidal despair of a melancholia that is ambiguously positioned between the consciousness of the man and the objective conditions of the new post-apocalyptic world.”

Grace Hellyer, Spring has lost its scent: Allegory, ruination, and suicidal melancholia in *The Road*. ■

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Satish Alekar as a Progressive Playwright with Special Reference to *The Dread Departure*

Asma Rafiq

In a period when the British playwrights were writing conventional plays with a definite plot structure, dynamic characters and complex storylines, some writers engaged themselves in writing plays that challenged the strategies of traditional drama. They along with Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco and Edward Albee agreed with the existentialist philosopher Albert Camus' assessment in his book *The Myth of Sisyphus* that the human condition was essentially absurd because humans continued to seek order and reason in a world that was not based on these principles. Against this backdrop, post-independence playwrights like Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, BadalSircar, Mohan Rakesh and others have written plays that projected the post war situation in India. They set their writings that aptly expressed metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of human existence by focusing on the instability, meaninglessness and unpredictability of human life. It was during this time that Satish Alekar appeared on the literary scene with his unique style and presentation of absurd situation. In this paper, an attempt has been made to explore the tenets of absurdity such as alienation, identity crisis, anxiety and meaninglessness with special reference to Alekar's play *The Dread Departure*. Also, focus has been made to examine the unusual structure, setting, language and character portrayal in the play employed by the playwright and argues that *The Dread Departure* exemplifies the characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd through its structure and ideas.

Keywords: Marathi drama, Experimental theatre, Theatre of the Absurd and Contemporary Society.

Satish Alekar is a contemporary Marathi playwright who is not only confined to Marathi theatre, but gave new dimensions to Indian theatre as a whole. He appeared on the scene when the post war situation in our country and in the Western world was to an extent the same. So literature produced in different regions was a reflection of human situation all around that marked sense of alienation, senseless suffering and unpredictability of the world around. An example could be "The Hollow Man" in which T.S. Eliot is talking about the

issues of fear, despair, and depression. Also, the *Waste Land* can be taken as a landmark in the 20th century literature that reveals the disillusionment caused by the First World War. Another example could be Henrik Ibsen, whose works depict grim atmosphere and protests against the freedom of man. Here in India, the contemporary society was also in conflict with the existing ideologies. Generally speaking, these dramatists were more concerned about the contemporary social issues along with the presentation of the usual conflict between tradition and modernity. These themes are well portrayed in Alekar. In *The Dread Departure*, he makes fun of the concept of death and uses the incident of a funeral to satirize blind conventions and religious orthodoxy. The play alternate pathos with farcical comedy and thus makes an impact on Marathi theatre.

However, it is important to mention that towards the close of the 19th century, the works of Norwegian Ibsen infused English Drama with a new sense of direction. However, with the intervention of the Western tradition and culture on Indian life, it was only by the early 20th century, that it opened the exciting chapter of modern Indian drama. The Indian theatre has been an outcome of various western art movements such as Realism, Naturalism, Expressionism, Symbolism, Existentialism, the Epic Theatre, the Theatre of Cruelty and the Theatre of the Absurd. All these playwrights were influenced by the western canon- the Greek plays, Shakespeare, Shaw, O'Neill, Brecht, Beckett, Sartre and Camus. But it must be noted that there could be a possibility of these writers being influenced by the Americans writers consciously or unconsciously but it is evident that they recreated 'Indianness' in their works. The themes, characters, form and style are all representative of Indian culture and tradition. G. P. Deshpande's defines this complexity in the following words. He states: "Indian theatre however seemed to pursue a different path. It was not postcolonial. It was not post-modern either. It seemed to hark back to tradition and the ethnic. It seemed to celebrate the 'Indian' more than any other form of writing in India". (Deshpande xiv, xv).

It can be said that contemporary Indian drama has experimented and made innovations with respect to thematic and technical qualities. It is a deviation from classical and European models and it does not follow any specific tradition in the strict sense. Rather it has laid the foundation of a distinctive tradition in the history of world drama. The effect of the two World Wars was that it gave way to issues such as identity crisis and human predicament. The post-independence era witnessed the creation of playwrights like Acharya Atre, Vidyadhar Gokhale, P.L. Deshpande, Vijay Tendulkar and others. Some of the other prominent Indian Dramatists of this era are Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar and Mohan Rakesh. They are called the "Big Four" of Indian drama. They have tried to give theatre a different dimension and therefore experimented with content, acting, decor and audience communication. Thus, it is important to examine the bold innovations and fruitful experiments to establish Alekar as a progressive playwright, which is consider in Indian drama as a significant mark of achievement.

The story of *The Dread Departure* revolves around middle class dwellers and is about death and cremation. In *Technique of Drama*, Gustav Freytag gave parameters to

judge the construction of plot. It is known as Freytag's Pyramid. According to Freytag, a typical plot consists of five acts. It is like pyramidal shape and consist of a rising action, climax and falling action. But Alekar's play does not fit into this definition of plot as he is an experimental playwright. The Experimental theatre has rejected the notion of Well-made play. These dramatists have developed the plot without following any set norms and their plot comprises of common incident, action and reaction on the incident by the characters. It observed that in his play *The Dread Departure* Alekar has chosen a common man for his plot and has explored the mentality of the people through a funeral procession. Shailaja Wadikar explains in his book *Flowering of Indian Drama: Growth and Development* that "The Experimental Theatre marks a definite break with the precious traditions of theatre. It is characterized with realism in the theme, structure, dialogues, setting and performance of the play. The presentation of the contemporary daily life is its main purpose". (Reddy and Dhawan 30)

The Dread Departure is about Bhaurao a simple middle-class man who lives in a chawl. He is dead and the son is not around. Ordinarily, we expect cremation, a grief-stricken wife, a young son and some rituals on the tenth and thirteenth day and then regular life continues. However, the smooth course of Bhaurao's death is hindered by several obstacles. The son is not present at home. When the corpse reaches the burning ground, the gate is found to be locked. In this regard, Shanta Gokhale describes that, "The grief that should follow death is treated ironically on the two levels. On one hand, the neighbours treat death as an exciting event. While they mouth sentiments expressing sorrow, their attitude towards the funeral and rituals oscillates between the utterly practical and the celebratory". (225) The funeral gathering turns into celebration. The discussion whether the rice balls have been made from the best basmati or regular rations variety is also awkward. One of the mourners who have been given the responsibility of funeral arrangements instructs Nana who is out to buy woods and other stuffs for cremation thus:

Neighbour: ... Tell him to put on good, dry wood. If you are afraid of the lamp, increase the total by twenty kilos. But on no account, on pain of death, remember you are never to decrease the dried dung. And see that he gives the full measure of kerosene. At least six full beer bottles. Understand? ... And listen, listen! Take my message to the priest. He will come right away if you tell him my name... The heat must be high. All must be finished fast. We have to come and bath before the water's turned off, see? (31)

The above speech underlines the insensitivity of the people around. The great departure of Bhaurao from this world and its depiction show the lack of humanitarian concern. Bhaurao says that on hearing his untimely demise "Some were glad, some sad, some afraid and some worried, but in their heart of hearts were all untouched..." (29) These lines show the hypocrisy of the middle class and how these people are bother about their own interests on this occasion of death. The text well defines their sentiments by projecting that some are making money out of this while others are busying discussing the quality and price of the rice. While the

neighbours are waiting for Nana's arrival, all of them, except one, start playing a song game which is generally played by children. The games are introduced by the playwright to reflect absurdity by using a particular kind of language and music. There are Hindi songs in it too. For example, 'Muttukodikawwadihada' and 'Rukjananahitukahinhaarke'. Some sentimental Marathi songs like 'Divyadivyanchijyotsangte' are also there. Adults also play it sometimes on picnics. Only the one who was on duty for watching out for Nana, was not in the game. What is difficult to believe is that when this man tries to announce Nana's arrival, everybody was busy in games and songs. It is only when he whistles shrilly they all fall silent. We know that the gathering is for Bhaurao's death, but the man celebrates Nana's arrival to the beat of the table.

Moreover, Rama's widowhood is treated ironically. Through the use of social customs and religious rituals, Alekar has tried to bring forth the hypocrisy of Rama. On the tenth day of her husband's death, there is a ritual which is followed to free the dead man's soul of all earthly bonds and desires. The ritual is to prepare a rice ball and carry it to the crematorium. This rice ball is expected to be pecked at by a crow. It is believed that this ritual will bring back the dead man's kin to normalcy. When the family members are busying in this ritual we see Rama sobbing in grief. Nana repeatedly tries to make her mother stop crying and get on with the job of making the ritual rice ball. Finally, he loses patience and starts shouting at her mother:

"Shut up, will you! Just shut up! Get up. Go, put the rice on to boil and make me a rice ball. Fast. . . Use the best Basmati rice. Let Bhau have a bloody ball!" (48)

In the play, the characters are symbolic. For instance, the female character (Rama) is deeply symbolic. She represents typical Indian contemporary woman who is dependent on her husband, and after her husband's death, her son takes care of her. Rama has no choice of her own and is depicted as a woman who is marginalized, oppressed and humiliated. Similar to Rani in Karnad's *Nagamandala*, she symbolizes a woman's predicament in a traditional joint family set-up. She is the part of family but has no freedom to exercise her powers. She is like a sparrow trapped in a cage and is expected to maintain the dignity and honour of the family. This reminds us of Louis Althusser who asserts that "Family is an ideological apparatus" which binds the woman to domesticity. The play also highlights the fact that till the husband is alive, Rama was not targeted by the other men of the society. As soon as her husband's death, she becomes the object of attraction for the males. The neighbours were looking for an opportunity to enter into her house and express their desire for her. This reflects the corrupt psyche of the male members of the society, who are looking for Rama to treat her as a sex object of patriarchal society. This reminds of Elkunchwar's *Garbo*, where characters like Intuc who is a college professor, Pansy a school dropout and Shrimant a businessman all find satisfaction in the use of Garbo, a dramatic construct and who is also a petty actress in B grade movies. She is a kind of sex goddess for the three men.

His plays fall within the category of symbolist tradition. *The Dread Departure* is full of symbols of various kinds. The title of the play is itself symbolic and can be interpreted in many ways. It can be a departure of a soul from this world to another. It can also be taken as a departure from tradition to modernity. Different people interpreted *Mahanirvan* in many ways. But what Kumar Ketkar said about the play was very different. He said it was the ‘great departure’ of the twentieth century. While Alekar claims that while writing the play, however, he had nothing of the sort in mind. G.P. Deshpande writes about it in these words:

“It is not the mahanirvan, the great departure of just one individual. It is the great departure of an entire lifestyle. *Mahanirvan* performs the act of looking at this lifestyle, at the incompleteness in this lifestyle, at the unfulfilled desires in it, with open eyes....”
(867)

This play is entirely different from any other previous plays. It is independent, autonomous and experimental in nature. What went into the making of this play is his experience, awareness of the paradox and the discontinuity created by the tensions between tradition and modernity. The play shifts from death to romance. In the second Act, the idea of the man in suit and dark glasses enters the play. The mode of narration, too, changes from father to son. Moreover, the first act begins with traditional Keertan form of story-telling while the second act begins with Dnyaneshwar’s *Pasaydaan*. The change in style is because of the change in generation. ‘Traditions’ continue because Nana is carrying Bhaurao’s legacy forward:

I hold in my hands
What my father bequeathed,
Hold like a bird,
But I am afraid. (Alekar 47)

There is clearly a shift from tradition to modernity. Critics have said that the thematic and the narrative break between the two acts harms the play. But Alekar rejects this criticism and says:

I do not agree that the effect of the play is diluted on account of the two disparate narrative modes employed in the two acts. When the older generation dies, the next generation must take on responsibility. The ways of the new generation appear to be a rejection of the traditions of the old generation, but if you look carefully enough, you will see that they are in fact trying to give new meaning to that tradition, in fact, give new meaning to the old ways. (Ketkar 253)

In the play, a dead man uses the form of the keertan and begins a humorous narration. Keertan is traditionally used to narrate mythological stories, to convey ideas of traditional values. This was a religious, upper caste folk art form. The keertankar narrates mythological stories and sings Bhajans. But in Alekar’s case, it is clear that the form is itself treated

ironically. The treatment of keertan shows disrespect towards the impulses associated with the form of the keertan itself. Through this narration the playwright has in fact, exposes the hypocrisy, contradictions and the reality of the society. The keertankar is dead but he participates in all the activities that take place. The play begins at this point. It is seen that Bhaurao is dead but in the beginning of the act II, he narrates his own story. He says:

There's the bell, folks.
So take your seats.
We continue to tell, folks,
Of a man's demise. (47)

The relationships among the characters reflect the disintegration of moral values. *The Outsider* by Albert Camus opens with the statement where the son is not sure whether his mother died today or yesterday. The protagonist states that "Mother died today. Or maybe yesterday; I can't be sure" (Camus 9). Nor does the French Algerian hero Mersault cares. He cares about nothing. He himself confesses the fact that he has lost the habit of noting his feelings. After Bhaurao's death, it is expected that the son will become the head of the family.

The responsibility of the whole family comes to Nana. He becomes the 'father' figure in the family. This fact is reflected in the conversation between mother and son about her lover that seems unreasonable. She is confident when she saw her lover carrying the body of her dead husband and was satisfied that the man is her true lover and is going to take her away from this ugly world. Nana too is concerned about her mother's lover and wanted to find a perfect match for her. He considers it as her duty to remarry her mother to another person of her choice. There is an instance where he consoles his father at Rama's infidelity in these words.

"Control your tears my father. Control your tears. However much you may cry, you are still an outsider. You are dead. You are the past. We are the present. Time has snatched from you the right to change it". (64)

Another instance that reflects the absurd nature of father son relationship can be seen in Nana's speech when he lifts his father to burn...Nana says: "Burn! Burn! Someone burn this heavy load of my dead father off me. Let his skull crack in the fire like a rifle shot. Relieve me. Release me. Help me, someone!" (46) The reaction of Nana is shocking. He gets irritated while performing the pre and post funeral rituals and wanted to wind it up as soon as possible. All these thoughts and actions reveal the moral degeneration of the society which is filled with so much hypocrisy that there is no sense in respecting anything at all. The modern society is represented by Alekar as one that shows the disintegration and loss of moral values.

The characters do not possess individual traits. They are not just individuals; rather represent a whole class of contemporary society. The names of the characters are 'He',

‘She’, ‘Woman’, ‘Broomstick’ and ‘Blockhead’ represent common way of connoting. But they have symbolic significance. For instance, Kapila means ‘the dark one’ and Appanna means ‘any man’. This hints at the fact that every individual in the human civilization is in degenerating state. Importantly, in Karnad’s *Naga-Mandala* and *Hayavadana*, the animals prove to be superior to human beings. Hayavadana becomes a complete being, superior to both Devadatta and Kapila. In *Naga-Mandala*, Naga attains a status higher than man. This is absurd as humans are treated as inferior. In this thread, *Bhoma* by BadalSircar can also be observed as a play about an Indian peasant who is socially and economically exploited by the capitalists. Also, the characters in the play are engaged in activities that are insignificant and meaningless. The life of the characters is representative of middle class, mediocrity, monotonous boring and depressing – the kind that desires to move ahead, but does not possess either the capacity or the luck to do so. Vijay Tapas makes an interesting observation in this regard. He states that

Alekar’s characters are not the kind that one can refer to as capable, creative thinking, impactful in the standard sense. They are of ordinary potential, lukewarm beliefs and those who have very limited expectations from life and aim at very limited accomplishments. Their valuable dreams are concerned only with their basic necessities in life. They are eternally preoccupied with fear- hunger-sex. Alekar’s talent is incredibly drawn to their lives, hopes and disappointments, illusions and truth at this level. (870)

Modern contemporary Indian dramatists were concerned in the depiction of middle class and lower strata of society. Tendulkar’s *Silence! The Court is in Session* takes a critical view regarding the hypocrisy of the middle class society. This is projected with the help of characters, dialogues, gestures and mannerism by Alekar too in this narrative.

