

# ROCK PEBBLES

## International Literary Magazine

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### about the magazine

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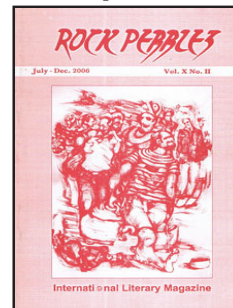
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## Response

Readers'



..... The articles on Mulk Raj Anand, the Evolution of the character of Ganga, the Rape symbol of Paul Scott's the Jewel in the crown are excellent pieces of analytical compositions. So also the article of Manoj Dash. The entire bouquet of writings are superb.....

-Biswakesh Tripathy IPS (Retd.)  
Bhubaneswar, Orissa.

..... The issue is the best one that you have published so far. It contains healthy criticism and praiseworthy creative works. I am sure this standard shall be maintained.....

- Dr. Gauri Shankar Jha Chandalang, Arunachal Pradesh.

..... I enjoyed reading poems in the magazine; quite meaningful, thoughtful & inspiring. Comparatively the magazine is appealing. The articles, stories are worth-reading. I wish successful days ahead.....

- Dr. Anjana Anil Alwar, Rajasthan.

..... It is a pleasure to see the Journal gaining popularity and momentum day by day. With its articles of scholarly interest, nice stories and some excellent poems, each issue of Rock Pebbles is precious. The editing job is done wonderfully well.....

- Bipin Patsani  
Doimukh, Arunachal Pradesh

..... 'Rock Pebbles' is your son/daughter and who can keep himself apathetic when he finds his son/daughter facing perils & death. In case of the publication of a little magazine, the editor has to do everything. The 'Board' or anything else is unimportant. This matter is proved thousand times.... 'Rock Pebbles' has become a great name throughout India. I wish that you should not think to discontinue 'Rock Pebbles'.....

-Gopal Roy, Birbhum, W.B

..... I acknowledge my indebtedness for your magazine because of the appreciation it has earned for my article "From Turmoil to Tranquility". I thank you for the same.....

-Mrs. V. Anbarasi, Salem, Tamilnadu

... I have read Rock Pebbles (July-Dec. 2006) with interest. I like very much the essay titled 'Evolution of the Character of Ganga in the Trilogy of Jayakanthan' by A. Selvaraj. The essay has been developed very well and the delineation of the character of Ganga is superb. Further, the information about the Women Nobel Laureates as contained in the essay by Dr. P.C. Swain is enlightening. The story - 'Thanks Aids' - by Dr. Mallikarjun Patil is crisp and appealing. It has been well written. I like the poem- 'The Last Love Letter to an Old Husband' by Dr. V.R. Badiger. The issue has been well-planned...

K.B. Rai, New Delhi

..... It was a big pleasure to obtain a July-Dec'06 copy with 4 of my poems published in it. I am very proud that such prestigious Indian magazine has published my poetry.....

Dr. Adolf P. Shvedchikov  
Russian Scientist, Poet & Translator

## POETRY : TRANSLATING THE UNTRANSLATABLE

\* Bishnupriya Hota

Just as I was searching for a poem to elucidate how difficult it is to translate a poem into another language I came across Banalata Sen of Jibanananda Das. I was surprised to see that there are at least ten translations of the poem available. It also became clear to me that many Oriya poems like Alaka Sanyal, Radha Noliani, Pratima Nayak were inspired by Banalata Sen. As I went through the translations I was surprised to find that none of them could exactly reproduce the theme & emotion evoked by the original poem. I also realised that, given the new theories of translation, it is no longer a simple affair.

Translation studies and post-colonial studies have become significant areas of cultural studies in recent times. Translation is no longer an *anūābd* or *bhāsāntar*. Rather it is a conscious act. The traditional essentialist approach to literature, which Lefevere calls “the corpus approach” is based on the Romantic notion of literature. It sees the author as a quasi-divine creator possessing genius. He is regarded as the origin of a creation that is original, unique, transcendental and hence sacred. Thus for these essentialists translation is a mere copy of a unique entity which by definition is un-copyable. They also believe that translation of a text involves an exercise of finding equivalents not just for lexis, syntax, concepts, but also for style, genre, figurative language, historical stylistics, cultural items and culture specific concept and values. But in recent times, translation studies have taken, ‘a paradigm shift’ (to use Theo Herman’s phrase) or ‘cultural turn’ (to use Lefevere & Basnnet’s phrase). These theorists no longer consider literary text as an autonomous and independent domain; rather they consider literary text as a cultural artefact; a social institution which is related to so many other social institutions. Hence, for them a translation is an act which examines the complex

interconnections between poetics, politics, metaphysics from various social sciences like complex interconnections between poetics, politics, metaphysics and history. The scholastic tools it uses are semiotics, anthropology, history, economics, psycho-analysis. They consider, as Lefevere and Basnnet say; “neither the word, nor the text but the culture becomes the operational “unit” of translation (1990:8). They strongly believe; “There is no such thing as human nature independent of culture. We are incomplete or unfinished animals who complete or finish ourselves through culture and not through culture in general but through highly particular form”. (Clifford Geertz, 1973 : 49). Language, for them is the carrier of culture. Ngugi’s remarks on language also merits mention in this context. He says:

*“Language, any language has a dual character; it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture.... Language as a carrier of culture is a product and reflection of human beings communicating with one another in the very struggle to create wealth and control it. But language does not merely reflect that history or does so by actually forming images or pictures of the worlds of nature and nurture.... Language as a carrier of culture imports images of words and reality through spoken and written languages, through the capacity to speak, the capacity to order sounds in a manner that makes for mutual comprehension. This is the universality of language, but the particularity of the sounds, the words and the laws of their ordering into phrases and sentences distinguishes one language from another. Thus a specific culture is transmitted through language not in its universality but in its particularity as a language of a specific community”.*

Talgeri and Verma rightly point out, “a word is, essentially a cultural memory in which the historic experience of the society is embedded” (1988:3). Given such complex nature of language, translation has become a conscious act. In a pragmatic departure from the essentialist approaches, the translation of a literary text has become “a translation, not between two language or a somewhat mechanical sounding act of linguistic substitution” (Cartford) but rather a more complex negotiation between two cultures.

result, translators, have been adopting different methods to convey the cultural items, concepts, culture specific markers some employ “a method of ethnocentric reduction of the text to target language cultural values” making the text recognizable, intelligible for the target reader. This method is called ‘assimilation, ‘familiarization’ or ‘domestication’. There is another method followed by some translators which is dubbed as foreignization or alienation. Foreignizing translation entails the practice of keeping the culturally embedded words as such; the translator does not even try to explain them to retain the foreignness of the original. In domestication, the translator deletes the culturally specific markers and replaces the names of local things, places, even historical references with that of their own. Whereas a few of the foreignizing translators take care to explain the culturally specific markers with the help of foot-notes or postscripts.

Amidst such well pronounced dictums, it is all the more difficult to translate poetry. Whether it is domestication or foreignization, the translator while translating a poem encounters additional problems; he translates the words and meaning on the one hand and the flow and rhythm on the other hand. Most scholars and translators like Jacobson (1991:57) believe that translation of a poetry “by definition is impossible ..... only transposition is possible”. For Dante (1265-1321) “all poetry is untranslatable” (cited by Brower 1966:271). Even the American poet Robert Frost opines that poetry is “that which is lost out of both prose and verse in translation” (cited by Webb 203) Fiaz Ahamed Fiaz says, “Translating poetry, even when confined to a cognate language with formal and idiomatic affinities with the original composition is an exacting task”. But the interesting comment comes from Yves Monnefoy says, “You can translate simply by declaring one poem the translation of another” (1991:186-192). All these comments are pointer to one fact that it is actually the creative dimension of the translation that comes to the fore in the translation of poetry.

I have the poem “Banalata Sen” for elucidation of the above mentioned difficulties that a translator encounters while

a poem. ‘Banalata Sen’ is the famous poem from the famous post-Tagorean Bengali Poet Jibanananda Das; who was born and brought up amidst the sylvan beauty of Bangladesh. His poem “Banalata Sen’ has attracted the attention of several translators because of its mystic quality. As a result, multiple translations of the poem are available. But I have taken up some of the translations for the purpose of analysis; one by the poet himself, another by his lone English biographer Clinton B. Seely and two others by quite modern translators Amitav Mukherjee in 1990 and Anjana Basu in 2004.

Jibanananda has endeavoured to depict the real physical beauty of the earth making use of the flora & fauna of Bengal. The poem weaves magical effect with the images of Bengal and the imaginary women figure of Banalata Sen. Bana (wild), lata (creeper) and Sen (a Baidya Surname) ends in a transfixed image of Banalata Sen an idealised form of beauty. Banalata Sen is a popular name in the middle class Bengali family of the age but here that is anchored in the physical details as well as the folklores and myths exclusive to Bengal. These myths and legends are so culturally embedded that it becomes difficult for a translator to convey in the target language. Even the surname of the girl ‘Sen’ is indicative of Baidya caste to which the poet’s forefathers belonged before they became Brahmo. Natore is a small ordinary mufossil town in Bangladesh which has came up as a centre of trade and commerce, such as colonialism created and replicated throughout Bengal. On the very first look the poem seems to be very easy. Even without the knowledge of the source language one can realize that there is the overwhelming presence of the vowels that governs the slow pace and rhythm of the lines. But only the knowledge of the source language will enable the transference of the deep structure along with the poet’s reference to history. An indepth study of the poem reveals that the poem contains some such tropes and references which cannot be communicated in another language easily. Because of that there are multiple translations. The poet’s own translation

Seely's translation and the translation of Amitav Mukherjee seems to have the alienation or foreignization practice where as Anjana Basu's translation follows the practice of domestication. Basu's translation is a creative transposition of the original where she has deliberately changed the place, names Vidisha to Ninnevah & Sravasti to Tanagra. She also uses the phrase 'small town' in place of Natore.

The translations of the poem are many but after reading each translation it is felt that the residue is always left which encourages a new translation. Though the lyrical voice of the poet does not pose any difficulties, the poem alerts the reader to the poet's dialectic selfhood and the subtext present in the poem make the translation a difficult task. For elucidation let us take the first lines of the second stanza.

*Chul tar kabekar andhakar Vidishar nisha  
Mukh tar Srabastir karukarya.*

These two lines have been translated by different poets in the following manners.

I remember her hair dark as the Vidisha's night.  
Her face an image of Sravasti - *Jibanan-  
anda*

Her hair dark like some long gone Vidisha's  
night.

Her face like Sravasti's delicate handiwork. -  
*Seely*

Her hair the ancient darkness of Vidisha  
Face a sculptor from Sravasti. - *Amitav Mukher-  
jee*

Her hair is the forgotten darkness of Nineveh's  
night

Her face Tanagra's filigree - *Anjana Basu.*

These translations exemplify the difficulty one faces when one translates a cultural memory in which the historical experience of the society is embedded. Unless one has the knowledge of

and conventional narratives like myths, literary texts, legends as well as literary conventions like genres, literary devices and other symbolic structures. Thus the enterprise of finding cultural equivalence raises awareness of difference and similarities between the cultures. While the poet, his biographer Seely, Amitav Mukherjee have tried not to meddle with the historically and culturally embedded references, Anjana Basu has tried to overcome the cultural perplexity by following domesticating technique. She has used 'Mughal's vanished empires & Samarkand in place of Ashoka and Vibisara. She has used place names like Nineveh and Tanagra in place of historically important place names like Vidisha and Sravasti to make her translation fluent & intelligible, for the target reader.

The poem also contains such expressions which are simply untranslatable or if translated loses the magic of the original text. For example

*Pakhir niner motor chokh tule;*

Translations:

The poet has left the expression.

And raised her bird's nest like eyes — Seely

Her eyebrows arched like the soaring winds of bird —

Amitav

Lifting her deep bird's nest eyes — Anjana

Here I would like to mention some more translations of the same line:

So she turned her bird's nest eyes

— P.Lal & Shyamasree Devi

Raising her eye's like a bird's nest - Tatum Mukherjee

Gently raising her eyes — Sudeep Sen

None of the translations seem to carry the charm of the Bengali original.

The examples are many. All of them point to the fact that it is not possible to translate a poetry with all its cultural embed-



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## COMIC IRONY IN R.K. NARAYAN STORIES:

\* B.P. Jyothi

"I get all influence from life from surroundings, a little bus stop or a street shop" <sup>1</sup> - R.K. Narayan

Narayan is one of India's leading writers and one of the best known Indian writers in the west. His achievements as a writer gives him a very prominent place among the Indo-Anglian writers. The story writer, like the minstrel in European medieval tradition occupies a place of respect and popularity in Indian English Literature. Narayan so far published eight collections of stories. 1. Malgudi Days, 2. Dodu and Other Stories, 3. Cyclone and Other Stories, 4. An Astrologer's Day and Other Stories, 5. Lawley Road and Other Stories, 7. A Horse And Two Goats, 7. Short Stories Old and New, 8. Under the Banyan Tree.

Narayan so far published his stories in daily newspapers and in foreign periodicals. He mainly depicts South Indian life. The striking features of his stories are irony, satire and humour. His irony makes him a social philosopher and holds a mirror to society and compels to see its image in it, though he is not an involved social reformist like Mulk Raj Anand and others.

The main themes of his stories are road side events, the family atmosphere, the innocent mischief of children, their innocent talk and tricks remind an adult of his childhood. Though the forte of Narayan is humour there are many stories like 'Wife's Holiday', 'Half a Rupee Worth', 'Mother and Son' which have pathos. The character and narrative technique in most of his stories is first person narrative where the character is called the 'Talkative man'. He portrays a number of characters representing various professions and occupations. His characters are drawn from urban middle class and South Indian towns. He does not identify himself with his characters nor does he evoke reader's identification. The setting in Narayan's works is vivid and as K.R. Srinivas Iyengar says;

\* Teaching Associate of Andhra University and now lives at A.U. Campus,

*"Malgudi is the hero of Narayan's works".<sup>2</sup>*

Narayan's plots are thin and there is nothing spectacular or distinctive about them. There are many sub-plots. But he has what E.M. Foster says:

*"The primitive power of keeping the reader in suspense and playing on his curiosity."<sup>3</sup>*

The serious short-coming in his art is that, plot breaks mid-way.

'Irony' is a statement in which the implicit meaning intended by the speaker differs from that which he ostensibly asserts. 'Verbal irony; depends on knowledge of the speaker's intention shared by the speaker and his audience. 'Dramatic irony' involves a situation in a play or a narrative in which the audience shares with the author's knowledge of which a character is ignorant. 'Structural irony' depends on a knowledge of the author's intention shared by the audience, but unknown to the speaker.

The best examples of Narayan's comic irony are the stories 'A Horse And Two Goats' and 'The Edge'. The predominant theme of the story - 'A Horse And Two Goats' is the selling of the goats by Muni and buying of a clay horse by an American. The communication gap and the language problem between the two old men is conveyed through this story. The story is written with rural background. This is a comic story where Narayan writes about a trivial matter. Muni - a one time affluent shepherd who owned a flock of forty sheep and goats used to drive his flock a couple of miles away from his village. There he sits on a pedestal of a clay horse while his cattle grazed around. As his fortune declines, from a flock of forty his stock has come down to two goats. His present situation is so pathetic that nobody pays any attention to him. The shopkeeper in his village would give him the things he needs when he was in good mood, and sometimes he would lose temper at Muni for daring to ask for credit. Muni comes from an age old society and his life has no comfort. He always obeys his wife because he knows that if he obeyed her, she would

conjure up food for him. Muni is a man with self respect though he is very poor. He speaks of himself thus:

*"I am the poorest fellow in our caste and no wonder they spurn me."<sup>4</sup> (p.11)*

He is a soft, pleasant, simple person and talks nothing back when people made comments about him. One day when he is sitting at the pedestal of the horse, he meets a red faced American. The American's truck has run out of petrol and he asks for direction to a gas station.

He is from New York and he works in Empire State Building. He visits India every summer because he wants to know about other civilizations. The clay horse attracts him very much and he thinks Muni owns it. He loves India and its things of antiquity. He wants to buy the statue of horse because it will be a decorative piece in his living room. The foreigner speaks in English and Muni speaks in Tamil and there is no one to translate their conversation. As a part of bargaining the statue, the foreigner says:

*"Namaste! How do you do?"<sup>5</sup> (p.13)*

And Muni utters only the English expressions he learnt, that is, 'Yes, No'.

Their conversation runs on two different planes and we see the verbal humour in these lines when the foreigner remembers courtesies and asks.

*"Do you Smoke?"*

Muni says, "Yes, No". The situational humour is seen when the foreigner flickers the lighter and offers it to Muni. Muni is confused and puts out the flame. When the foreigner says that he is from New York and presents him his visiting card, Muni shrinks away thinking that it is an arrest warrant, as the foreigner is dressed in Khaki and takes him for a police. A murder is committed in a nearby village and police investigation is going on. Muni goes on explaining the murder. He says,

*"If the murder was committed, whoever did it, will not escape. Bhagavan is all seeing. Don't ask me about it. I know nothing".<sup>6</sup> (p.15)*

He denies any knowledge about crime when the foreigner asks, "Do you know when the horse was made?" Muni replies,<sup>7</sup> "Please go away sir. I know nothing. Priest at the temple can see in the camphor flame the face of thief and when he is caught... He gestured with his hands a perfect mincing of meat."<sup>7</sup> (p.17) The American watches his hands and mistakes that the old man wants to chop wood and says. 'Chop something? May be I am holding you up. Where is your axe? Hand it to me and show me what to chop. I do enjoy it. You know just a hobby'<sup>8</sup> (p.17). The stranger is fascinated by the statue which he supposes belongs to Muni, some kind of peasant property. He asks "Isn't this statue yours? Why don't you sell it to me? I will offer you a good price" (p. 18). Muni thinks that the subject matter of murder was abandoned and starts speaking about the horse and goes on saying.

"I was this high when my grand father told me about this horse and the warrior, and my grand father was this high when he himself was this high"<sup>9</sup> (p. 18)

The foreigner is fascinated by the Tamil language. He likes its rhythm, and says: 'I wish I had my tape recorder here. I get a kick out of every word you utter here. (p-18) He indicates his ears. Muni explains how the horse acted as a guardian of the villagers and how it carries away the good ones on its back and tramples down all the bad men. The foreigner thinks that Muni is asking how he could carry it and answers that -

"My van can take an elephant"<sup>10</sup> (p.20)

In the middle of the conversation the American says that he is not a millionaire but a business-man of coffee. When Muni hears the word 'coffee' he thinks that the American is asking for coffee and advises him to go to next town where coffee is available. As Muni is a good actor he goes on explaining to the foreigner how he played roles of goddesses in epics.

"When we played Ramayana they dressed me Sita"<sup>11</sup> (p.22)

Finally the foreigner asks him to lend him a hand so that he can lift off, the horse and its pedestal. Muni enquired how many children does the foreigner have? Thinking that how much he was paid for the horse the foreigner replies, - 'A Hundred', and

encouraged Muni to go into details and asks how many of them are married? As an answer to these questions the foreigner offers him a hundred rupee note. And now Muni thinks that he is asking for change; and directs him to the village head man. He says:

"Ask our village head man. He is a money lender. He can change a lakh of rupees"<sup>12</sup> (p.24)

When the foreigner strikes the back of the goats as an act of courtesy, Muni misunderstands the gesture for a offer being made for his goats and answers:

"This will be their first ride in a motor car".<sup>13</sup> (p.25)

When the truck comes, the foreigner with the help of a couple of men detaches the horse from its pedestal and takes away the statue.

Now Muni goes home, explains everything to his wife and he shows the money, when they hear the goats cry backdoor.

His wife does not believe him and questions him if he has stolen the money. Her character shows how women or wives donot readily believe their husbands. She has been very shrewd from the beginning of the story. But Muni is quite ignorant and thinks that he has sold away the goats, but he is least bothered about the statue which is carried away before his eyes. He gets his hundred rupees as well as his goats back. He does not even ponder for a while why the foreigner paid him a hundred rupee for just a couple of goats which he has never seen so much money before. Comic irony in this story is that, Muni thinks that he had sold something and the foreigner thinks that he has bought something. Narayan introduces mythology in this story. He portrays the character of the foreigner as a very decent and dignified. His speech and gestures are very polite. The story had been telecast in 'Malgudi Days' along with other stories of Narayan, and these stories like novels *The Guide* and *The Financial Expert* makes an impact on the minds of the readers. Narayan is familiar to the reading public but his popularity has been doubled by these televised stories.

Another good example of R.K. Narayan's comic irony is the story 'The Edge'. The predominant theme in this story is



character around whom the story is woven is a sharpener of knives and other things. He is a familiar figure in Malgudi and offers his services to its people. He is loved by his customers, he never argues with his customers and just sharpened the knives free of cost and his liberal attitude towards his customers is seen through these lines:

*“After all, it costs nothing, only a few more turns of wheel”.*<sup>14</sup> (p.161)

When he stayed away from village his thoughts would go round his daughter who studies in a school under the care of his shrewd wife. Narayan always depicts the character of heroes as meek, mild, innocent, but their wives as rude, talkative and so on. Ranga would some times drink in order to face his wife’s tantrums. Even in this state he would feel relieved at the thought of his daughter. His wife would behave rude when he earned less and the humour in situation can be seen when his wife says:

*“I suppose you don’t cry loud enough and mumble to yourself as a grinder”.*<sup>15</sup> (p. 164)

*At this comment Ranga would feel upset, shouts such a deafening yell and says:*

*“Just to demonstrate how I call out”.*<sup>16</sup> (164)

Ranga would behave meek and obedient but regarding his daughter’s education he stands firm. He plans to get more money for his daughter’s school fee, books, uniform, bus-fare. Narayan depicts the character of Ranga’s daughter as self-willed. Her mother has false notions that rich folk flirt, and she prefers to stay in the same place and allows Ranga go to the city to earn more. At this Ranga feels happy to stay away from his wife and he says:

*“God is kind and wants me free and Independent in town”.*<sup>17</sup> (p. 166)

Ranga goes to the city and comes every month and spends three or four days.

Now the story takes a new turn. While returning from the village, he waits for a bus. A man in a car offers him thirty rupees and takes him to a secluded place. The stranger tells him to keep

story is there in communication gap. When the chief asks about the name and age Ranga answers right. But when the chief asks about his marital status he starts talking about his wife’s temper. He goes on explaining how he married her under the pressure of his uncle and relatives. When the chief questions him how many children he had?

He says, *“my first wife would have born ten if God has given her long life”.*<sup>18</sup> (p.171) and goes into the details of her sickness. The officer repeats,

*How many children?* Ranga says,

*“Six died before they were a year old. Do you want their names?”*<sup>19</sup> (p.171)

He goes on saying how he vowed to goddess on the hill and he says that only one girl remained and that girl is precious to them and they wanted her to become a lady doctor. The officer notes down that he had seven children and advises him not to have any more. As Ranga waits for his reward he is driven into the operation theatre. The comedy is, even here he examines the sharpness of the instruments in the operation theatre. As he was instructed to keep quiet he lays down, when all of a sudden he remembers the reading from a newspaper how men and women are operated in order to stop producing children. At this he shouts *‘Leave me alone’*; and runs into the fields, saying:

*“No I won’t be cut up”.*<sup>20</sup> (173) which dominated his usual cry in the city *‘Knives Sharpened’*.

Narayan’s stories are written about people who are stricken with poverty but who have dignity. But the women characters are sometimes rude and proud in spite of their poverty. We do not know how the bush shirt man comes there, why he wants to take away this innocent man without knowing how many children he had. The conversation between Ranga and the Chief in the camp is totally unintelligible to Ranga and not to the reader. At the end we see Ranga deprived of both his reward and also his daily wage of two rupees. The women character in these two stories resembles Raju’s wife in the story *‘Trial of The Green Blazer’* and Kannan’s wife in *‘Wife’s Holiday’*.

Narayan is influenced by the ancient Indian method of narration and stories which have happy endings. In his humour he resembles James Thurber, Jerome K. Jerome, and P. G. Wodehouse. Though Narayan wrote when the country was going through immense political activity he did not use the theme of freedom struggle in his stories. Though his stories are always readable, they are perhaps not as significant as his novels. He relies more on the incidents and characters than on the plot for effect. His main aim is to bring about only those aspects of a character which are interesting and appealing. He does not write about village folk because he finds it dull and uninteresting. He does not aim at any serious social change but is content with touching only the surface of life. Though his stories do not have a strong plot they are attractive because of his style of narration. One draw-back in Narayan is that in some of his stories he prolonged the story beyond the price of effectiveness. He sticks to standard English and does not attempt to use words from Tamil or other Indian languages like Raja Rao and others. □

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## Identity dilemma and Existential crisis in Girish Karnad's 'Hayavadana' and 'Nagamandala'.

\* Dr. C. Kannammal.

Unlike poetry and fiction which have flourished in speed, sustained by the fertile imagination and the creative talent of poets and novelists, drama in Indian soil suffered and lagged behind because of the want of dramatists and the conducive atmosphere facilitating its growth by thematic and effective dramatic devices. Of course, dramatists like Tagore and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya were there, but with their own limitations. Most of them have written verse dramas which fail to create desired effect on the stage and upon the audience. Tagore's were not very successful on the stage except a few. Such unsuitability of Indian dramas for the stage is rightly observed by Iyengar:

*Modern Indian dramatic writing in English is neither rich in quantity nor on the whole, is of high quality. Enterprising Indians have for nearly a century occasionally attempted drama in English - but seldom for acutal stage production. (226)*

The causes for such paucity in Indian drama are very many-language, dialogue, settings, stagecraft are some of the impediments in the way of Indian drama making its progress practically an impasse. The credit of rejuvenating Indian drama by infusing a new life into it goes to modern dramatists whose service is a sort of instant elixir to the staggering and slugging drama. Among the modern Indian dramatists, Karnad stands out by the singular sign he made by his feat diversely as a dramatist, director, actor on the stage, screen and T.V. media.

There is an array of eight plays in his oeuvre: **Yayati** (1961), **Tughlaq** (1964), **Hayavadana** (1975), **Hitting Hunja**, **Anju Malige**, **Agni Mattu Male** (1984), **Nagamandala** (1990), **Thaledanda** (1994).

His plays bear the traces of the influences of 'Company Natak' which was in vogue in Sirsi, his native place. during 1930s.

Besides these native influences, the profound impact of Western dramatists like Henrik Ibsen, George Bernard Shaw, and Shakespeare can also be discerned in his plays. He has also been the spokesman of the incarcerated condition of the other sex and the social conventions which perpetuated the superstitious belief.

Though his themes are from puranas, myth and history, he has rendered them in a modern way. The innovative and indigenous devices and the improvised stage techniques made his plays effective and instantly successful. He has made use of mythical themes to interpret the most complicated problems of life. Except **Tughlaq**, **Yayati**, **Hayavadana** and **Nagamandala** are based on myths. Behind the mythical facade, he deals with serious issues like identity dilemma, existential crisis and the primeval conflict between body and mind.

But M.K. Naik differs in his observation by facilitating the argument both in defence of and to substantiate Karnad's view point. Naik is of the opinion:

*Karnad does not succeed fully in investing the basic conflict in the play with the required intensity, but his technical experiment with an indigenous dramatic form here is a triumph which has opened up fresh lines of fruitful explorations for the Indian English playwright.*

This article is an attempt in a way to establish the fact that Karnad has used the stage as a whetstone to try and sharpen the sensibilities of audience towards the most crucial crux of human survival. Drama as an enactment of life is employed by him not to represent life alone but to experiment the issues of life too. It can be deduced from his plays that he has used 'from known to unknown' technique by using myths and puranas, well known sources to audience, as his themes.

Along with social, mythical and familial problems, due importance is given to the problems of survival. In this sense he can be termed as an Existentialist Dramatist. Existentialism implies the quest of the individual for the assertion of the self despite his limitations and failures. Karnad concerns himself with the problems

of self, search for identity and the problems of isolation and frustration. The study of Existentialism affirms and asserts that man can transcend reality in his own consciousness. It establishes firmly the humanism and the dignity of man. Karnad's plays stand testimony to his philosophy of Existentialism.

The issues like identity crisis and impersonation have become the main motif of **Yayati**, **Hayavadana** and **Nagamandala**. In **Yayati**, the impersonation takes place between the father and son. Whereas in Hayavadana and Nagamandala, the characters involved in the problem are both human and animal. Identity is a personal passport for social security, recognition and respect without which an individual has to suffer a lot by loneliness, frustration and remorse of ones own despondence.

In Hayavadana, Hayavadana himself is the combination of a horse and man; Naga, a king cobra in Nagamandala takes the shape of a man, so the theme of impersonation holds good to these plays. In Hayavadana, Kapila gets Devadatta's head and Devadatta gets Kapila's due to the transposition of heads by Padmini. In Nagamandala, Naga poses himself as Appanna, Rani's husband and lives with her.

Nagamandala is the story of Rani, who is imprisoned and ill-treated by her husband Appanna. Desperately lonely Rani is helped by a blind woman Gurudavva who administers a herb which has the capacity to induce love as soon as it is consumed by her husband. Terrified by the debilitating effect of the herb upon her husband causing unconsciousness, Rani pours the medicine over the ant-hill. Unfortunately the medicine is tasted by a king cobra, which lives in the ant-hill and falls in love with Rani. Though she is locked up by her husband Appanna, the snake manages to enter into her room through drainage pipe and takes the shape of Appanna as it is believed that snakes can take desired shape.

The snake which is known as Naga lives with her by visiting every night and makes her pregnant. Rani, who is innocent about the impersonation of Naga, is puzzled by the ambiguous behaviour of her husband. She is confused by the incongruously

angry husband during day time and the totally changed as an endearing and concerning one during night. This ambience of character due to the act of impersonation of Naga causes the anxiety over the identity of these men.

The simple innocent mind of Rani is muddled by the contradictory behaviour of her husband. She remarks one night:

You talk very sweetly at night, but in daytime you hiss like a snake ready to bite. (52) And continues,

*Why do you torment me? I am sick of loneliness. To night, I was worried lest you should not come, because I thought that all that I remembered of the last night was only a dream, or an imagination. What can I say when you make such puzzling statements? (53)*

The impersonation of Naga poses an acute identity dilemma which is suffered by both men, Naga and Appanna. In the case of Appanna, he loses his right and dignity as Rani's husband, while Naga suffers by his inability to express his real self and love, lest he has to lose both. The love between Naga and Rani is pure and sincere. It acts upon her as a charm and she compares it to the charm of a snake over a bird which can not move its eye when cobra fixes its eyes upon the bird (54). Like that charmed bird she can not delve deep into the problem of her partner's identity in the presence of Naga. Though he emulates her husband's appearance, there is no pretension in his love to her which is genuine. These two men here suffer due to the loss of their identity. Appanna fails to prove his spousal right over his wife Rani whereas Naga could not have such an identity even though he can claim his right because he belongs not to human but reptile.

Hayavadana is the story of two friends -- Devadatta and Kapila who exemplify the intellectual and physical strength. They enjoy perfect happiness, understanding the identity of their own till Devadatta marries Padmini. The arrival of Padmini creates a complication in their friendly relationship. Devadatta's offering of himself to Kali to fulfil his promise makes the situation even worse. Kapila kills himself for the sake of his friend and saves himself

*Oh God! What's this? Both gone! And didn't even think of me before they went? What shall I do? What shall I do? Oh, Devadatta, what did I do that you left alone in this state? ... Where shall I go? How can I go home? What shall I say when I get there? What shall I say happened? And who'll believe me? They'll all say that two fought and died for this whore... then what will happen to me? No, Mother Kali no-- it's too horrible to think of, No! Kapila's gone -- Devadatta's gone. Let me go with them. (31)*

Shocked Padmini laments and implores Goddess to help her. The friendly relationship of Devadatta and Kapila gets tangled when Padmini transposes the heads of the deceased friends as per the direction of Goddess Kali. The friends are overjoyed to get life once again, not knowing the seriousness of the exchange of heads. They reveal that they were two persons with individual bodies and minds earlier but now they have been united both emotionally and physically and become friends in the real sense. They are thrilled and exclaimed:

*Devadatta--How fantastic! All these years we were only friends...*

*Kapila--Now we are blood-relations! Body-relations (coughing) what a gift! (35)*

Soon their gift proves itself a curse. After revelling their boon to be together, they are about to depart. There come all sorts of complication in deciding with whom Padmini should go. Both are claiming themselves Devadatta. The argument regarding the identity of Devadatta raises the primeval conflict between the mind and the body. The following dialogue vividly exposes the conflict:

*Kapila: But what has she got to do with you now?*

*Devadatta: (stops) What do you mean.*

*Kapila: I mean Padmini must come home with me, shouldn't she?*

*She's my wife, so she must...*

*(Exclamations from Devadatta and Padmini)*

*Padmini: What are you talking of Kapila?*

*Padmini: Shut up...*

*Devadatta: Don't blather like an idiot! I am Devadatta...*

*Padmini: Aren't you ashamed of yourself?*

*Kapila: But, why Padmini? I have Devadatta's body now....*

*Devadatta: We know that. You don't have to repeat yourself like a parrot.*

*According to Shasthras, the head is the sign of a man...*

*Kapila: (angry now) that may be. The question now is simply this:*

*Whose wife is she?*

*(Raising his right hand) This is the hand that accepted her at the wedding. This is the body she's lived with all these months... (36-37)*

The really crucial problem to be solved immediately is to decide who is Devadatta, either the one having Devadatta's head or the one having his body more than deciding whose wife Padmini is?

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 7<sup>th</sup> ed. defines 'person' as 'a human as an individual' (1126). An individual or a person is the one having the organic whole of both the 'body' and the 'mind'. As per the dictionary definition mind is "the part of a person that makes him able to be aware of things, to think and feel" (971). 'Body' is "the whole physical structure of a human or animal" (159). It can be deduced from these definitions that a person is an individual having organic unity of body and mind. Hence body and mind should go together for any perfect individual. Karnad's idea of a person is amply illustrated in the argument between the friends:

*Dev : When one accepts a partner in marriage, with the holy fire as one's witness, one accepts a person, not a body. She didn't marry Devadatta's body, she married Devadatta - the person. Kapila : If that's your argument, I have Devadatta's body, so I Devadatta -- person.*

*Dev : Listen to me. Of all the human limbs the top most in position as well as in importance - is the head. I have Devadatta's head and it follows that I am Devadatta (37).*

But in the case of Devadatta and Kapila with their trans-

body and mind differ and cannot comply with one another.

The enigmatic personality of these men, so as to say the conflict between the head and the body, is well expressed in Devadatta's (whose head is Devadatta's but body is Kapila's) words:

*I'd always thought one had to use one's brain while wrestling or fencing or swimming. But this body does not wait for thoughts - it acts! (43)*

The utter failure of the co-ordination of an intellectual's mind and the wrestler's body is clearly illustrated in the above lamentation and the same thing has happened to Kapila too. Kapila (Kapila's head and Devadatta's body) confesses:

*When this body came to me, it was like a corpse hanging by my head. It was a Brahmin's body after all - not made for the woods. I couldn't lift an axe without my elbows mourning, couldn't run a length without my knees howling. I had no use for it. The moment it came, a war started between us. (55)*

The continuous struggle between body and mind makes their lives a torture. None of these characters including Padmini can have a peace of mind. The unsolvable conflict within their personalities renders all their efforts futile in finding a solution for the existential crisis which persists pervasively. Kapila shuns the whole society and relations and prefers to live in seclusion in the forest while Devadatta lives with Padmini but with a nagging obsession within his heart.