The language used is fragmented and purposeless, the narrative is non-linear and the repetitive version of conversation in the play defines the reality of human existence. The language used by Alekar also adds to the absurdity of the situation. Interestingly, the characters use different registers from the contemporary colloquial to old style literary. Let’s take the example of the sole narrator of Act II. The readers witness Nana using different language at different situations. In the following conversation, Nana is using colloquial language:

Rama: When did you get back from the crematorium?

Nana: A little while back.

Rama: And the crow?

Nana: No.

Rama: Then?

Nana: Bhaurao pecked at the rice himself.

Rama: Don’t be so mean!

Nana: Mean? I’m not being mean. What do you expect? What if there were no

crows? I should eat the rice myself? Yes. The crow came. He ate your rice. All right. But he took his time about it. And I'm tired (62).

There is an instance where Nana uses ornate idiom. Nana is shown as responsible son who is engaged in the rituals on the thirteenth day. The speech by Nana is as follows:

Nana: ... Go, my Lady Mother. Go you and prepare for the festivities. It is not meet thus to present yourself to stranger's eyes

—

Go my lady! The one you seek shall be sought by us personally and conveyed to you. Have no qualms on that score. We have given you our sacred word. Once we have sworn we will not be forsworn. (69, 70)

A different kind of register is used by Nana when he intervenes in an argument in the crematorium ground. There are two who have been waiting since early morning but not a single crow has approached their rice balls. They are blaming each other and are irritated as the only one crow that has approached the rice ball had flown away. One man accuses the other for placing the rice ball too close to him. What is interesting is that in between Nana goes back and returns dressed in black cloak and glasses, looking like a crow. He addressed the two men using the idiom of plays based on old legends. Nana speaks that

“Shut up, you fools. Here I am, as old as the ages, black in colour, delicate of build and of a beak grown blunt with too much pecking. I am the one who brings to you messages of the spirit's desire- the telegraph man from heaven. It is I, it is I, the crow”. (53)

Further, it has been observed that the two men get impatient by Nana's speech and taking him as a crow, order him to continue pecking. At this Nana changes the idiom to speak like a gangster. Nana orders:

“Look here, mister! None of that lip! This is our monopoly. Rice balls is our beat, see? No parrots and things will do. I'll peck if it suits me. Or fly away. Want me to go?” (54)

The play can also be interpreted in terms of its relation to tradition. There is this conflict between tradition and modernity among the characters. Throughout the play, Alekar describes the conflict between orthodoxy of older generation and modernity of younger generation. It shows the gap between generations particularly in the city of Pune of the 70's. For example, the neighbours' treatment to Rama as a widow defines an old age tradition of treating widows as untouchables: ... “Don't you open a crack. Just sit in the dark. Just sit in the dark like a widow black wake up”. (Alekar 27) In Sircar's *Procession*, the two main characters are the old man and Khoka, both represent tradition and modernity respectively. Similarly, it has been noticed that Bhaurao wants to get cremated in the old crematorium ground after his death. And the reason is obvious and that is tradition. He belongs to older generation and

has love for his past. The conflict between tradition and modernity is quite evident throughout. However, towards the end Nana convinces his father to get cremated in the new crematorium ground.

The issue of black marketing is also a metaphor of a journey from tradition to modernity. Thus, Alekar's absurdity does not become spiritual, or philosophical or about human existence, but becomes social. It is not political either, because the author does not engage with any political ideological. However, it becomes deeply rooted in contemporary social reality. The theatre of the absurd is all about the meaningless existence. Bhaurao laments that he met death at the prime of his life. One can share sorrow when one is alive but after death one has to bear it all alone. After the funeral only bones of the body remain which are collected in an urn. This highlights the fact that life is meaningless and sense cannot be derived out of it. This meaninglessness of life is well portrayed in Kafka's novel *The Trial* which is about a legal process which doesn't process anything.

In Caligula's grief over the death of his sister, with whom he had enjoyed an incestuous love, the young emperor decreed that Rome should be ruled by the ugly logic of a purposeless universe. At first a man of gentle disposition, Caligula now becomes as cruel despot in order to show others what a monstrous world they live in. (Styan 119)

Bertolt Brecht's influence on Alekar can be seen in the text. He has unintentionally used black humour in the play which helped him to achieve distancing effect. The alienation or distancing effect is a technique used in the theatre in order to keep the audiences from losing themselves into the narrative. Its main aim is to have a conscious critical response from the audiences. This distancing effect of Brecht is influenced by Marx's concept of alienation. Marx used this in the political sense, but Brecht used it in socio-political context, for social and political purpose. In *The Dread Departure*, Alekar uses it with socio-cultural context and is close to Brecht. It is a play with traditional Marathi musical modes.

Illusion is an important characteristic of traditional play to take the audience out of the strong traditional consideration. To achieve the desired result, Brecht uses unique Anti-illusionistic devices. Alike Brecht, Alekar too uses such devices recurring in the play especially in second Act. Nana says:

“What if you had fainted or tripped. It would have been all up yours. I tell you. You really were a pain in the arse at the end of the last act. Just as well the act was over, otherwise, I would have had to lift you up on my shoulders and cart you home”.
(Alekar 57)

To conclude, Alekar's plays are representative of the fusion of various dramatic techniques of the Western and Indian Theatre and fall under the category of experimental theatre. Alekar's intention is to reveal how people are being hypocrite and show off others. The play is an attempt to show the dual mindedness of the humans in the contemporary world.

Kumar Ketkar rightly comments about *The Dread Departure* that, “He remains far from the fashionable philosophy that shouts from the rooftops about the meaninglessness of life.... The play does not create a feeling of disgust towards material happiness. It opposes the insensitive manner in which material life is lived”. (47) Thus, Alekar has tried to perform his duty by showing and tearing off this mask to view the reality and leaves much scope to the imagination of the audience. ■

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A Psychoanalytic Study of Asif Currimbhoy's *The Dumb Dancer*

SanghamitraNath

Psychoanalysis is a great modern theory which vastly used in English Literature. It develops by the famous Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud which he had found from “Oedipus Complex” and divided our human psyche into three functions like “Id”, “Ego” and “Super Ego”, and here this Ego is very different than that ego which way we understand it in our day-today life. According to Freud Id maximizes our “pleasure principle” like it only triggers our thirst, hunger and other human desires. So it is very childish and impulsive as well. And super-Ego on the other hand functions as the morality principle which is very extremist in nature and always tries to repress the Id to be a social upright. Then the most important function is the “Ego” which is known as the reality principle. It surprisingly able to balance the two extremist Id and super ego by satisfied both of them gradually and suitably. Because always an extremist path is very dangerous like here the characters of Asif Currimbhoy Bhima, Prema and Rita could not live in their real world for their extremist nature.

Keywords: psychoanalysis, hallucinations, obsessions, Id, ego, super, ego, identity crises, mythology, suicide, anxiety, conscious, unconscious, subconscious, relationships, Introduction:

Undoubtedly psychoanalysis is a great modern theory which vastly used in English literature. It helps a reader to find out the hidden meaning of a literary text and helps a lot to easily understand the writer's personality and perspective through his interpretation of conscious, unconscious and subconscious thought process. But sometimes psychoanalytic theory becomes very controversial both for the reader and writer not only of literature but also of psychology, philosophy, science and sociology. Because still in India mental ailments are social taboo and compared with “madness” instantly without having any specific idea about it. So depression, obsession or any other mental sickness is still not talked in the open which may make India as the second highest depressed country with 40% patients and suicide attempt according to the recent record of W.H.O. and becomes a very common tendency all over the world like we find these types of minor and major issues with

Currimbhoy's each and every characters and also with the other author's characters of literature. Because literature can present those things which society can't, as its mirror.

The Dumb Dancer is a dance play of highly stylized South Indian Kathakali dance which dramatizes the ancient epics of Indian literature the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharata*.

Textual Issue:

Here Currimbhoy has used very fascinating theatrical devices like darkness and light to divide the two world of sane and insane. Because Bhima always loves to dance in dark and hesitates to perform in light and becomes aggressive. Currimbhoy also talks about the frustration being a dancer of Kathakali which is purely an art of distraction and mood swings. Kathakali basically is a theatre of imagination and the dance is through its reliance on language of human body. He has also used music, cymbal, mask and drum for a great orchestral effect. This classical dance art has highly stylized gesture language a vast vocabulary eye movements, hands gesture and moods accompanied by drum and songs. And its practices suddenly became symbol of basic mood from the heroic to terrible exactly like we find Bhima's dance performance of mythological Bhima.

In the opening scene we found in the right side a strange cage like structure. The dancers scream and howl and tear at their cloth and hair, despair of madness. They are in fact mad and reflect the habitat of insane in *The Dumb Dancer*.

In *The Dumb Dancer*, Bhima is an extremist and perfectionist as well. In his own hallucinations of mind, he thinks himself as the mythological Bhima and becomes a murderer in his own mind. Because he always recreates the scene of Draupadi and Duryadhana in his mind and in his aggressive performance due to the excess involvement of his with the mood of distraction theme in Kathakali art. In his extreme behaviour once he has caught his own tongue and throws on the feet of his Guru when he had addressed him as a "dumb dancer". Bhima recreates the scene of Dronacharya and Ekalavya again and doing this to be a perfectionist in Kathakali.

And Dr Prema who was a well educated doctor eventually becomes obsessed with the character Bhima for her excess involvement with her patient Bhima. She suddenly thinks herself as her Draupadi and commits a heinous murder of his friend Madhu in jealousy whom she often finds as his Draupadi. And in her extreme hallucinations she suggests her friend Dr Dilip to conduct a shock therapy for Bhima in which she has conducted autopsy of a dead body by torn out his stomach to present him as the Duryadhona of his patient Bhima.

So both the character Bhima and Dr Prema of this drama follows extremely the morality principle of Freud and they could not repress their super ego to gain some personal pleasure by their pleasure principle and being an extremist could not survive in their real world.

The play “The Dumb Dancer”, takes the story from the popular classical themes directly borrowed from Indian Epic , the *Mahabharata* and adopts the popular cultural form of kathakali dance-play as the medium to demonstrate this story .The character around whom the play revolves is the Kathakali dancer who plays the role of mythological Bhima and has also the same name which become the main cause for his confusion as he , the actor fails to disassociate from the character he plays in his dance . It is another female self that only lacks in order to complete his disassociation of identity any female self to become his Droupadi . Bhima’s attempt is to protect her from evil and to take revenge of the evil done to her by Duryadhana and Dushasana by slaughtering them or by putting every male to death.

This absence is first fulfilled by Shakuntala, his childhood friend often playing with him during his training period of Kathakali dancing in the institution of her an father, Guru. In the mental asylum her presence is replaced by the psychiatrist Dr Prema under whose supervision Bhima is to be treated by a shock therapy. The mythological Bhima who has to slaughter his enemies in order to fulfil the pledge made to his wife- to drink the blood of Dushasana and to smear Draupadi’s hair with his blood. The rest is done by Dr Prema who from a psychiatrist becomes the patient to be together with Bhima whom she begins to love and becomes his Draupadi after killing the first Draupadi –Shakuntala which is a consequence of her too much mentally involvement the insane character of Bhima which gradually makes her insane like him. Music and songs significantly constitute the dramatic genre. Bhima’s madness for perfection and his throwing of his tongue at the feet of his Guru remind one of the mythological past of Ekalavya’s cutting of his right thumb and offering it to his Guru Dronacharya. From the continuity, the dramatist discontinues the sane sign to incorporate his theme and the title of the play. Bhima has made the greatest sacrifice in his journey to perfection in dance like an serious obsession and compulsion state of human mind.

So the specific term for Bhima’s hallucination is called as multi-personality disorder where one man shows the behaviour of two or more characters exactly like him and his psychiatrist. For an instance we also find some movies and series characters with this disorder like we find it in the famous cartoon series, ”Doremon” who used to pretend like his pet cat is always with him and helping him but actually the cat was died since so many years and when his mother and his doctor reveal about the death of his cat in front of him he could not tolerate the dark truth and commits suicide instantly at the age of 12 for his failure to cope up with his childhood trauma, which is a real story of a Japanese boy whose real name is Nobita Minamoto. And we also find these types of characters in the movies like Aparichit and Amar Akber Anthony.

The drama symbolically displays the indispensable, struggle between the real self and the self that is projected and takes the audience to the inner depth of mind to show the alienation an indispensable factor in the human life. Bhima and his psychiatrist Prema are the characters that show this inner struggle which in turn turns them insane. When they

understand the conflict as the indispensable factor of human existence. lapsing into the inner depth of mind. they identify Currimbhoy presents; the conflict between the self and the projected self in human mind which leads to the contemplation human existence.

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Conclusion:

For the extremist path and their imaginary world, the well-educated psychiatrist Dr Prema turns insane from a doctor and also becomes a murderer. Then Bhima the professional and skilful Kathakali dancer also found on the bed of mental asylum from a classical dance centre and lost his own real identity by identified him with someone else. Because their thoughts and emotions are poking them and started torturing them day after day make them sick according to the information they have gathered in their mind, like John Locke has said “mind is a tabula rasa”. Because our psychological process is entirely like a fantasy world and it has nothing to do with the reality. And our unconscious mind is more powerful than our conscious mind and has more trigger like our repressed desires are more powerful than our day today desires. According to Freud , “the unconscious activities of mind is a royal road to the knowledge.” ■

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The Theme of Alienation in Peter Abrahams’ *Song of the City*

Megha Balaso Mali

Pradnya Vijay Ghorpade

The literary corpus of Peter Abrahams truly depicts the predicament of modern man in the era of industrialization. He suffers from alienation which is a helpless and powerless state in which a person isolates himself from others and sometimes from his own self also. It is an existential phenomenon that deals with psychological state of modern man. Abrahams treats the separation of husband wife caused by their differences in opinions in his work. The simple, artless tribal folk suffer from the estrangement and dissociation from their families and societies. They get separated from their families and migrate to the fastest growing cities and catch the pace with the whites. However, they are not accepted but are despised and derided in social, economic, and political sphere that lead to economic disequilibrium. Therefore, colonialism and its aftermath have aroused a sense of alienation among the South Africans. The principal aim of this paper is to study the theme of alienation in the works of Peter Abrahams’.

Keywords: alienation, predicament, psychological state, estrangement, disequilibrium, colonialism, industrialization, etc.

Peter Abrahams’ (1919 to 2017) was a Coloured writer of South Africa. His novels explore the causes and effects of racism and injustices of apartheid regime done to the blacks in South Africa. His popularity as a writer rests on two of his famous novels entitled *Mine Boy* and *A Wreath for Udomo* published in 1946 and 1956 respectively. However, the very first novel of Abrahams’ is *Song of the City* published in 1945. It portrays the urban life of Johannesburg. It consists of two completely different narratives. One deals with a black man who tries to cope with urban Johannesburg after leaving his rustic tribal life. While the other is concerned with the political crisis within white society about the Second World War as to whether South Africa should support Britain and join the War or not. The latter narrative consists of English speaking middle class family of Professor Ashe, especially, his daughter Naomi and his friends including the black professor Dr. Timbata.

The discovery of gold and diamonds in South Africa paved the way for the industrial revolution which resulted into the British rule in South Africa. The white rule in South

Africa established the western civilization firmly on African soil. Industrial towns came into existence like Johannesburg. Black women and children weren't allowed in such towns. On the other hand, men were drawn to work restlessly. Industrialization overcrowded the Africans to towns and cities. Both Africans and Europeans moved into the industrialized cities as a result of urbanization. Various cultures came into contact and influenced people to compare and choose between the different value systems.

The black people were being separated from certain aspects of their traditional tribal life and began to adopt the influences of white culture and civilization. It resulted in the breakup of tribalism. It devastated the traditional, cultural and social bonds of tribal life rapidly than their replacement by European standards. Certain tensions aroused between the indigenous tribal experience and the western colonial experience. The white ruling people denied accepting the Africans into the changing economic system. They were despised socially, economically, and politically which led to economic disequilibrium. Therefore, colonialism and its aftermath aroused a feeling of alienation among the South Africans.