Besides identity problem the search for completeness is also be discerned which makes the reader irresistible to ponder over it. Due to impersonation, the male characters become imperfect. In the trial of their seeking and striving for completeness, they suffer from frustration and loneliness. Kirtinath Kurtkoti reinstates this theme in his observation: "It is a world of incomplete individuals, indifferent Gods,.... a world indifferent of the desires and frustrations, joys and sorrows of human beings". (Intr. vi)

Kapila's words of frustration testify the complexities of having Devadatta's body and Kapila's head, for the sensations



physical sensations and dejected by his inability to abate them, he loathes, "Why should one tolerate this mad dance of incompleteness?" (57)

Further, the play begins with the worship of Lord Ganesha as "single-tusked destroyer of incompleteness" (1). The choice of the elephant-headed Ganesha for invocation is significant in the sense that it represents the theme of incompleteness of being by having an animal head and a human body. Bhagavada's (narrator) words further reiterate the incomplete nature of being:

*An elephant's head on a human body, a broken tusk and a cracked belly - which other way you look at him he seems the embodiment of imperfection, of incompleteness. (1)*

This motif of incompleteness is further intensified in the subplot of **Hayavadana**, who is doomed to be born with a horse head upon a human shoulder. He is the son of a princess of Karnataka and the white stallion of the Prince of Araby. The white stallion is but a celestial being turned as a stallion by a curse. Hayavadana, the off-spring of the celestial being and the princess, loathes and wants to rid of the horse's head and longs to be a complete man. Despite his efforts, he has to reconcile with the fate which renders him a perfect horse. In Nagamandala too, Naga represents the incompleteness of being. He laments over his incomplete self: "I had forgotten this simple truth. I was under the wrong impression that I would turn into a human being. ... I am a snake that has to cast off his skin every season. How can I think of retaining human form forever?" (69). Though he loves Rani and wants to live with her, he has to reconcile himself to be in the state of a king cobra. As Karnad has depicted these characters, he seemed to suggest that the chance of completeness and perfection is more probable in the case of lower strata being than the higher.

The identity dilemma between the friends poses many problems and forces them to encounter the most crucial crisis of their existence. Because of their dual personality, both become selfish, ambitious and anxious to fulfil the desires of their person (both physical and mental) that leads to duel and ultimately to

In **Nagamandala**, Naga has to compromise himself to be a snake in the tresses of Rani, while Appanna is reduced to be her devotee and servant. In the former case, men have been defeated by their identity dilemma and lose their lives notwithstanding the conflict within their personality whereas in the latter, men are degraded from their prestigious position giving up their individuality.

Along with men, women too are caught inescapably in the whirling vortex of confusion and anxiety of identity dilemma and existential crisis. A love triangle is employed in these plays Naga-Rani-Appanna in Nagamandala, Devadatta - Padmini - Kapila in Hayavadana to entangle the characters in the mesh of confusion and ordeal. Chastity problem of these women are dealt with iron-protocol of social ethics. As an Eastern, particularly Indian woman, Rani has to prove her chastity by undergoing 'snake ordeal' and Padmini through 'Sati'. However innocent they may be, the price of the identity problem of men has to be borne by them stoically. Unlike the Western women like Hardy's Tess and Hawthorn's Hester Prynne, who bear the whole responsibility on them, these women are forced to bear the cross upon themselves for the wrong committed by men. However the men folk of these plays are tend to lose their identity and life in their scramble for preserving what they lose.□

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## Re-absorption and Re-integration in Bernard Malamud's The Fixer

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**B**ernard Malamud is a world renowned Jewish American writer. All his novels and short stories deal with what it is to be human. In the same vein Malamud's **The Fixer** also deals with the discovery of the meaning of human existence. The novel very tellingly portrays the dramatic struggle of a handyman entrapped by the anarchic forces of the Tsarist Russia. His excruciating suffering in the Russian prison, aggravated by cold and physical torture proves to be salutary in that it leads to his re-absorption and re-integration.

Yakov Bok the hero of the novel is a repairer fixing what is broken. His early life is an existential ordeal. He says, "Opportunity was born dead" (T.F.7). With the death of his parents he became an orphan. His job as a fixer is not very lucrative. He often worked for nothing or if lucky, for a dish of noodles. For him life in the shtetl is tenuous constricting and arid. He feels that so far his life has been wasted. He says, "In this shtetl everything is falling apart" (T.F.7). So he is intended to go in quest of a materially better existence. It is in fact, an epistemological quest.

That he has got a raw deal from his life owes to some extent to his own actions. Yakov, "blames fate and spares himself" (T.F.9). In utter narcissistic abandonment of responsibility he fails to realize that he has partly contributed to the monstrous injustice, he feels, he has been done. The conjugal failure in his family is due to emotional imbalance. He imputes the barrenness of his wife to her infertility. In fact, the possibility is his. His wife Raisl, ran away with a goy after a five and a half years of childless marriage. He was studying the philosophy of Spinoza far into the night while she was waiting for him in bed. "The couple's growing estrangement, his (Yakov's) hostility to her for not producing a child sufficiently account for the frantiness that leads her to flee..." (Quart 144).

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Yakov, curses his wife, eventhough, he himself has been uncharitable to her. In the same vein he is uncharitable to a beggar

who asks for a little money for a Sabbath blessing. But his father-in-law Shmuel is ready to help the beggar even by borrowing moeny from Yakov. To Shmuel charity is something, "you can give even when you don't have" (T.F.7). On the other hand, Yakov says, "All I have to my name after thirty years in this graveyard is sixteen rubles that I got from selling everything I own. So please don't mention charity because I have no charity to give" (T.F.7) Shmuel is unhappy about his daughter's elopement with another man. But his paternal instinct asserts itself when he pleads to God not to listen to his imprecations on Raisl. He even advises his son-in-law not to blame God for his misery. He adds, "He gives the food, we cook it" (T.F. 256). Shmuel is a man of infinite interpersonal responsibility while Yakov is solipsistic. "For Malamud, man lives... in the world of human relationship, the world of interpersonal relationship..." (Handy 67).

Bok enters Kiev with a false name Yakov Ivonovitch Dulugushev. He has already shaved off his beard. These facts reveal that he has concealed his identity as a Jew. Symbolically speaking, he has distanced himself from the common bond with his fellow Jews. In Kiev he resides in a district forbidden to Jews.

The Tsarist Russia is an anti-Semitic state. Yakov's troubles begin with his two acts of kindness. Once he saves a drunken Russian from death by being buried in the snow. The Russian is wearing the Double eagled emblem of the Black - Hundreds which is an anti-Semitic organization. In gratitude Lebedev appoints Yakov his redeemer the foreman of his kiln. As foreman he prevents the lucrative fraud of his colleagues. So he gets alienated.

On another occasion he saves an old hasid from being pelted to death by some mischievous boys. He dresses the old hasid's wounds and accommodates him in his residence. The old hasid refuses the food offered by Yakov. Instead, he prefers to

away until it had gone” (T.F. 59). At least at the religious level Yakov, retains his identity, Yakov’s (kind) act reveals his courage as well as his innate responsibility to his fellows.

Yakov gets wind of the murder of a boy, killed for cabalistic purposes. The Christian boy’s dead body was discovered with 47 stab wounds. Yakov becomes the suspect. He is arrested on trumped up charges. Marfa Golov the mother of the dead boy falsely refers to her son having told her of a Jew who chased him with a knife. A jar of jam in Yakov’s room is misconstrued to be a bottle of blood. At this Yakov cries, “Jam is not blood. Blood is not jam” (T.F. 125). Proshko who was caught by Yakov while committing a fraud in the brick factory accuses Yakov of having swindled money to help a synagogue in Podol. He even falsely testifies to having seen Yakov and the hasid at prayers. Distorting reality and placing blind faith in falsehoods the anti-Semites seeks to undermine and crush Bok’s health and spirit.

In the beginning Yakov underestimates the range and intensity of anti-Semitism. Bok is stunned at the inscrutable monstrosity that is being inflicted on him. His ordeal in the prison is heart rending. He is subject to worst indignities. He is locked up in a stinking cell and beaten severely. He is served a food contaminated by cockroaches and rats. His armpits, anus and genitals are searched during which he has to stand near naked. He is chained to the wall during the day and at night he has to lie on a plank with his legs enclosed in stocks. “To be imprisoned alone was the greatest desperation the fixer had known” (T.F. 178).

Yakov’s sticking shoe nails have pierced his feet and suppuration has set in. He has to crawl to the infirmary. The surgeon who is a sworn anti-Semite operates on his feet without administering anaesthesia. He tells Bok, “this is good for you Bok ... now you know how poor Zhenia felt when you were stabbing him and draining his blood all for the sake of your Jewish religion” (T.F. 169). The surgeon deals with Bok as though he were an object at whom to vent out his rage. These tortures, the grinding

and womb containing the possibilities of death and life” (Avery 29).

Even among the malignant Russians, there are benignant human ‘beings. They sympathize with Yakov. Bibikov, the investigating magistrate and Kogin the guard are benevolent to Yakov. Bibikov being convinced of Yakov’s innocence tries to save him. He knows that Marfa and her lover are the murderers of Zhenia. Marfa had already thrown carbolic acid on the eyes of her paramour and blinded him. He tells Bok, “The boy was killed in his mother’s house, Bulkin taking a leading role in the beastly sacrifice” (T.F. 186). But Bibikov’s endeavours to limelight the criminality of Marfa and her lover get flummoxed by Gruveshov who tells Bibikov, “...as your superior officer in rank I forbid these questions” (T.F. 127).

But Bibikov gets arrested on false charges and he commits suicide by hanging himself. When Yakov sees the dead body of Bibikov, he gets devastated. Bibikov, “is an optimistic humanist and rationalist who puts his confidence in government and the law” (Kort, 94). The prosecution recognizing the wobbly state of the case resorts to other expedients. The Russians constrain Bok to confess that his Jewish nation egged him on to perpetrate the murder. On confession he is promised either parole or suspended sentence. Yakov does not need a pardon because it will taint his people and him with guilt. He seeks no forgiveness for himself, but vindication, the recognition of truth and innocence. But Bok refuses to acquiesce in to the temptations of the Russians. He does not want to implicate his innocent fellow Jews in a crime that they did not commit. Yakov is ready “to shift resistance from suffering itself to those who impose it knowing that passivity is no good” (Ducharme 119).

Yakov now reads the New Testament given him by Zhitnayak. The suffering of Jesus moves his heart. On reading the Hebrew Bible Yakov becomes aware that suffering causes repentance. Yakov realizes that so far he has been absorbed in

Kogin the guard is warm hearted towards Yakov. He is a grieved father. His son murdered an old man and is serving his sentence in Siberia. Outside Yakov's cell Kogin "paced the corridor as if he were the prisoner" (T.F. 190). On the morning of his trial Yakov refuses to remove the under shirt. Growing irate at this the deputy warden aims to shoot at Yakov for his temerity. But Kogin intervenes saying "Hold on a minute your honour ... I've listened to the man night after night, I know his sorrows. Enough is enough and anyway it's time for his trial to begin" (T.F. 326). But Kogin is shot dead by the deputy warden. Kogin had to sacrifice his own protection and rise against those who would deny men justice. Kogin's sacrifice exemplifies substitutional responsibility. Kogin "Bok's guard shares his owes with him and is shot by the deputy warden while protesting the in-human treatment of the prisoner" (Rupp 183).

Bibikov and Kogin are models of compassion and selflessness whom Bok has to emulate. His protracted and beastly imprisonment has provided the psychological and physical base for his moral transformation. It is only at this time his attachment to Judaism and Jews has got reinforced. Bok by now has become a Jew once again. In the Larva catacombs he is unable to kiss the hand of St. Andrew howsoever he wishes to. This evidences his extant association with Judaism.

Yakov does not want to embrace orthodox Christianity. His beard and forelocks begin to grow and he looks like a Jew. The Prosecutor sends a prayer shawl and phylacteries into Bok's cell in order to have a stronger case against Bok, as a ritual murderer. But Bok breaks open the phylacteries to get at the excerpts of the Tora inside. He happily receives a stained copy of the Old Testament. Nothing can erase his ties to Judaism.

The three and a half year prison ordeal has bettered Yakov's vision of humanity. In the shtetl he had divorced himself from communal life. Now he thinks that the Jews have a "right to be Jews and live in the world like men" (T.F. 274). In his relationship with his wife Raisl he was previously egoistic. He repeatedly

her a strumpet because she had committed adultery. He resented using the word **love** to her. He did not consent to her suggestions to move out of the shtetl together so that their luck might change. Now in his altered vision he recognizes that he too has contributed to her adultery.

Bok becomes human enough to recognize his guilt in making Raisl desert him:

*one white mooned night, after a bitter quarrel about something he couldn't remember how, Raisl left the hut and ran into the dark to her father. The fixer sitting alone thinking over his bitterness of going after her, but had gone to sleep instead. After all, he was dead tired doing nothing. The next year accusations against her had come true, although it wasn't true then. Who had made it come true? If he had run after her, would he be sitting here now (T.F.292).*

Bok has now become bold enough to call his enemies 'dogs'. With the visit of Shmuel to his cell Bok has become a totally transformed man. He sees in his dream the dead body of Shmuel. On waking up he comes to a positive awareness of the utility of his suffering. Like the biblical Job Bok must suffer his way onto insight and from insight into understanding. "In Malamud's fiction self-centeredness is a primal sin that is severely punished until the individual changes his attitude" (Abramson 9). He asks Shmuel to live and he is prepared to die for the sake of his father-in-law. His vision has broadened and the range of his self imposed responsibility has extended. With these his conversion to re-integration into humanity and re-absorption to society have started progressing.

Raisl is sent into the prison by the anti-Semitic Russians to get the paper of confession signed by Bok. On seeing her Yakov says, "so that is why you came" he said in a vehement Yiddish "to get me to confess lies I've resisted for two years. To betray me again" (T.F. 287). She has been ostracized from her community. If anyone accepts paternity for her child, she would get re-absorbed into her community. Raisl asks Bok to accept her son as his own child. This is the supreme test of self transcendence.

“Raisl’s function is to offer her husband the possibility of redemption through sacrifice” (Briganti 152). She is an instrument to his re-absorption and re-integration. It is certain that without Raisl, Yakov would remain incarcerated in his selfishness.

Raisl is sad and exhausted. Now that Bok has come to terms with her desertion and his part in it she has simply ceased to be a sinner. She has come to be identified gradually with the fate of ever suffering Jews. Bok writes in Yiddish on a paper “I declare myself to be the father of Chaim, the infant son of my wife Raisl Bok. He was conceived before she left me. Please help the mother and child and for this amid all my troubles I’ll be grateful. Yakov Bok” (T.F. 292). In fact, it is after he has been jailed, tortured and made powerless that he could constitute a self that would accept another man’s child as his more willingly.

The paper of confession reads as “I Yakov Bok confess that I witnessed the murder of Zhenia Golov, the son of Marfa Golov, by my Jewish compatriots. They killed him on the night of March 20, 1911 upstairs in the stable in the brickyard belonging to Nikolai Maximovitch Lebedev, merchant of Lukianovsky district” (T.F. 291). Instead of signing the confession Yakov declares that every word on the paper is a lie. Bok has ceased from betraying his fellow Jews in the interest of personal convenience. Book has redeemed Raisl from the pariah status and saved his Jewish brethren from needless pogroms. His transformation from apostate, un-kind individual to other loving human being is complete. By this way he has constructed a self that can accommodate other people and this way he has got re-integrated into humanity, re-absorbed into society.

Bok has at last gained his trial. The novel closes open-ended. Whether he wins his trial in the court or loses it is inconsequential. And what the judges will finally say is less important than Bok’s developing attitude as he has moved towards his re-absorption and re-integration. □

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## Excavation of Silenced Voices : A Reading of Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

\* Dr. J. G. Duresh

On account of the significance ascribed to the political and historical paradigms, very often, readers of Rohinton Mistry, flipping through his epic-like novel *A Fine Balance* (1998) fail to comprehend the subaltern voice it raises. In fact, Mistry in the novel devotes one chapter titled "In a Village By a River" to create a vision of the rural India so backward with its landlordism and casteism. Reading superficially, it seems that the plot of the novel centres round four characters who live through the Emergency enforced by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India in 1975. The novel artistically narrates the corporate life of two Dalit tailors, Ishwar and Om Prakash Darji, Maneck Kohlah, a Parsi student and Dina Dalal, and attractive Parsi widow and how the Emergency intrudes in it and destroys it. Mistry manipulates the story in such a way it unfolds each major political and communal upheaval in India from the Partition of 1947 to the macabre aftermath of Mrs. Gandhi's assassination in 1984. In the post-modernistic sense of "blending of history and fantasy" (Barry Lewis 124) Mistry weaves national history with the personal experiences of the central characters.