Alienation is a helpless and powerless state in which a person isolates himself from others and sometimes from his own self also. It is an existential phenomenon that deals with the psychological state of modern man. Especially, in modern world, the concept of alienation has grabbed attention of the writers, philosophers, critics, artists, etc. In his article, "The Cape Gooseberry also Grows in Botswana/ : Alienation and Commitment in the Writings of Bessie Head." Ogungbesan states, "Alienation is a much abused word in the intellectual circles." Alienation was derived from Latin word *alias* which means "another", while the developed forms *alienus* means "belonging to another country" and "alienates" means "estranged". It has become a subject of psychological, philosophical, social, and literary studies. It is an existential predicament dealing with major psychological crisis in modern man's life. Further he comments as:

The word "alienation" thus, bears the constant notion of being and feeling a stranger, an outsider... (it is) considered to be a characteristic feature of modern man, his sense of inward estrangements, of more or less conscious or aware that the inner being, the real "I" was alienated from the "me" the person, as an object in society. (93)

South Africans are separated from their loved ones physically and psychologically. It is an emotional isolation of blacks from their people. They are dispossessed from their homes, lands, religion, identity and what not. The result of all this is psychological sufferings and meaninglessness of their lives. The alienation of black people is a consequence of their acceptance of the objectification. The blacks are just considered as economic entities. The black men are forced to work against their wills by white people.

Peter Abrahams points out the alienated self of natives of South Africa through his literary works. Ernst Cellier is a prototype of alienation in *Song of the City*. He is a newspaper reporter and a cynic masquerading as a deep thinker. However, in reality, he is a shallow

person. His cynicism of the world is shown through the symbol of the dark glasses he always wears. Abrahams' depiction of Ernst's character matches with the predicament of alienated characters depicted in other literary works, for instance, Gabriel Conroy from James Joyce's short story, "The Dead". Like Gabriel, Ernst longs to escape from the people and yearns to go away. Abrahams has shown his dissociation as:

Ernst Cellier watched the red light jump into place and crossed the road. Hurriedly he walked home. He felt tired and out of tune with the city. He longed to be away from it. Away from its glitter and its beauty. Away from its violent throb and motion and its intermezzo of quiet Sunday mornings. He longed for emptiness and desolation. For some place where man had not built or destroyed. Where man had not touched and despoiled things after his own image. (56)

Ernst's attempts to cope with the situation with the help of her girlfriend, Lee who has seen his transformation from a warm man to a harsh man. The excessive ambition, energy and imagination has paralysed Ernst into a deep feeling of alienation. Lee tries to help Ernst out from his harshness but she cannot do anything because Ernst does not believe in anything. She cares and worries about Ernst who needs laughter in his life but always feels out of life. She thinks about him as:

Not bad but empty, no hope to give him; nothing but an empty shell— aching and striving but empty. She longed to be able to offer him some faith. A faith to cling to and work for; to wipe fore ever that bitter twist from his mouth; to make him laugh and believe in people and life. She thought: Laughter and sunshine and people— that is what his body wants, that is what his mind needs. (60)

Lee's all efforts to keep Ernst normal are fruitless. She also loses faith in curing of him and asks "Is there no hope for the individual in the world?" (58) Ernst is also aware about the Lee's serious but honest attitude towards him but his cynicism and negative approach spoils everything. Abrahams has thoroughly and acutely pointed out how a normal man slips into an alienated being just after an intimate scene between Lee and Ernst as:

She kissed him tenderly on the lips. He smiled at her. They stood close together. And as they stood she felt a subtle change coming over him. The gentle warmth slipped from his body and something else took its place. Something hard and steel-like, cold and bitter. It seemed to seep through his body. Gradually. Like ink spreading over the surface of blotting paper. It hurt. It hurt because she could do nothing to stop this hardness from spreading. (59)

Ernst believes in negative things like war, death, and hate. His verse is also abundant in a strange feeling. For instance, "There was a Door to which I found no Key: There was a Veil past which I could not see." (103) He never removes his spectacles off his eyes. Roger Jones, a communist man truly describes Ernst Cellier as: "The Marxist interpretation would declare you a corpse that should have been in the earth ten years ago. You're not even a

good bourgeois. You're not a social animal; you're a perverted misfit." (103) Ernst's estrangement and cynicism has proved him a misfit for the society. He makes very harsh comments on other people and life in general like he wishes to break the friendship of Lee and Naomi by saying bitterly, "it is all eyewash, there's no friendship between you and Lee." (101) In this way, Ernst sees negativity in all aspects of life. He has lost faith in everything- good or bad- the life bestows on human being.

Moreover, Myra, wife of Hendrik Van der Merwe, the Minister of Native Affairs suffers from estrangement because of her excessive possessiveness. She wishes her husband should take side of her home country and participate in the War sided with England. It is described by Abrahams as, "they had disagreed about the war and now it had come between them." (24) Before the war breaks, her marital life was very happy however, later she starts living aloof from her husband being not sure of her husband's point of view towards the war. The disagreement about the War has caused fights between them now and then. Her sadness has been described as:

Myra lay staring at the ceiling. She moved nervously when Van der Merwe shut the door. She felt lonely. Terribly lonely. She thought: Lonelier than I've ever been in all my life. The thought hurt her. She tried to push it out of her mind, but it would not go. For a while she struggled with it, then she let it be. It pervaded her body and mind. (30)

Moreover, Hendrik is also unable to take firm decision about his stand for the War. He wishes to take opinion of his people who have elected him as a Minister of Native Affairs. The procrastination of Hendrik regarding the acute opinion causes a rift between husband and wife. Hendrik Van der Merwe is puzzled and cannot come to a stand. He realizes Myra's aloofness as:

There was no excitement in her voice when she recognized him. It was calm and aloof and polite. He asked her what the matter was. She said nothing was the matter. And the barrier grew between them. Again he asked her what the matter was and again she said nothing and asked him why. He said he loved her, and she said oh. He asked her what she was doing. She said nothing much. (128)

All life seems hopeless and empty to Hendrik. The long-lasting relationship of Hendrik and Myra comes at stake because of differences in their opinions. The distance between husband and wife grows gradually so they cannot overcome the feelings and feel like aliens to each other. Their relation ends in vain as Myra leaves Hendrik. The silence between them never breaks and they depart without opening their hearts to each other. The social duties of Hendrik detach him from his familial responsibilities that becomes a cause for the break up with Myra. In this connection, The uprooted and estranged man cannot fulfil his duties and responsibilities in the society. In this view, Eldon L. Wegner in an article, "The Concept of

Alienation: A Critique and Some Suggestions for a Context Specific Approach”, states about alienation as:

A personal orientation involving negative feelings and cynical beliefs toward a specific social context. The conditions underlying alienation involve the relationship of social structure to personality. A negative or disenchanted response from the individual results when there is an incompatibility between his social role or the social context and his personal characteristics, such as his self-image, values, goals, and needs. (172)

With the suppression of Myra’s feelings and thoughts, her mind gets polluted and she goes away from her husband and their family gradually. Myra from *Song of the City* and Anna from *Wild Conquest* can be compared on the basis of alienation and estrangement, they share. Myra is affected by England’s involvement in warfare, on the other hand, Anna’s alienation is aroused by her husband’s behaviour, who has lost his land and home. Their alienation has built a wall between them and their husbands. They are unable to express freely their feelings and thoughts.

On the other hand, Dick’s alienation is different because he wants to be in the city. His desire to live in city has estranged him from his family and tribal society. He is afraid of white people and does not find a friend when comes to Johannesburg. Abrahams through the character of Dick focuses on the predicament of black migrated men to city. He tells his mother “every person in the village has seen it. You see people and you do not see them; you speak to them and you are far away.” (178) The self-esteem and self-respect of black men have evaporated by the overwhelmed suppressive thoughts. Dick’s wishes to understand the ways of white men attracts him to the city because he wants to become like white man. He wishes for the things of whites which again is a running away from his traditional culture. He does not have his self- opinions and self- esteem too. He is always absorbed with his thoughts but he never gets a chance to express himself freely. ZiauddinSardar in foreword of *Black Skin White Masks* asserts the condition of black men as:

When the black man comes into contact with the white world he goes through an experience of sensitization. His ego collapses. His self- esteem evaporates. He ceases to be a self- motivated person. The entire purpose of his behaviour is to emulate the white man, to become like him, and thus hope to be accepted as a man. (14)

Thus, Alienation and its effects have become the very cause for black man’s estrangement from others as well as himself. Cynicism and estrangement from social roles have become a part and parcel of South African society since the beginning of colonial era. Black man is dehumanized; he is estranged from his people, society and from himself too. Franz Fanon in his book *Black Skin White Masks* identifies that black man is alienated from his traditional community and comments as “Whenever a man of color protests, there is alienation. Whenever a man of color rebukes, there is alienation.” (43)He adopts western traditions,

practices and culture by forgetting their own, which is a reason for feeling of alienation. South African population has also fallen a prey to this predicament. They cannot identify themselves with their own selves because of the outer strikes they have experienced in their lives. These men are robbed off from their ancestral values, culture, and what not. As a result they have turned into harsh and strange human beings to others as well as to themselves. He is obsessed with the feeling of estrangement because of the African racist structure, harsh economic conditions endowed by colonization and the apartheid regime.

Thus, Abrahams has shown various causes of the feeling of alienation, such as, cynicism, the attraction for city, and excessive stress between husband and wife. His novels point out that black man is isolated intentionally from the society he lives in, from the work he likes to do, and from his own self. His characters are the typical examples of alienation and estrangement. They are merely considered as commodities that is passive objects, or means of productions only. Hence, they are estranged from their true selves, their true nature. Moreover, most of the blacks are unaware of the exploitative nature of the white's society and fall victims to the traps created by the white elites. ■

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Rediscovering Sri Aurobindo's *Idea of India* : Lights for Today's Society

Charan Singh

Sri Aurobindo (1872 -1950) was an Indian yogi, poet, nationalist leader, philosopher and spiritual master of 20th century India. Along with other literary and political stalwarts like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Maharshi Dayananda, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo can be called as one of the founding fathers of modern Indian Renaissance. He is duly credited to introduce the notion of spiritual nationalism to Indian freedom struggle. Educated at St. Paul's School London and King's College, Cambridge University, he returned to India in 1893 and , after a decade old service in the princely state of Baroda, joined India's struggle for independence as a rebel, revolutionary, mentor and a patriot journalist. In the first decade of the 20th century, Sri Aurobindo was the first Indian leader who formulated fundamental political strategies and instruments like Swaraj(self-rule), swadeshi, the strategy of boycott and the doctrine of passive resistance, a fact not known by many people in Indian academia ! He was the first Indian to give an open call for complete independence from the British through his paper Karmayogin in July 1909 , seven years before Lokmanya Tilak , who gave the call of Swaraj at Belgaum (Karnataka) in April 1916 ! Sri Aurobindo's contribution to Indian writing in English is unmatched and immense as he profusely wrote in genres like prose, poetry , drama, short story, literary criticism, cultural history and poetics. The vast oeuvre of his works have a multidisciplinary appeal ; he can be studied and critically researched in subjects like English, history, education, philosophy, yoga, psychology, sociology , political science and physical education. He is the only Indian ,till date, who has written an epic , mahakavya , in English. The present paper is an attempt to discuss Sri Aurobindo's views and ideas about India, whom he called "a Mighty Shakti" , her role and relevance for the world and the best line of her development and multi -faceted growth. The paper will also highlight his suggestions, spiritual tools and techniques for the creation of a prosperous, puissant, great, invincible and inviolable India and discuss how she can become Vishwa Guru, a world-teacher, not just rhetorically but in the true sense of the world. It also focuses on the burning need of the hour to see India as one indivisible spiritual entity as an inner development of this vision alone can save us as people from our narrow fault lines of caste

, creed and class. Given the increasing acrimony and distrust between classes and communities in India, rediscovering this unifying idea of India as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo has become inevitable.

Keywords: Spiritual nationalism, Indian culture, Yoga , Spirituality, Sanatan Dharma, Indian Renaissance

India, the way we look at her and decipher her character to our students in schools and colleges, is a geographical landmass, a collective name for mountains and fountains, hills and rocks, fields and forests. On the cultural and political front , we name India as a social and political entity. But the India that Sri Aurobindo talks about is the one with a living embodiment of a Goddess, a mighty Shakti. In all his writings and speeches, we see him adoring and revering the motherland as his biological mother. In Bhawani Mandir, a powerful pamphlet with embers of aspiration for a free India, he defines the spiritual meaning and character of our nation :

...what is a nation ? What is our mother-country ? It is not a piece of earth, nor a figure of speech, nor a fiction of the mind. It is a mighty Shakti, composed of the Shaktis of all the millions of units that make up the nation, just as Bhawani Mahisha Mardani sprang into being from the Shaktis of all the millions of gods assembled in one mass of force and welded into unity. The Shakti we call India, Bhawani Bharati , is the living unity of the Shaktis ...of people.(83)

Explicitly, what Sri Aurobindo wants to convey is that India is a Shakti, created by the unity and synergy of her people. When Indians are strong and united , India is invincible. Each one of us comprises a small unit of the vast national body and the land we name India. In recent years the world has witnessed the pathetic condition of Afghanistan and her nationalism. When nationals are weak, selfish and disintegrated ,the nation pays the actual price. Likewise, hubris and myopic haughtiness took the better of our leaders in 1947 and there was a friction among people. Consequently, India paid the price in the form of partition, riots, four direct wars and a lasting religious acrimony between Hindus and Muslims. Had we remained strong and united, casting aside all narrow religious and political fault lines, India would be a developed country today, perhaps in a better position than America is. We must take our lessons and through this bitter experience of partition and disintegration, remain united in the face of the challenges and ordeals Time throws at our doorstep in the future. We must remember our past legacy, the spiritual patrimony of our ancestors and act and behave with that majesty. Throughout human history our nation always enjoyed a privileged position of honour and authority due to her high standards of reason, rationality and rectitude. In his book *Bande Mataram*, Sri Aurobindo writes about the great and glorious past of India,

This great and ancient nation was once the fountain of human light, the apex of human civilization, the exemplar of courage and humanity, the

perfection of good government and settled society, the mother of all religions, the teacher of all wisdom and philosophy. (707)

The most challenging word in the above quote is - 'was' ! We were 'teacher(s) of all wisdom and philosophy' and yet we saw decimation and degeneration and , eventually, couldn't avoid thousand years' foreign rule. This should be a great lesson for the present. No nation could be great, prosperous and invincible only by the mettle and marvels of the bygone age ; the past at best can work as an inspiration, an experience and ballast for better and longer flights to the future. Yes, India's past has been marvellous but that itself is a great motivation and an invitation to the present to become great and justify the tradition of excellence. Sri Aurobindo introduces India's inherent character to us with a message that we belong to a nation that was once "fountain of human light" and "the apex of human civilization". In *Karmayogin*, the paper he edited after being acquitted from the internationally famous Alipore bomb case, he writes about the origin and magnificence of bygone India :

This nation is not a new race raw from the workshop of Nature or created by modern circumstances. One of the oldest races and greatest civilizations on this earth, the most indomitable in vitality, the most fecund in greatness, the deepest in life, the most wonderful in potentiality... is now seeking to lift itself for good into an organized national unity. (23)

Many nations are just a new race, created for various socio- political, economic and religious reasons. India is immortal. We should remember that Sri Aurobindo wrote these lines in *Karmyogin* at a time when the great and ubiquitous British empire was at the height of her political glory and military might. He expressed these views when Christian missionaries were busy penning highly biased books about India and Indians and our society at large was suffering from suicidal complacency. This essay — *The Ideal of Karmayogin* —was the best counter narrative and rebuttal Sri Aurobindo could offer against fake narratives and mendacious accounts of British superiority and the blatant lie of white man's burden.