At the outset of the novel *A Fine Balance*, quoting Balzac Mistry declares that "this tragedy is not a fiction. All is true". Mistry in the novel fervently attempts to expose the misfortunes, discrimination, oppression and the endless suffering of the Dalits in India after independence. Though many Dalit writers and other reputed literary personalities have focused upon the stark realities of the pitiable existence of Dalits, their problems are not properly represented. Ranjit Guha has rightly observed that "The historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism and bourgeois nationalist elitism" (quoted in Stephen Morton 50). Lack of common language and a homogeneous

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identity prevent the Dalits and underprivileged finding due space in Indian literature. Therefore, Subhendu Mund stresses the exigent need of representing the cause of Dalits in literature. "I believe, is the want of good literature in an adequate magnitude that can create affirmative responses among the masses to change popular opinion" (71).

Living in distant Canada, Mistry is haunted by the excruciating experiences of the hapless underdogs who are crushed down by the so called upper class and the denial of their legitimate rights in India. His primary concern in the novel seems to show how Om Prakash and Ishwar, two characters in the novel leave their village harassed by the brutal caste system and come to the city to eke out their livelihood. But to give the novel a historic dimension, Mistry digresses away and portrays the backwardness of their village. With the symbolic title of the chapter "A Village By the River" Mistry claims this kind of oppression and discrimination is a common feature in Indian society.

Mistry wants to affirm that it is impossible to separate casteism from Indian mind. S.G. Sardesai and Dilip Bose in their book *Marxism and Bhagvat Gita* remark, "If we cannot imagine other religions without their church and institutionalised hierarchy, Hinduism is inconceivable without caste" (88). In a similar vein, Devendra Chaubey remarks, "Needless to say, this untouchability established by birth or caste is such that it is never ending" (65). Mistry too in *A Fine Balance* relates untouchability with the Hindu "darmic order" (88). In the novel the Brahmin Pandits of the village collectively declare:

*There was a proper place for everyone in the world, and as long as each one minded his place, they would endure and emerge unharmed through the darkness of Kaliyug. But if there were transgressions - if the order was polluted - then there was no telling what calamities might befall the universe. (101)*

Mistry presents a cogent illustration of the happenings in rural India in the novel. In the caste-oriented village, Dukhi Mochi, belonging to Chamaar caste of tanners and leather work-

“accepted from childhood, the occupation preordained for his present incarnation” (95). The village is by a small river and the Chamaars are “permitted to live section down stream from the Brahmins and landlords” (96). There is an “invisible line of caste” (97) which the downtrodden can never cross. Like his ancestors, Dukhi is ever fated to live “with humiliation and forbearance as his constant companions” (97). In this most backward village, where landlordism rules the roost, the poor untouchable women, in spite of all man made segregations, are easily targeted by the land owning Zamindar. It is reported in the novel that Buddha’s wife “refused to go to the field with Zamindar’s son, so they have shaved her head and walked her naked through the square” (97). The poverty-stricken women who just live on the husk thrown out by their overlords, to save themselves and their children from hunger-pinch become vulnerable to sexual abuses. They are easily frightened with warnings and punishments by the upper class thugs who exploit their ignorance and innocence quite shamelessly. Thus, Roopa, Dukhi’s wife, who is ruthlessly raped by a lecherous watchman of an orange orchard. She goes there in the dead of night to steal oranges for her starving children. The upper class watchman who pounces upon her, brings her around and appeases his sexual urges, frightening her off and on with his refrain “I only have to shout once” (Mistry 99).

The cruel landlords are green with envy at the birth of male issues in Dalit families. The caste Hindus fret and fume and blame it on the subversion of the time honoured social order.

*What is happening in the world? They complained. Why two sons in an untouchable house, and not even one in ours? What could a chamaar pass on to his sons that the gods should reward him thus? Something was wrong, the Law of Manu had been subverted. Someone in the village had definitely committed an act to offend the deities. (100)*

Therefore, the Thakurs and the Pandits begin to “whip the world into shape” (101) by abusing, beating up and inflicting all kinds of horrible punishments on the Chamaars. Dukhi, for instance, gets a good thrashing as a substitute for a glass of goat’s

how brutally and inhumanly some of the elders in his caste were once punished. As a reportage in a journal he narrates the atrocities of the landlords.

*For walking on the upper-caste side of the street, Sita was stoned, though not to death-the stones had eased at first blood. Gambhir was less fortunate; he had molten lead poured into his ears because he ventured within hearing range of the temple while prayers were in progress. Dayaram, reneging on an agreement to plough a landlord’s field, had been forced to eat the landlord’s excrement in the village square. Dhiraj tried to negotiate in advance with Pandit Ghanshyam the wages for chopping wood, instead of settling for the few sticks he could expect at the end of the day; the Pandit got upset, accused Dhiraj of poisoning his cows, and had him hanged. (108-09)*

As knowledge is the true deliverer of the marginalised from exploitation and oppression, the landlords by all means try to deny them education. Narayan and his brother Ishwar who were denied the chance of getting education, stealthily enters a school through the window. They take slates and chalks from a cupboard, sit cross-legged on the floor as they have so often watched the upper-caste children do and begin to draw lines. The teacher who enters in all on a sudden, catches hold of them and treat them as inhumanly as possible. Calling the boys “Chamaar rascals” he “twisted their ears till they yelped [...] he slapped Ishwar six times in quick succession across the face [...]. He slapped them again, and by now his hand was sore” (110-11). He makes them remove their pants and then beats them up with a cane. “The watching children flinched each time they came landed on the bare bottoms. A little boy started to cry’ (111). Later Dukhi, the father of the boys takes up the matter with Pandit Lalluram who is known “for the sacred knowledge locked inside his large, shiny cranium” (111). Poor Dukhi is safely dismissed by the learned Pandit with the usual exhortation that he has to adhere to caste rules. Then raising his voice in anger the Pandit shouts that:

*Your children entered the classroom. They polluted the place. They touched instruments of learning. They defiled slates and chalks,*

*which upper-caste children would touch. You are lucky there wasn't a holy book like the Bhagavad Gita in that cupboard, no sacred texts. Or the punishment would have been more final. (113-14)*

When Narayan and Ishwar are very small boys, their father Dukhi sends them to the city where they live under the protection of Ashraf, a Muslim tailor. Ashraf has already advised Dukhi that he and his family are in danger because of the evil caste system. Ashraf has told Dhuki that the only possible way to escape is that he and his family should leave the village and settle in a city. What Mistry insists on through Ashraf is the common solution suggested by many for the age-old problem of casteism. There has been always an urge on the part of the rural youth to escape to cities in search of employment which may give them some fooding.

In the novel, Mistry brings in a few Gandhian leaders, who in a meeting address the city-dwellers and exhort them to "expunge all caste prejudice from their thoughts, words and deeds" (108). The people applaud the speakers as advised and take an oath. Dukhi listening to the speeches has the doubt whether "the Zamindars in our village would ever clap for a speech about getting rid of the caste system" (108). Ashraf replies, "they would clap, go on in the same old way" (108).

Mistry caricatures the Indian electoral system which is nothing but a farce in his view. During the elections the landlords cast the votes whereas the subaltern voters have to leave the thumb impression on the ballots. Since Narayan gains political awareness he refuses to leave the ballot with the landlords. The enraged landlords beat him to death and set his hut ablaze, burning the inmates alive, except Narayan's son Om Prakash and brother Ishwar who are away. Thus Om and Ishwar become helpless, leave the village and set out their journey to Bombay. Mukul Kesavan, while commenting on the tragic as well as realistic aspect of the novel says that this section of the novel "reads like the script of a bad Bengali film" (80).

Having lived in Bombay for a few years, Om and Ishwar return to the city where Ashraf lives to find a Chamaar bride for

They learn from Ashraf that the village landlord Thakur Dharmis is now a powerful politician and his domain has extended to the cities and his monstrous activities still continue. He is also in charge of the Family Planning Centre, where he collects the cash and benefits for himself and denies what is due to those who undergo sterilization. Poor Om and Ishwar are forcibly taken into the centre at the connivance of Thakur and Om's testicles are removed. Finally, finding no way to live either in that city or in the village, they go back to Bombay only to become beggars. Mistry very carefully brings into the novel the transition of one time landlords into powerful politician in the democratic set up and continuing their atrocities. Savita Goel in this connection observes that, "Mistry stresses the fact in post-colonial India the plight of common people has not ameliorated and they have to face the same exploitation and injustice" (192).

Mistry's description of the problems of untouchability with sordid details of age-old caste system, and the rural poverty-stricken peasantry reads like one culled from Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchables. Unlike Anand, Mistry fails to indicate a solution to the problem of untouchability that has been eating into the vitals of the country. For instance, Ananta, in Anand's The Big Heart returns to his home town Amritsar, organizes the Thathliars and finally lays down his life for their sake. He says: "I feel I ought to do something good before I die, so that the others who come after can be a little happier [...]" (143). In A Fine Balance also Om Prakash has a dream of gathering "a small army of Chamaars" and providing them "with weapons, then march to the landlord's house" (149). Mistry's extreme skepticism and hopelessness do not allow him to offer any sign of redemption and consequently Om's dream never materializes but he becomes an invalid beggar similarly, the Gandhians also fail in their mission. □

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## Treatment of Tribals in Gita Mehta's A River Sutra

\* Dr. A.K. Chaturvedi

Gita Mehta with three published novels to her credit has emerged as one of the distinguished women novelists of India writing in English. Her success as a novelist solely rests on her third novel A River Sutra (1993). Her earlier novels Karma Kola and Raj that deal with rather narrow themes failed to make a mark. With the publication of A River Sutra she has emerged as a novelist of considerable worth. The novel has carved out a niche for her in the history of Indian English Literature and has enabled her "to become a writer lionized by the world who has created a new language of literature and recreated India for Indians"<sup>1</sup>. Adjudged as a seminal book by The Illustrated Weekly of India, the novel reflects the shift of novelist's concern to Indian sensibility and deals with the themes like cultural values, music, art forms, ethos and tribal life.

Although there is depiction of rural life in a number of Indian English novels, tribals as such have rarely been depicted in them. This fact testifies to the conspiracy of silence against a large chunk of society which is doomed to remain marginalized and lead life in its periphery. The reasons for this are not far to seek in view of Indian English writers' urban and westernized background and their pre-occupation with urban life and its problems. However, tribals are mentioned here and there in Manohar Malgaonkar's The Princes, Kamala Markandaya's The Coffer Dam, Arun Joshi's The Strange Case of Billy Biswas and Gita Mehta's A River Sutra.

Unlike in Kamala Markandaya's The Coffer Dam and Arun Joshi's The Strange Case of Billy Biswas, tribals in A River Sutra have been assigned a limited space. Commenting on this aspect of the novel, Stella Sandahl remarks, "She (Mehta) does not of course entirely ignore the poor menaced tribals, but she mentions them only as a decorative element in a manner similar

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A River Sutra's three chapters out of total sixteen are partly devoted to the treatment of tribals. The first chapter of the novel presents the picture of a tribal village of Vano situated on the bank of the Narmada river. Near this village is situated a government rest house in which the narrator of the novel, an ex-civil servant, lives as its manager. After retirement from service and death of his wife the narrator shifts to the rest house to spend the remaining part of his life in the vicinity of nature. Vano lies on the way from the rest house to the jungle where the narrator daily goes for morning walk. One day on his return morning walk he is warmly welcomed by some tribal women from Vano. He feels a happy surprise at being welcomed by those with whom he is not familiar at all. A few days' stay at the rest house acquaints him with the tribals of the village as some of them serve as the guards of the rest house. On the basis of the information he has gathered from the guards he reveals the historical incidents relating to the tribals in this passage:

*"Our bungalow guards are hired from Vano and enjoy a reputation for fierceness as descendants of the tribal races that held the Aryan invasion of India at bay for centuries in these hills. Indeed, the Vano village deity is a stone image of a half woman with the full breasts of a fertility symbol but the torso of a coiled snake, because the tribals believe they once ruled a great snake kingdom until they were defeated by the gods of the Aryans. Saved from annihilation only by a divine personification of the Narmada river, the grateful tribals conferred on the river the gift of annulling the effects of snakebite".<sup>3</sup>*

One of the significant features of tribal culture is the worship of mountains and rivers as gods and goddesses. In Arun Joshi's The Strange Case of Billy Biswas, the Bhils of the Satpura hills traverse a long distance to see the mountain.

*"I come a thousand miles to see your face O' mountain,*

*A thousand miles did I come to see your face"<sup>4</sup>*

Likewise, the tribals of Vano worship the Narmada river as a powerful goddess that can cure fatal diseases like madness

The invocation given below reveals the depth of their devotion to the holy river:

*"Salutation in the morning and at night to thee, O Narmada,*

*Defend me from the serpent's poison".<sup>5</sup>*

Women of the village daily go to the jungles for fuel collection. Their dull and monotonous work makes them derive pleasure from the romantic discussion over the person who happens to pass by them. One day the narrator becomes the subject of their romantic dialogue quoted below:

*"The Sahib finds your face pretty today, Rano".*

*"It must be the season. Spring rouses even old tigers".*

*"It is true. Don't you see a prowler to the Sahib's walk this morning"*

*"Kama must be sharpening his arrows of blossoms and stringing his bow with bees, sisters.*

*Take care the sahib does not lure us to a seduction" (pp.92-93)*

Nitin Bose, an executive in Calcutta's oldest tea company, visits the rest house and stays here for a few days for the purpose of exempting himself from the enchantment of a tribal lady, Rima. To the narrator he hands over a diary containing his experiences that he got from his association with the tribal lady. The narrator grows sympathetic to Nitin when he reads the mind baffling details with regard to the enchanting effect of Rima's company on him. Nitin mentions in the diary:

*"She seduced me with tribal songs in a language I could not understand so that I heard only the sweetness of the melodies. She told me tales of a great serpent kingdom lying inches beneath the soil. She spoke to me of charms that gave men the strength of elephants in rut and of magic performed during the eclipse of the moon when a man's soul could be captured inside the two halves of a coconut" (p. 126-27).*

Rima, the wife of a coolie in the railway depot in Agartala represents the feminine force to which man's reason has to yield. She is a tea picker in the tea estate of which Nitin is the manager.



Nitin is sleeping soundly, she awakens him by singing the following song:

*“Bring me my oil and my collyrium.*

*Sister, bring my mirror and the vermilion.*

*Make haste with my flower garland.*

*My lover waits impatient in the bed” (p.128).*

For one year Rima regularly visits the bungalow of Nitin to enjoy his company in the darkness of night as her husband is far away from her. She ensnares Nitin in the net of her love and enchants him to the extent that he forgets the fact that he is in love with a married woman, and that too the wife of a coolie. As for the magical effect of her love on his mind, Nitin again mentions in the diary:

*“Like a magician she drew me into a subterranean world of dream, her body teaching mine the passing of the seasons, the secret rhythm of nature, until I understood why my grandfather’s books called these hills Kamarupa, the kingdom of the god of love” (p.129).*

In due course of time, Nitin’s infatuation towards the tribal lady grows so intense that he cannot spend a night without her in his bed. One night instead of appearing before him physically, she calls him by his name from a dark distant place. As he hears her voice, he opens the gate in the hope that on being invited she will come close to him. But, to his dismay, she does not come. Consequently, he grows restless and madly runs after the voice coming from a bush. As he puts it himself:

*“Heedless of the low branches whipping against my body, I ran after her through the jungle calling her name, my voice loud in the night” (p. 133).*

Ultimately, Nitin reaches the place where Rima is standing with a lantern at her feet. On Nitin’s reaching close to her, she utters *“you will never leave me now, no matter how far you go” (p. 134).* After uttering these words she disappears in the wilderness leaving Nitin alone with his soul possessed by her. Nitin spends the night lying in an unconscious state in the jungle. The next morning he is brought to the rest house and is put under the special care

of Rima’s spirit. When he fails in his efforts, he advises Nitin to visit the shrine situated on the bank of the Narmada river. Following this advice, Nitin visits the rest house and requests its manager to help him in reaching the shrine. Revealing his distress to the manager he says:

*“They say there is a shrine to a goddess in these jungles. A tribal goddess who cures the madness of those who are possessed. Can you help me find it?” (p. 105)*

The guards of the rest house take Nitin to the shrine situated on the bank of the Narmada river near the small village of Vano. The tribals of Vano, helpful and co-operative as they are, come forward to help Nitin. With Nitin they hold an assembly and pray to the goddess to cure him. They also advise him to make the mud image of goddess and carry it to the river for immersing purposes. Pursuant to their advice, he makes the idol, puts his arms around it, lifts it from the ground and walks into the Narmada river. The tribals with *“their hands raised and their faces turned to the west” (p. 145)* accompany him. Nitin performs the tribal ritual under the guidance of the tribals and as a result thereof he is exempted from the possession of Rima’s spirit.

Thus, with the help of the tribals Nitin’s life is saved from being spoiled. They selflessly devote their time and energy to the performance of the ritual as a result of which Nitin is cured of madness caused by Rima. Nitin represents the social mainstream from which the tribals are cut off from the time immemorial. His redemption from the possession of Rima’s spirit with the co-operation of tribals reflects the role of the marginalized chunk of society in finding out the way to redemption from the ills of life. Many of the problems facing the upper strata of society can be solved by following the way the tribals lead their lives in remote rural areas still cut off from the prevailing trends of modern civilized society. On being approached the tribals selflessly help in finding out the way to redemption from the maladies that have no remedies except through the rituals and sacraments that are part of the tribal culture.

People of the civilized world approach the tribal world for fulfilling their personal needs. Nitin approaches the tribals of Vano village for curing himself of madness. Billy Biswas, the hero of Arun Joshi's The Strange Case of Billy Biswas leaves his service, social status and well settled family and joins the tribal society for realizing the meaning of life. Helen, the heroine of Kamala Markandaya's 'the Coffer Dam' goes to the huts of tribals for the fullness of life that she could not enjoy in the grand bungalows. The tribal world invariably benefits those who approach it with an open mind. Billy's disgust with his life is removed when he comes in contact with the tribals living near the Maikala hills. Helen enjoys the fullness of life as a result of her unusual closeness to Bashiam, a tribal by birth and technician by profession. Nitin's redemption from the possession of Rima's spirit results from his adherence to the advice of tribals.