As a wonderful political strategy Sri Aurobindo connected nationalism as a religion and concept of India as matribhoomi, the motherland, a living incarnation of Goddess. Writing about this distinction of Sri Aurobindo's idea of India and Indian nationalism, Dr. Karan Singh , prominent politician, scholar , indologist and research scholar on Sri Aurobindo , writes in his book *Prophet of Indian Nationalism* that,

His concept of the divinity of the Motherland led directly and inevitably to the demand of her complete emancipation from foreign rule, and Sri Aurobindo preached this doctrine with immense patriotic fervour. Nor only did he powerfully advocate the ideal of independence , he also effectively demolished the timid and constricted political platform of the Moderates.(171)

Any academic reflection about Sri Aurobindo's idea of India is incomplete without discussing his views on Indian culture and the eternal fountain of its sustenance, sanatana dharma. After

unprecedented yogic realisations at Ailpore jail, he interpreted the actual meaning and purpose of Sanatan Dharma and its inalienable relationship with the very spirit of India. According to Sri Aurobindo, we cannot imagine India without thinking of Sanatan Dharma. He believes that the resurgence of India and her political freedom too was actually the resurgence and emergence of sanatan Dharma. His Utrapara Speech is famous for the lights and new spiritual wisdom he presented about Sanatan Dharma. In that historical speech Sri Aurobindo says,

When therefore it is said that India shall rise, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall rise. When it is said that India will be great, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall be great. When it is said that India shall expand and extend herself, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall expand and extend itself over the world. It is for the dharma and by the dharma that India exists. (Karmayogin 10)

One of the things that we have not established our correct relationship with even after seven decades of independence is : our understanding and appreciation of Sanatana dharma and its fulfillment in national life. Intellectuals and academia, artists and aesthetes, the thinking class of the society, harbour a biased view about sanatan dharma and believe that this religion is but mumbo jumbo of rituals and rites ! Doing so, they deviate from the path of enlightenment their forefathers so proudly trod on. Based on cosmopolitan values and humanitarian ethos, sanatana dharma embraces the whole world with the eye of a friend. In India all great socio-political reformatory movements have begun as religious movements.

THE MISSION OF INDIA IN THE WORLD

a). To purge barbarism out of humanity.

This is another unique feature of Sri Aurobindo's idea of India. He believes that and, as a yogi spiritually realized too, India has a very unique duty for herself and the world. He saw a divine purpose behind the long subjugation and eventual freedom of India. In Utrapara Speech he said, "India has always existed for humanity and not for herself and it is for humanity and not for herself that she must be great." (*Karmayogin* 6) As if God was preparing the soul of India through various sorrows and sufferings, setbacks and surprises, dishonours and denigrations. When many stalwarts were skeptical about India freedom and her very existence as a large nation, Sri Aurobindo was convinced not only of her imminent political freedom but her larger future role as a leader , champion of thought and a world - teacher ! As early as 1905 when Sri Aurobindo wrote a highly poetic and powerful revolutionary pamphlet *Bhawani Mandir* and revealed the purpose of India's destiny,

India cannot perish, our race cannot become extinct, because among all the divisions of mankind, it is to India that is reserved the highest and the most splendid destiny, the most essential to the future of the human race. It is she who must send forth from herself the future religion of the entire world, the

Eternal Religion which is to harmonise all religion, science and philosophies and make mankind one soul...It is her mission to purge barbarism out of humanity and to Aryanise the world. In order to do this, she must first re-Aryanise herself. (Bande Mataram 84)

Here we need to understand the word Arya and assimilate the idea of India as Aryabhoomi, the land of Aryamaans or the Aryans. In comparison to Hindu, Arya is a very ancient word and is profusely used in classics like *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*. In today's highly cosmopolitan world where national and regional identities are under constant threats, India needs to rediscover and rekindle her Arya bhava, the feeling of belonging to Aryabhoomi. Sri Aurobindo's idea of India is that of a nation who has been assigned by God the most splendid destiny. India has to become a rallying point for religions, philosophies, sciences and ideologies. It has to make mankind one soul and this earth a small global family. Oppression of children and women, religious bigotry, ideological fanaticism, terrorism and the onslaughts of pandemics have long snatched the actual music of Life. India needs to restart the symphony of love and compassion, mutual progress and the orchestra of collective perfection.

b) To create brotherhood of soul :

Sri Aurobindo believes that socialism, the oneness of spirit, will not come through political means and by the use of force and coercion. The brotherhood of soul, the most essential condition of global peace, will come through realization of human oneness, spearheaded by spirituality and yoga. And one of the missions of India in the world is to create such conducive conditions where the efflorescence of true humanity and actual brotherhood is possible. In his long essays *Asiatic Democracy*, (published in *Bande Mataram*) Sri Aurobindo writes,

Her(India's) mission is to point back humanity to the true source of human liberty, human equality, human brotherhood. When man is free in spirit, all other freedom is at his command...When he is liberated from delusion, he perceives the divine equality of the world which fulfills itself through love and justice, and this perception transfuses itself into the law of government and society. When he has perceived this divine equality, he is brother to the whole world, and in whatever position he is placed he serves all men as his brothers by the law of love, by the law of justice. (931)

In the last 250 years, our world has witnessed violent and inhuman bloodshed in the name of political correctness and the ideal of socialism and communism. We can trace the seeds in the French revolution where ideals like liberty, equality and brotherhood first found their global significance and currency. But despite centuries down the memory lane, there is not a single country which has lived these ideals on ground! France, Russia, China, Cuba, Cambodia and North Korea have displayed immense barbarity and oppression in the name of establishing socialism but of no avail. Political ideologies have failed and will always be

unsuccessful in touching the core of human hearts. No oneness and brotherhood is possible on gun points. Power will never generate the true fount of harmony. In such chaotic times, India can become a global herald of divine liberty, divine equality and souls' brotherhood. Everything can be achieved by the law of love. Love is the only and ultimate alchemy to bring our real socialism on earth.

c) To offer to the world the boons of yoga and spirituality :

One of the missions of India, according to Sri Aurobindo, is to make yoga and spirituality universal and ubiquitous, as a calming balm for ailing and agitating humanity. He believes that only the universal expansion and percolation of spirituality and yoga can save the mankind from unkind apocalypse and his suicidal hubris and myopic visions. This remedy lies with India. In his book *The Renaissance in India*, Sri Aurobindo calls spirituality "the master-key of the Indian mind" (6) In the same book, he explained that how India of the past tried to establish her entire life around the aureate fiber of spirituality and yoga and how that assiduous tapasya blessed her a distinct character in the world :

The whole root of difference between Indian and European culture springs from the spiritual aim of Indian civilization...A spiritual aspiration was the governing force of this culture, its core of thought, its ruling passion. Not only did it make spirituality the highest aim of life, but it even tried, as far as that could be done in the past conditions of the human race, to turn the whole of life towards spirituality. (178)

The inherent character, swabhava, of our country is spirituality. In the seed-state, spirituality has always nourished the soul of this land, even when the outer body was being violently trampled upon by the marauders and looters. None could seize her soul, the fountainhead of spirituality. Our best and most sublime devotional poetry emerged during the darkest and most dolorous hours of middle age. When political leadership was wiped away, spiritual and religious leadership emerged and took control of the country. India was never left like a waif.

It is good that India is being recognized for market and manufacturing , for soft skills and hard diplomatic gestures, for rocket science and defence research but, India's most valuable gift to herself and the world are yoga and spirituality. India will always be known for these two remarkable soft powers and no country under the blue sky can dethrone India from this position. In a world where threats of third world war are looming large on the horizon, India can offer peace, amity and understanding to the jarring forces and create harmony. In this age of artificial intelligence, India can offer some genuine kindness and soothing wisdom.

HOW CAN INDIA FULFILL HER MISSION IN THE WORLD ?

a).By making Indians true Indians !

This advice may sound a little strange but it has the full stamp of truth in it. We do not become Indians only by being born in India ! Spiritually one becomes an Indian

only after assimilating and identifying oneself with the spirit of India. In the course of thousand years' slavery , Indians have lost their inner contact with the soul of Bharat. Most of us do not know Sanskrit, the language in which India has expressed herself. We have very scanty knowledge and regard for our past and our traditions. The great classics, the Vedas, the Upanishads, marvellous texts on yoga and spirituality are missing from our bookshelves as well as education system. In the past too ,India fell to foreign bullets because the nation had already lost her inner swaraj. Beginning of resurrection should always be from the basics. That is why Sri Aurobindo is inspiring the young nation to become themselves first , to regain and recover their lost inner swaraj, before they reclaim outer swaraj or political emancipation. In Karmayogin Sri Aurobindo writes,

It is only the Indian who can believe everything, dare everything, sacrifice everything. First therefore become Indians. Recover the patrimony of your forefathers. Recover the Aryan thought, the Aryan discipline, the Aryan character, the Aryan life. Recover the Vedanta, the Gita, the Yoga...Live them and you will be great and strong, mighty, invincible and fearless. Neither life nor death will have any terrors for you. (27-8)

Essays like this should have been prescribed in syllabus for generations to get inspiration for self-discovery and nation building. As a very shrewd and sagacious politician, Sri Aurobindo presented before the youth the infallible road map for their all round development. He appealed that by living Gita, Vedanta and Yoga, Indian youth could boldly face any tempest, as the key of becoming invincible and fearless shall be already in their hands. He believed that India will not get or maintain her freedom, of this rediscovery of her inner swaraj remains unfulfilled. In his widely popular biography of the Mahayogi, K.R. Shrinivasa Iyengar writes, “from the beginning Sri Aurobindo knew that it was not political freedom nor economic sufficiency but the recovery of the nation’s soul that was the heart of the problem.”(782)

Another suggestion from Sri Aurobindo for India’s future course is that she should develop herself “by becoming India”. This , however, does not mean that India should ignore lights and wisdom coming from outside. But India should wisely assimilate the outer influences and inspirations and develop them according to her nature and need. In his magnificent book on Indian culture and spirituality, The Renaissance in India, Sri Aurobindo writes,

India can best develop herself and serve humanity by being herself and following the law of her own nature. This does not mean,as some narrowly and blindly suppose, the rejection of everything new that comes to us in the stream of Time or happens to have been first developed or powerfully expressed by the West. Such an attitude would be intellectually absurd, physically impossible, and above all unspiritual; true spirituality rejects no new light, no added means or materials of our human self-development. It means simply to

keep our centre, our essential way of being, our inborn nature and assimilate to it all we receive. (38)

The aforementioned words are signature quotes for the material realization of Sri Aurobindo's idea of India. By becoming India in spirit and taking nourishment from yoga and spirituality, she can best serve herself and the world. Each nation has its unique character and innate form and, when it comes to India, spirituality can be comfortably called her innate character and Swabhava. She should welcome lights and luminosity from everywhere in the world but 'keep the centre intact ' and take outside inspiration only after proper osmosis and assimilation. Some of us, should I say most of us, have become more and more occidental in our approach to life and our way of life but this is tragic and a great blow to the body of the motherland. An Indian can never be an Englishman, as much as a Japanese cannot behave like a native of Afghanistan. It's high time we start the decolonization of our mind and feel proud of our Indianness and , as the mahayogi suggests, recover and rediscover the spirit of India and inundate ourselves in the white radiance of her spirituality and yoga.

b) By Dharma and Spirituality !

Many people, specially the urban anglicized intellectuals who are extremely influenced by the West and Western education, believe that too much religion and religious exuberance has been one of the reasons behind India's downfall and her prolonged slavery under different colonial powers. They mock their own mores and manners, festivals and faiths. Such people easily ignore the tradition of thought and independent enquiry ingrained in sanatana dharma. For them dharma is but mumbo jumbo and a bundle of rituals ! There are authors, historians and intellectuals around who believe that too much religion has spoiled India's destiny. They state that we failed and fell due to overdose of religious fervour in social life. But the mahayogi does not buy such puerile narratives. He is the one who has assimilated the very spirit of India, her spirituality and Sanatana Dharma. Exposing such mendacious accounts in his book *The Renaissance in India*, he writes,

Religion has been a central preoccupation of the Indian mind ; some have told us that too much religion ruined India, precisely because we made the whole of life religion or religion the whole of life, we have failed in life and gone under. I will not answer, adopting the language used by the poet in a slightly different connection, that our fall does not matter and that the dust in which India lies is sacred. The fall, the failure does matter, and to lie in the dust is no sound position for man or nation. But the reason assigned is not the true one. If the majority of Indians had indeed made the whole of their lives religion in the true sense of the word, we should not be where we are now ; it was because their public life became most irreligious , egoistic , self - seeking , materialistic that they fell. (38-9)

These days a particular liberal and secular class of Indians feels special privilege in denouncing and denigrating their own country, calling religion mumbo jumbo and culture archaic and obsolete. But Sri Aurobindo believes that , “India has been preeminently the land of the Dharma and the Shastra” (Renaissance 9) , and dharma has always been present in India with great regard for diversity of life and expressions. It was dharma that saved and sustained India in her darkest times. We were defeated and enslaved not because of dharma but because of our selfishness, hypocrisy and mutual rancour. Sri Aurobindo should be read again and again before people who lie about dharma and its connection with India’s slavery.

There is also a widespread belief in India (and some religious schools still harbour the same belief and vehemently support it !) that in order to gain desired results in religion and spirituality, one needs to observe a chill penurious lifestyle and a life of hardship and austerities. In his idea and appreciation of India, the Mahayogi opined that, “there was never a national ideal of poverty in India ... nor was bareness or squalor the essential setting for her spirituality”. (Renaissance 34) The whole world is a manifestation of Godhead and there is nothing at all that can be labelled mundane and ordinary. Money and other outer attractions are too essential ingredients of the platter called Life. The Mahayogi says,

It is a great error to suppose that spirituality flourishes best in an impoverished soil with the life half-killed and the intellect discouraged and intimidated. The spirituality that so flourishes is something morbid, hectic and exposed to perilous reactions. It is when the race has lived most richly and thought most profoundly that spirituality finds its heights and its depths and its constant and many sided fruition. (Renaissance 10)

There is great clarity in the aforesaid lines of Sri Aurobindo. It is but stupidity that spirituality and religious spirit thrives in poverty. Nobody cares about a banana republic , poor and unproductive. A nation needs to live most richly and profoundly in order to realize full fruition in spirit. Ours is the land of all-embracing vision of life. Some of most radiant stars on the spiritual firmament of India have been princes and powerful kings, Janaka, Buddha and Mahaveer are but a few glaring examples. Spirituality and even religious austerities have nothing to do with outer asceticism and penurious life. Money and opulence too is an aspect of the Divine and there should be no aversion to it. We can be a great spiritual country by tapping all our material and economic resources to the fullest and developing decent life conditions for our people. We can be deeply spiritual and religious people and yet economically, militarily, politically a super power. True spirituality does not advise to shun life and shear head and retire in the majestic but solitary calm of woods ;true spirituality inspires and prepares us to drink life to the drains and develop a deep and universal bond of love and friendliness around us.

c) By the power of Thought !

Another way of realizing the mission of India is the power of thought which is one of the greatest powers of the universe. The States has become the most powerful country of the

world only because of the power of thought. America invited and opened her heart for the best talent pool from everywhere and provided them with absolute freedom of thought, ample resources and an amicable and unbiased atmosphere of professional growth and career opportunities. As a result America scaled ladders of progress unimaginable for other countries even today ! If Americans can achieve the unthinkable, why can't India ? But in order to match their standards, we need to clear our basics : we need a transparent and progressive government, ample , unbiased and honourable career opportunities, resources and a work culture of very high standards. We need to invest in the process of thought. The thinking process alone is the basis of multi dimensional progress. An honest and enviable work culture and governmental encouragement will prevent brain drain, inviting best minds to invest their skill , expertise and energies in their own motherland. One recent example of this culture of fairness and encouragement has been India's vaccine making progress. Our scientists proved that we could achieve miracles if there is ample support from the system and trust of the nation. India prepared indigenous vaccines and, as a gesture of brotherhood and goodwill, supplied them to many needy , suffering and poor countries. Such is the power of thought and innovative approach ! Voltaire, the great French philosopher used to say, "when once a nation begins to think, it is impossible to stop it."(The Story of Philosophy 261)

Thought is the most potent tool of materializing Sri Aurobindo's idea of India and making the mission of India a success. In 1893, when he touched the shores of India after fourteen years, he read about the people and their plight, learnt their tongues, scanned the methods and manners of the then Indian National Congress and seriously thought over all the possible reasons for India's prolonged subjugation and humiliation. Author and famous musician Dilip Kumar Roy quotes Sri Aurobindo's letter which he wrote to his younger brother and famous revolutionary Barindra Kumar Ghose,

I am fully persuaded that the origin of the weakness of India is neither political servitude nor material poverty, still less the dearth of spirituality: we have degenerated because of the wanting of our capacity to think and concentrate. Except for a few solitary giants everywhere you meet the average man who has no strength and who does not want to think nor can. (9)

Sri Aurobindo thinks that thinking is the first necessity for a nation to thrive and throb. Nations die because of their incapacity to think and create solutions for their most pressing problems. In contemporary India too, the greatest malaise is absolute inability to think. The more educated and cultured we are, the more incurable our myopia and dogmatism. Sometimes, the only uneducated person is an educated person. Our education , even higher education, is unable to alleviate our myopia, our racial, caste based discrimination and communal acrimony and distrust. Instead of acting as a bridge, education has become a trench for us ! But there is a possibility and a promise for us if we care to listen to Sri Aurobindo. Independent thinking ,for Sri Aurobindo, is inevitable for us if we wish to survive and thrive. Thinking is living and thought phobia is one of the gravest dangers that a nation faces. His book *Essays Divine and Human* talks about the basics and inevitability of thinking ,

Our first necessity, if India is to survive and do her appointed work in the world, is that the youth of India should learn to think —to think on all subjects, to think independently, fruitfully, going to the heart of things, not stopped by their surface , free of prejudgments, shearing sophism and prejudice asunder as with a sharp sword, smiting down obscurantism of all kinds as with the mace of Bhima... India can never cease to be India or Hinduism to be Hinduism, if we really think for ourselves. (40-1)

This mindset has not fully left us. Many times we still naively believe that America will think for us, Russia will think for ourselves. But for every nation, their self interests come first and they have to think of their own country first. It is high time we come out from this delusion. What a key Sri Aurobindo has handed over to us!

d) By Pluralism and multi - faceted Diversity !