Rima is a major tribal character sketched beautifully in the seventh chapter of the novel. She has been portrayed as a lady of bewitching beauty with romantic looks and sweet voice with which she rules over the heart of Nitin Bose. Her role in the novel can be compared to that of Bilasia in Arun Joshi's 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas'. The magic of Bilasia's beauty enchants Billy, the hero of the novel, to the extent that he grows mad about her the moment he sees her. As he puts it himself:

*"Desire was too mild a word for what I felt at that moment. It was closer to madness, the terrible madness of a man who after great sin and much suffering finally finds himself in the presence of his God".<sup>4</sup>*

As regards her beauty he observes:

*"She had that untarned beauty that comes to flower only in our primitive people".<sup>5</sup>*

During the moments of his separation from Bilasia Billy weeps in the manner he never wept for his first wife Meena. The magic of Rima's beauty exerts the same effect on Nitin Bose. Ensnared by her beauty, he forgets that he is in love with the wife of a coolie. Like Billy, he weeps bitterly when Rima does not

at the scheduled time. Like Bilasia, Rima does not shed tears herself but forces her victim to weep like a helpless child.

The fifth chapter of the novel contains the suggestive references to the sturdy tribal women and their *"cat-like faces with the triangular tattoo marks on each cheekbone"* (P2). They are given to the romantic discussion and provocative gestures. To the narrator they appear more threatening than Tariq Mia's tales of murder and suicide. Commenting on the physical appearance of these tribal women the narrator says:

*"Through the undergrowth I could see their slender brown arms reaching for the dry branches fallen on the mud. As I approached them I saw the saris sliding from their shoulders, baring their waists and the curve of their full breasts to my view as they stacked bundles of wood onto the small donkeys grazing under the trees" (P.92).*

The guiding and controlling principle in the tribal world is love. The tribals are known for their predilection to romance. For them romance is a tool to remove the monotony of life. Scarcity of the means of entertainment leads them to resort to the romantic activities like group dance coupled with songs. Love sustains and enkindles the tribals. Nitin Bose falls a prey to it. In the presence of Rima he feels as if he had been pierced by all five arrows of the god of love.

Industrialization and deforestation are playing havoc with the lives of tribals. Technological advancement and developmental projects that may be beneficial to the civilized world are causing irreparable loss to the tribals who still want to live their lives in a natural way far away from the madding crowd. They prefer to remain clung to their old customs and traditions, rites and rituals. The move to detribalize them is proving dangerous. As the editorial in a leading newspaper of India reveals:

*"The report of inhuman exploitation of tribals, especially their women, by privileged classes make painful reading. It has been going on in almost all places where the Adivasis have been brought willy nilly in contact with the plains- people in the name of conferring on them the fruits of development. In the process of change, much of their natural*

*habitat has been destroyed and their traditional sources of living i.e. the forests depleted beyond recovery. The rhythm of tribals, which our poets have sung about, is now almost a thing of past. The alienation and deculturalization of these communities resulting in a large number of them taking to the vices of modern civilization - trafficking in liquor, drug and sex is itself a tragedy ... if this is progress, the Adivasis would have been far happier without it".* <sup>7</sup>

*As contrasted to the urban area " crumbled under the weight of poisonous humidity, traffic jams, power failures and the crowd teeming across the broken pavements" (P 110), the area populated by the tribals "seethes with activities on the part of peacocks, parakeets cuckoos and pigeons. The jungles are impenetrable on account of shrubs, bushes and thickets. The entire area is dominated and presided over by the dark forces of the jungles and people are obliged to do the tribal workship of the feminine force which even their conquerors had acknowledged to be invincible".*<sup>8</sup> Tribal life has a rhythm of its own. Of this fact a minor character Mr Chagla is unaware and that is why he accuses the tribals of having no sense of time. As compared to the people of the civilized world, the tribals have more integrated sense of time as is evident from their adherence to the schedule of the worship of the shrine.

The tribal world as depicted by Gita Mehta is inhabited by the tribals who are well mannered and well behaved. The gentle tribal women treat the narrator with a great reverence. His gloom is removed when he is welcomed warmly by these women. Nitin's madness is cured as a result of the efforts put in by the tribesmen. Being the descendants of old civilization they are by no means undisciplined, uncivilized and barbarous. The release of a murky fragrance from their body is confined to exceptional cases. Their way of life is characterized by simplicity and naturalness, songs and dances, laughter and humour. This way of life may not appeal to the inhabitants of the civilized world but for them it is indispensable. In a nutshell, their life is governed by spontaneity, love, desire, selfless service, struggles and their

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## Imagery in William Carlos Williams's Poetry

*\* Dr.K.Muthuraman, V.K.Saravanan*

An image in a poem is a linguistic imitation of reality. Images are always sensory. They are sometimes sensual. They ground the poem's themes and ideas in real things. Wallace Stevens said, "Not ideas about the thing but the thing itself." William Carlos Williams said, "No ideas but in things" (*Paterson* 6).

William Carlos Williams is an enthusiastic user of imagery. While the earlier stage of his career was committed to the principles of imagism, Williams seemed to grow dissatisfied with the limits of imagism. Its compressed format, concentrated treatment of language and images often restricted the poet from exploring his own perspectives. Although he did not discard vivid imagery, Williams began to allow his own views to enter his poems. Gradually, the objective presentation of an image, once the centre of his poetry, surrendered to the poet's active engagement in personalizing an image. This progression is reflected in the body of his poetry, and can be summarized by comparing three poems.

The poem "The Red Wheelbarrow" represents the poet as a purer imagist. On the other hand, in "Spring and All" Williams blends his personal perspective and objective imagery. Finally, "The Sparrow" presents a more radical alternative to imagism by presenting images that are fully charged with the speaker's personal emotion and impressions.

One of Williams's early poems, "The Red Wheelbarrow," remains true to the imagists' proposals. It earns Williams a place as one of the significant figures in the school of imagism. The imagery of the objects is presented with a great degree of concentration, and the language is succinct with little personal impression. The poem is compressed and short as illustrated below:

*\* Dr. K. Muthuraman teaches English at Annamalai University,*

*so much depends  
upon  
a red wheel  
barrow  
glazed with rain  
water  
beside the white  
chickens. ( 1-8)*

The poem is visual, and looks much like a photo or a still painting of some outdoor setting. The vessel is highlighted by its shiny surface since it is wet, and the sunlight is reflected on the surface of it. The chickens stress the presence of the wheelbarrow by juxtaposition. First, "white" contrasts with "red," enhancing the visual effects of the poem. The metal, angular sense of the wheelbarrow stands out against the chickens' soft-feathered, round, and earthly features. There is also an implicit juxtaposition between the human beings using the wheelbarrow and nature as presented by the chickens. Furthermore, the poet enriches the imagery of the poem with unusual line breaks. For example, the "white" is visually and spatially separated from the "chickens," and thus, the imagery of "white" catches the reader's eye first. Then, the picture of "chickens" strolling on the ground augments the white colour, completing the whole picture.

There is something more than the poem's sheer picturesque quality that pleases the reader's eye. Despite its terribly short length and ambiguous meaning, these four words in the first stanza achieve a haiku-like effect. These words lead the reader to ponder the meaning of the poem. But, at the same time, the commentary is not explicit at all about what the poet or the speaker intends to say. Here, the poet directs the reader's attention to the forms and colours of the objects in the poem. Imagery is a central text, and the commentary remains sub-textual and decorative.

This practice of imagism aims to maximize the objective presentation of objects, and minimizes the poet's own impressions in a democratic way of interpreting the poem. The absence of personal statements suggests the absence of strict directions,

otherwise would guide the reader to certain interpretations the poet may intend. Therefore, the poem allows for a diversity of interpretations and creative responses from the reader. Some critics, like Barry Ahearn, pay attention to the fact that such a neglected object is the centre of attention. The wheelbarrow is so common that it has been devalued despite its enormous contribution to civilization and industrialization in our modern life. Based on this fact, Ahearn extends the meaning of the poem to honour the working class, poorly educated but diligent, whose social and political position is similar to the wheelbarrow, essential to expanding wealth in America yet underestimated.

The list of objects in the poem— the wheelbarrow, rain, and chickens – looks rather arbitrary and incidental, thereby troubling the readers and critics who will ask: Why rain? Does rain have something to do with the wheelbarrow? Why chickens, not cows or pigs? But, the debate surrounding those questions cannot result in a consensus since the poem does not indicate any relationship among those objects. There is a vivid blend of white and red, and the glistening surface of metal glazed by the rain presents a beautiful picture. These images fail to develop any extended metaphor or meaning that could have been naturally, coherently drawn from the text itself with such literary techniques as repetition and recursion of an image.

While in “The Red Wheelbarrow” Williams hesitates to interrupt the objective presentation of objects by including his subjective impressions, in “Spring and All” he subtly blends his own view into the concrete imagery of a winter landscape. The opening lines evoke a sterile, bare, vacant late winter scene. As in “The Red Wheelbarrow,” there is no “I” in the poem, but unlike “The Red Wheelbarrow,” there is the obvious presence of a speaker who stands on the road and depicts details of the landscape. His eyes move from the expansive sky to the broad field and to the cold ground. Now his eyes run towards the broad, muddy field beneath the sky, and the field is displayed at a distance — its brown colour, tall trees, and bushes. Through a series of visual fixations on the field, the speaker comes to discover the gradual

spring from a disease-like winter. He states, “Lifeless in appearance, sluggish / dazed spring approaches—” ( 14-15). As the poem goes on, the speaker’s personal impression of the barren objects overtakes any attempts to depict the landscape objectively. While viewing the lifeless vines, the speaker personifies them, and imagines how they would feel in a season when the winter still dominates. He implicitly compares the feeling of the vines to the naked and cold. Newborn babies who are uncertain of all “save that they enter a new world”:

*They enter the new world naked,  
cold, uncertain of all  
save that they enter. All about them  
the old, familiar wind— (16-19)*

Keeping his eyes on grass rooted on the ground, the speaker gives the fragile yet strong grass his own impression about its existence:

*Now the grass, tomorrow  
the stiff curl of wildcarrot leaf  
One by one objects are defined—  
It quickens: clarity, outline of leaf . . . (20-23)*

The speaker, who defines things by imposing dignity on leafless vines and formless grass, observes life in the transition between death and rebirth. Finally, he claims that life is again on the verge of being awakened. The speaker’s impression of the objects shows his compassion and respect for these creatures that endure a harsh winter and get ready for new life in the coming spring:

*But now the stark dignity of  
entrance—Still, the profound change  
has come upon them: rooted, they  
grip down and begin to awaken (24-27)*

Although “Spring and All” shows more personalized images than “The Red Wheelbarrow,” the subtle blending of solid imagery and the poet’s voice did not seem to satisfy Williams. “The insignificant image may be evoked never so ably...and still



*All* (quoted in Guimond 93). Indifferent to his earlier goal of presenting objective images, Williams probably felt the need to employ his subjective views in his poem. Gradually, the speaker's narration began to dominate his long prose-like poems written during the 1940s-1950s.

The poem "The Sparrow" reflects this radical progression Williams went through as a poet. A sparrow, a small, common creature, is reborn into a sympathetic, yet aristocratic figure through fragments of the memories the speaker collects. Major images and characteristics of the sparrow are personally defined by the speaker from the beginning to the end. In the first stanza, the speaker views the sparrow sitting on the windowsill, and refers to it as "a poetic truth / more than a natural one" (3-4), hinting that the sparrow is the subject of the poem. Then, the poet endows the sparrow with power when the speaker recalls a spectacular moment of how sparrows made men flee:

*They filled the trees  
of a small park. Men fled  
(with ears ringing!)  
from their droppings,  
leaving the premises . . . . (47-51)*

This time the speaker gives the sparrow the gentleman-like qualities of gentility, wit, and devotion:

*He crouches  
before the female,  
drags his wings,  
waltzing . . . . (81-84)*

The poet's personalized images of the sparrow reach a climax when the speaker reveals that "I" is a sparrow. Through observing the sparrow and threading it with his memories, the speaker transforms the poem into a memoir or a brief summary of his life:

*and it says it  
without offense,  
beautifully;*

*This was I,  
a sparrow.  
I did my best;  
farewell.(133-139)*

If Williams's earlier poetic project exhibits the excesses of restraint, his later experiments display the excesses of emotion and information as in "The Sparrow." For instance, such statements as "*Practical to the end, / it is the poem / of his existence*" (118-120) or "*This was I, / a sparrow*" (136-37) are unnecessary indications of the plot and the meaning of the poem. Of course, such lines clarify the metaphor of an object and reduce the ambiguity of its meaning. It is hard, however, for any reader to miss the point that the poem is about the sparrow; the sparrow is everywhere in the poem. Also, it is equally hard for any reader to underestimate how the sparrow is a trigger of the speaker's memories and a medium to look back on his life. The act of personifying the sparrow already implies the connection between the sparrow and the speaker. These self-evident commentaries risk closing off the text, leaving little room for readers to generate any new meaning except for what the poet produces. Likewise, since Williams literally defines the meaning of the poem through the formula the sparrow = the "I," no sense of wonder, shock, or new meaning takes place in the audience's rereading of the poem.

The exclamation marks, overly used in the poem, are other evidence of the poet's excessive display of emotion. Words such as "yell" or "ring" already possess an innately strong sense of action or movement, not requiring any exclamation mark to be stressed. Ironically, this form of punctuation lessens the sense-related impact. In other words, the reader does not need to engage himself or herself with imagining what the "yell" would be like, whether it is a symbolic gesture of shouting in mind, an ironic expression of gently whispering to a female sparrow, or a yell, using actual vocal sounds. Rather, it is too difficult to think of "yell!" in any other way than as the act of uttering a loud cry,

Williams thinks that “Spring and All” releases the excessive restraint of personal emotion and serves as reciprocal forces to each other as in an action-reaction principle. Imagism was such a refreshing banner that many fascinated followers of it denied the literary conventions that had defined Romanticism, launching into and advancing rather abstract depictions of things and sentimental views of them.

Hence, Williams gradually began to embrace his own emotion and views, turning back to something closer to Romanticism and its principles, which imagists refused to follow: Williams returned to what he tried to avoid. The circular pattern of these two kinds of excess informs the world of literature and the whole body of Williams’s poetry. □

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### HAIKU

K.B. Rai

Janakpuri, New Delhi

(I)

O Man, cast away  
 the cup of sorrow  
 And enjoy  
 the moments of happiness  
 As these won't come again in  
 life.

(II)

O Man, remove the curtain  
 of ignorance  
 Life bubbles on the surface of  
 life  
 Take advantage  
 of the pliable time.

(III)

Complexities of life cripple  
 many  
 Only those survive who are  
 brave  
 And know to swim  
 against currents of life. □

### APPRAISAL OF SOUL

Laxmidhara Mishra

Jajpur, Orissa

If or when ?  
 my lips ever acclaim  
 myself, a theist,  
 a deep devotee to God,  
 my heart bemoans, saying  
 “yourself, a blatant liar,

Do you ever love His creation  
 for love alone ?

Do you serve His creation  
 for service alone ?”

My ‘self’ apprises me,  
 all in negation, only in nega-  
 tion.

If or when,  
 your lips proclaim,  
 “myself, an atheist”.

Your heart scathes,  
 “yourself, a downright liar,  
 a shrewd showman,  
 a double-dealer”

He asks  
 for self-scanning of yours,  
 “Don’t you cry out, when  
 your wrecked ship sinks

in the tempestuous,  
 devouring life-ocean,  
 God ! save me  
 from this fatal peril?”

Then,  
 reverberates your soul  
 the truth to appraise  
 your assertion of atheism,  
 nothing but a hyperbole,  
 a cowardly pretence.

He appraises  
 theism or atheism,  
 nothing bears entity

but,  
 an expression  
 of ego-conspicuity.

Love and only love to Him

## FOR HER

*P.K. Majumder  
Lake Town, Kolkata*

The skies opening first  
cawing of a crow  
The petals unfolding dews  
stirring feeble blow  
Is it she returning  
in steps silent slow?

The autumn morning  
soft sweet cold glow  
Heaven is sending  
divine dawning flow  
Is it she waiting  
in melting shadow.

In cycle of seasons  
I kept flawless waking  
Misled I rushed  
dreams everytime breaking  
Yet I surmise  
She is around smiling

Who is she then  
always keeping in hiding  
The tree near my window  
knows my pining  
Bird on the bough  
Stole her look unheaving

This autumn is no different  
blue  
Sailing clouds leave same

I am graying I know for sure  
Only do I crave her view holy  
pure  
Thousand autumns afar  
yet do they lure. □

## WATERMELON EYES

*Jeanne Leigh Schuler-Farrell  
Novato, CA. U.S.A.*

Uncork the bottle  
and pour forth  
carbonated laughter  
into crystal glasses.

Slow rhythmic beating of  
drums,  
a chanting flute,  
and liquid whispers,  
dripping like melting wax  
on the candle between them,  
discussing social security  
and the adverse effects  
of Vitamin E,  
while fingers encircle  
on stalking hands  
and feet bound  
in leather and wood  
off glazed canines  
exposed in chiseled smiles.  
Cafe Mocha for dessert  
and red rimmed watermelon  
eyes

## YOUR WORDS

*Goldie Laden Morales  
Novato, CA., U.S.A.*

Let me mourn the death  
of dreams in silence,  
In the silence and alone,  
For the idol once beloved  
has crumbled,  
And its glamour now has  
flown,  
And you become a stranger,  
and your words.  
Of a language all unknown.

O your words have pierced  
my heart like daggers,  
And killed my joy and laugh-  
ter.  
They turn to somber notes  
of misery  
Slow notes, then faster, faster,  
Yet bringing no relief  
but added pain  
In tears that follow after.

Now all your words  
but fall in empty space.  
Unheeded all their measures  
--  
Yet even if they turned  
to purest bliss  
To feed my soul with plea-  
sures,

## AN ODE TO DAWN

*Jean Calkins  
Farmers Branch, TX, U.S.A.*

The golden globe arises from  
its den behind the hill,  
serenaded by the lark  
with lyric tones that thrill  
my soul to shout its accolades  
in words on empty page,  
hoping to preserve the gold  
with wisdom of the sage.  
But who am I to glorify  
the beauty of the morn,  
resplendent in its spectacle,  
with each new day reborn. □

## Fey Saturnine Day

*David L. Transue  
Greenwood, SC, U.S.A.*

The November feyness  
Of pouting clouds  
Hovers over the saturnine  
Landscape of the black death  
Of trees (once wild  
and riotous with living green),  
The wayward gray clouds  
scowl  
Blown by the tantrums  
of the wind.  
Above, a frenzied storm,  
of birds descend,

I'm the cold, bruised earth,  
As the bloodied red eye  
of the sun oozes downward,  
Smear'd by the lugubrious  
Dirge of the now weeping  
Clouds. □

### FAIR WEATHER ALSO RUTHLESS

*Bernard Hewitt*  
*North Cairns, Australia*

The boat will not take  
excessive weight,  
huge certitudes weigh down  
heavily,  
seductive desires  
entangle the oars,  
profound dreams encrust  
the sides and break them.  
It trails in unpretentiously  
to its destination,  
like he who races  
and comes last.  
Fair weather also ruthless.  
If all my wealth  
I left behind on the ocean  
bed,  
at least we survived,  
and deserve welcome  
as soon as we make port,

### NAP TIME

*Margaret English*  
*Novato, CA, U.S.A.*

Afternoon nap time,  
peace and contentment.  
In my room fair weather.  
In my room sounds are mut-  
ed.  
Mind is resting with fairy tales  
and my aura fairly glows. □

### CALIFORNIA LAND- SCAPE

*Marjorie Salin Anderson*  
*San Rafael, CA, USA.*

Spring Fever hit!  
I climbed into my car  
and chased pink blossoms  
and daffodils up to Cloverdale,  
Anderson Valley -- Mendocino  
to Fort Bragg.  
Slept overnight and chased  
more blossoms returning.  
My body told me spring is  
here,  
Not on Easter's official date,  
But now --  
Last night's wind  
blew the blossoms away  
off the Mangolia  
outside my window,

### GIVE ME LIGHT

*\* Dhirendra Mishra*

Birds go in for the kill  
Fluttering in air  
Running apace  
Cocks strike the beaks  
menacingly.

Feathers bristle  
The glitterin knives  
tied to the claws  
In maddening blood-thirsti-  
ness  
show their shine  
The game cocks are out  
in the duel.

In a moment  
claws pluck out feathers  
Blood oozes  
And knife  
chops the contender dead.

The winner gets picked  
by its proud owner  
The loser tossed away  
A few feathers  
lurk in the ground  
The wind mellowed in cheers.

In a moment it is all over  
But what remains is  
a deep red strain in the duel  
pit.

With all its might  
The man tries to  
Defend, nay attack the beast  
With a spear

The horns of the bull pitted  
against the blade of the spear  
In few minutes, the duel gets  
done  
The bull lies still on the ground  
When the crowds cry in Joy.  
I faint in Pain.

As the soul loses the way  
How restless does she stray  
Where is the God  
to find in the duel of life  
That makes it blind. □

*\*Mr. Mishra, a senior executive  
in Indian Revenue Service is at  
Bhubaneswar, India*

### Seventeen Poems

*by Adolf P. Shvedchikov, Russia*

(I)

My stony path was oppres-  
sive,  
My road never was straight,  
There was not a lot of honey  
in my life.  
Nevertheless I remain happy  
Because sometimes  
a bit of wormwood  
Is more precious for you  
than gorgeous roses.  
Unfortunately life uses very

(II)  
How often we intertwine  
Into poems myriad colorless  
words.  
Enough! Let's stop  
this execution!  
You cannot offend  
the dignity of words  
Because a trite word is dying.  
The words suffer like people.  
Remember, they are from a  
magic place!

(III)  
Sometimes I cannot look at old  
letters  
Without experiencing agita-  
tion.  
I remember those old days  
when I was  
Ready to die reading these  
prayers.  
My hands were trembling,  
And my poor heart  
Was broken into pieces!  
How many years have passed  
But I am still suffering  
From your severe sentence!  
I am reading again  
your old letters  
Looking at your familiar hand-  
writing.  
My throat is parched again,  
And I am ready to burst into  
tears...

(IV)  
Someone left us in this world

A burlap shoulder pack.  
Neither fathers nor descen-  
dants  
Cared about you, poor and  
homeless.  
They have no idea where you  
are.  
Perhaps you'll visit a dirty  
tavern  
And order a cheap beer,  
old vagabond!

(V)  
My home is open  
to each wanderer,  
Welcome please,  
be a guest of mine!  
Nobody will utter a swearword  
in my house.  
Shake off dust from your shoes  
and close the door.  
Forget about your tedious jour-  
ney, have a rest  
In the shadow of trees.  
Nobody will blame you here,  
everyone is polite  
Trying to understand the deep  
meaning And greatness of the  
Word!  
Welcome please, be a guest  
of mine.

(VI)  
We like to dream about glory.  
From century to century  
People have drunk this poi-  
son.  
How many victims were buried

That is not for me! To sit on the  
bronze horse?  
There are thousands of similar  
monuments!  
I don't like parades, I don't like  
cameras.  
My dream is to stay in  
the silence of oak forests  
And to keep the wings of glory  
In some secluded place.

(VII)  
Day is gone, all troubles are  
behind,  
And a sweet languor visits your  
soul.  
You feel the desirable cool of  
the evening.  
The night is silent and peace-  
ful...

(VIII)  
You played so calmly  
With strands of your hair.  
Your eyes pleased me. You lit  
such a flame  
Inside of my heart!  
The unknown forces  
Moved my soul into heaven!  
Two different beings  
became one,  
To different wings  
became crimson!

(IX)  
When you are full of sadness,  
When you are not expecting  
a miracle,  
When you are in trouble,

Don't be afraid of furious  
waves.  
You will break through  
the fearful storm  
To the sun-splashed harbour!

(X)  
Everything will return,  
Year after year,  
century after century,  
The rivers will run as before,  
And people will suffer again.  
All garden will be in blossom  
as today.  
But I don't know for sure  
Will my name die or live  
after me?

(XI)  
Sometimes I think  
Who will need my poems  
with all these tears?  
Nobody cares today  
about poetry.  
Why are you writing,  
who will know  
How you did nurture  
the flower of your poetry?  
Life is running, its' time to sum-  
marize what you did.  
How do poets find  
the wings of eternity  
When everything is vanity?  
Enough to philosophize  
after midnight!  
Day is dawning,



(XII)  
As never before I met you  
With raised head,  
unmerciful fate!  
— Are you ready? Yes, I am.  
Do your terrible job,  
but before my death  
Let me say my last word.  
Fate, you are a blind *Neander-  
thal man*  
Who crushed everything!  
Your are like an elephant  
in a china shop!

Tell me, when you'll kill every-  
one  
Who will sell cups in the china  
shop?  
You are a monster  
with a dull head!  
You are a malicious,  
ferocious animal!  
You may eat my flesh  
But you'll never possess  
my soul!

(XIII)  
I am not satiated in this life,  
I am full of dizzy happiness  
Which I drink in the summer  
And in the winter.  
I would like to try everything  
And grasp all the deep secrets  
Before I leave this world  
Sinking into eternal dreams.

(XIV)  
Sometimes you feel  
the breath of heaven

all troubles,  
When the shadows of the past  
Don't disturb you,  
And when you are ready to  
burst  
Into tears of happiness.  
Oh, these wonderful moments  
Which cannot be described by  
words!  
Only the birds of paradise  
Are able to reflect these feel-  
ings!

(XV)  
How harmonious is Nature,  
Everything is commanded  
By the laws of symmetry!  
How light and perfect is  
The House of the Universe!  
It seems that everything is cor-  
rect.  
Only you, my soul,  
is hiding among  
Dense reeds, illusory freedom  
forgotten...

(XVI)  
Sometimes being tired from  
troubles  
We fall into rosy dreams,  
in the dreamland  
Where nothing disturbs you,  
Where you are weightless,  
And you become off age,  
Where there is not the smell  
of a swamp,  
Where you drink the air like

(XVII)  
Life is wonderful!  
It's nice to walk in garden,  
To keep your hand in silence  
And to breathe in early spring.  
I don't want anything else.  
Let the sun shine!  
I'll love you forever,  
I'll keep you like a pearl.  
You are my highest reward.  
Life is wonderful! □

### CALENDARS

*\* Dr. R.R. Menon  
Bangalore, India*

Words too shy, but pictures  
refreshingly bold  
appearing in calendars,  
tell a story untold  
in far-away Mizoram,  
of stolen gold  
Slyly exposing what the people  
knew  
as the Minister's own house,  
it drew  
attention to the corruption  
through the new  
calendar. No words were  
needed as a clue.

Tongue-tied, the bureaucrats  
would fend  
for themselves, the political  
brigands pretend  
innocence by looking

Why defend  
a charge any words didn't  
make. No dent  
Until Courts convict.  
The modern trend is to grin and  
bear it.  
The emperor thinks,  
though wearing no clothes,  
he's dressed  
to cover his suppurating sore  
that stinks.  
The fashion elsewhere is to be  
shamefaced  
and send a basket of fruits  
and flowers  
to the calendar-man who wisely  
traced  
and gave free publicity by his  
endeavours

Innocuous protests can't  
avenge  
or redeem.  
Though novel or newsworthy,  
they die; we dream  
of success and wait.  
A ray can't be a beam.  
Thieves are many, power gives  
them clout,  
a stray calendar won't get the  
minister out.

The age of such sly nuances  
is long past,  
big criminals stay immune,  
enjoy their repast  
Coalition politics don't have a

even good ones behave as if  
they lost their voice  
Some day, not far-off,  
might develop a muscle  
for retribution, when the evanes-  
cent sizzle  
bursts out into fire, flame and  
brimstone,  
that burn out corruption  
cancer in the bone. □

### RENEWAL OF PAIN

*Gyana Ranjan Bhokta*  
*CDA, Cuttack*

Life was full of 'ifs' and 'buts',  
a patchwork,  
with only words to play with  
and console upon.  
The heart,  
engulfed in darkness,  
lived a life  
full of nothingness.

Notes of farewell  
resonated everywhere.

Life was getting lost  
in its lonely crowdness  
scared of the noisy silence  
sometimes standing lonely  
in a nauseatic world  
wondering  
where everything is so  
damned  
is this the same world

### BABY AND HER DOLL

*Gagan Rism*  
*Chandigarh, India*

Out of feather cot, the mirth  
Pranks, did she play - brought  
To shriveled faces so numer-  
ous  
Smiles - guileless smile-worn  
Spell thus cast; Enigma, her  
doll  
She named; her mate,  
her daughter  
Would she be, tossing  
at her beck  
And call her eyelids,  
arms and all.  
Lying on her cot,  
would she make  
Her sleep and moan,  
"She died, Mom".  
From her hazel eyes would  
gush  
Forth tear-dews, "Enigma, be  
up  
And play". Yet to her pleads,  
doll  
Won't yield as such wasn't  
the babe's  
Wish, "Look Mom, Enigma  
wants  
Chocolates and Ice-Creams,  
only then to life she would  
come, so she says".  
And Mom, but, would smile  
On daughter's antics and dare

O cruel death! won't thy heart  
Squeeze while churning life  
out  
Of that lovely babe, the five  
Springs full who hath yet  
Not seen!

O death! thou spare none  
Be it beast, old or babe  
Merciless, so that's why  
Cruel thou are, Cruel!! □

### POETIC GEOMETRY OF THE UNIVERSE

*Bruno Rombi, Italy*

Here we are,  
primeval astronauts,  
lost in the minute space  
granted to us of all the Uni-  
verse  
still in search of the moment  
of the Great Metamorphosis.  
Profound solitudes alternate  
with the creaking of the stars  
in our heart  
where profound roaring  
gives light  
to the dark silence of the spir-  
it.  
The great Eternal Order,  
for us for ever mysterious,  
moves the immense wheel  
of Life.  
Tangents of stars we discover

sing about worlds  
afar by light years.  
In the senses lies  
the measure of mystery.  
On the horizon of space  
the course of the galaxies  
and the coordinates of doubts  
on the energy emanating  
from every celestial body:  
the sense of Creation  
in the toil of Time  
still unexplored.  
Ours is the vertical bewilder-  
ment  
due to the immensity of space  
which circles intersecting  
in turn each other  
extend in perspectives  
of black holes and galaxies.  
We are saved by the entital  
awareness  
of belonging to the Cosmos:  
of always intending to search  
for the widest light  
and the certainty of a meeting,  
tomorrow,  
though losing from time to  
time  
the balance of a goal,  
with beings still to us un-  
known,  
a proof of a design much wid-  
er  
than the one inquired by us,  
perhaps beyond the invisible  
wall

## MOTHER TERESA

*M.A. Nare*

*Nasik, Maharastra, India*

At Kalighat,  
a tender sapling grew  
surpassing 'The Great Banyan  
Tree'.  
eating only little salt and rice,  
seeing Infant-Christ crying  
in every deserted, ailing soul  
in Calcutta streets.  
Now, her empire has grown  
vaster  
than the compassionate  
Ashoka's:  
I think, she is now a new Avar-  
tar  
of Mother Mary and Ma Durga  
with a million long, loving arms  
reaching and feeding  
abandoned,  
new-born infants,  
babes, orphans,  
lepers, the destitute and dy-  
ing,  
all over the world.

In this Holy Trinity,  
East and West dutifully meet:  
Dear God!  
May her tribe increase! □

## SILENCE OF GUILT

*Kamna Kathuria*

*McLean, Washington D.C., USA*

Nobody emits a sound,  
Then, a cat mews  
with eyes round,  
And squirrels scuttle  
across the ground.  
The yard is heavy with ten-  
sion,  
A knife could slice the air,  
Tears fall silently all around,  
Yet everyone refuses  
to even mention,  
The girl whose blood  
pools on the ground.

Alive or dead, nobody knows,  
Time slows,  
yet the moment goes,  
Slowly they turn around,  
Turn their backs on the girl,  
Whose blood pools on the  
ground. □

## VOICE OF PEACE

*Santi Ranjan Kar*

*Sukhchar, Kolkata, India*

If I die, don't keep the Geeta  
On my chest, but -  
Write few words —  
***Want peace, want peace  
throughout the world.***  
Don't cover me with namabalee  
or white clothes.  
If you can—  
cover the whole sky with  
white clothes or with white

As the sky is polluted with the  
Smell of gunpowder, with  
smoke  
And polluted air.  
If you can, wash out the spot  
of blood  
From the earth  
So that the next generations  
would not get the taste of  
blood.

## MY COLLEGE

*Dr. I. Shams*

Paddling up and paddling down  
the dusty way  
Under the burning sun of the  
day  
For nothing but worldly plea-  
sure  
and gay  
Crossing and crossing the  
lonely way.

Friends and foe all alike  
Everyone has a bike  
No order, no system and noth-  
ing  
All indulge in something.

They lick and lick for their own  
The Monarch is happy  
for the favour shown  
Students hither and thither dis-  
tressed and disappointed  
For the laymen have been ap-  
pointed.

## THE VOID !

*Harish C. Pradhan*

*Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India*

The void is not new -  
and there no void  
several springs later  
you have now come  
to these barren hills.  
**W**hose skeletons, these,  
scattered in the valley  
do they belong to  
some strangers;  
or someone's father,  
uncle or somebody's lover.  
In flesh and blood  
for half a century,  
or may be more  
you don't want to  
give up so easily  
you want to cling  
to your trusted bones  
and twisted shadow  
hanging on empty walls  
like drowsy bats.  
In the anger  
of self-immolation  
the fire burns  
into embers, as  
you change cloak.  
what remains  
is this unique  
process of  
incumbency in  
the land of  
predecessors. □

Three Poems  
by \*Manoj Kumar Dash

### PRAYER

I will go today and sit  
In prayer  
Under the vast sky  
Somewhere beside a river  
Or lake  
And thank God  
For his blessings upon us all.

Every moment  
Of light and joy  
Make me fold my hands  
In gratitude

All that I listen  
All that I see  
All that I touch and feel...  
The moments make me  
think and thank.

Each passing moment  
Each running breath  
Each wink of the eye  
Are reminders  
Of the blessings  
Of the Lord.

I open up like a lotus  
To the sunshine  
That floods  
this throbbing orb.

Let each moment-fall  
Call me  
To the prayer of God.