Pluralism and diversity of life is India's greatest strength and one of the most fundamental reasons for its longevity as a civilization. In his essays on diversity Sri Aurobindo writes, Uniformity is not the law of life. Life exists by diversity (The Ideal of Human Unity 513) . India is the world's most diverse country with unimaginable variation and shades of life, languages, cultures, creeds, cuisines, beliefs systems, classes, mores, communities and regions. In 1983, when India became world champion in Cricket, our team had representation of all major religions of India ! This syncretic fibre of our society is one of the greatest spectacular phenomena of the world. It is a matter of great concern that in recent years there has been a growing gloom of communal disharmony, religious acrimony and mutual distrust. We have forgotten that India's diversity and our catholicity for 'the other' , our adaptability to times and situations is our strength. All political parties are hand in glove in such scenarios ; they focus the interest of their loyal groups and ignore other segments of the society. During elections, we can clearly see a sizeable gap , a rift in our society , a bruise on the face of our Indianness. It is high time that intellectual patrons of the society stood up against any such divisive forces and stood by India. Our unity in diversity, our collective forces, synergy, against the tornadoes of Times is our ultimate sheet anchor, our bulwark. Any leader or political party or think tank who promotes chasm between communities does a disservice to the nation. Sri Aurobindo was a great supporter of communal harmony and his ashram at Pondicherry is a living lab of new humanity, a crucible of his teachings and a cradle of communal friendliness. To Sri Aurobindo, religion is, at best , the scaffolding of the temple of spirituality. And every religion has done some marvellous work to make this temple of spirituality possible. All faiths are equally respectable and acceptable. In Essays in Philosophy and Yoga, he writes,

Each religion has helped mankind. Paganism increased in man the light of beauty, the largeness and height of his life, his aim at a many sided perfection; Christianity gave him some vision of divine love and charity ; Buddhism has shown him a noble way to be wiser, gentler, purer, Judaism

and Islam how to be religiously faithful in action and zealously devoted to God ; Hinduism has opened to him the largest and profoundest spiritual possibilities. A great thing would be done if all these God-visions could embrace and cast themselves into each other ; but intellectual dogma and cult egoism stand in the way. (211)

e) By becoming young again !

India is a young nation and therefore pregnant with possibilities ! This demographic dividend can surely be a blessing for our country and an edge over countries with small or aging populations. Sri Aurobindo has great faith in the youth power and he kept inspiring the youth throughout his eventful life. As a leader and scholar, he is of the opinion that once the youth decide to build a great and invincible nation, it is impossible to stop them. Youth power can change the stream of Time and script a new and vibrant story for earth , steeped in mirth and magnanimity. He inspired a treasure trove of powers and wisdom like Subhash Chandra Bose, K.M. Munshi, Pt. Nehru and a host of others. Through his revelatory speeches and essays he exhorted the youth to come out of stagnancy and lethargy, emotional weakness and mental myopia and work for the nation. While bidding goodbye(fearing that his incarceration is imminent) to the young students of Bengal National College in 1907, he gave them the following advice :

There are times in a nation's history when Providence places before it one work, one aim, to which everything else, howsoever high and noble in itself, has to be sacrificed. Such a time has now arrived for our motherland when nothing is dearer than her service, and everything else is to be directed to that end...Work that she may prosper. Suffer that she may rejoice. All is contained in that one single advice. (Speeches, 2005, pp.6-7)

Today, sky high ideals like these sound near impossible. Corruption has choked the growth of the nation and everybody is trying , by hook or crook, to fulfill their desires. National assets and resources are exploited for personal gain and unwarranted opulence, for swagger and sophistry. In this doom of gloom, who will hear Sri Aurobindo's magical advice : work that she may prosper. Suffer that she may rejoice. It seems that a large population of the country has blissfully forgotten the sacrifices and pains behind this hard won independence and today we clearly see scant regard for icons and ideals of glorious past. We as a nation need to rekindle that Samurai spirit, the audacity of the hero warriors, the tenacity of unruffled leaders. We need to refresh our bond with our motherland and perform our best for her progress and peace, growth and greatness. Here, our youth can play a pivotal role in nation building. In Essays in Philosophy and Yoga, Sri Aurobindo opines that what kind of youth India needs and why such youth power is indispensable for her future :

Our call is to young India. It is the youth who must be builders of the new world.,— not those who accept the competitive individualism , the capitalism or the materialistic communism of the West as India's future ideals, nor those

who are enslaved to old religious formulas and cannot believe in the acceptable and transformation of life by the spirit , but all who are free in mind and heart to accept a complete truth and labour for a greater ideal. (511)

Surely, youth are the “builders of the new world” and architects of new humanity. This is specially relevant for a young and resurgent nation like India with a large youth population, bustling with dreams and desires. Yes, it is the responsibility of our politicians and policy makers to provide unbiased and ample opportunities for their development and full blossoming of their inherent potential. Sri Aurobindo’s vision of youth is remarkable; but we must remember that his call is only for those youth who are not besotted by competitive individualism and capitalism of the West (which played a great role in dehumanizing the human world) and , as often happens in our country, who are also not enslaved by religious formulas, fanaticism and orthodoxies. He calls for a youth power that is free in mind and heart, open and receptive towards the power of spirit, that transcends all other powers. By tapping youth power , we can best fulfill our destiny as role models and world -teacher. Our youth power is our possibility.

Sri Aurobindo continues to inspire generation after generation of people who want to know about and identify the spirit of India, Bhawani Bharati or Bharata Shakti as he called his motherland. Right from the very beginning of his political journey, as speaker of secret societies like Lotus and Dagger and Indian Majlis in London, he was very much aware of the divine character and role of India. India as Divine Mother, as Bhawani, as Kali. In his sanskrit poem Bhawani Bharati (1907) he worships India as Mahakali, shackled in the chains of subjugation. And right after setting his feet on the soil of India, Sri Aurobindo always envisaged free and liberated India. Peter Heehs correctly writes that ,”Aurobindo had been convinced since his student days that India had to rid itself of foreign rule if it was to survive as a spiritual entity”. (134) During the trial of Alipore bomb case in 1908, Deshbandhu C.R. Das while defending Sri Aurobindo ,calls him poet of patriotism , prophet of nationalism and lover of humanity. It was he who established nationalism as a new religion first in Bengal and then everywhere in India. It was he who realised the need to connect the masses to the ideal of India’s independence. It was he who gave new meaning and magnificence to the cry of Bande Mataram (originally coined by Rishi Bankimchandra in Anand Matt) through his pen, poetry and effulgent speeches. K.R. S. Iyengar calls him “the fiery evangelist of Nationalism”(Indian Writing in English 144) who still needs to be properly read and reflected upon in his own country.

Today’s India needs more than ever the spirit and spiritual force, the patriotic fire and the literary luminosity of Sri Aurobindo. We are still far from the India of his dreams. Our youth are abysmally divided into caste and communal lines, poets have become pigmy mouthpieces for power corridors and politicians are corrupt to the core. The choking rivers and litter - stifled cities are living proof that much needs to be done to lift India to the stature of her past glory. We need to reestablish our relationship with India ; instead of taking her as a piece of land, we need to embrace her as mother, a Shakti, who becomes Shakti only by

the surrender , sincerity,,unity and sacrifices of her children. It is satisfying that India is becoming a global power in technology, science, business,space science, engineering ,art and military. We are proud of the fact that some of the best ventures in the world are being run or controlled by people born and educated in India. It is also heartening to see that our body language is changing on international platforms and nations of the world have started showing specific regard for India for what she stands for and is an idolon of. But all these gestures are not sufficient reason to feel proud of India and sit smugly. The India that Sri Aurobindo wanted to see is a spiritual India, a divine laboratory of superhumanity, a cradle of creativity and a promise of Superman. Should we materialize spiritual India, the hubris of people in politics and bureaucracy , our style of functioning as a democracy and the collective mindset of our masses needs a radical overhauling. Dr. Beloo Mehra explains insightfully the idea of Sri Aurobindo's India and highlights the points which make present India more a 'colonial copy' than a resurgent young nation :

In Sri Aurobindo's vision, the modern and free Indian nation was not meant to be a colonial copy with an outer machinery of elaborate bureaucratic structures left over by the British and now merely-to-be- filled by the Indians...He envisioned the rebirth of a nation which will be grounded in India's unique temperament shaped by her spiritual genius and conscious of her true mission". (65-6)

A million dollar question is: can India try to understand , assimilate and appreciate Sri Aurobindo's life and legacy and , more significantly, his idea of India ? We may be late but we are not surely very late. And can there be a more propitious hour than this when India is celebrating Sri Aurobindo's 150th birth anniversary? More than people in power, the onus of this work is on the shoulders of those who are "the thinking class" —sound minds in media, academia, independent think tanks, scholars, writers, poets and painters. Thirteen years back Francois Gautier, a French national based in India and an authority on Indology, held the mirror before us Indians through his column in Outlook, India's premier news magazine. He called Sri Aurobindo "the true father of Indian independence" and lamented that,

If we, in France, had a great man such as Sri Aurobindo ...we would cherish him endlessly. His poetry would be taught to children, his philosophical works would be part of the university curriculums, books would be written about him, museums would be built. (14) ■

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Representation of Women in Indian Mythology : A Feminist Perspective

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In the past, Indian mythology tended to aid patriarchy by placing women where they do not belong. They have been at the bottom of the social ladder with the marginalised. However, the tide is finally turning in their favour. Thanks to Feminism that has demonstrated how devastating is Patriarchy which has reigned in all spheres of existence from the beginning of civilization. Women are barely mentioned in our epics with a few exceptions. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to spark discussion on the possibilities of a gender-focused approach to investigate the actual representation of women in our mythologies. In Indian culture mythologies are devoid of women's narratives due to the myth's long-standing patriarchal structure and interpretation. The patriarchal narratives and interpretations have silenced or annihilated the voices and experiences of female mythological characters. Exploring and reexamining women's representation and location in literary and cultural discourses has been an important field of research in women's studies. In our own cultural context, we will investigate the traditional cultural legacy most prominently expressed in myths and tales in order to comprehend the current position of women in society.

Keywords: Women, patriarchy, mythology, hegemony, epic.

Stephen Fry writes in *Mythos: The Greek Mythos Retold*, "Ancient humans congregated around the hearth to keep warm, and they chatted, sang, and laughed as they did so". Since the dawn of time, stories of human fight against Fate and Destiny have existed. People's constant relocation across continents conveyed such stories to new places, where they took on additional, more localised features. Myths are the most satisfying kind of storytelling since they serve to record events, explain the inexplicable, and function as morality manuals. Narrating stories is a universal human trait that transcends nations and languages. The supernatural, warfare between mortals and gods, and heroism, among other things, enriched the core plot. Legends became myths, and myths became legends." (Singh, 2019)

However, they indicate a patriarchal account that has developed a discourse. Men gave us these characters, complete with their defects and flaws. While feminist revisionist fiction has addressed the issue, in a post-#MeToo world, it's never been more vital to invent new characters and reassess current ones. Gender is largely reflected in language. Patriarchy masterfully manipulates myths to subjugate women. Myths provide women with a gender identity based on binary reasoning. Radical myth-making is a feminist perspective on these myths. It leads to a rethinking of a male-dominated environments.

Women are, without a doubt, one of histories most misunderstood and distorted figures. This is especially unbridled in patriarchal society, as seen by patriarchal societies' religious texts and mythologies, in which women are either completely neglected or primarily seen as transmitters of men's ideals. Everything from the uniqueness of the feminine experience to what it means to be female biologically has evolved in language. There has also been a renaissance of feminist myth retellings in literature, particularly in Classical mythology.(Singh, 2019)

With the growing belief in a more equal world order, many myths have been read and reread to emphasize entrenched feudal ideologies, while the emergence of authority in women's studies has overturned traditional interpretations of myths in a male-dominated world. While the Western worldview has long seen the postpartum woman as fundamentally imperfect, based on the story of Adam and Eve, Simone de Beauvoir points out that this worldview is by no means isolated and that women throughout the world and in the course of history "endured immorality" in other words, she must "be embodied in a being with exceptional qualities: be the "righteous woman "," ideal mother "," "honest woman ", and so on.(Kirkpatrick, 2019)

When considering Indian mythology, two great epics come to mind. The magnificent epic of the Ramayana, in which Sita is the female protagonist, was written by the great Sage Valmiki, and the Mahabharata, in which Draupadi is the heroine, was written by the Maharishi Veda Vyas. There are two great epics that Indians (Hindus) love and revere, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Both are tales of kings and kingdoms, period wars, and the ultimate victory of good over evil. Although these epic poems have been passed down through the centuries through oral anecdote, traditions such as dramas and speeches, as well as bedtime stories from grandmothers and mothers, the great stories till date remain unchanged.

Objective of the study

The objective of our study is to find out why there is the spiritual and cultural divide and why women are required to be subservient despite the spiritual hierarchy. The next one is to find out why are women still treated as a second class citizen. Based on ancient writings and documents, the study has aimed to underline the status of women in ancient Indian myths. Since ancient times, the Indian socioeconomic system has actively encouraged changes in women's standing, which has eventually proven to be an obstacle to the country's

prosperity. Even though Indian culture has never regarded femininity as equal since the age of the Dharmasutras, Manusmriti, women's stories are still reflected as intriguing occurrences from the early time of Indian civilization today, according to historical research and women's current position.

Research Methodology

The myth critique and feminist criticism methodologies have been applied in this study. Feminism is a way of analysing literary texts written by women from the perspective of a woman's subjectivity and point of view, as previously stated. However, we employed concepts and insights from a variety of disciplines and ideologies in our study, including Social Criticism, Feminist Concern, and Indian Essence.

Women in Indian Mythology

Those who are familiar with the Mahabharata and Ramayana epic literature may recognize female protagonists such as Sita, Draupadi, Kunti, and others. However, there are some female characters in our mythology who have been discriminated against, cursed for no fault of their own, and who have not gotten their fair share of glory. The writers of this study discuss one such character from the Ramayan, Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam who was cursed by her husband and transformed into a rock. In the narrative of Ahilya, the Gods' King Indra poses as her spouse, so he can have physical union with her. It has been mentioned, recounted and repeated in Hindu holy books since the time of the Brahmanas of (9th-6th centuries) BC. It appears in the Ramayana twice and the Mahabharata twice. Indra approaches Ahilya and violates her modesty. However, in mythology, almost invariably, the lady is accused, cursed, or deformed. Ahilya is also cursed as is Indra. She is turned to a stone. "You will live here for thousands of years, consuming wind, without food, lying on the ash and generating heat inside. Invisible to all living beings, you will live in this hermitage. When Rama, will arrive in this terrible forest, then you will be purified. When you receive him as a guest, you will no longer be insatiable and delusional, you wicked woman, and you will get back your own appearance in my presence " (Pande 2000).

The question of whether Ahilya was wooed or raped by Indra remains unsolved. As it does not tell us if it was her fault? Should she be blamed for it? From various researches it has been identified that the Hindu religion's most powerful goddesses are female, but women are expected to serve males in subordinate ways "Women in Hinduism" (2021), Hindu texts offer different and conflicting views on the position of women, from the female leadership role as supreme goddess to the limitation of gender roles.

Women's Representation from a Feminist Perspective

As per mythology Ahilya meaning the one without any ugliness was Brahma's (Creator) daughter. Her father brought her to Sage Gautama's recluse to keep her safe from Indra's lustful gaze. Brahma was aware of this. She was sent there to live, till she attained puberty. Pleased with Sage Gautama's asceticism Brahma gives Ahilya in marriage

to him. One day while the sage was away to take a dip in the Ganges Indra comes to the hermitage disguised as Rishi and woos her. When the sage returns from his bath he finds the duo and curses both Indra and Ahilya in a fit of rage, where Ahalya is transformed into a stone, but is brought back to life when Lord Ram crosses that forest during his journey to Mithila and finds her statue there. He, with the dust of his feet, brings her back to life. Ahilya is thus rescued. (Arunima). There is no impersonation in one version of the story. Indra simply grabs her by force – she is raped. Bakshi, Rohini 2013 (Ramayana 7.30. pp17-36.) The authors therefore have identified the gap that, despite the fact, Hindu religion's most powerful forms of Holiness are goddesses, women are still unsafe, expected to serve males in subordinate ways and maintain stoic silence even in the face of the most heinous crimes committed against them. Our social history includes mythology. Despite the actuality that mythology is unsupported by historical evidence, it gives a means of investigating and following a society's progression. As a result, the description of female figures in mythology provides a window into patriarchal society's restrictive policies. The representations of these mythical female figures, as well as the consequences they face, have a direct impact on how women are treated in real life. Men subjugated the literary sphere in India and around the world for many centuries. From the Bible, epics, myths, and folklore, there is something for everyone. Not only did male authors focus on stories about great, virtuous, and strong men, but they also denied women any opportunity of glory. When told by men, the female roles were severely simplified. They were either shown as goddesses or devils, or just as filler characters who moved along with the plot. Their positions were never entirely justified. Men's characters, on the other hand, were given more depth, intricacy, a compelling backstory, and a driving motivation. We've all heard mythological tales about Hinduism and its amazing heroes since we were children. Some of them were larger than life, and their wonderful manner of living left us speechless. It's hard to imagine such powerful personalities have existed on this planet. They did, though, according to Indian mythology. When discussing our culture, one is reminded of the powerful ladies of mythology. These women were not only important figures in our mythologies, but also in the establishment of a just world. They are fine examples of tenacity, boldness, and exquisite beauty and intelligence.

Let's take a look at some of Indian mythology's most prominent women and their roles: The existence of a masculine equivalent is presupposed and followed by gayatri, the feminine version of gayatra, a sanskrit term that means song or hymn. In both the Vedas and the Puranas, Aditya is praised as the cosmic mother, also known as devamatri, who has a total of seven or eight sons, including Daksha, Aryaman, Mitra, Bhaga, Varuna, and Amsa, in addition to being the mother of the lord Indra and hence achieving the status of the mother of kings. Parvati, Saraswati, Lakshmi, and Prithvi are the first and most important wives of Mahesh, Brahma, and Vishnu, respectively.

Then there's Shakti, the greatest feminine divinity and Universal Mother. India has a long history of mythicizing and glorifying its women, conferring supernatural qualities on them to make them represent something far higher than life and enormously superior.

When examined in isolation, in Indian mythology, we witness a multifaceted representation of women and virginity as interpreted and portrayed, which fails to provide any agreed ethical foundation or supreme rule of conduct. Or is it the case that whenever an Indian woman asserts her right to choose and deviates from the predetermined outline that a patriarchal society has drawn for her, she is mythicized and transformed into a mystic being, or she is adored and placed on a pedestal, ensuring that she remains distinct from the legion of her gender?

Conclusion

What we see in mythology is, loyalty and purity have been used as models to limit women's sexuality. Discriminatory mindset and gender bias are seen in mythology. Adulterous relationships and those who indulge in them were reviled, but the punishments for women were particularly harsh. Infidelity has been an offense from ancient times, followed by mediaeval and modern times, with the law against adultery changing throughout time. To understand the makeup of society, its structure, and standards, go no farther than mythology. It's intriguing to consider the traits that Indian mythology attributes to strong, virtuous women. These are ladies who never question authority, never voice their opinions, and only way to vent their wrath is to give up everything, including asceticism. A few things concerning the position of women in ancient India are revealed after a quick examination of how women are portrayed in the Epics and a comparison with how women are portrayed in the Vedic corpus of literature. The depiction and representation of women in the Vedic literature is quite open.

Despite having far less power than a man in the household and society throughout the Vedic eras, women were nevertheless considered to be unique individuals with the option of remaining single and the right to an education. In some ways, the Mahabharata's portrayal of women is more accurate. However, women are portrayed in the Ramayana as being only obedient and domicile or crooked and evil. And in other secular books like the Manusmriti.

Thus, mythology has conditioned women to believe that true strength lies in their ability to sacrifice and deny themselves access to authority. The iconic roles of Sita, Savitri, Ahilya, and other Indian women are associated with the ideal Indian lady. These are admired images of being obedient, loyal and tender. Regardless of their differences, women's experiences of gender discrimination, dominance, and power over them, share some similar ground. ■

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Contesting Anthropocentrism : Joseph Conrad's Anti-anthropocentric Ecological Narrative

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Conrad's fiction, despite being subject to manifold critical interventions in the past, still offers itself for further analysis by the recently developed theoretical paradigm of Ecocriticism. Ecocriticism, for its thoroughgoing exploration of the causative history of the 'authorization,' 'domination,' and 'exploitation' of Nature, finds The Enlightenment majorly responsible for such anthropocentric devaluation of Nature. Conrad's delineation of the Man-nature dialectics however seems to present a sustained critique of the Nature-derogating principles of The Enlightenment through its initial exposition and subsequent demolition of anthropocentrism. Such a reversal method takes us to a conclusion that Conrad does not promote the idea of man being the master of Nature, rather, establishes, in concurrence with what ecocritics would intend to ascertain in the end, that man is nothing but an infinitesimally small element in the vast biotic life of Nature.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Anthropocentrism, Enlightenment, Dualism.

Joseph Conrad's literary oeuvre has been read, re-read, examined and re-examined from almost all the critical and theoretical frameworks available at hand, such as: postcolonial studies, feminist studies, gender studies, psychoanalytic studies, narratological studies and many more. Despite the incredibly humongous outpouring of critical interventions on his writing over the years, the relatively lately flourished theory of ecocriticism readily demands for a re-reading of his works to yield a composite understanding of the intricate man-Nature dialectics complexly interwoven in his oeuvre. Revealingly, this reading promises to unveil Conrad's precocious and futuristic engagement with a systematic ecocritical discourse that evolved many years after his death—a discourse that runs as the foundational core of his overall narrative structure. Needless to say, Ecocriticism poses a staunch and defiant critique to anthropocentrism—anexclusively human-centered world view which, though discursively embedded in the bedrocks of classical Western philosophy and religion, has its culmination point in the self-aggrandizing, scientific and progressive principles of *The Enlightenment*.

The fundamental premise of ecocriticism, while aiming at the exploration of the causative history of Nature's stark and enforced passivity in the modern man's anthropocentric cultural terrain, holds that Nature has become conspicuously silent in the human-centered Western discursive formations decreed by Enlightenment pioneers, especially Bacon and Descartes."For half a millennium," says Christopher Manes, "Man has been the centre of conversation in the West. This fictional character has occluded the natural world, leaving it voiceless and subject less" (26). It hardly needs mentioning that Bacon, an illustrious Enlightenment-pioneer and the celebrated and ideological father of Science, evaluates Nature purely in terms of its instrumental value while disregarding its ontological facticity and conceptualizing it purely in terms of utilitarian values and in terms of its exclusive usability for mankind. Descartes, on the other hand, looks condescendingly at Nature defining it as a mere drab and insensate body devoid of the qualities of mind or spirit; it is a philosophical ramification of his infamous mind/body dualism or its corresponding man/Nature dualism¹ that declares man as the lone possessor of mind or spirit and discredits Nature as dead matter bereft of the formers. On the whole, these two major pioneers of Enlightenment anthropocentrism contribute, in their own significant but notorious ways, towards the utter derogation of Nature, either as a mere instrument of human telos, or as mere mindless matter or body meant for exclusive human possession and use.

In this scenario, a close look at Conrad's Nature-narrative would reveal its deep and sustaining engagement with these typical anthropocentric tenets of Western philosophy, particularly that of The Enlightenment. However, he has more to offer. An intense perusal of his narrative would reveal that Conrad, though outwardly showcases the Nature-dominating principles of The Enlightenment, counteractively, does the reverse by effectuating the mocking reversal of man's claims to mastery over Nature. A close look at his narrative—which I prefer to call Conrad's double-helix Nature-narrative—would reveal how these two mutually contradictory and counteractive narrative strands are interestingly intertwined in his Nature-narrative such that one narrative that is purposely constructed is also subsequently dismantled. In so doing, the novelist seemingly takes an ironic dig at the anti-Nature philosophical principles of The Enlightenment thereby in a way, shaking the bedrocks of Western anthropocentrism—manifest predominantly through the celebration of the human sovereignty over Nature. Such a dismantling act, of course, crucially goes in concurrence with the edifying anti-anthropocentric principles of Ecocriticism that attribute the human being with a humble and subdued position in Nature's vast and intricate biotic life, not a masterful one.

In this context, this article endeavours to disentangle these two perpetually intertwined narrative threads in Conrad's double-stranded man-Nature discourse that initially seemingly construes Enlightenment anthropocentrism on the surface only to be punctured and dismantled, later on, through dissident, anti-anthropocentric underpinnings. The article, in its endeavour to do so, will have a blended structure—like Conrad's twisted narrative itself—where it will first show the construction of the human ego over Nature and then, the following demolition act by the author.

Conrad's magnum opus *Heart of Darkness*, for its succinct elicitation of the man/Nature dialectics, becomes the first important text for the above analysis. The novel, albeit its unremitting engagement with the issues of racial discrimination (as charged by Achebe), also presents itself as a graphic documentary of man's frontal encounter with African Nature which—as the colonizer sees it—is no more than a dumb and deaf, dispirited, non-human 'other.' Marlow's immediate and spontaneous reactions at the sight of the colossal forest is worth mentioning:

“The smell of mud, of primeval mud, by Jove! was in my nostrils, the high stillness of primeval forest was before my eyes. . . . All this was great, expectant, mute. . . . Could we handle that dumb thing, or would it handle us? I felt how big, how confoundedly big, was that thing that couldn't talk, and perhaps was deaf as well” (Conrad, *Heart* 30).

The passage, in its succinct evocation of the image of Nature as a mute, spiritless and unresponsive 'other,' makes us realize the presence of an age-old, antediluvian conceptual disconnection between man and Nature—a disconnection that crucially determines the anthropocentric foundation of Western humanism. In addition, as an oafish vindication of the Baconian principles of attacking and vanquishing Nature, we learn that this 'other,' i.e. Nature, also stands ready, as Marlow had informed us beforehand, to be invaded by the colonizers. He narrates: “And outside, the silent wilderness [was] waiting patiently for the passing away of this *fantastic invasion* (emphasis added)” (Conrad, *Heart* 26). It goes without saying that it is a crude and blatant assertion of the Baconian spirit of domination of Nature through a military march into its pristine and ensconced territory by man. Bacon, in a notorious protestation of anthropocentric despotism over Nature, sanctions similar human military march into the former's territory by advising man to “unite forces against the Nature of the Things, to storm and occupy her castles and strongholds, and extend the bounds of the human empire” (qtd. in Mathews 32).

Intriguingly however, the text, after such purposeful construal of a thoroughgoing, egomaniac image of man, leads us to a reverse scenario—with the unfolding of the other strand of Conrad's double-helix Nature narrative as mentioned previously—where the intended human domination of Nature is foiled with scathing ridicule and cynicism. The enlightening conviction of Kurtz in his dying moments substantiates such a dramatic turnaround:

You should have heard him say, 'My ivory.' Oh yes, I heard him. 'My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my—' everything belonged to him. It made me hold my breath in expectation of hearing the wilderness burst into a prodigious peal of laughter that would shake the fixed stars in their places. Everything belonged to him—but that was a trifle. The thing was to know what he belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own. (Conrad, *Heart* 58)

The passage, while brilliantly contrasting Kurtz's self-acclaimed possession of Nature with his counter-possession by the same, not only demystifies his futile claims to mastery over Nature, but also, makes a scathing caricature of this so-called genius that arouses in us mixed feelings of pity and ridicule for him. In addition, one could also notice that it is a counteracting rebuttal of the Baconian principles of domination and possession of Nature. Nature's backlash at the pointless human endeavour to master it—convincingly demonstrated through Kurtz's momentous defeat and surrender—is, one could say, a hard setback to the Enlightenment-pioneered human autonomy and omnipotence over Nature. As Ian Watt observes, Kurtz's defeat “enacts one of the ideological lessons of *Heart of Darkness*: that nothing is more dangerous than man's delusions of autonomy and omnipotence” (44).

In another notable instance of Conrad's anti-anthropocentric agenda, we find a compellingly demonstrative picture of man's miniaturization before the all-encompassing visual field of Nature. Marlow, while journeying across River Congo, flanked on both sides by the enormous masses of trees, describes his feelings of being very small and very lost in the following lines:

Trees, trees, millions of trees, massive, immense, running up high; and at their foot, hugging the bank against the stream, crept the little begrimed steamboat like a sluggish beetle crawling on the floor of a lofty portico. It made you feel very small, very lost, and yet it was not altogether depressing, that feeling” (Conrad, *Heart* 40-41).

Particularly, the last sentence of the quote seems to indicate towards a sort of candid acknowledgement, on the part of the colonizer, (as the feeling of being very small and very lost are not depressing for him), of man's essential and ineluctable puniness before colossal Nature's vast and empyrean ecosphere. It very well coincides with Eco-philosopher Michael Tobias's remark, in the introduction of his book *Deep Ecology*, about mankind's negligible positioning in Nature's empyrean biosphere in which humanity is a mere infinitesimally small part or fragment. Tobias' description of the diminutiveness of mankind before Nature's vastness is fascinating: “From the biosphere's perspective, the whole point of *Homo sapiens* is their armpits, as warm with 24.1 billion bacteria” (vii).

So, Conrad's abrupt evocations of these confessional moods on the part of his protagonists and characters undoubtedly carry the insignia of his anti-anthropocentric narrative denouements. Marlow's unquestioning acceptance of man's puniness before Nature's all-pervading vastness directly contrasts the Conradian characters' otherwise generally haughty, condescending, and discontented engagement with the same. Through these rare moments of self-defeating declarations on the part of his characters, he looks like enforcing his intended theme of the implicit critique of anthropocentricity.

Conrad's other notable work *Lord Jim* provides us with more fitting evidences of similar narrative flip-flops in his treatment of the man-Nature conflict. Right from the outset, we encounter a fabricated and vainglorious image of Jim that generates an impression of

him as being “as unflinching as a hero in a book” (11) and we learn through many textual evidences and anecdotes that Jim boastfully considers himself as someone who is not only unbeatable by the forces of Nature, but also someone who is its master. However, we learn through a series of subsequent dramatic turn-around of events and episodes that Jim finds himself a hapless captive of Nature rather than being its self-styled master. A revelatory passage describing his shifting dynamics with Nature in the island of Patusan would help us unwind the two narrative threads intertwined in Conrad’s double-helix man-Nature dialectics:

He looked with an owner’s eye at the peace of the evening, at the river, at the houses, at the everlasting life of the forests, at the life of the old mankind, at the secrets of the land, at the pride of his own heart: but it was they that possessed him and made him their own to the innermost thought, to the slightest stir of blood, to his last breath. (Conrad, *Jim* 188-189)

A close look at the above passage would reveal how Jim’s self-excoriated mastery over Nature (at which he looks with an “*owner’s eye* (emphasis added)”) is immediately and comprehensively dismantled by his complete counter-possession by the former (as seen in the last portion of the quote). Jim’s thoroughgoing captivation by Nature makes his self-assumed and differentiated subjectivity break, crumble and dissipate into Nature’s all-pervasive enormity. Such collation of the paradoxical figurations of Jim, first, the self-styled master and then, a captivated slave, clearly goes in concurrence with the typical Conradian strategic ploy—as has been reiteratively claimed beforehand—to first expose and then demolish Western anthropocentrism, thoroughgoing.