Bells ring,  
Bells ring

Let us ---listen  
Let us pray  
Me, you, and all. □

### WHISTLING

When the trees were green  
And the boughs were in  
colour  
When the wind blew  
Like wool  
Across my face

When the clouds traipsed  
Across the sky  
In many hues and shapes

When light bounced  
From the corners of the skies

When the heart rang with a  
song  
Then came a whistling  
Onto my lips  
And sought a rhythm

It came like the waves

### TOUCH

Touch a man  
he will tell you a story  
wherever he goes  
he carries  
with him a world  
to be revealed  
The most silent people  
have the most to talk about  
Touch them with a  
word  
with a look  
with a smile  
they will gush out  
like forest streams

They have seen so much  
they have known so much  
they have experienced so  
much  
they have lived in  
so many stories  
told and untold

Just touch them  
what they have to re-  
late

is pure gold  
They are every where,  
you find them  
as you go and come  
your way

They lie in cold  
their lips frozen and  
sealed  
their looks like the  
snowfields  
of a winter day

like rainbow dreams  
like the flowers of spring  
like the dashing waves  
of the ocean  
Touch them  
and realize  
they are not the oth-  
ers  
they are your  
kith and kin  
Touching them  
you touch yourself  
somewhere deep within  
so just touch  
and see. □

*\* The poet teaches English at Women's  
College, Bargarh, Orissa*

### TOYS

*\* Dr. T.S. Geetha*

He seems fed up with  
this game.  
Like a child who  
scrambles off his  
playthings when  
he's had enough,  
He too  
seems to want  
Something new!  
He shakes buildings,  
burying men;  
earth is ripped apart  
to swallow masses;  
Hurricane sweeps  
through, carrying  
roofs and burying

Ravishing fire smacks  
his lips on  
tasting innocence.  
Tidal waves rise up  
in fury  
finding entry into  
land!  
He enjoys, destroying  
what He made!  
Fed up He must be,  
with toys old, that  
He plans other things-a new?

\* teaches English at J.K.K. Nataraja  
College, Namakkal Dist, T.N., India.

## THE MORNING

\* *Pitambara Tarai*

This morning jumps  
like a beast  
more ferocious than  
darkness itself is.  
The city shivers  
with its heavy unsteady steps,  
A tearful restlessness rules  
over in the bossoms  
of the country, the fields  
and orchids.

Some killer may snatch  
the colours off  
the faces of flowers  
and the virginity be raped  
at the feet of  
some loveless god.  
Suspicion, fear or dejection  
in the souls of affectionate  
trees

be wrought upon.  
Hopes float away  
across the diseased sky  
the season of rain is barren,  
in its womb wanders the  
brown  
cloud of saturn.  
Below in the earth's lap  
burn the corn fields,  
the greenness,  
the breath of life.  
From the hearts come words  
of contaminated cancer.  
This is not a morning  
of the people.

This poisons the morning -  
smile,  
Prances with heavy paws  
on mines, barns, farms  
and fields  
screaching, scraching,  
scrapping, pricking  
shattering, scattering  
breaking apart  
the fortune of the unfortunate.

And our morning  
will be making  
the accounts of blood and  
sweat  
like a fallen crest  
hired servant  
at its master's feet  
and so

And so is it. □  
\* *Sri Tarai is a known name in con-*

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## SHORT STORY

### -The Last Diary

\* Nityananda Panda

**B**iswakesh Das failed to recollect the date when he exactly started writing diary. He just remembered his headmaster teaching the life of a greatman when he was in high school. He was not sure who was the greatman that was taught to him - Galileo or Rousseau or some one else. But he was sure that the great man was not an Indian. Now-a-days many leaders of this country claim to be greatmen supported by mass in clappings and slogans. There is a madding rush of greatmen in this land.

"The headmaster asked the students", he remembered, "Do you know how a man becomes a greatman? It becomes possible years after his death. The diary that he wrote comes to light all on a sudden. People compare the things written therein with what they witnessed and realise that the man should be elevated to the position of a greatman. How strange it was that an orphan, roaming on the streets, championed in culminating a revolution in the country. It was only for his diary that he became a greatman. Remember, that only for their diary that common men have become greatmen. Who can say that none of you will be greatman? Listen to me, to become a greatman you have to make the habit of writing diary. Write down the things you do, see and listen everyday in the diary in brief. That will do a lot though not for you but for your coming generation and for the country at large".

Then he continued with a look that projected him as a man from whom everything has been looted out. "I had written diary for some years and kept the volumes carefully. But once when I was not at home my wife sold them to the hawker taking them for scrap and to propitiate my young son with some biscuits". Saying this my headmaster held his handkerchief tight in his eyes. His throat became splitted. He said "Ah, what happened to me! The results of a long labour has been shattered just like a piece of ice melting out all on a sudden. Of course I consoled myself afterwards thinking that I was not writing for my own self.

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Rather I was writing for the people and for the country. It is true that many facts had been lost. Let the country and people suffer for the loss - I consoled myself”.

The headmaster was so emotional that day that he couldn't carry on and only drank water from the peon and left the class room.

Child Biswakesh was so much affected by the emotional words of his headmaster that he made a diary book with four sheets of paper and wrote “DIARY” on the cover that evening. He started writing diary with a quarter to half page everyday. It could have been more writing but one day there came the real danger to his writing.

One day his father searched his note books from his school bag to know and assess how his son was getting on his study. It was a bad time for Biswakesh. He found the ‘diary’; started reading it page by page. He was pleased with Biswakesh as he could see through it his son becoming a greatman. Suddenly he stopped in a page. His happiness turned into anger. His eyes flushed and face turned red. Instantly he called for Biswakesh.

- “Did you call me, father?” Asked his son.

- “Yes, called for a thief”. His father replied.

- His father held the diary unfolded. Biswakesh fumbled.

“Didn't you with some other rascals, steal coconuts from the yard of Madhu Tiadi that night? I could see the truth here that those five Harijans arrested by the police are innocent. They are not the thieves”. His father was too angry to feel that his heart was tearing apart.

“Bapa .... Ba ... pa....greatman!” To get reprieve from sudden punishment Biswakesh replied. He looked at the diary and his father's face.

“Which great man, you stupid?” His voice became louder.

“Our headmaster told us to write diary so that we can become greatmen” - his son replied. He thought that the wrath of his father will come down listening the name of his headmaster. But the result was just the reverse. He promptly gave two forceful

“No one becomes a greatman by stealing things and taking down these accounts on their diaries. It is my doubt about your becoming a simple man at least”. His father tore the diary book into pieces and threw away. That pronounced the end of his diary writing and shed the wish to become a greatman in future completely.

Biswakesh got a job when his father was alive. He became an officer. His father was old and senile then. He daredn't to tell his father that he was going to write his diary as an officer is compelled to write and for which he had torn the first diary of his life into pieces. Even he didn't dare to hold the diary on his hand while leaving for his office. He tried his best to conceal it from his father. Really he felt as if he was a thief when his father called him from back for any reason thereof. He was concealing his diary then.

.....Father passed away. Amidst much sadness Biswakesh felt that now he has really got the authority of an officer. He is not a thief any more - this feeling came to him forcefully. He felt some kind of sensation within him by remembering the forceful slaps given by his father on his cheeks for writing his diary. He couldn't understand why, instead of a burning feeling, he felt some kind of sandal wood - paste coolness inside him in the absence of his father. This kind of feeling in many a silent moment was making Biswakesh quite absent minded. To say it properly, it was not due to the slaps from his father, not for the tearing of his diary, not even for stealing coconuts. It was something else. This something else was giving him much pleasure. Nobody from rest of the world including his wife and children could know it.

Whatever it may be now, Biswakesh was able to come out of his home with the official style and look, holding the diary cheerfully and showing it to his wife, son and bearers. From tour returns, he used to hold the diary in the similar way discussing with them with smile.

At last Biswakesh retired from his job. In the meanwhile his wife passed away. His son got married. The daughter-in-law came to his house. His official outfit was stripped off just like the

confined within the four walls of his house only. By the by, some years have been passed. Now he was getting up early and taking his bath early also. Wearing his trousers and shirt he used to sit on the 'Sofa' with the last years diary in his hand. He seemed to be worried if the diary was not in his hand. If the diary was there in his hand, one could easily mark his sense of security and comfort. As if he was waiting to get back his lost authority and all that have been withered away. He seemed to be normal then.

Now-a-days Biswakesh had nothing so urgent to do with. Pintu, his grandson and his last diary were the most precious possession that he had. It was Pintu's wish that his grand father would hold him on his laps, fondle him and tell him stories. Biswakesh was doing that willingly. But it was a fun that while doing all this work his diary could not slip off his hand. Even while eating he was seen holding the last years diary intact.

One day while eating Biswakesh told his daughter-in-law that once he had been to 'Saranakul Panchayat' for an enquiry. "Do you know what kind of enquiry it was? . . . . Bear".

.... "Bear?" astonished Bijayalaxmi, the daughter-in-law.

"There is a bear in my Picture book. Long thick hair all over it's body"-said Pintu.

"Yes, a bear. It escaped from one of the thin forests and entered into some villages. It did not kill any one but wounded many people. More cattle were wounded. It created much nuisance. I had given orders to the people of the forest department to catch hold of the bear at any cost, without causing it's death. They caught the bear causing it some wounds. Then there came the Ranger. I went to the spot where about one thousand people gathered. The bear was tied. There swung a big piece of stone from its neck". - stopped Biswakesh.

"Then what happened?" asked the daughter-in-law.

"Then a strange thing happened. As soon as the bear saw me, it started laughing at me. I said, you are laughing, how naughty you little one! Instead of crying, you are laughing! I could have released you, if you have not laughed. Do cry. The bear started crying. I asked the Ranger to take this naughty one in his

a Jak-fruit and make it free in any of the deep forests. They carried it and went away." - Biswakesh stopped again.

His daughter-in-law asked, "why did the bear, caught in ropes, laugh at you? It should have cried". Thinking it deeply, the daughter-in-law laughed.

Biswakesh laughed and explained how laughing and crying of the bear calls for the same action - to make it free. Then Biswakesh laughed again. But his in-law remained silent.

Biswakesh now showed his in-law the report in his diary unfolding the page of 18th June. He asked to throw it.

Hi... hi... laughed Pintu saying everything is there in grandpa's diary. Biswakesh looked at Pintu and enjoyed his talk.

Bijayalaxmi warned her son against such joking.

It was seen that Biswakesh enjoyed free talk with his daughter-in-law while eating his meal. Because his in-law had to sit by him and feed him with much care and request. Pintu's innumerable questions like adults added flavour to his gossip. Not to speak of that in all his talks, the diary had got its place.

There happened another incident the otherday. The grandpa and his grandson sat for their food. The daughter-in-law was standing by their side.

Biswakesh started, "Listen Bijayalaxmi! It's really a very serious matter of the day that how could the subordinates bring their officers to their confidence". Biswakesh stopped arousing the interest of his in-law.

'Yes' - replied Bijayalaxmi without making it out.

"There was a B.D.O. in a certain Block", he resumed. "I won't tell you his name and the Block where he worked. Once there came a page of allegation against him. It was my duty to look into the matter. I did that and the allegation was true. He was found guilty. But I didn't take any action against him. Do you know why? That idiot clapped both of my legs in a closed room and cried loudly like a child". Biswakesh stopped until his in-law

“What kind of accusation?” asked his in-law. “I’m just looking for the means to say that”, he continued. ‘If Pintu was not here, I could have told that frankly. Well, let me tell that,.... two packets of condom were found from the drawar of that scoundrel’. Biswakesh bentdown his face holding his tongue between his two gumlines.

“What is a condom grandnpa? How does it look? Is it’s hair longer than the bear’s? There is no such thing in my picture book”. - Pintu went on.

“Shut up your mouth, Pintu” - asked his mother quite shamefully and with a fading smile on her lips.

“Take this diary and open the page at 21st July. You will know how rubbish the man was” - Biswakesh told this with his head downwards.

Pintu burstout in laughter and said, “there is everything in my grandpa’s diary”. This amused Biswakesh.

..... It was the night of that veryday. Biswakesh was in his bed. Pintu was in deep sleep by his side. Sleep didn’t come to his eyes. In the mean while he was able to listen the conversation between his son and in-law. The in-law was saying to her husband - “Do you know the present state of your father’s mind? I’m scared of him as I’m staying alone at home. How can I manage him?”. Then she told her husband everything about her father-in-law and how he refers everything to his diary. (diary-mania)

She said, “It would be fine if that useless diary could be lost somewhere!” She thrashed her legs on the bed.

“That will be horrible” - said the son. He said, “suppose father will live for another five years. I think his head could be something else then ! Well, you sleep now. We will do something later.

Biswakesh listened everything. He didn’t sleep at all that night. The night passed. He bathed early in the morning and wore his pant and shirt. He just remembered his father saying, ‘I have doubts about your becoming a common man’. Suddenly he felt a burning sensation on his cheeks. He decided not to hold the diary anymore. He wanted to hold it tight on his chest and caress it for the last time. To get the diary he moved towards the book-shelves.

bits. No, it was not found anywhere. More he brokedown as the conversation between his son and in-law last night echoed in his ears so many times. He felt as if something was going out of his innerself. The earth under his feet was moving away. He felt he would fall down soon. With much effort he managed to hold himself.

“Bijayalaxmi! Have you seen my diary? I have been looking for it since morning,” - asked Biswakesh to his in-law while serving him with the lunch.

“No, I haven’t seen that” - replied the in-law. She asked her husband about it. Both of them asked Pintu. But they were in vain. There was no information about the diary. Biswakesh sat quiet. Having seen the crying face of his grandpa’, Pintu didn’t insist his grandpa’ to tell him stories. Pintu, a mere child could well understand the mind of his grandpa’. Biswakesh knew that no one except Pintu was worried over the disappearance of his diary. His sadness grew more and more.

It was afternoon. His son had not turned up from office. The in-law was in the toilet. Suddenly Pintu came weeping and leaned against his chest. “Mummy will beat me” - he said in a low voice.

“No, she won’t. Stay with me. I’ll tell you a very nice story today. But tell me first why your Mummy will beat you” - asking this Biswakesh picked Pintu up to his lap. Pintu hesitated. It seemed that he had something to speakup but he couldnot.

“Speak it up, Pintu. I won’t say it to anybodyelse. I promise, I won’t tell it to anybody else” - told Biswakesh.

Pulling his grandpa’s shirt-collar Pintu said, “Grandpa’ you love your diary more than me, isn’t it? You hold it always and don’t hold me on your back; in your arms and on your shoulders, do you? So I took the diary and kept it in secret”. Saying this Pintu rose up silently, moved into the room and brought the diary and placed it in Biswakesh’s hand.

Tears piled up in Biswakesh’s eyes. He concealed the diary immediately under his banyan and silently asked Pintu to keep quiet. Then he placed Pintu fondly on his back and went

you longed to see it. Let me show you the river today. You will see how beautiful it looks with so much water and the turbulent currents which carry away everything with them formidably”.

Soon they reached the river bank. Biswakesh alighted Pintu from his back. He said, “See the river here; see how it flows downwards. It will carry away everything you drop in it. Will you drop anything? Well, drop not; only see how it carries away!”

He took out the diary beneath his banyan’, tore its pages one by one and threw them into the currents of the river. He said, “Pintu! See how they are floating down like boats sailing in”. Biswakesh laughed for some minutes.

Pintu couldn’t utter a single word. Perhaps his little mind was able to understand that the laughter of his grandpa was not real. He couldn’t laugh with his grand-father as usually he laughs. He only looked at his grandpa’ unwinkingly. Both of them came back. This time Pintu came on his grandpa’s shoulders.

It was evening. Biswakesh’s son and daughter in law were worried for Pintu and their father as they were not found for some pretty hours. They were more worried for their son Pintu.

“Father in law is no better than a mad” Bijayalaxmi uttered and couldn’t speak anything else. The son expressed his unrest through drinking water for so many times. “What can be done?” - he put to himself time and again.

“Maa Bijayalaxmi!” - called Biswakesh from the road. Pintu got down from his shoulders.

The son and daughter-in-law rushed out to the ‘veranda’. They got new life when they saw Pintu.

“I took Pintu to show him the river” - clarified Biswakesh with a smiling face.

Pintu rushed to his mother. Bijayalaxmi took her son to her arms immediately. He exploded on her mother’s shoulder by weeping. To know why their son was weeping they looked at Biswakesh. Biswakesh was speechless. He swiftly got into his bed room. He felt a sense of relief amidst a plethora of agony being released away from the core of his heart. □

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\* Mr. Nityananda Panda, is a known name in Oriya story writing. This story is translated by Mr. Purna Ch. Patra, a secondary school teacher at Jajpur, Orissa,.

## SUICIDE

\* Dr. P. Raja

**Dr. A. Surya Sundari, M.B.B.S., M.S., F.R.C.S.** decided to hang herself.

A much sought after surgeon both by ailing patients and by doubt nurturing colleagues, she was a big name in the medical circle. Her younger colleagues always appreciated her and the elder ones patted her on her back for making quick and favourable decisions. And once the decision was made, she never went back on it. In spite of her popularity and affluence she got ready to move away from this world and she herself was not sure why she took such a decision at that odd hour, and that too all of a sudden.

The preliminaries over, Dr. Surya held the noose in both her hands to widen it so as to push her head into it before she could tighten the noose and kick the stool away.

“So you think your time is over!”

She heard someone say so. Shocked she let the noose go. She looked around, sideways, up and down to confirm if she was the only one in her bedroom. Ascertaining that she was alone and wondering whose voice it could be, she held the noose again.

“So you think your time is over?”

This time she did not let the noose go off her hands. “Who is that?” she asked in a curt tone.

“Life,” came the reply. The word ‘life’ began to reverberate throughout the room and made her turn her head quickly to different directions.

“Life?” She asked as if she had never heard of that word before.

“Yes... I am Life”.

“But where are you?”

“Me? In your hands.”

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She blinked. She only felt that someone from somewhere

“Ha...ha...ha... You are like any other woman looking everywhere to find me out when I am in your hands”.

She thought awhile and then looked at the noose she was holding in her hand.

“Ha! Ha! You are quick witted. Yes! Life is in your hands”.

“What? Is it the noose that is speaking to me?” she asked looking askance at it.

“Why ‘Noose’? Call me Life. Don’t I make a full circle, and a completed cycle of life?”

Dr. Surya had the shock of her life. She had never before come across a rope or a noose speak to human beings in any of the medical texts she had deeply studied in all these years. She was not sure of any such scene created by writers capable of making anything speak to anyone. Panicky physician pushed the noose away from her with a jerk. It began to swing before her.

“Hold me tight. Don’t let Life go off you,” said the dangling noose that looked beautiful, integrating and crowning.

She was in a fix. Thoroughly confused she scratched her head.

“What is there to get confused? Hold me tight. You will learn from me what your parents and teachers, friends and relatives, colleagues and patients have failed. Is not Life, experience incarnate? Hold me tight, tighter than before and do not be afraid of me.”

“Pssst...Had I been afraid of you, I would not have touched you with my hands at all?” said Dr. Surya.

“Good! This is what I expected you to say. That is the spirit. An undaunted woman like you should not resort to any base act. I do not know what is going on in your mind but I am sure you are confused if not perturbed.”

She realized that Life spoke sense. “Thoroughly confused...yes! I am thoroughly confused,” she said as she held the dangling noose in her hand.

“All confusions arise only to get cleared. Every question

problem fails to find a solution then it can’t be a problem at all. I would say that you have only failed to find out the solution to your problem. Well, well! I think I spoke too much. Give me just one reason for taking this stupid decision.”

“Reason? You want reason in this unreasonable world?” commented Dr. Surya.

“You are a responsible citizen and you speak in an irresponsible way. We are the creators of our own world and together form one World. Your world may be different from the writer who is telling this story to the world. His would be different from his wife’s. Hers would be different from their children. Yet they make a family. Several families make a nation and several nations make the world. Hence forth don’t blame the world. Blame yourself”.

“Blame myself. Why should I blame myself when the world is responsible for driving me to this extreme?” howled Dr. Surya.

“Going to extreme is easy, for people like you suppose that extreme is the end all of things. But what you call end is no end at all but a new beginning. I wonder why highly educated people like you fail to understand this, when the unlettered easily understand this to the core. Gathering too much of knowledge too is in a way responsible for driving people to extremes,” said Life.

“May be. I had the best in my life right from babyhood to this day. Yet I am confused. Perhaps I need a new beginning,” said Dr. Surya holding the noose in one hand and rubbing her forehead with the other.

“Then begin it. What stops you from starting one anew? From green to greener pastures is the way of life. You are not married all these years. Get married to a man of your choice and spend the rest of your days happily. All human beings need change. In fact, a changeless life is a useless life.” Life sermonized.

“Ha...ha...ha...” Dr. Surya laughed like a machine gun at work. “Marriage! Choice! Happiness! All balderdash. Not



with the highly educated ones. My parents too were physicians and they loved only each other's money. Not a day passed without a quarrel and that may be the reason for my being their only child. I don't want to be harassed by a stranger. I have seen enough in my lifetime. No man loves his spouse with all his heart. Neither does the woman. Marriage is a failure in many western countries. That is why divorcing one's spouse is quite easy. But here in our country it is the most difficult of all. How long can one tolerate the other? What can be more boring than marital ties?"

"Well then! How about an affair with a man of your choice?" asked Life without a moment's hesitation and suggested, "There is nothing wrong in it. In a way it is better than marriage. And responsibility too is nil".

"Hm... You seem to have read my mind," said Dr. Surya. "Once I thought of that too. And that was years ago when I met my match. He was a professor and writer. When I met him I was as old as his eldest sister. Unfortunately he was married and was living with a lovely wife and two cute little kids. That was the time when I thought of an affair with him. No man but an impotent says no to any woman when it comes to joys of the flesh. But I soon realized that I can't play second fiddle to anyone. An affair is fatal relationship. I can't afford to risk my precious life for the sake of seven minutes of pleasure".

"You speak as though they are seven deadly sins. If you are not interested in a man for any sort of relationship, then you could have very well adapted a child from an orphanage...say a girl child," said Life and without waiting for her answer continued, "It is your loneliness that drove you to hug death. I hope you agree with me".

Dr. Surya was silent awhile and then said, "Thank you very much for your concern. I do not agree with you. Nor do I disagree with you. Your question is quite blunt. The idea of adapting a child flashed across my mind once. But somehow the idea continued to remain without any action, for on second thoughts I found that I would not be a good mother to the child. I learnt

from my dead mother. The wounds that my parents left in me are beyond healing. They are perennial blisters and I don't want to be responsible in any way for leaving even the slightest scar in anyone's heart".

Life laughed to its heart's content. Dr. Surya looked at the noose with probing eyes.

"You have left very many scars on your patients!" mocked Life.

"Of course, I did. My profession demanded it. I couldn't help it. Scar is history. Blister is news." She giggled before she added, "A touch of women's rights here".

"But no law will ever give you the right to take away your life", said Life in all humility.

"Ha...ha... Haven't you heard of mercy killing? Nobody can stop me when I decide to practice it on myself". She laughed with a flash of delight, as it an unexpected boon had fallen into her lap.

"Stooping to the mercy of a killer when Life has endowed you with the knowledge to save lives is something unpardonable. Think it over and find out what is responsible for your malaise", advised Life.

"I told you I don't know what it is that drives me to this end. I only know that I am not what I am. Leave me to myself. Let me die" said she in a fit of fury.

"That's what I want you to do. Die to be born anew. Only you can kill that malaise in you. Shed it away like a snake that sloughs off its skin. And that is why I have given you so many suggestions", said Life patiently.

"But you are too boring. I think I have lived enough here..."

Before Dr. Surya could complete her sentence, Life interrupted her and said, "Then take a trip abroad for a change. That is also a best way of relaxation. You have worked too much. It is monotony of work that is killing you. Go to some country you have so far not visited. In spite of your wide travels, I am sure

no intention of going there for I know what is there. But as you say I will visit the country of my choice... the undiscovered country. So leave me alone, please.”

“Look! You are only holding me. I leave you to your fate. I took all possible efforts to dissuade you from committing this sin. You do not heed to my words. It is useless to talk to the educated mankind. I feel sorry for having wasted my time on you. I have a hundred and one things to do and yet I rushed to counsel you. Fiasco...utter fiasco. If a woman takes a decision, nothing on earth can stop her from doing it. So feel free. I will not be there to stop you. Go to that undiscovered country you want to visit but rest assured that no traveller to that country ever returned”. said Life.

“Ha.” Dr. Surya let out a short cough. “You don’t have to teach me all that. Now go and mind your business.” She said bluntly.

Life felt defeated, humiliated in front of his exciting adult friend whose life he wanted to extend. He left the noose and turned round at the door with a scowl. Before he disappeared from the scene he said, “How do you know that worse things are not waiting for you there?”

“Life’s last words kept reverberating in Dr. Surya’s ears for hours together till her stomach growled and whined with hunger. Its unending protest made her embarrassing to stand before the

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**Dhirendra Mishra’s**

a collection of Poems

**“Under A Virgin Moon”**

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Sriram Nagar, Khurda, Orissa, India

## What a Man can do, a Woman can do!

\* Mallikarjun Patil

Lalita alighted the KSRTC bus in the evening at about 8 o’ clock. She had come from Gadag to Hubli to meet her friend Anu. Lalita and Anu were childhood friends and had been classmates, roommates and what else? They would marry did they live in the West. Such a new marriage was lesbianism in the West. Lalita had heard about it. She knew another kind of marriage wherein two women would marry one common man who happened to be their lover. Or the two women would marry one man, for they would be very bosom friends.

Lalita and Anu were MA graduates from Karnatak University, Dharwad. Lalita was serving as English lecturer in Govt. First Grade College in a village of Gadag district and stayed at Gadag. Her husband Prabhakar was a Sales Executive and wandered always from place to place. Such of his position made her unhappy. Yet he was a free man and did not restrict his wife’s social movements. He himself was a wanderer. So Lalita would visit her friend Anu as often as she would like to. She knew Anu’s husband Satish closely. Because he was her friend once. Likewise, Anu was known for her western ways of the world. She liked an independent and social life. She too was in employment at Hubli. She was also a lecturer in English. Her husband Mr. Satish was a businessman. He was rich and luxurious. He liked romantic life.

Lalita had come to meet her friend Anu on some urgent research business and on that fortunate day - Saturday. She knocked at the door of Anu and Satish Mirji.

‘Who’s it?’ a voice resonated from the inside of a big house in Gandhinagar.

‘It’s me Lalita, gentleman’, the outsider said in a familiar voice. She guessed it should be Anu’s husband.

It was, indeed, Anu’s husband.

‘O, Please come in’, Satish said her, beaming with a smile.  
He stood there like Arjun - tall, red and charming.

'Yes - yes. I'll come in. Where's Anu?' Lalita asked him, her eyes meeting his.

'She's gone to Belgaum', the insider said, liking the outsider's newly purchased sari. 'She'll come back tomorrow'.

'Is it?' Lalita got into the house without any reticence. It was a fine RCC house with all modern facilities. Lalita was familiar with it. The hall was big and well lighted and ventilated. Lalita sat upon a sofa. The sofa was soft. He sat upon an armchair. They sat face to face. Yet there was nothing special in it. That was how they would sit on every get-together. The only thing was that Anu was not there.

Meanwhile, Satish went in to bring her some water.

Lalita was a bit surprised. She wondered why Anu went off after inviting her. She remembered what Anu had said her on phone. Anu had assured her a gift for Lalita. What was the gift remained a mystery. Lalita had dismissed the idea as a gossip.

Satish brought her a *lota* of water plus a cup of tea. Lalita drank the water.

'Does she come back tomorrow?' Lalita asked him sipping the tea.

'Yes - yes. She'll be back tomorrow', Satish said looking at her feet. That was a western way. She looked very fine, probably. Her 30 years youth, good height, red complexion and face - that lovely face, had mesmerized Satish. Probably he would marry her did he get a chance and live with Anu too. Anu knew that he had tried for it.

Lalita knew what he was doing. She smiled at him. Her broad chests, lovely face, and pleasant speech soothed his heart. He thought she was like his heart. He had heard people say that one cannot part with it and live.

'So what about Prabhakar? Where's he now?' Satish asked her about her husband. Satish and Prabhakar were good to each other.

'He has gone to Koimuttur on business', Lalita replied without any warmth.

Now both were watching the film "*Mungarumale*" on the TV in the hall.

'I think I can go home', Lalita said to Satish.

'No - no. Please stay with me today', he replied. He liked what he said her.

'Anu is not there...' Lalita mumbled, looking at him and reminiscing his words 'stay with me'. There was some ecstatic turmoil in her.

'No problem', he said, switching a fan above her head. He was charmed with her 'lovely sparkling eyes' and dreamt of asking for a 'paradise of joy'.

The man looked singular and attractive. His maturity was exemplary. She liked his vision and way of life. Satish was most liberal of ideas. He had often helped Prabhakar's relative in business.

Lalita liked to stay back and make use of him for a time. She knew how her husband had used many women in his life. She loved to believe in gender-equality. She believed in woman's rights as human rights. She believed in 'what a man can do a woman can do'. She thought it was not wrong. Of course, Anu lived as equal as Satish. The Mirjis lived as though friends. If Satish could have extra-marital sex, Anu could have it and she had it when she had gone to Canada. This was due to the impact of western culture. Lalita had some clash of ideas between the eastern and western cultures. She thought sex was like any other appetite. She thought it was like making use of any other commodity subject to the condition of fidelity, health and social decency.

Lalita went into the kitchen and began to cook some food items for both. She cooked some rice and curry. There were some eggs in the loft. She opened milk products from the fridge. Already Satish had gone off to bring some things from the shops.

'This's latex', he said, lodging a bottle of beer on the dining

'I don't need it', Lalita said, with a smile on her face. She smiled as though she never smiled as that.

'You're quite a forward-looking woman', the man said, his head held high.

'I want a gift', she said, readying the plates of meals.

The two sat at the dinner table. Satish uncorked the bottle. Lalita served the food.

'Cheers for you,' Satish looked at her pointedly.

'Thank you', the lady lifted the glass.

The two had their supper. Lalita readied two pans - one for him and the other for herself. She presented it to him. She did not know presenting a pan was as good as inviting him for an embrace. The two kissed each other heartily.

Lalita was not Lalita now. She was Satish's prided prize. Lalita was not in the world. She had gone to paradise. The two were one invariably. They were in union. Lalita thought, "Love was the wind, the tide, the waves, the sunshine. Its power was incalculable for the two now. It made a paradise within which would dispense with a paradise without". Lalita knew how to use her body that way. Satish used it that way. Neither of their spouses objected to it. It was a double profit for Lalita coincidentally, for she had got the pleasure most sought after, and a child she was in great need of.

The next day Lalita met her friend Anu and thanked her for the gift. She went home proud of the saying 'What a man can do a woman can do too'. □

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a collection of Poems  
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**UNDER A VIRGIN MOON:-** A collection of Poems by Dharendra Mishra, is a unique but virgin attempt of the poet which reflects a travelogue of emotions experienced in the world around him. A keen study of the poems infers that they are about the vital life experiences - the follies and foibles and emotions of various nature like amorous love, bitter hatred, anger, truthfulness etc. which occur within and without. The feelings, though very much personal & immature, bear the adamancy of universality & maturity at least in lyrical forms & coherence of unification of sensibility. In the very first poem To My Words With Love the poet writes, *I don't feel like touching your velvet wings..... tenderest chords*, which proves the fact that immaturity is his strength. In almost all the poems he expresses his emotions & experiences collected from the world within & the world around himself. His concerns for changes taking place all around, his search for freedom & hope, his contemplation on degeneration of Nature with the changing time & seasons are quite genuine, universal and worth praising. He writes *'You opened your starry eyes / And a new year is born'*.

He invites his ladylove *'Let us collect the golden pore that dazzle on the stretches of time'*.

To him, *'freedom' was mine and mine alone & 'Hope' is invincible & undaunted --- a spring eternal & flows to eternity.*

The changes in nature are marked in the phrases 'denuded greeneries'. 'Scorching Summer', 'dried leaves', 'disheveled sky', which express the writer's attractions to the things of nature & shows how they pierce his heart that has got sense & sensibility towards the beauty of eternal nature.

In the poem 'Under A Virgin Moon' he says *'life stays on when it should move / moves on when it should stay'*. The colour of Nature has diametrically symmetric reflection on the changing face of the 'darling dear' most probably his ladylove. In To My Friend he expresses the modern day friendship - *'when I praise your traits/ you turned a traitor'*.

The emotion of love between a son and the mother, brother and sister or a man and his ladylove is quite explicit in most of the poems. The heart of the son sometimes swings between his vouched love for his beloved and gratitude for his mother — the giver of his life. At one point of time the son's heart pines for the love of his mother when he himself has fathered a child. The fear for exam. (exam phobia) and the mother's command coupled with blessings is seriously depicted in Nightmare. The poet delineates human beings vis-a-vis fate, hope vs. hopelessness, life vs. death, lover vs. beloved, freedom vs. human chains and the like in many of his poems. In Soliloquy a dialogue with 'self' over crisis between the lover and beloved bears an impersonal touch. The uniqueness of Mr. Mishra rests not only in unification of ideas and thoughts but also conglomeration of sounds perceived from around his immediate surroundings and from the greater environment. This almost pertains to T.S. Eliot's theory of capability of the poet of the 'unification of sensibility'. This is evident from the phrases *first raindrops patter/frogs croaking/crickets singing/leaves murmuring/coughing throat* etc. in the poems like The First Raindrops and several others.

The poet intends to get the value of truth in this materialistic world. He fails to guess why one prays with trickling tears. To him, religion is an opium and ---

*Life is a mystery  
More so than death  
In its painted wings.*

In On The Other Side Of The Sky the poet delineates 'love has no season/dares all calamity/braves all pangs and attacks. The lover likes the lap of nature without carrying the ferry of the nature hazards, even the hailstorm.

The concept of death always thrusts into the memory of the poet and activates his sensibility in the poems like Dusk, The Corpse, The Count Down Begins, The Mystery That Is Life, Silent Voice, The Brave Dies But Once, Summer Showers etc.

However, the book is read-worthy and it establishes the

## And the Last Poem

### **Jesus of Kolkata**

*Nirendranath Chakraborty*

There was no prohibition of red light,  
Yet the Kolkata City fast moving in speed of storm  
suddenly had to stop;  
With a severe break stopped  
Taxi, Private-car, Tempo and Tiger-marked-Double-Decker.  
Those who came rushing from both sides of road  
with shout of "Alas! Oh! Alas!" -  
The porter with basket on head, the hawker, the shop-keeper,  
the buyer -  
Now they're also seen to be absorbed in easel of artist  
alike the stationary picture.  
All glancing spell-bound,  
from one side to other  
crosses road with tottering feet  
a complete naked baby.  
A bit early, a shower drenched the Chowringhee area.  
Now the Sun again coming down alike a long spear  
piercing the heart of cloud;  
In misty light, floating the city of Kolkata.

Placing the mouth on the window of State-bus  
once view the sky and then you-  
The baby of beggar-mother,  
Jesus of Kolkata,  
by your wondrous-hymn, you've stopped the entire traffic.  
The shout of crowd, abrading of teeth of impatient driver,  
anything you least care.  
From both sides death about to fall, bifurcating it,  
you go on staggering.  
As if distinguishing humanity,  
for the pleasure of having learnt the art of walking recently  
you desire to grip the whole world in your palm.  
For this, with your stumbling feet,  
you are on your way from one end to other of this Earth. □

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\* *Translated by Supriya Chatterjee from original Bengali "Kolkatar*