At another critical juncture in the text, Jim’s captivation by Nature is all the more visible when the narrator informs that he is possessed not only by his beloved Jewel, but also by the entire biotic community of Nature accompanying her: “The land, the people, the forest were her accomplices, guarding him with vigilant accord, with an air of seclusion, of mastery, of invincible possession. There was no appeal as it were; he was imprisoned within the very freedom of his power . . .” (214). This exemplary nullification and reversal of Jim’s self-acclaimed command and ascendancy over Nature truly echoes the voice of the pioneer of “land ethic,” Aldo Leopold: “. . . that we are plain members and citizens of the land-community, not the rulers of the earth” (240).

This ongoing deconstruction of the Western man’s anthropocentric ego is perhaps most effectively demonstrated by the evocation of the image of “fall” of man by Stein who, while reflecting on man’s inexorable inclusion in Nature, construes: “A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavour to do, he drowns . . .” (Conrad, *Jim* 163). Stein’s metaphor of “fall” of everyman into the unfathomable depths of the sea seems to be Conrad’s suitable literary artifact to underscore the futility of Jim’s (and the Western man’s for that matter) desperate yearning to transcend the totalising dimensions of Nature and also, to expose the illusory nature of his soaring self-belief. It is significant to note that Conrad, in his personal

life as a sea-voyager, sees Nature as a manifestation of eternity and is well aware of man's littleness before its compelling and all-encompassing immensity, as he confesses: "In my early days, starting out on a voyage was like being launched into Eternity" (Gose, Jr 139). The 'fall' that Stein stresses so emphatically on is of course suggestive not only of man's inability to transcend and transgress the all-pervasive enormity of Nature, but also the latter's all-inclusiveness in which humanity is a mere fragmentary part.

Conrad's another famous masterpiece *Nostromo* characteristically wavers between similar narrative undulations of the exposition of anthropocentrism and its subsequent dismantlement. The novel initially explicates how Nature (the Sulaco Valley in particular)—through its instrumental and utilitarian estimation by the colonial man—is conceived as a mere object exposed to the capitalistic western man's possession and exploitation. This can be marked from the cool and dispassionate mechanistic attitude of Sir John and the Engineer-in-chief who had come to survey the Sulaco Valley for forthcoming capitalistic enterprises. It is worth noticing that initially Sir John and the engineer-in-chief are exceedingly overwhelmed by the Sulaco Valley's exquisite scenic beauty; yet, that spontaneous joy proves to be momentary and is immediately eclipsed by "all the indifference of a man of affairs to Nature" (Conrad, *Nostromo* 39). Moreover, as a mark of the typical 'commoditizing everything' tendency of capitalism, the narrator conceives of the land of Costaguana to be no more than a "bottomless pit" exposed to European investments and foreign intrusions. He boasts: "Now, what is Costaguana? It is the bottomless pit of 10 percent loans and other fool investments. European capital had been flung into it with both hands for years" (Conrad, *Nostromo* 76-77). It is, of course, redolent of the idiosyncratic human way of seeing Nature as an object meant for human exploitation in a way, as the Enlightenment philosopher Descartes would assert, that men "render . . . [themselves] as the lords and possessors of nature" (78).

The derogation of Nature perhaps finds its abominable low through its conceptualization as a mute entity meant for forcible disclosure by the European capitalistic ventures. The narrator describes: "[The coloniser] with each day's journey, seemed to come nearer to the soul of the land in the tremendous disclosure of this interior . . . , a great land of plain and mountain . . . , suffering and mute, waiting for the future in a pathetic immobility of patience" (Conrad, *Nostromo* 88).

Curiously though, things take a startling overturn when after such premeditated rendering of the egocentric image of man over Nature, Conrad leads us towards a scenario, at a later part of the text, where such anthropocentric prefabrications are indeed sabotaged by an anti-anthropocentric counter-narrative employed by him. The artifact of this prototypical Conradian dismantling act is Dr. Monygham, the medical officer of the San Tome mine. Propelled by an edifying "misanthropic mistrust of mankind" (Conrad, *Nostromo* 432), he is visibly frank and candid in wholeheartedly admitting man's nullity in Nature's empyrean ecosphere. Though Nostromo is some kind of a hero for him and he holds his intrepid character in high esteem, he is aware of the tininess and defenselessness of man

before Nature—a conviction that springs from the realisation of his own inability to confront the same. The narrator describes:

In this Dr. Monygham was sincere. He esteemed highly the intrepidity of that man [Nostromo], whom he valued but little, being disillusioned as to mankind in general, because of the particular instance in which his own manhood had failed. Having had to encounter single-handed during his period of eclipse many physical dangers, he was well aware of the most dangerous element common to them all: of the crushing, paralysing sense of human littleness, which is what really defeats a man struggling with natural forces, alone far from the eyes of his fellows. (Conrad, *Nostromo* 433)

The passage is another clear instance of the typical Conradian narrative turnaround through which he exposes the “crushing and paralyzing sense of human littleness” before the indomitable forces of Nature. Apart from Dr. Monygham, Martin Decoud also has similar experiences. In a self-defeating tone that negates anthropocentric despotism over Nature, the narrator describes how it takes possession of the self, mind and spirit of men. In his words:

It [Nature] takes possession of the mind, . . . Decoud caught himself entertaining a doubt of his own individuality. It had merged into the world of cloud and water, of natural forces and forms of nature. In our activity alone do we find the sustaining illusion of an independent existence as against the whole scheme of things of which we form a helpless part. (Conrad, *Nostromo* 497).

Decoud’s self-defeating confessions are ironic reversals of The Enlightenment principle of the man-Nature dualism—or, its corresponding, Cartesian mind/body dualism stated earlier—where man claims to possess the qualities of mind while Nature, bereft of such qualities, is conceived as a mere body or insubstantial matter. But here, Nature’s act of possession of Decoud’s mind alters the scenario while concurrently negating a reclusive and distinctive identity that the enlightened modern man has assumed for himself for his lone possession of the Cartesian mind or spirit. It seems that Conrad enforces onto his probably hesitant characters a merger with the “more-than-human-world²” (Heise 61) of Nature at all levels—both physical and psychic.

Moreover, the master-slave dichotomy between man and Nature further receives a serious jolt through Martin Decoud’s self-imagined reduction into the status of a slave before Nature. His final submission to Nature after a futile struggle with the same is finely noted by the narrator as: “He sat down on the soft earth, unresisting, as if he had been chained to the treasure, his drawn-up legs clasped in his hands with an air of hopeless submission like a slave set on ground” (Conrad, *Nostromo* 495). It needs mentioning here that Conrad in his letter to his friend R. B. Cunningham Graham, while explaining a similar universal context of man’s perpetual submission before Nature, describes man as a self-

conscious slave of Nature, not its master. He writes: “What makes mankind tragic is not that they are the victims of nature, it is that they are conscious of it. To be part of the animal kingdom under the conditions of this earth is very well—but as soon as you know of your slavery the pain, the anger, the strife—the tragedy begins” (70). A wholehearted admission of such magnitude, on the part of Conrad, can be taken to be an implicit, unconscious negation on his part of the Baconian metaphor of man’s mastery over Nature.

Conrad’s early Malayan tale *An Outcast of the Islands*, like many other texts discussed beforehand, effectuates the initial exposition and subsequent nullification of anthropocentrism through the intermittent rise and fall of the protagonist Willems’ ego and fortune. This is done through his exclusion from the latter’s biotic sphere—an expulsion that works as a just nemesis for the conceited modern man. Considering himself to be “an extraordinary character in an ordinary world” (Carroll 52), the novel’s protagonist Willems always harbours in him a masterful attitude towards the Malayan Nature. Like a typical enlightened modern man who thought he could conquer Nature through the knowledge and understanding of its operation, Willems is “ferociously conceited” and believes “in his genius and his knowledge of the world” (Conrad, *Outcast* 21) and is believed to be able to, as Captain Lingard puts it, disturb “the harmony of the universe” (Conrad, *Outcast* 147) as and when he wishes.

Interestingly however, his self-proclaimed ascendancy over Nature and its elements turns into utter defeat and despair as the narrator fittingly notes that “it was only himself that seemed to be left outside the scheme of creation” (Conrad, *Outcast* 58)—an altered scenario where the self-styled master of the universe becomes a destitute outcast.

Additionally, the narrator’s scathing portrayal of Willems as a mere “grain of dust,” in the course of his fight with the unconquerable forces of Nature, adds to the archetypal Conradian subversion of anthropocentrism. The narrator describes:

And under the . . . branches outspread wide above his head, . . . , he tossed like a grain of dust in a whirlwind—sinking and rising—round and round— All through the languid stillness of that night he fought with the impalpable; he fought with the shadows, with the darkness, with the silence. He fought without a sound, striking futile blows, dashing from side to side; obstinate, hopeless, and always beaten back; like a man bewitched within the invisible sweep of a magic circle. (Conrad, *Outcast* 115)

This quote from the text, in a nutshell, is the saga of the defeated modern man before the unassailable forces of Nature. Its tone and spirit ironically reveal a startling subversion of the Enlightenment principles by flaunting the deplorable plight of the modern man caught inescapably in Nature’s invisible circle. A passage cited below would substantiate the foiling of the Baconian principles of the human domination over Nature through Willems’ incarceration in the former’s metaphysical prison house:

He saw the horrible from among the big trees, in the network of creepers in the fantastic outlines of leaves, that seemed to be so many enormous hands with big, broad palms, with stiff fingers outspread to lay hold of him . . . to take him, to enlace him, to strangle him, to hold him till he died; hands that would hold him dead, that would never let go, that would cling to his body forever till it is perished—disappeared in their frantic and tenacious grasp” (Conrad, *Outcast* 222-3).

The metaphysical incarceration of Willems by Nature can be taken to be the symbolic nullification of the Baconian myth of man’s enslavement of Nature through the latter’s capture and vanquishment by the former. The passage, thus while abrogating the Baconian anthropocentric military metaphor of the conquest of Nature, brings under scanner, under attack and under reversion the prevailing anthropocentric principles of certain strands of Western philosophy. What is foregrounded here is a certain sense of defeat, surrender, loss of footing, and dispossession on the part of the Western man—a scenario that echoes the voice of Aldo Leopold in his famous “Land Ethic” where he proclaims: “In human history, we have learned (I hope) that conqueror role is eventually self-defeating” (257). Willems’ fall can be said to be what William Rueckert, in his essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism,” would call a tragic flaw of the enlightened and conceited modern man. He says: “In ecology, man’s tragic flaw is his anthropocentric (as opposed to biocentrism) vision, and his compulsion to conquer, humanize, domesticate, violate, and exploit every natural thing” (113).

In the end, it can be ascertained that Conrad, in his colonial novels, performs both an exposition and critique of Western anthropocentrism. John G. Peters in his book *Conrad and Impressionism* critically acknowledges the novelist’s rejection of anthropocentrism, which, of course, unquestionably forms the very foundation and crux of Western humanism. Peters convincingly remarks: “. . . western civilization in particular comes under Conrad’s scrutiny, and since the popular view of western civilization at the time conceived it to be based upon an absolute foundation [of anthropocentrism], Conrad’s epistemology strikes directly at the foundation” (5). Thus, Conrad finally achieves what Dominic Head would call “the deprivileging [of] the human subject” and concomitantly, the disillusionment of the human being’s self-proclaimed ascendancy over Nature. In addition, he inculcates an anti-Enlightenment and anti-anthropocentric world-view thereby vindicating his stated claim of Nature’s autonomy and omnipotence along with man’s puniness before the former’s all-pervasive enormity. This paper, it is believed, helps us unravel certain unrealized dimensions of Conrad’s writing where he achieves the double purpose of both exposing and deconstructing the ego of man against Nature. Moreover, his writing seems to exude an implicit moral teaching that suggests for a paradigm shift in man’s flawed perception of Nature so that he sees the same not as an “other,” rather as something to which he belongs.

Notes:

1- Australian ecofeminist Val Plumwood is of the opinion that Descartes' famous mind/body dualism actually leads to the generation of several other associative dualisms like man/Nature, culture/Nature etc. through what she calls "linking postulates" (45). Such dualisms are logically connected to each other in a way such that man becomes equivalent to mind or culture whereas Nature becomes the representative of body.

2- See Heise, Ursula. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Here Heise argues that some environmentalist thinkers prefer the phrase "more-than-human world" to the more conventional phrase like "nonhuman environment" to effectively de-emphasize the boundary between the human and non-human parts of the life-world. The term has become immensely popular after the publication of David Abram's *Spell of the Sensuous* that is broadly based on the Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological analysis of man's relation with Nature. ■

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Reflections on the Agonising and Miseries of Dalits in Bama's *Karukku*: An Assessment

Pramodini Patnaik

From oppression to identification, lower to higher, religion to religion, name to name, caste to caste, child to a student, teacher to a nun, school to a convent, barter system to monetary, discrimination to the reservation, from life history to autobiography, regional language to translated English language, Bama experienced all these and had faced different difficulties/ turbulent phases. The years she spent in all those barriers in her education, situation, struggle, suffocation, caste subordination, exploitation, renunciation, and human humiliation which was reflected in her writings. Bama, a Tamil Dalit woman author of the autobiography *Karukku*, described the text as having two edges in the prologue. Her work was acclaimed as the creation of the first Dalit woman novelist in India and the first autobiography of its kind in Tamil Dalit literature. Bama's debut book, *Karukku*, which was released in 1992, is when she first garnered notoriety as a writer. It was swiftly translated into English by Lakshmi Holmstrom in 2000, and in India, it won the Crossword Award in 2001. Writings by Bama reflected the beginning of Dalit literature.

One thing that gave her the most satisfaction was that she used the language of her people- a language that was not recognized by the pundits of literature was not accepted by any literary circle in Tamil Nadu and was not included in the norms of Tamil literature.

Her intense urge to save her people from the clutches of caste oppression is evidently reflected in the work. Bama thus became a representative writer of Dalit literature.

Karukku provides light to the most agonising and miserable lives of the Dalit community. A soul under oppression undergoes a painful and terrible change. That change was brought about by the resistance tale *Karukku* that Bama wrote. It was crucial to acknowledge that Bama's portrayal of the central character was a testimony to the plight of the Dalit woman in that era. Through the new literary genre she invented known as testimonial writing, she helped her people get ready for the battle by educating readers about the situation of Dalits, particularly in Tamil Nadu. In the hopes that it would improve the plight of her fellow people and inspire a revolutionary change in their lives.

Keywords: *discrimination, renunciation, humiliation, Tamil Dalit literature, oppression, plight.*

The childhood memoir *Karukku*, written by Bama, conveys the joy and sorrow of her people who were victimised by upper castes in India. The book includes descriptions of many of the events throughout her life. She grew up in a Dalit family with limited resources. The Naicker landowners' farms and homes were where her grandparents and mother worked. Despite the pain, she had a nice childhood. Her brother Raj Gauthaman, who is also a writer, introduced her to books and gave her the motivation to create. When she was in college, she wrote poetry. Later, she began to write novels. She entered teaching after receiving her undergraduate degree. Bama talks about the prejudice she encountered as a teacher and a student. She asserted that she was intelligent in her study and teaching, which allowed her to somewhat escape the harsh oppression. At the age of 26, she took the vows to become a nun, and her life was forever altered.

Bama came to the painful realisation that Dalits' situation would never change. The first autobiography of its kind in Tamil Dalit literature is Bama's *Karukku*. Bama's family was coerced into becoming Christians in the 18th century. She considered a few names for herself, including Mary, which she found unappealing. *Karukku* sheds light on how the higher castes in India subjugated the Dalits. Even though India gained its independence, the lower castes were left out since dalits were not allowed to enjoy, live life, or have an identity. The difficulties she faced and the experiences she had during various times and phases of her life were truly unforgettable.

The choice she made to write an autobiography about her experiences prevented her from taking her own life in the midst of all of her hardships. Because of her writing *Karukku*, she gained notoriety and her reputation in higher literary circles. Reserving causes dehumanisation rather than addressing the issues. It intensifies the unfair situation. They were treated with disdain in public because they lacked talent or merit. They were referred to as scheduled castes rather than Dalits. In her essays, Bama conveyed her sorrow over the pitiful and helpless state of Dalits. Even if the Dalits were converted to Christianity, their miserable situation did not improve. Dalit Christians are never accepted into the non-Dalit Christian community. The caste system of Hinduism was followed by Christians in India, which led to caste hierarchy, caste subjugation, and caste exploitation. Above all, it is extremely uncommon for Dalit Christian castes and non-Dalit castes to swap spouses. In *Karukku*, a Christian priest is shown to have casteist tendencies and to have preconceived views regarding Dalit Christians. The priest's opening comment was, "After all, you are from the Cheri" (Dalit colony). You might be responsible. You must be the culprit. (Bama 19)

Living as a Paraiya from a young age was incredibly difficult. Everyone had to work in order to support themselves, whether it was in the fields or for the Naickers. In addition to this, they carried tonnes of soil, gravel, and stone and dug wells while working as construction labourers. If this employment wasn't available, they walked to the hilltop to

get firewood. Each Paraiya family served as bonded labour for a Naicker household. In the Paraiyar streets, there were Nadar males who owned businesses. In exchange for the things that were brought to them, the Nadars used to provide what the Paraiyars need. When they were bartering, the Paraiyars were severely duped. They traded cotton and grain from the harvest, taking advantage of the situation each time. However, it was the Dalits that worked really hard to succeed.

There were many Dalits present in the churches alone. They came last in everything else. Only Christians from higher social classes were taking advantage of the church's amenities. Even among priests and nuns, members of the upper classes controlled the top positions and flaunted their power. And if Dalits became priests or nuns, they were ostracised and ignored before the rest of the population went about their daily lives. Because of this, Dalits may choose to follow the path of renunciation.

A Paraiya's treatment by the Catholic Church was no better than the mistreatment they received from Hindu society. Regardless of their religious affiliations or their financial standing, the dominating segments of society humiliated the lower caste members (131). The lowest of the low was thought to be the Tamil Paraiyar nuns. Nuns from the Paraiya caste were not accorded any respect or positions in the convent. It had a certain artificiality to it. Dalit nuns received a distinct level of treatment. Dalits were not regarded as beings with rights. Christians from the Dalit community fought against this bias. Dalits made about 80% of the Roman Catholic population in Tamil Nadu. However, Dalits were not given important posts in the Tamil Nadu Catholic Church.

Dalit autobiographies are a representation of all those Dalits who have suffered because of their status as Dalits. They are expressed and intended differently from other categories. They are the tales of sufferings. They painted a picture of the torture and suffering these folks went through. In their autobiographies, Dalits employ a variety of instances of injustice as a topic in order to inform other Dalits—not to celebrate. The autobiographies of Dalits don't have any fictional themes. Only a few Dalit women have published their autobiographies, compared to the majority of Dalit men, and most of them have not been translated into English. Despite official educational institutions and India's long history of independence, there are extremely few Dalit women who are literate. They must forgo their schooling and put in a lot of effort to survive due to poverty. By describing the process of self-discovery, identity, and empowerment, Bama, one of the first women Dalit writers, sheds light on the most agonising and miserable lives of the Dalits in her autobiography *Karukku*. It is in this context that *Karukku* is relevant.

Bama blends the two together to create a testimonial autobiography, talking about life occurrences while the latter is created with a goal. Bama, a Tamil Dalit woman author of the autobiography *Karukku*, describes the text as having two edges in the prologue. Bama's *Karukku* is acclaimed as the creation of the first Dalit woman novelist in India and the first autobiography of its kind in Tamil Dalit literature. Bama's debut book, *Karukku*,

which was released in 1992, is when she first garnered notoriety as a writer. It was swiftly translated into English by Lakshmi Holmstrom in 2000, and in India, it won the Crossword Award in 2001. Writings by Bama reflected the beginning of Dalit literature.

“Dalits are all those who have been exploited politically, economically, or in the guise of religion,” states the 1972 manifesto of the Dalit Panthers. Included in this are hill people, neo Buddhists, workers, women, and struggling farmers (Holstrom xviii-xix). Bharati Dasan used the term “taazhthapattor” to refer to the Tamil word for “Dalit” while he was a part of the Self Respect movement. He uses it in his poem Tazhthapattor Samathvappattu (Song for the equality of the oppressed). In the new Tamil Dalit writing, the movement’s founder E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker regularly alludes to his anti-caste and anti-religious statements. The primary objective is to deepen understanding of the Dalit experience, and Bama’s works are among those that examine how the Dalit identity is changing. She evaluates the Dalit way of life in her writings. Despite his desire for change, “Bama desires an identity,”

Readers are compelled to respond with curiosity and pay close attention by Bama’s distinctive writing style. She intentionally strayed from the diction and writing style of memoirs, giving it a unique and afterwards appreciating quality.

The childhood memoir *Karukku*, written by Bama, conveys the joy and sorrow of her people who were victimised by upper castes in India. The book includes descriptions of many of the events throughout her life. She grew up in a Dalit family with limited resources. The Naicker landowners’ farms and homes were where her grandparents and mother worked. Despite the pain, she had a nice childhood. Her brother Raj Gauthaman, who is also a writer, introduced her to books and gave her the motivation to create. When she was in college, she wrote poetry. Later, she began to write novels. She entered teaching after receiving her undergraduate degree. Bama talks on the prejudice she encountered as a teacher and a student. She asserted that she was intelligent in her study and teaching, which allowed her to somewhat escape the harsh oppression. At the age of 26, she took the vows to become a nun, and her life was forever altered. But Bama had to accept the hard truth that Dalits will always struggle in the seminary and thereafter in the convent. Bama finally left the convent in 1992, which was after seven years. Outside the convent, she was questioned nonstop. Despite all of her tribulations, she refrained from taking her own life thanks to her decision to write an autobiography about them. Because of *Karukku*, Bama quickly became well-known and was discussed in more prestigious literary circles.

The caste persecution within the church surprised the Paraiyars, who converted to Christianity in order to leave the caste system of Hinduism. Additionally, Dalit Christians did not receive reservation privileges, as Christianity purportedly does not recognise caste. Dalit Christians bear the brunt of the government’s reservation policy since they don’t account for the discrepancy between belief and practise.

Bama did a good job at portraying the Dalit culture, society, and family life. It wasn’t limited to the injustice and difficult conditions that Dalits had to deal with. The daily

routine, language, naming customs, religion, culture, holidays, eating customs, entertainment, games, taunting songs, and kinship in the Paraya society were all described in detail. She discussed the religious significance of drumming, which is highlighted in this manner. Her own life experiences provide insight into what it was like to be a Dalit in a caste-based society. *Karukku* concentrated on two key elements, namely caste and religion, which are very painful in Bama's life. Bama had negative school memories: Bama and her pals were playing one evening at the school. Someone took the coconut at that same moment. She received the blame. Everyone agreed that Bama had harvested the coconut. Although she wasn't guilty, the headmistress mistreated her. She reprimanded her based on caste. "You the people of low caste with the manner you have...we cannot allow you inside this school," the headmaster said in response to her protests. (Bama 19). Bama was suffering as a result of this occurrence. She had endured humiliation and abuse in front of the kids. She was then expelled from the school. She was in tears when a teacher suggested she meet the church priest so he could write her an apology letter. The entire class stared at her strangely when she entered the classroom on the priest's advice. She said, "The entire class turned around to look at me as I walked into the classroom, and I just wanted to curl up inside of myself as I went and sat on my bench, still crying" (19). Bama begins to explore ways to free herself and her people from this deplorable situation.

Her older brother guided her in the right direction and advised her that the only way to achieve equality was via education. Due to the fact that those who fell under the Paraiyajati were deprived of all honour, dignity, and respect. But if we all work hard and advance in our studies, all of these humiliations can be forgotten. Study carefully, and discover that these are possible. People will come and attach themselves to someone if they are consistently ahead in their lessons. Work hard and acquire knowledge. (17-18)

The advice from Bama's older brother left a lasting influence on her. She sought to establish her worth. She had been working extremely hard on her studies since her brother spoke to her. Bama was really dedicated to her education. She was concerned with making sure she always finished top in the class. Even though I was a Paraichi, many people became her friends as a result, according to Bama. (15). Bama discovered that throughout her time at school, untouchability served as an unpleasant reminder of her caste wherever she went. The government provided the Harijans with cash incentives and discounted tuition. These scholarships and fellowships were less of a comfort to her because of her caste identity and more of an embarrassment. A titter of derision can be heard among the other pupils after the identification is disclosed, according to Bama. "I experienced a sudden wrath." (19). Despite all obstacles, Bama managed to complete her B.Ed. and undergraduate degree. She later made the decision to become a teacher. She had a job at a convent. Bama discovered that the nuns there routinely mistreat the Dalit youngsters. After finishing her eighth grade, Bama was at the hostel and bitterly recalled the nuns making remarks about the Dalit kids. "The warden sister of our dormitory could not stand low-caste or underprivileged youngsters, Bama lamented. She reprimanded us

for no apparent reason. A girl would experience it significantly more if she had a tendency to be overweight. She would claim in public that these people don't have access to food at home; when they come here, they gain weight. Look at the Cheri kids when we get back to school after the break, she would say. They consume their fill while they are here and have a potato-like appearance. But take a look at how they arrive back from home—they are little more than skin and bone.” (17-18)

Since Dalits made up the majority of the convent's students, Bama was actually delighted to be their teacher. She enjoyed instructing and had some success. The nuns ruthlessly repressed Dalit instructors and Dalit students. “As a result, I decided to become a nun. She made the decision to give her life in order to aid the needy and Dalit children. I joined that specific order because I wanted to be like her and just care for the underprivileged and impoverished.” (20-21). The nuns from the Paraiya caste were not treated with any respect or given any positions in the convent. The casteism at the convent was noted by Bama. The convent, in her opinion, was the sole exceptional location. She began to understand that discrimination from society on the outside can be tolerated. But dealing with politics and casteism inside the convent was incredibly difficult. She had to act as if there were no one there in order to ensure her survival. Bama remained in the convent despite the critical conditions there because of her unwavering commitment to the underprivileged and the children of the Dalit community. Those undergoing training to become nuns with Bama were curious about the caste to which Bama belongs. Bama addressed all questions concerning her caste directly and honestly. Regarding the Harijan women becoming nuns, the religious order had its own concerns. A sister in a particular lesson informed Bama that Harijan women may join a different religious order and become nuns. Sister claims that despite the fact that there was a distinct order for Harijan women someplace, they would not accept them as potential nuns. (22). Bama is only allowed to join the holy order after receiving authorization from the convent. Her services had been requested by the convent. The nuns frequently mistreated and insulted the Dalit students. Christianity promotes compassion, selflessness, and assisting others. Convents had a service-oriented philosophy, yet they had a different perspective on upper castes and Dalits. In their convent school, Dalit pupils could not be accepted. As a result, their standard will drop. They denigrate all Dalits as being inferior. The convent's nuns have an extremely derogatory way of speaking about persons from low castes. They talk as if they don't even consider members of lower castes to be human. The beliefs of the nuns regarding low caste people are as follows: “Low caste people are all degraded in every aspect. They believe we lack culture, morality, and hygiene.” (22-23)

In Bama's shared testimony, her upbringing is often told in episodic form, and throughout the while, she demonstrates unwavering fortitude by overcoming the powerful influences. Even the smallest incidents Bama had during her life are described. She frequently talks about “dying within several times” (28). Bama's heart was ignited by the sense of injustice she experienced at school, college, the job, the convent, and in society at large,

and it became conscious of the need to rebel against the system. *Karukku* became her testimony, serving as the Dalit identity of a subaltern.

Bama's *Karukku* significantly altered the way people think about autobiographies. It destroyed the purported guidelines for writing autobiographies. Both male and female Tamil authors frequently adopt the practice of writing under a pen name. This norm in this instance contributes to the unusual paradox of shyness and familiarity in the work. In contrast to most autobiographies, it omits a lot of intimate information about the author and her life. Never is the protagonist identified. Contrary to typical autobiographies, Bama's life events are not presented in a straightforward, linear, or chronological order. But it is observed from numerous angles, repeated frequently, and categorised under multiple subjects, such as labour, games, eating customs, etc. There were a lot of important things in *Karukku* that I decided not to remember, as Bama says. She had seen a lot of violent caste-related episodes firsthand. Because she believed they would divert from the topics she wanted *Karukku* to focus on in her first book.

Dalit authors had disapproved of the established language, which had a clear class. Dalit authors claimed that their works of literature reflected the life they encountered, witnessed, and lived. With the birth of Dalit writing, a new human being has been depicted in literature for the first time. The language used in Dalit writing reflected its reality in a unique way. It was the Dalit people's crude spoken language. Dalit writers view it as haughty despite the fact that the culture people have chosen the standard language for their writing. They felt more comfortable speaking in the Basti language than in the ones they were used to. "Bama is taking a novel approach by often using the demotic and the colloquial as her medium for argument and narration, rather than only for reported speech. She spoke in a Dalit manner, which subverts the formality and beauty of conventional upper-caste Tamil" (Holmstrom xix). According to Bama, one aspect of her language usage that brought her the most delight was the use of her native tongue, which was not acknowledged by literary experts, recognised by any literary circles in Tamil Nadu, or included in the standards of Tamil literature.

Bama purposefully departs from the conventional autobiography writing technique in *Karukku*. The piece unmistakably reflects her strong desire to free her people from caste tyranny. Her writing style and vocabulary demonstrated the haughty attitude Dalit writers had toward diction and language conventions. As a result, Bama rose to prominence as a writer of Dalit literature.

Bama added an Afterword to the book's conclusion seven years after it was completed. She said, "You are a Dalit; lift up your head and stand tall," as she was pleased to see Dalits attempting to live honourably. (Bama 138) This was probably the author's goal when she wrote about her experiences. Bama's works on the Dalit victimhood were never particularly effective. Her entire body of work is heavily focused on the agency of Dalits. Her words gave a lot of weight to Dalits' emancipation through education. The

literary intervention known as *Karukku* turns Dalit writing into primarily a political act of expression. Bama, who in an interview expressed her absolute joy about *Karukku*, claims that “It is applied in Bangalore’s Theological College. That represents an important victory.”

Karukku provides light to the most agonising and miserable lives of the Dalit community. It was crucial to acknowledge that Bama’s portrayal of the event was correct. A soul under oppression must undergo a painful and terrible change. That change was brought about by the resistance tale *Karukku* that Bama wrote. Through the new literary genre she invented known as testimonial writing, she helped her people get ready for the battle by educating readers about the situation of Dalits, particularly in Tamil Nadu. In the hopes that it would improve the plight of her fellow people and inspire a revolutionary changes in their lives. She presented her memoirs in a unique way. Bama expressed the change that had taken place as follows: “I compared myself to a bird with its wings clipped in *Karukku*. I feel like I’m flying through the air right now.”XI (Bama)

Through *Karukku*, she is honouring both her subaltern identity and her uprising against caste injustice. Bama “gradually realised herself as a Dalit” after being “nurtured as a Catholic” at first. She later came to terms with who she was and began to identify as a Dalit. By giving a witness to her life, she departs from the autobiographical form. *Karukku*, her testimonial autobiography, became a passionate and emotional critique of the callousness of the higher castes while simultaneously celebrating her subalternity. A reader must “surrender to the special call of the text” in order to read a text because “Bama is writing to affect people’s emotions and ideas.” The Dalits have a desire to alter their way of life. *Karukku* asserts that it is an autobiography containing testimonies from the underclass. ■

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THE HINDU

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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.